

**Venice and the Crusades in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries**

Ian Christopher David Amorosi

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Department of History, Royal Holloway, University of London

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### **Abstract**

Venetian involvement in the crusades and other anti-Ottoman military actions of the late Fourteenth to the mid-Fifteenth centuries has never received a comprehensive study. This thesis sets out to fill that gap by providing analysis of the Venice and the Venetians during this time and investigating why Venice joined the crusades discussed, namely: the Crusade of Nicopolis and the Crusade of Varna, and how they participated in the defence of two major Aegean cities, Thessaloniki and Constantinople. Throughout the course of the paper I investigate why Venice got involved, challenging the typical historiographical answer that the Venetians only sought personal gain. I attempt highlight the positive actions the Venetians made towards assisting in these campaigns while at the same time not trying to downplay the hindrances and problems that the often caused during these times. Furthermore, throughout the thesis I challenge the writings of several historians who would attempt to portray Venice as a minor concern in these campaigns. This work will show that Venice, while a small state territorially, was a major proponent of these crusades and sets out to begin a deeper discussion of the role the Venetians played and their motivations for engaging in these conflicts.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ASV - Archivio di Stato di Venezia

TR - Freddy Thiriet, *Regestes des délibérations du sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, 3 vols.

(Paris: Mouton & Co., 1958-1961)

## Introduction

Venetian participation in and its policies toward crusading in the Later Middle Ages have received very little attention from modern historians. This lack of interest may derive from the fact that the early crusades (late eleventh to late thirteenth centuries) have absorbed most of the scholarly attention. Additionally, there appears to be an anti-Venetian bias stemming largely from the outcome of the Fourth Crusade tainting their image. Venice, therefore, has not been the subject of a comprehensive study after 1300. Brief mentions are found, however, indicating their presence and involvement and yet their motives and policies as to why they participated in some and not in others has not been fully explored.

Turning to the first point, numerous studies have focused on how Venice participated in crusading throughout the early period typically ending around 1291 and the loss of Acre, the last crusader stronghold in the East. Much of this investigation is based around the Fourth Crusade as Venice played a major role in the outcome of it. Presented here is just a sample of the range of discussions of Venice's engagement in the early crusades. An investigation of the index of most histories of pre-1300 crusades will reveal references to the Venetians that will lead to at least minor mentions of the commune. This can be epitomised in a collection of Italian essays published in 1965, featuring historians such as Steven Runciman (1903-2000) and Dionysios Zakythinos (1905-1993), which covers studies of Venice in the crusades from the First Crusade through the 1204 campaign.<sup>1</sup> There are, however, a number of important studies that focus on the early period of crusading and do, to varying extents, discuss the Venetians. The work of Jonathan Riley-Smith (1938-2016), for instance, covers the full breadth of crusading until the 1700s where he believes crusading ended; however, Venice only sees limited mention throughout it and most of it tied to their efforts in the early years of the overall crusading effort as a naval power in support of the Crusader states and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Venezia dalla prima crociata alla conquista di Costantinopoli del 1204* (Florence: Sansoni, 1965)

Kingdom of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> David Jacoby presented an article focused on the Venetians in Acre throughout the history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and how their involvement within the kingdom influenced the city and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Most of his study focuses on the Genoese-Venetian War of St. Sabas and its effect on Acre and Tyre and not on the crusades themselves. However, Venice achieved their position in these cities through their actions within the early crusades, primarily in 1100 with their aid in capturing Haifa and in 1123 in Tyre.<sup>4</sup> Hans Mayer and Louise Robbert fall into this same dilemma as well. Mayer does not provide much detail on Venetian crusading at all and ends in 1291 with the fall of the Crusader states.<sup>5</sup> Robbert, unlike many of the others, does focus heavily on the Venetians in her essay in Kenneth Setton's edited work.<sup>6</sup> Robbert's work provides an excellent background on why Venice joined the early crusades and what the commune was able to obtain throughout the early period of crusading. This information is very important for the study of later crusading as it gives context to what Venice may expect from a crusade and what may cause them to join or refrain from joining one. Robbert's study is supported by Christopher Marshall's article on the motivations of the city republics in the early crusading period.<sup>7</sup> Through his investigation Marshall, argues that the Italian Republics are motivated not solely by the commercial privileges that they earned for their service but by a genuine religious fervour. Using contemporary narrative sources, Marshall shows that the Venetians, Genoese, and Pisans were motivated by religious figures such as priests, bishops, and in the case of the Genoese in

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, Second Edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)

<sup>3</sup> David Jacoby, 'New Venetian Evidence on Crusader Acre' in *The Experience of Crusading vol. 2: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, Peter Edbury and Jonathan Phillips (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 240-56

<sup>4</sup> John Pryor, 'The Venetian Fleet for the Fourth Crusade and the Diversion of the Crusade to Constantinople' in *The Experience of Crusading vol. 1: Western Approaches*, Marcus Bull and Norman Housley (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

<sup>5</sup> Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, Second Edition, John Gillingham (trans.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)

<sup>6</sup> Louise Buenger Robbert, 'Venice and the Crusades' in Kenneth M. Setton (ed.), *A History of the Crusades: Vol. V: The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) pp. 379-451

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Marshall, 'The Crusading Motivations of the Italian City Republics in the Latin East, 1096-1104' in *The Experience of Crusading vol. 1: Western Approaches*, Marcus Bull and Norman Housley (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 60-79

the First Crusade direct contact from the Papacy, to join in the crusade.<sup>8</sup> Though they gained commercial privileges these were not seen as contradictory motivations in the contemporary sources, despite the fact that many historians now see this in a negative light. However, the limited time scope of these investigations keeps the overall usefulness of the articles limited to background material for this thesis on later crusading.

No crusade before or after 1300 has received more attention directed at the Venetians than the Fourth Crusade.<sup>9</sup> This crusade has coloured the opinion of historians against the Venetians more than any other with the blame for its diversion and attack on Constantinople being put almost solely on the Venetians. This anti-Venetian bias began at least as far back as the 1960s and 1970s but continues through much of the work being done today. This bias largely seems to stem from a belief that Venice and the Venetians are not what can be considered 'true' crusaders. Venice has been deemed by historians that follow this line of thought to not be joining crusades for the wholesome reasons of defence of Christendom or reclaiming lost lands of Christendom but instead for more selfish reasons of gaining power, authority, or trade gains in the targeted area. This of course is not all encompassing and has led to debates over the Fourth Crusade. In the introduction to his work on Venice's self-perception as a possible hindrance to the Crusades, Şerban Marin states that much of the study of Venice as a disruption to crusading focuses on the Fourth Crusade. Marin states that this view of Venice as 'an element that diverted – and thus deserted – from the original crusading ideal' has become seen as a 'consecrated tendency' of the Venetians.<sup>10</sup> Marin, however, ignores this sentiment and instead attempts to focus on how the Venetians themselves viewed their

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<sup>8</sup> Marshall, 'The Crusading Motivations', p. 67

<sup>9</sup> For more on the Fourth Crusade and the debates over the placement of the blame on various parties see: Jonathan Harris, 'The Debate on the Fourth Crusade' in *History Compass* 2 (1) (2004), Donald E Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: the Conquest of Constantinople, 1201-1204* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), Luigi Andrea Berto, 'Memory and Propaganda in Venice after the Fourth Crusade' in *Mediterranean Studies* vol. 24(2) (2016) pp. 111-138, Alfred Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade* (Boston: Brill 2000), Michael Angold, *The Fourth Crusade: Event and Context* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004)

<sup>10</sup> Şerban Marin, 'Venice- Obstacle for the Crusades? The Venetian Chronicles' Point of View', *Revista Istorică*, vol. 23 (2012) p. 251



involvement in the crusades. Before continuing his study which unfortunately focuses only on the crusades pre-1300 Marin does state that the Venetian sources that discuss the Fourth Crusade do not actively see themselves as a hindrance to the crusade at all and instead see it as a glorious victory for the commune.<sup>11</sup> Donald Queller (1925-1995) and Thomas Madden have devoted much of their academic lives to defending the Venetians.<sup>12</sup> Amongst their collective works they lay out a fair understanding of the critics' arguments against the Venetians. Madden divides them into two parties: treason theorists, who blame specific parties for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade, typically the Venetians, and the accident theorists, who typically consider the blame to be on poor planning and who are less likely to blame solely the Venetians, though some still do.<sup>13</sup> Queller goes through tremendous effort throughout his works to lay out the beliefs and perceptions of the anti-Venetian historians including: that religious crusading enthusiasm was foreign to the Venetian psyche, that the Venetians purposefully compelled the crusading host to comply with its treacherous plans during the Fourth Crusade, that Egypt was not a priority target for the Venetians, and that setbacks within the trade deals with the Byzantines made Constantinople demand her attention over the crusade.<sup>14</sup> John Pryor provides an interesting riposte to the belief that the Venetians planned the entire diversion ahead of time, though he does admit that convincing many anti-Venetian historians is impossible.<sup>15</sup> Pryor's argument focuses around an understanding of the fleet composition that is provided in the documents of the Fourth Crusade and an understanding of what those ships are designed to do. The argument focuses around two points, first that the transport ships called *uissiers* and the Venetian fleet of fifty galleys that accompanied the crusaders were

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<sup>11</sup> Marin, 'Venice- Obstacle for the Crusades?', p. 251

<sup>12</sup> A sampling but not the entirety of the bibliography of the Madden and Queller defence of the Venetians includes: Thomas Madden, 'Food and the Fourth Crusade: A New Approach to the "Diversion Question"', in *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades*, John Pryor (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 209-228, Donald Queller and Thomas Madden, *The Fourth Crusade 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), Thomas Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and The Fourth Crusade*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2003), Donald Queller and G.W. Day, 'Some Arguments in Defence of the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade' in *American Historical Review* 81 (1976) pp. 717-37, Donald Queller and Thomas Madden, 'Some Further Arguments in Defence of the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade' in *Byzantion* 62 (1992) pp. 433-73

<sup>13</sup> Madden, 'Food and the Fourth Crusade', p. 209

<sup>14</sup> Queller and Day, 'Some Arguments for the Venetians', p. 718

<sup>15</sup> Pryor, 'The Venetian Fleet', p. 103

better suited for an assault on the Egyptian coastline as was originally planned and not against the city of Constantinople. *Uissiers*, according to Pryor, are boxy wooden ships designed with a stern door way that would allow for knights to beach the ship and charge out on their horses while already mounted which is beneficial when assaulting a hostile beach when port services are unavailable.<sup>16</sup> These ships are inefficient transport vessels compared to other designs, however, and would likely have only been used if there was the likelihood of a hostile beach invasion or a location where port facilities would not allow for the loading and unloading of horses. The second point that Pryor argues is that the Venetians provided a combat fleet of their own accord and that would have been entirely unnecessary to confront the Byzantine fleet, which he argues had suffered from years of neglect leaving them with little naval power, while the Egyptian fleet and coastline would have necessitated a fleet of galleys.<sup>17</sup> Pryor does admit that the Venetian fleet of fifty galleys is overly excessive for either target but that it would have been entirely unnecessary for them to bring that fleet against the Byzantines. While much of the argument over the Venetian's crusading practice is focused on the Fourth Crusade, it is this argument and the bias that has arisen from the anti-Venetian histories that carries on throughout a fair amount of modern study on the Venetians within the crusades. Norman Housley even considers the Venetians to be greedy and exploitative. In his discussion of the Crusade of Smyrna in 1345 he believes that the Venetians overcharged and exploited the crusaders for the transportation of their troops.<sup>18</sup> This is a similar claim to those that blame the Venetians for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade that the Venetians were too greedy and did not join the crusades for 'true' purposes. Aziz Atiya (1898-1988) considers the Venetians' actions and dealings with the Ottomans in the lead up to the Crusade of Nicopolis 'unscrupulous' and explains that Venice was too willing and active in making peace and treating with the Ottomans.<sup>19</sup> There are numerous examples of this making it undoubtable that many historians of the crusades

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<sup>16</sup> Pryor, 'The Venetian Fleet', p. 117

<sup>17</sup> Pryor, 'The Venetian Fleet', p. 120-1

<sup>18</sup> Norman Housley, *Avignon Papacy and the Crusades, 1305-1378* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986) p. 148

<sup>19</sup> A. S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce, and Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962) p. 460 and A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Methuen, 1934) p. 111-2

have been influenced by these opinions and thereby created a stigma against the study of Venice as a crusading force. This is compounded by the lack of study of the primary material, the focus on earlier time periods, and an interest in the larger crusading forces in general.

Returning to the issue of Venice's interaction with the crusades after 1300, one positive development has been the enormous strides taken in the study of the later crusades over the past thirty years, especially by Norman Housley. However, despite the crusades of the Later Middle Ages receiving greater attention from more recent historians, much of the current research does not discuss Venice's role in them. Study seems to drop off drastically after the beginning of the Fourteenth Century. This is even true of historians who study Venice itself and not just crusade historians. Dennis Romano's book on Francesco Foscari who was doge of Venice (1423-1457) through both the Crusade of Varna and the fall of Constantinople, important events of the mid-Fifteenth Century, barely discusses Venice's involvement with the anti-Ottoman activities and crusades around these events at all.<sup>20</sup> His only major mentions of the Crusade of Varna come when discussing the selection of Alvise Loredan, Foscari's rival, as a commander on the expedition, and of the overall failure of the crusade being blamed on the Venetians which caused issues for the Doge.

A perfect example of this neglect is the existing literature on the Crusade of Nicopolis. Venice provided a place of embassy prior to the crusade allowing for the various parties including the Papacy, Burgundy, France, and Byzantine courts to negotiate and plan for the crusade. Upon joining the crusade, they built a fleet that would support the land armies; this fleet supplied and transported armies as they travelled eastwards, and during the siege of Nicopolis itself, it served as part of a blockade of the city and after the disastrous battle outside the city, part of the fleet saved King Ladislas of Hungary and brought him safely back to Constantinople. Numerous historians have covered the Crusade of Nicopolis and yet Venice has received very little attention.<sup>21</sup> It is known and

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<sup>20</sup> Denis Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari 1273-1457* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007)

<sup>21</sup> For studies on the Crusade of Nicopolis see: A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1938); Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*; Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce, and Culture*; Kenneth M. Setton,

accepted that the Venetians were present during the Crusade and even saved the King of Hungary. Kenneth Setton comments that later in the 1300s when the Venetians and the Hungarians were at odds the Venetian Senate called the king of Hungary, Sigismund (1387-1437), to witness their role in saving his life after the defeat at Nicopolis. Unfortunately, this is the only mention of the Crusade in Setton's chapter on the Venetians and does little more than confirm their presence and actions on the crusade.<sup>22</sup> Most of the rest of these historians provide much the same information about the Venetians. Mainly it confirms that they were present during the crusade. Such is the case of Norwich's work that discusses very briefly the Crusade of Nicopolis but does not provide any analysis of Venice's actions other than they were 'scarcely heroic' despite saving King Sigismund.<sup>23</sup> Atiya, Donald Nicol (1923-2003), , and Wilhelm Heyd (1823-1906), however, do actually research to some extent the subject of Venice's in the Crusade of Nicopolis each building off of the other. Heyd's work is only available in the original German, and its French translation was heavily used by Atiya during his work while Donald Nicol uses much of Atiya to support his claims. However, none of these historians specifically discuss Venice in the crusade. Donald Nicol's sole contribution concerning the Venetians in the crusade is to comment that their sole practical role in the crusade was the saving Sigismund's life after the defeat and that some of the Venetian Senators lamented their involvement in the crusade entirely.<sup>24</sup> This is an interesting bite of information but it is not expanded further why some senators believed this and what actions the Senate might have taken to prevent Venice from joining in further crusade actions. Atiya, of all the historians of the Crusade of Nicopolis, discusses Venice the most. Atiya tells us that the Venetians provided twenty-five ships to the crusade and

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*The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976-84), H. L. Savage, 'Enguerrand de Coucy VII and the campaign of Nicopolis' in *Speculum* vol. 14 (1939) pp. 423-42, D. J. Geanakoplos, 'Byzantium and the Crusades, 1354-1453' in Kenneth Setton (ed.), *A History of the Crusades* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955-89) Vol. 3, pp. 69-103, John Barker, *Manuel Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), Donald Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), W. Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen-Age 2 vols.*, Furcy Raynaud (trans.) (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1885-6)

<sup>22</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 261-2

<sup>24</sup> Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, p. 335

were initially unwilling to join at all as they wished to protect and maintain the trade agreements they held with the Ottomans and did not wish to provoke them.<sup>25</sup> In his work focused on the Crusade of Nicopolis, Atiya does provide a little more information into Venice's motivations and contributions to the crusade but again it is limited with most of the focus dedicated to the main armies of the crusade. Part of this limited study can be attributed to the lack of discussion of Venice in the primary material.<sup>26</sup> Much of what is known comes to us through the Venetian's own records in the ASV and the works of Freddy Thiriet (1921-1986) and Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940).<sup>27</sup> The other primary sources such as Jean Froissart and Shams al-Din ibn al-Jazari do not discuss Venice at all during the crusade.<sup>28</sup> Others, like the letter from Tommaso Mocenigo written to counter the claims of King Sigismund confirms, not only that the Venetians were involved in the crusade but also that they were instrumental in the rescue of Sigismund following the defeat of the crusader army outside of Nicopolis 25 September 1396.<sup>29</sup> This letter is only recently being investigated despite how useful it is to provide evidence of this long standing claim that Venice participated that has long been unsupported. This is a common problem for the study of Venice in the Later Crusade, the Venetians themselves were great bureaucrats providing detailed information on the running of the state, the votes of the Senate, but they were not as well known for their production of chronicles or other literary works of their own deeds. However, the lack of exploration into primary material does not fully explain the dearth of analysis of Venetian crusading. This is not limited to the Crusade of Nicopolis but appears throughout the study of crusading in the Later Middle Ages.

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<sup>25</sup> Atiya, *Crusade of Nicopolis*, pp. 14. 34-8 and Atiya, *Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 437

<sup>26</sup> The primary material used by these historians: Sigismund, King of Hungary, 'Letter from Byzantium, November 1396', in Barker, *Manuel Palaeologus*, pp. 482-5; Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. J. Joliffe (Penguin: London, 1967),; Exhortation a la Croisade (1395?) in Atiya, *Crusade of Nicopolis*, p. 127

<sup>27</sup> Freddy Thiriet, *Regestes des délibérations du senat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, 3 vols. (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1958-1961) and Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades*, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902)

<sup>28</sup> Ilker Evrim Binbaş, 'A Damascene eyewitness to the battle of Nicopolis: Shams al-Din ibn al-Jazari (d.833/1429)', in *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453*, ed. Nikolaos G. Chryssis and Mike Carr (Farnham and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 153-75.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Whelan, *Germany, Hungary and the Crusade during the Reign of Emperor Sigismund, c.1400-1440* (Routledge: Abingdon, forthcoming- 2019)

Further examples of this inattention can be found in two major histories of Venice from its creation to its fall from prominence, the works of F. C. Lane (1900-1984) and John Julius Norwich (1929-2018). Neither of these historians however devote much time to Venice's role in crusading despite their long timelines. Norwich's history runs from 700 to nearly 1800; however, Venice in the crusades receives only minor mention. Such is the case when discussing the Crusade of Varna which receives merely a sentence of discussion with no mention at all of Venice's involvement in the crusade.<sup>30</sup> Norwich does not discuss to any great detail how Venice received crusades, what caused them to join or refuse to join certain actions, or analyse how Venetian policy influenced or was changed by these events. His sole analytical mark is that Venice was too weak to fight a crusade alone and could only sit by passively and watch the growth of the Ottoman threat.<sup>31</sup> This is not necessarily true as they did what they could to resist the Ottomans where possible. But did become hesitant to join in crusades they did not believe could be successful; however, should a crusade show promise, they were more often than not willing to join any anti-Ottoman campaigns. Norwich's history focuses almost entirely on the growth and expanse of Venice at home in Italy but ignores much of their work in the wider course of European and crusader history. F. C. Lane's work is divided more into topical sections rather than chronologically; however, it devotes no more time to Venetian crusading throughout their long history than Norwich's. In fact, Lane's work only directly mentions the First through Third Crusades in reference to Venice in the crusades and the entirety of his discussion of Venice in the Later Middle Ages is only fifteen pages long and does not discuss crusading at all. In his work, the most we get is that the Venetians played a 'prominent role' in the failed defence of Constantinople in 1453.<sup>32</sup> Likewise in the collected works of John Law, a book that includes sixteen of his essays on Venice, not one deals with the crusades despite the long period covered by these papers.<sup>33</sup> Peter Lock's work on Frankish peoples in the Aegean covers a section on

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<sup>30</sup> Norwich, *History of Venice*, p. 325

<sup>31</sup> Norwich, *A History of Venice*, p. 262

<sup>32</sup> F. C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973) p. 325

<sup>33</sup> John E. Law, *Venice and the Veneto in the Early Renaissance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000)

Venice and their occupation of lands in the Balkans, where many later crusades were focused.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, Lock does little more than summarize the Venetian actions and does not discuss their role in the crusades throughout the phases into which he divides Venetian involvement. It is unfair to criticise historians for focusing on the earlier period of crusading. This section is merely to show that there is study of Venice as a crusading state in the early period of the crusades which is understandable as there is a greater interest in the early period of crusading in general. However, this study will go to show that study of the Later Middle Ages are just as important.

There are four historians who should be noted for providing varying degrees of information on Venice in the crusades of the Fifteenth and later centuries; Norman Housley, Kenneth Setton, Elizabeth Zachariadou, and Mike Carr. Each of these historians does work on Venice or at least the trade communes of Italy and their role in the crusades in the later medieval period and their works are of special importance to this study.

Norman Housley's work is extensive and covers every imaginable topic from throughout the long and storied period of the crusades from the First Crusade in the 1090s until the late Sixteenth Century. The most important works being: *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar 1274-1580* and *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades 1305-1378*. Housley's work on the Avignon papacy focuses just prior to the focus of this study and provides background information on Venice's involvement in the crusades leading up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This includes the crusading projects of Philip VI of France and Charles de Valois as well as the defence of Smyrna and the various naval leagues that Venice participated in during the late 1300s. Housley begins examining the Venetians throughout the period covered in his work but it only scratches the surface. He goes so far as to discuss the motivations of Venice in the 1320s and 30s, that Venice had become increasingly targeted by the pirates and raids of the Emirates of Aydin and Menteshe and were interested in defence, had attempted to form a defence league in 1325, and then tried to secure help from France in 1331.<sup>35</sup> Housley also states that

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Lock, *Franks in the Aegean 1204- 1500* (London: Longman, 1995)

<sup>35</sup> Housley, *Avignon Papacy*, p. 25

Venice seemed, at this point in time, to believe it could best secure its position through negotiations rather than through force. Unfortunately, Housley does not further investigate or analyse Venice's motivations here. Housley's comprehensive study of crusades in the later middle ages provides an even less in-depth study of Venice, her motives, her policies, and her actions.<sup>36</sup> The most engaging study of Venetian practice and policy found here is the development of the naval leagues from the mid-1320s-30s. He discusses in brief the events leading up to the creation of the first league in the late 1320s that saw the 5-year league of Byzantine, Venetian, and Hospitaller ships.<sup>37</sup> Study of this is lacking here, however, and little more than a brief summary and description is provided by Housley. His lead up to the Crusade of Varna discusses almost nothing of Venice's involvement nor how they reacted to the increasing Ottoman threat. During Housley's discussion of the Crusade of Varna there is almost no mention of Venice at all, not even when discussing Eugenius IV, the Pope and himself born Venetian.<sup>38</sup> We do get more about the Venetian involvement in the crusade itself when Housley points out that all but two of the ships in the fleet that joined the crusade were crewed by Venetians, and that therefore was representative of Venice's desires, and whose actions were dictated by the Venetian commander, Alvise Loredan.<sup>39</sup> This is not accurate as this thesis will later show that Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, papal legate of the crusading fleet, took steps to ensure that the papacy dictated the actions of the fleet, despite the fact that he himself was Venetian born and nephew of Pope Eugenius. Housley does go into the processes that Venice had to enforce to run their growing colonial empire after 1204; however, he does not discuss how these processes and offices created, such as the *consilarii* and *basilii*, effected and played into the policies that Venice created in response of its crusading action.<sup>40</sup> Overall, these works by Housley provide useful background information on a surface level when dealing with Venice and crusading in the 14<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>36</sup> Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580 from Lyons to Alacazar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

<sup>37</sup> Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 57-8

<sup>38</sup> Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 84-5

<sup>39</sup> Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 86

<sup>40</sup> Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 151-6



15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Aside from this however, Housley does not provide any deep discussion or examination into Venice, more often mentioning events in which they were present but without discussion or examination, as is common with many historians. Before moving on, one last Housley work should be discussed mostly for its clear statement of the role Venice was to play against the Ottoman expansion.<sup>41</sup> Housley here lays out in detail the idea of the '*antemurale*' or bulwark state. Simply put this idea was that certain states could serve the greater benefit of Christendom by forming a buffer against Muslim, or more specifically Ottoman, aggression.<sup>42</sup> The two most important of these *antemurale* states were Hungary on land and Venice at sea. Though as Housley explains Venice's status as an *antemurale* state was less impactful on Venice itself than it was on Hungary. He attributes this mostly to the smaller frontier that Venice shared with the Ottomans compared to that of Hungary, based around Negroponte, and later Modon, until those places were lost to the Ottomans in the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Venice also had, as Housley states, a less friendly relationship with the papal curia than Hungary and received less praise and support for its actions as a bulwark state.<sup>43</sup> This was further weakened by Venice's penchant for making treaties with the Ottomans and other Turkish powers over time and their continued trade with them. Housley further expands on this explaining that rumours arose throughout the 1450s and into the 1480s of Venice's complicity with Ottomans. These rumours included Venetians serving in Turkish armies in the fight for Belgrade in 1456 and in the continued suppling of arms to the Turks throughout the century. Based on the discussions by Housley here, the only author to address this idea of *antemurale* states in these terms, it leaves a rather ambivalent view of Venice in this role. They seem to be one of the best candidates for the role as a bulwark Christian state due to their proximity to the Ottomans and their need to curb Ottoman aggression in order to maintain their overseas empire. However, as Housley shows through this chapter, Venice instead did not accept this role as bulwark wholeheartedly and instead continued to serve their own interests far more

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<sup>41</sup> Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat 1453-1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>42</sup> Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, p. 40-1

<sup>43</sup> Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, p. 45-7

than those of Christendom. With such a limited focus in this study it is difficult to come to a strong opinion over how far Venice truly adopted the *antemurale* rhetoric and these are exactly the ideas that this thesis sets out to explore further. Much of the rest of his work focuses on the period after the scope of this thesis and could benefit from the context and background this thesis will provide for further study of Venice and Ottoman conflict into the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Amongst all of the historians discussed here, Kenneth Setton's monograph provides perhaps the largest amount of information of the Venetians and their role in crusading despite its title.<sup>44</sup> The second volume of this work which covers the period of 1402 to 1503, devotes an entire chapter to the actions of the Venetians against the Ottomans during this period.<sup>45</sup> This chapter forms the background of this volume. Setton discusses the successes of Venice over the Ottomans in the early years of the Fifteenth Century such as the major victory of the Venetian fleet over the Ottoman one at Gallipoli in 1416.<sup>46</sup> He also provides insight into their treaties with the Ottomans such as the treaty between Venice and the Ottomans in 1454 which offered protection and for the rights Venetian citizens, their ships, and their goods. The treaty substantially benefited Venice, but as Setton says 'not the needs of Christendom'.<sup>47</sup> Outside of the introductory chapter Venice next appears in the context of the background of Pope Eugenius IV, who himself was a Venetian. Unfortunately, Setton does not provide any information into how closely Eugenius, born Gabriel Condulmer, kept his ties from his birth city during his reign as pope. Later, in his chapter on the Crusade of Varna, Setton does discuss the involvement of Venice in the crusade and the fleet they helped build and send to the Dardanelles, though Setton himself states 'The extent of Venice's involvement in the crusade of 1444 has probably not been sufficiently appreciated, perhaps because the fleet achieved so little in the end.'<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Setton's footnoting style provides a treasure trove of information for

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<sup>44</sup> Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant 1204-1571*, vol. II (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1978)

<sup>45</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, pp. 1-38

<sup>46</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 7

<sup>47</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 141

<sup>48</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 86

further study including documents in the ASV and other primary sources both archival and literary. However, despite its usefulness, Setton's main focus is on the Papacy and its continued interest in the Eastern world throughout the later middle ages. Although his analysis of Venice and crusading in this period is in greater depth than almost any other it is all to provide context and background to his discussions of various Popes, Cardinals, and the Curia. This is highlighted when Setton discusses Pope Pius II and his crusade when Setton states 'In their cautious way the Venetians were reconsidering their Turkish policy.'<sup>49</sup> Setton does not go on to explain what Venice's policy was prior to this, nor exactly what was changing other than stating that the change was brought about by the provoking attacks by the Ottomans on Coron and Modon. This continues later in the same chapter when Setton discusses the arrival of Cardinal Bessarion in Venice to preach Pius' crusade. Setton states that Venice needed to retaliate for the attacks and punishments they had received from the Turks; however, Bessarion arrived to an indecisive Venice.<sup>50</sup> Venice was often indecisive when it came to crusading as they had to weigh the possible gains of a campaign versus the current status quo they enjoyed. Setton, unlike others that tend to fall short of the time period studied here, goes beyond into the 1470s and on up to the 1500s which falls beyond the bounds of this study. It is important to mention that he does continue to be a valuable source of information and discussion of Venice in the crusades; however, once the discussion of the Papacy enters into the book Venice loses its importance as Setton's inspection leads him elsewhere.

There are a couple scholars whose work looks in-depth at Venice's actions within the Crusades during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries; Elizabeth Zachariadou and Mike Carr. Zachariadou's work is most closely related to this thesis in terms of topic. Her work focuses on the impact of trade and trade agreements on Venetian Crete. Trade of course was the prime element of Venetian political decision, heavily controlling the policies decided on by the Signoria; however there are other aspects neglected in her work that must be discussed. Furthermore, Zachariadou does not focus on how

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<sup>49</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 234

<sup>50</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, p. 244

trade affected the policy and position of Venice but rather the trade deals Venice made and explaining the vast topic that is Venetian trading; providing discussions on weights and measures as well as commodities. Zachariadou's work is divided into three main sections: the historical background of her study, the trade including long discussions on coins, weights and measures, taxation, and commodities, and finally texts from the period. The middle third of the book while interesting is of little help to this study as it focuses on describing, defining, and illustrating how trade worked in the Venetian islands.<sup>51</sup> The final third of the book proves enlightening as a background to the study as the texts that Zachariadou reproduces are treaties between the Dukes of Candia, now called Crete, and various emirs, particularly those of Monteshe between the years 1313 and 1414.<sup>52</sup> This does however pose a problem, Zachariadou's study is of the island of Crete which was ruled by the Venetians largely without interruption from around 1204. However, the decisions of the Dukes are not necessarily tied entirely to the decisions and policies of the Signoria in Venice. It is true that, unlike Genoese overseas territories that were largely independent from the centralised government of their home city, Venetian overseas territories were more attached and highly governed by the Senate at home. However, there was an increasing amount of independence of the Dukes of Crete during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries with numerous revolts not just by the native Greeks but also of wealthy and powerful Venetians who had settled the island and saw the distant home government as oppressive. So these treaties may not in fact be representative of the treaties that the Senate would gauge in-keeping with the policy of Venice. Last to be discussed is the first third of the book. Covering the background of the study which Zachariadou is undertaking (despite the book's title) it is largely lacking in any discussion of crusading and Venice's role or the policies that led the city to join the efforts. It merely discusses the campaign known now as the Crusade of Smyrna in the late 1340s. The most enlightening events described by Zachariadou here are that while the Venetians were at war and sending a fleet to support the crusade to Smyrna against the

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<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Monteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)*, (Venice: Library of the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1983) p. 123-173

<sup>52</sup> Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, p. 187-242

Emirate of Aydin they kept their trade agreement with the Emirate of Monteshe under the *Sancta Unio* of 1332 and 1334, documents which she provides at the end of her work.<sup>53</sup> This is interesting as it shows that Venice and the Senate differentiated between various groups of Muslims and did not recognize all Muslims as enemies or infidels and were happy to continue trading even with those that were even nearby their current enemies. Even war materials like grain and horses were allowed to be traded during this time.<sup>54</sup> Much of the rest of the work focuses on the issues that Venetian Crete had with other Christian powers such as the Genoese, the Catalans, and the Greeks. Unfortunately, Zachariadou does not even mention the crusade of Nicopolis and the extent of her study ends in 1415. Zachariadou's work provides some insight into the large subject of trade and helps readers to understand the many aspects of trade including commodities, measurements, and costs; however, it does not go into great detail over how trade impacted the Venetian Senate's decisions or policies, particularly when it came to crusading. This study is interesting as it can show why Venice would fight to keep the trade agreements and helps to show where the wealth of Venice came from. However, it does not satisfactorily discuss how trade impacted Venice's policies towards crusading nor does it go into any deep analysis of what Venice hoped to gain from crusades in the later middle ages.

Similarly to Zachariadou, Mike Carr focuses on the relationship between trade and crusade in the later middle ages, particularly with the Italian trade republics. However Carr focuses largely on the early period studied here mostly focusing on the period 1305-29<sup>55</sup> in one piece and 1300-50 in another.<sup>56</sup> Carr focuses primarily on the Genoese in the Aegean during this time, as is the case with his article in the book *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean* where he focuses on

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<sup>53</sup> Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, p. 49

<sup>54</sup> Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, p. 50

<sup>55</sup> Mike Carr, 'Trade or Crusade? The Zaccaria of Chios and Crusades against the Turks' in Mike Carr, Nikolaos G. Chrissis, and Christoph Maier (eds.), *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453: Crusade, Religion, and Trade between Latins, Greeks, and Turks* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2014) p. 115-34

<sup>56</sup> Mike Carr, *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean, 1291-1352* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015) which was expanded from Mike Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades in the Aegean: c. 1300-1350' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of London, Royal Holloway, 2011)

the Zaccaria family that ruled the island of Chios for the Genoese. The main work of Carr to focus on is his PhD thesis which was later expanded on into a book that does cover Venice and their actions on crusade between 1302 and 1351. His work, while set earlier than the scope of this thesis, lays out the Venetian position in the Aegean from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and describes how Venice influenced the future of crusading adventures by pioneering the naval league as a form of resistance to Turkish aggression. In Carr's work one can finally find discussions of Venetian policy in dealing with Turkish aggression and crusade. He first begins by pointing out that between the early decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century despite Catalan-Turkish aggression and piracy Venice refused to go on the offensive and join the papacy against the Catalans.<sup>57</sup> Proof of this is seen in the treaties that Venice accepts from the Catalans in 1319 and renewed in 1321 and 1331. However, Venice also begins to change its policy in order to begin the steps towards allying against the Turkish threats from Aydin and others. From this grew Venice's plans for naval leagues as a counter to Turkish aggression, a weapon that was heavily influenced and led by Venice and relied on the support of many of the major Christian powers in the Mediterranean.<sup>58</sup> Carr describes the steps Venice took to reconcile with the Byzantines, whom they had been opposed to since the end of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, that led to the support granted to the naval leagues by the Byzantines in the face of a growing common enemy.<sup>59</sup> Carr's discussions on particular crusades focuses around the Crusades for Smyrna (1343-51), the major crusades that took place during the time period he covers.<sup>60</sup> Venice, Carr argues, was a willing and major participant of these crusades and even when troubled by financial problems due to the closing of the Black Sea markets never deserted the campaign and even proposed continuing the effort in 1350.<sup>61</sup> The Republic led the naval leagues that supported the crusades land actions. Further Carr provides the model for how this thesis will handle the question of religion versus practicality when dealing with Venice and the crusades. There exists a long debate

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<sup>57</sup> Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades', p. 112

<sup>58</sup> Carr, *Merchant Crusaders*, pp. 63-78

<sup>59</sup> Carr, *Merchant Crusaders*, pp. 20-6

<sup>60</sup> Carr, *Merchant Crusaders*, pp. 74-8

<sup>61</sup> Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades', p. 234

over the position of Venice and religion, much of it sprouting from the Fourth Crusade, with many historians on both sides. One side argues that the Venetians were not 'true' crusaders working for the betterment of the Christian world but instead opportunistic adventurers looking solely for the best economic benefit for the Republic. With Venetian defenders arguing against this. Carr frames this argument as two sides of the same coin, an approach this thesis will adopt. Instead of arguing for one side or the other, Carr acknowledges that Venice joined crusades in order to achieve both goals, the defence of Christendom and for economic or territorial advantage for the Republic.

Recently an article was published by Stefan Stantchev dealing closely with the topic of Venice in this time period. The article, instead of investigating Venice in crusades directly, is focused on Venice's view and response to Ottoman aggression.<sup>62</sup> Stantchev concludes that Venetian government rarely saw the Ottomans as a veritable threat until the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Instead, he argues that Venice was largely focused on countering their other rivals such as the Catalans, the Knights of Rhodes, and the Genoese, as well as expanding their mainland holdings in northern Italy. This argument is largely based around Stantchev's own interpretation of archival material presented in Thiriet's work as well as the works of many modern historians. Stantchev often counters the interpretations of other modern historians such as Ruthy Gertwagen, Kate Fleet, and John Melville-Jones in this analysis, particularly when dealing with the importance of the Aegean in Venetian policy. Whereas others have argued for patterns that arise in the Venetian acquisition of locations throughout the Aegean with most of them tying the Ottoman aggression to at least some of these acquisitions, Stantchev instead believes that Venetian expansion of their overseas empire was sporadic, haphazard, and half-hearted. His article provides an interesting counter to the focus of this thesis and will provide an alternative view to the events of the late fourteenth and into the fifteenth centuries. For instance, Stantchev barely discusses Venetian involvement in two major anti-Ottoman crusades undertaken during the period he covers, Nicopolis (1395-6) and Varna (1444-5),

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<sup>62</sup> Stefan Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat, 1381-1453', in Norman Housley (ed.) *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth-Century Crusade*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) pp. 161-205

<sup>63</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 190

both of which Venice to part in and which will be covered in this work. Venetian involvement in Nicopolis receives only a bare mention in Stantchev's work and which he calls 'typical', to which he fails to elaborate further.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, the Crusade of Varna is relegated to the concluding paragraphs of the work allowing for very little analysis despite the fact that much of the participation of Venice in the Crusade of Varna runs counter to his own arguments.<sup>65</sup>

The key to any investigation is the primary source material that will help form and support the core arguments of the work. For this thesis much of the primary material comes from the Venetian archives stored at the *Archivio di stato di Venezia* (ASV) in Venice which has been compiled, edited, and translated through the works of Freddy Thiriet and Nicolae Iorga, whose works are invaluable to this study.<sup>66</sup> In terms of primary, literary material this study will focus on a number of different sources for each of the crusades in question. In the case of the Crusade of Varna it will focus on two chronicles, one non-Venetian and one Venetian source. The non-Venetian chronicle is the work of Jehan de Wavrin whose nephew participated in the crusade and who provides the most complete account of the fleets' movements and action on the crusade.<sup>67</sup> The other chronicle is Giovanni Tiepolo's work covering the history of Venice but does briefly discuss the crusade.<sup>68</sup> Tiepolo does not discuss in-depth the crusade of Varna and in fact does not report much of it other than what occurred within Venice in the lead up to the launching of the fleet. However, this is still a crucial source as it confirms and reiterates certain information that not many other literary sources provide. Furthermore, it has not been used at all by other historians of the Crusade of Varna and this alone

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<sup>64</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 166

<sup>65</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', pp. 188-90

<sup>66</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades*, tome III, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902), Freddy Thiriet, *Regestes des délibérations du sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, 3 vols. (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1959-1961) and Freddy Thiriet, *Délibérations des assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Roumanie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966-1971)

<sup>67</sup> Jehan de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretaigne, a present nomme Engleterre*, Vol. 4, Edward L. C. P. Hardy (ed.), (London: Longman, Trubner, 1884)

<sup>68</sup> *Cronica di Venezia di Giovanni Tiepolo fu de Agostin patrizio Veneto* (secc. XVI-XVII), Emilio Aleo (ed.), 2 vols. (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2012)



makes it an important find to add to our understanding of the crusade. These sources are invaluable to the study of this crusade and each of the crusades discussed in this thesis will have their own sources attached to them that will help support the argument and focus of each chapter.

In terms of primary, literary material this study will focus on a number of different sources for each of the crusades in question. Among those produced in Venice is the Morosini Codex, although it has the disadvantage of only covering events up to 1433.<sup>69</sup> Another chronicle is that attributed to Giovanni Tiepolo (d.1631) which covers the history of Venice up to 1570.<sup>70</sup> Nicolò Barbaro's diary is an important source for Venetian participation in the defence of Constantinople in 1453.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, it has not been used at all by other historians of the Crusade of Varna and this alone makes it an important find to add to our understanding of the crusade. These sources are invaluable to the study of this crusade and each of the crusades discussed in this thesis will have their own sources attached to them that will help support the argument and focus of each chapter. Non-Venetian literary sources are also very helpful. For example, the work of Jehan de Wavrin, whose nephew participated in the crusade of Varna provides the most complete account of the fleets movement's and action on the crusade.<sup>72</sup>

Venice has not been the main focus of any single comprehensive study of the crusades and particularly not of the crusades of the Later Middle Ages after 1300. When Venice is discussed it is usually with the smallest of mentions of their presence. Venice's involvement within the crusades, how and why Venice decided to join some crusades and not others, or how Venetian policy changed or shifted to match the outcomes and failure of crusades in the Later Middle Ages continues to go

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<sup>69</sup> *Il Codice Morosini: Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*, ed. Andrea Nanetti, 4 vols (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010).

<sup>70</sup> *Cronica di Venezia di Giovanni Tiepolo fu de Agostin patrizio Veneto* (secc. XVI-XVII), Emilio Aleo (ed.), 2 vols. (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2012)

<sup>71</sup> Nicolò Barbaro, *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*, John R. Melville-Jones (trans.) (New York: Exposition Press, 1969).

<sup>72</sup> Jehan de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretaigne, a present nomme Engleterre*, Vol. 4, Edward L. C. P. Hardy (ed.), (London: Longman, Trubner, 1884)

understudied. This thesis will seek to bridge the gap within the scholarship of Venice in the crusades by focusing on how Venice's policies shifted in the period between 1390 and 1471. It will constitute a comprehensive study that investigates the extent to which Venice participated in crusading efforts during this time, it will explain why Venice participated in some actions and not others, it will investigate how certain Venetians in positions of power both within and without the Venetian government participated and effected Venice's involvement in the crusades, and it will show how Venetian policy shifted to deal with the changing political and social landscape presented by the various crusades during this period.

## **Chapter 1: Venice and the Crusade of Nicopolis**

### **1.1 Introduction:**

Venice fought the War of Chioggia 1378-81 against the Genoese mainly over control of the strategically located island of Tenedos. Although they technically won the war through the defeat of the Genoese fleet, at the treaty of Turin in 1381 Venice was forced into a disadvantageous settlement that cost them not only a substantial loss of land on the Dalmatia coastline to their rivals Hungary, as well as losing the rights to the island of Tenedos and its occupation. The war crushed Venetian morale and bankrupted both Venice and Genoa.<sup>73</sup> Venice was able to recover rapidly in large part due to its overseas territories. Through the exploitation of their territories and the money and resources they were able to rebuild and recover. By the late 1380s when the plans for the Crusade of Nicopolis were forming Venice was considered a viable place to meet and hold the planning sessions and were asked to join in the campaign. This campaign then launched in the mid-1390s, but Venice's involvement is still shrouded in mystery. Of all the campaigns discussed in this thesis, the Crusade of Nicopolis is the least studied, particularly when it comes to Venetian involvement. Much of the primary material that has survived comes from sources outside Venice

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<sup>73</sup> On the Chioggia War and the rivalry over Tenedos, see Lane, *Venice: a Maritime Republic* (, pp. 189-96; Joseph Gill, 'Venice, Genoa and Byzantium', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985), 57-73; Julian Chrysostomides, 'Studies on the chronicle of Caroldo, with special reference to the history of Byzantium from 1370-1377', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 35 (1969), 123-82, and reprinted in Julian Chrysostomides, *Byzantium and Venice, 1204-1453*, ed. M. Heslop and Ch. Dendrinos (Ashgate: Farnham and Burlington VT, 2011), No. II.

that were either ignorant of their involvement or were focused on other topics in which the Venetians held little sway over. This includes surviving archival material for the Venetians, that for other campaigns provide details of the preparations and orders made and issued by the Senate in the lead up to the Venetian fleets leaving for the campaigns, but for Nicopolis are lacking in a significant amount of this same information. This has led to secondary sources ignoring the contribution of the Venetians. This has led to the misunderstanding that the Venetians were either not involved or only a minor section. There has been limited study into why they joined the campaign, what their goals were during the campaign, and what Venice contributed to the crusade. This chapter will look at the weakness of the sources and the issues caused by how secondary work treat the Venetian involvement in the Crusade of Nicopolis, followed by a specific example of how Venice participated in the crusade including: their role in planning the campaign, the preparations they made as much as can be found, and their known actions during the campaign itself.

## **1.2 The Issue of the Material**

The largest problem when dealing with the Crusade of Nicopolis is the limited source material that has survived to the modern day. This lack of information and material, as well as other factors such as the small scale and uninspiring outcome of the crusade, has led to the Crusade of Nicopolis receiving very little attention from historians to this day. In fact, many historians simply use the works of Aziz Atiya whose studies were published in the 1930s. This has caused a level of misinformation to persist in the historical study of the Crusade of Nicopolis and hindered any original study to be done on the crusade in recent years. This section will briefly investigate the issues involved with the secondary source material and highlight two instances where Venice's involvement is known by historians but ignored or downplayed out of hand, in large part due to the lack of material and the reliance on the minor study of the crusade by previous historians.

The major reason that the Nicopolis campaign is poorly studied and largely ignored or skimmed over stems from the seeming lack of information provided in primary material that discusses the crusade, with only two major sources: the first is the work of Philippe de Mézières

(c.1327-1405), a French author who was not an eyewitness of the events. Instead Mézières collected accounts of the returning French crusaders and wrote based on the compilation of these accounts.<sup>74</sup> However, there is a level of doubt raised about the trustworthiness and reliability of the source as an accurate record. The other major source for the crusade is the account of Johann Schiltberger, a young German who fought in the crusade but was only privy to his small section of the fighting and the campaign and therefore is not able to inform historians on the crusade as a whole. Neither of these sources discuss the Venetians during the crusade. Mézières likely either did not know of their involvement if their attendance was not reported by his sources or ignored their involvement as they were not part of the major battle and were not the focus of his work. Meanwhile, Schiltberger was likely unaware of the goings on of the fleet and does not report their presences from his lack of knowledge. The Venetians do not feature in other contemporary or near-contemporary accounts of the crusade, Christian or Muslim.<sup>75</sup>

The Venetians themselves do not record much information about the crusade or their involvement either. This is particularly true of the preparations made in the lead up to the campaign. As will be seen in later chapters, particularly the defence of Thessaloniki, the archival material from Venice often records the purchases of materials, weapons, and food to be used during campaigns as well as the commissions and orders given to the chosen ship captains and Captain Generals whom were chosen to lead the Venetian fleets during these events. These records are incredibly useful in understanding the efforts that the Venetian Senate and the state put into building up and preparing their fleets and their logistics networks. These records also help historians understand the goals and plans that Venice sought to gain from their participation, a key example of this is the orders given to

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<sup>74</sup> See Nicolae Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières, 1327-1405, et la croisade au XIVe siècle* (Bouillon: Paris, 1896).

<sup>75</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, pp. 372-86; Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, trans. Anthony Kaldellis, 2 vols (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 117-23; Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975), pp. 83-4; *Le livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, ed. Denis Lalande (Droz: Geneva, 1985), pp. 88-91, 117-20, with English translation in *Documents on the Later Crusades*, ed. Norman Housley (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 105-7; Ilker Evrim Binbaş, 'A Damascene eyewitness to the battle of Nicopolis: Shams al-Din ibn al-Jazari (d.833/1429)', in *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453*, ed. Nikolaos G. Chrissis and Mike Carr (Farnham and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 153-75.

the captains of the Varna crusade fleet who were instructed to seek out Turkish targets in the Aegean during the campaign that could be seized; this included the city of Thessaloniki which was lost in the decades prior to the Crusade of Varna. However, the records for the crusade of Nicopolis are limited in their scope and detail limiting what can be gleaned from their actions. Despite this, other sources of information for the Venetian involvement do exist but are largely unstudied as a source of Venetian involvement. These being the letters of Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391-1425) and the King of Hungary, Sigismund =. Sigismund himself was rescued from the disaster of the crusade by Venetian ships and was brought to Constantinople safely by these ships. He wrote a number of letters discussing this fact and it became a particular point of contention later when Venice and Hungary were locked in disputes later. These letters prove that not only was Venice active in the area during the time of the Crusade, they were in contact with the crusaders and in a position to provide aid to the army. However, these letters have received little attention in the context of Venice and the crusade.

The Crusade of Nicopolis is perhaps one of the least studied crusades of any period. The most comprehensive study is the work of Aziz Atiya from 1934.<sup>76</sup> Atiya's focus for this work was to study the crusade as a whole, not just the Venetians or the Venetian role in it. There are a few mentions of their involvement but little analysis of their presence within the forces of the crusaders. There is no discussion of why the Venetians were involved and, aside from a few mentions, no real understanding of what the Venetians accomplished during the crusade. Atiya's work provides a necessary framework of the crusade but is desperate for an update and an expansion of the material available and what can be inferred from it. This is especially true given the book's importance as the basis of most other discussion of the Crusade of Nicopolis, including the later works of Atiya who often footnotes back to his first publication. Most other historians, when discussing the crusade of Nicopolis, use summarize Atiya's text. Sometimes these are with some original commentary or

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<sup>76</sup> Aziz Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (Methuen & Co. Ltd.: London, 1934)

additional material but typically they are just summaries and then move quickly on.<sup>77</sup> That is all the more odd given that the deficiencies of Atiya's book (though not its neglect of the Venetians) were pointed out very shortly after its publication.<sup>78</sup>

There are two examples of this cursory treatment of the Crusade of Nicopolis which draw specific attention to the Venetians. The first is a comment by Paul Wittek (1894-1978) about the indecision and lack of desire by the Venetians to participate in the Crusade of Nicopolis and the second is Stefan Stantchev's idea that Venetian participation in the Crusade of Nicopolis was 'typical', but then fails to explain what was typical of Venetian involvement. Wittek writes:

We cannot believe that the crushing victory at Nicopolis, achieved in 1396 over an army of crusaders recruited from almost the entire European knighthood, could purely have been due to chance. This crusade had been undertaken in an outdated spirit and with insufficient means: the lukewarm attitude that the political realists of Venice showed towards this venture is the best proof of this.<sup>79</sup>

The section continues to say that even if the crusaders had been successful they would only have been able to relieve the siege of Constantinople and nothing further. This dismissive attitude of the crusade of Nicopolis is a common one, in large part because of the crushing defeat suffered by the crusaders outside the city of Nicopolis and the overall unsuccessful plan of the campaign as a whole. However, his analysis of the campaign is questionable. The Ottomans were not entrenched in the

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<sup>77</sup> See for example: Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580 from Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992) pp. 73-9; K. Hilmi and J. Dumolyn, 'The Battle of Nicopolis (1396), Burgundian catastrophe and Ottoman *fait divers*', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 91 (2013), 905-34; Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State* (Longman: London and New York, 1962, pp. 59-78 David Nicolle, *Nicopolis 1396: The Last Crusade* (Osprey: Oxford 1999); Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror. The Calamitous Fourteenth Century* (Penguin: Harmondsworth 1978), pp. 538-63.

<sup>78</sup> R. Rossetti, 'Notes on the battle of Nicopolis (1396)', *Slavonic Review and East European Review* 15 (1937), 629-38.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies in the History of Turkey, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries*, C. Heywood (ed.) (Routledge Ltd.: New York and Abingdon, 2012) p. 145

mainland of Greece nor overly strong at that time. Had the campaign been successful the Ottomans risked losing control over major gains that had been made within the area. It would be hyperbole to claim that they would have been forced from Europe entirely, but they would have been in a poor position to fight back against the Christians had they lost against the crusaders and then had to face the threat of Timur, the ruler of Samarkand, in the east, much like the events that followed the defeat of the crusade by the Ottomans. Furthermore, Wittek's comment shows the sort of anecdotal use of the Venetians as reluctant or half-hearted participants of the crusades of the later middle ages that is common of historical works. Without corroboration of any kind the Venetians are used as an example of why the crusade failed. A trope common to studies of the later crusades where Venice is discussed. Wittek's work, as many others often do, quickly moves on from the campaign having acknowledged its existence and proceeded with their narrative. Stantchev's commentary on the Venetian involvement of the crusade follows the usual model of summarizing the work of Atiya while concluding that the Venetian involvement in the crusades was 'typical'.<sup>80</sup> He fails to effectively explain what the typical involvement of the Venetians was. Instead he recaps what Atiya claims of the promises that Venice made during the lead up to the crusade and includes a little of what the Morosini Codex provides.<sup>81</sup> There is no analysis of this information, simply reading as a derogatory statement of the Venetians, another common trope of study of that city state.

Having addressed the limitations of the primary material and drawing attention to the difficulties that these limitations have placed upon scholarship of the subject and the skewed workings of previous scholars, the rest of this chapter will seek to bring to light the extent the Venetians were involved in the Crusade of Nicopolis and attempt to explain what their motivations were for getting involved with the campaign.

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<sup>80</sup> Stefan Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat, 1381-1453' in *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth Century Crusade*, ed. Norman Housley (Palgrave MacMillan: London, 2017), p. 166.

<sup>81</sup> *Il Codice Morosini: Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*, ed. Andrea Nanetti, 4 vols (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 327-47, covering the year 1396, does not mention the crusade.

### **1.3 Background to the Crusade**

At the outset of the Crusade of Nicopolis in 1395 Venice was at that time, more than probably any other, in the best position it could be to participate. Since the end of the Smyrna campaigns in 1351 Venice had worked to expand and consolidate its Aegean and Mediterranean Empire and had, with the Treaty of Turin in 1381, defeated its long-time rival Genoa making it the nearly undisputed Christian naval power in the area. The state was not without its challenges but now more than any point in the history of crusading in the later Middle Ages was Venice in a position to assist the Crusade of Nicopolis. However, there was hesitation on behalf of the Senate and Venice's participation seems to have been largely downplayed and ignored by contemporaries. Before examining Venice's actions during the crusade to further our understanding of how crusades were carried out in this period the contemporary history of Venice must be examined to fully understand their position in the world at that time.

From the beginning of the Fourteenth Century Venice took an important role in the Christian response to the arrival of the Turks in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, what are known as Anti-Turkish Leagues. These leagues were formed to hem in Anatolia and the various Turkish states, though primarily these were aimed at the Emirates of Aydin and Menteshe who controlled the Anatolian coastline. Venice took a leading role in the negotiation, leadership, and maintenance of these leagues. In the late 1320s Venice was in need of allies against the Turks: the French were more interested in crusades to recover the Holy Land and Armenia, the Crusader States having fallen in 1291 with the fall of Acre, Martino Zaccaria had lost Chios and had been imprisoned in Constantinople, Byzantium was weakened from civil wars and internal strife, while the Papacy nominally supported the Christian rulers in the Aegean but were more focused on the events of Italy and Germany.<sup>82</sup> However, in 1332 Venice began another round of negotiations to form a new anti-

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<sup>82</sup> Mike Carr, *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean, 1291-1352* (Boydell: Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 17-31; Mike Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades in the Aegean: c. 1300-1350' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of London, Royal Holloway, 2011) p. 127.



Turkish league which would finally form in 1334 to push out against the Turkish states of Aydin and Karasi. Aydin was seen as the more important threat as their ports of Ephesus and Smyrna, which they had taken from the Genoese in the late 1320s, were not only major trade centres but the launch point for many of their raids into the Aegean.<sup>83</sup> Venice bore the brunt of these incursions and had been forced to recognize the power of the Turks and the threat they presented. In 1332, the Duke of Naxos was forced to sign a treaty with the Turks and later the Senate discussed a treaty over Negroponte, which would become a tributary to the Turks. Venice attempted to secure their trade with the Turks, making deals with the Emirate of Menteshe though in the mid-1330s they banned all trade with the Turkish states. This decision by the Senate did not take into account the position of their Aegean colonies, many of whom made their own treaties and deals with the Turks. In the lead up to the Anti-Turkish league in 1334, the Senate urged the bailos of Negroponte and Crete to form an alliance with the Hospitallers on Rhodes in 1332 though both were neglected from the document that confirmed the 1334 league. Many of the bailos were not willing to risk their tenuous treaties by acting overtly against the Turks that threatened their homes. Despite the weakness shown by the Byzantines from their internal conflicts, Venice still saw them as their strongest and most likely ally and signed a six-year treaty with the Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos III (1328-1341). This was immediately followed by two ambassadors, Pietro Zeno and Pietro da Canale, who were given full power to create a union between all interested parties, namely Byzantium, the Knights of Rhodes, and the Angevins in Naples. The French and Papal courts did not enter into much of the negotiations. In 1328, the newly crowned French king Philip VI (1328-1350) approached Venice with his plans to launch a crusade to the Holy Land. The Doge countered his offer with the idea of a league and attempted to garner his support by explaining that the league could blockade the Turks from interfering in the crusade. This was not a new idea but instead was an older idea proposed in a new way. It did successfully tie the league with plans of a larger crusade, however by the time the Doge responded to the king plans for the league were already progressing and the negotiations

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<sup>83</sup> Carr, *Merchant Crusaders*, 94-103; Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades', p. 129.

dragged. Venice proved that it could and would proceed without support of the French or the Papacy if it needed to. With the French returning to their long battles against England in 1335 the league, despite its successes against Karasi and Aydin collapsed. The newly elected Pope, Benedict XII (1334-1342), lacked any enthusiasm for crusading and the French war with England and the end of the league gave him the perfect reason to withdraw his support for any further action. Throughout Benedict's pontificate very few indulgences were granted for the Mediterranean states including Cyprus, Armenia, and some colonies but these were granted specifically for opposition against the Mamluks of Egypt, none were given for opposing the Turks leading to a dearth of interest in fighting against them during the late 1330s. However, with the election of Pope Clement VI (1342-1352) changed all this leading rapidly to the launch of the Crusades of Smyrna 1343-51.<sup>84</sup> Within months of his election, Clement wrote to the Venetian Senate for their advice on what would be necessary to confront the Turks of Aydin. By November Henry of Asti, Patriarch of Constantinople, had arrived in Venice with a letter inviting Venice to join in a league against Aydin consisting of Papal, Cypriot, Hospitaller, and Venetian ships. A fleet of twenty ships was gathered and the campaigns began. The crusade culminated in the capture of the port of Smyrna which was left in the hands of the Hospitallers and would remain under their control until the Timurids seized the city in 1402. Though successful the Smyrna campaigns had been costly with the deaths of many important figures including the Venetian commander Pietro Zeno.

The league that served the Crusade of Smyrna ended for Venice in what John Julius Norwich calls a 'characteristically Venetian fashion' with Venice securing the grant of all ecclesiastical tithes from within the Republic for three years from the papacy.<sup>85</sup> Between 1351 and the end of the Crusade of Smyrna and the lead up to the Crusade of Nicopolis Venice focused largely on

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<sup>84</sup> Carr, *Merchant Crusaders*, pp. 103-7; Carr, 'Motivations and Response to Crusades', pp. 161-5

<sup>85</sup> John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (London: Penguin Books, 2012) p. 215 Once again these broad stroke comments about the involvement of the Venetians appears. Norwich fails to elaborate or expand on the idea of a 'characteristic Venetian fashion'. While not read as negative like Stantchev's comments on the 'typical' involvement it is still an unhelpful and generalizing comment on the Venetian participation in crusade campaigns.

maintaining its position in the Aegean and Mediterranean. To this end, the Republic spent much of this intervening period at conflict with their long term rivals the Genoese. They fought over control of the Crimean, for the advancement of position within Constantinople, and over islands such as Tenedos. Venice had gained Tenedos in 1370 from John V Palaiologos as collateral for a 20,000-ducat loan.<sup>86</sup> The island was of extreme strategic importance to both Republics and would be a major sticking point to the Treaty of Turin in 1381. The wars against Genoa were broken up by occasional treaties like that brokered by the Visconti rulers of Milan in 1355 that ruled that neither republic could encroach on the home waters of the other and both would refrain from entering the Sea of Azov near the Crimean coast for three years. During these periods of peace with the Republic however Venice fought other battles against the Kingdom of Hungary over control of Dalmatia and with the commune of Padua.<sup>87</sup> War once again broke out between Genoa and Venice in the 1370s culminating in the Genoese siege of Chioggia not far from Venice itself. Though hard fought on both sides and with Genoese having the advantage, the Venetians were able to break the siege and wreck much of the Genoese attackers. In 1381 Amadeus VI of Savoy was brought in to settle the treaty between the two republics, the Visconti's at this time had agreed to an alliance with Venice in 1377 and may have been seen as too involved to play a more impartial judge to negotiate a treaty between the communes. The resulting Treaty of Turin however was not kind to either side of the war. Venice, having successfully fought off the Genoese at Chioggia thought that they should be allowed to make their demands; however, it was the King of Hungary that benefitted the most from the treaty. Venice did reclaim the strongholds it had lost around the lagoon that protected the city but was forced to accept ceding Dalmatia to Hungary and their control over Tenedos. Following this Genoa, facing internal strife and governmental collapse, slipped into relative obscurity never again becoming a major player in the West and only a minor inconvenience and nuisance in the East. Venice however surprised all of its rivals by bouncing back quickly and emerging from these decades

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<sup>86</sup> Chrysostomides, 'Studies on the chronicle of Caroldo', 124.

<sup>87</sup> The war with Hungary was fought between 1356-7 and Padua 1369-73

of war with a strong economy and united government. The most severe of the colonial rebellions, particularly those in Crete had been suppressed, the commune controlled numerous posts throughout the Levant and the Black Sea and by the end of the century Venice would control Corfu, Scutari, Nauplion, Argos, Durazzo as well as most of the Cyclades and Dodecanese Islands.

The crusade of Nicopolis was launched to counter the aggression posed by the Ottoman Sultans and their incursions deeper and deeper into Europe. The Ottomans however had not been a threat to the Europeans just forty years prior when the Crusade of Smyrna was launched against the Turks of Aydin and Karasi who were then the preeminent states. The rapid rise and expansion of the Ottomans has been the focus of many studies, but a brief overview is necessary to understand the drastic action of launching one of the Later Middle Ages largest crusades against them so immediately following their rise to prominence. Osman Bey, progenitor of the Ottoman *beylik*, entered into the political field in 1301 as the victor over the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos III at the Battle of Bapheus. Shortly following this victory, Osman captured the Byzantine cities of Nicaea and Bursa. Nicaea had been the capital of the Byzantine state during the period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople between 1204 and 1261 and was one of few cities still held by the Greeks in Anatolia.<sup>88</sup> Along with these cities the Ottomans under Osman and his son Orkhan Bey (1326-1362) had consolidated a moderately sized *beylik* with considerable agricultural land and several towns and cities. However, they had not yet become the greatest Turkish threat. It was around this time that Umur Bey of Aydin had become a major threat and provoked the Crusade of Smyrna which lost him his capital city to the Knights of Rhodes. In 1346 the Ottomans absorbed the *beylik* of Karasi, another earlier target of the Crusade of Smyrna and in 1352 they entered Europe for the first time.<sup>89</sup> John Kantakouzenos, rival to the regency for the young John V Palaiologos, invited the Ottomans

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<sup>88</sup> Douglas Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder States: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2011), p. 35; W.L. Langer and R.P. Blake, 'The rise of the Ottoman Turks and its historical background', *American Historical Review* 37 (1932), 468-505; Halil Inalcik, 'The emergence of the Ottomans', in *The Cambridge History of Islam. Vol 1: The Central Islamic Lands from Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 263-92.

<sup>89</sup> Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder States*, p. 36

into Europe as his allies against John V and his mother's forces. The army led by Orkhan's son Süleyman travelled into Europe and fought alongside Kantakouzenos. After the conclusion of the civil war, however, they refused to leave the Balkans, occupying the port of Tzympe. In 1354 after earthquakes had weakened the walls of the city the Ottoman forces captured the city of Gallipoli.<sup>90</sup> Not all Christian powers were immediate targets of Ottoman aggression however, as the Genoese began to make treaties and align themselves with them in the 1350s. During the War of the Straits from 1350-5 the Ottomans allied with the Genoese against the Venetians who had the support of John Kantakouzenos. From the outset this alliance proved to be important to both states as can be seen at the end of the War of the Straits when the Genoese and Ottomans agreed that the treaty between Genoa and the Byzantines could not adversely affect their own treaties.<sup>91</sup> Then in 1357 Murad Bey, son of Orkhan Bey, took over the offensive in Europe after his brother Süleyman Bey. He captured the city of Adrianople, in 1361 and prompted responses from the Byzantines who received help from Amadeus I of Savoy who briefly captured Gallipoli in 1366. Murad succeeded as emir in 1362 and focused on expanding progressively in all directions while securing Anatolia through marriages to the Karamanid Turks, rivals to the Ottomans to the East and one of the largest states in Anatolia. In Europe, Murad won victories against the Serbians in the 1370s, achieved concessions of over-lordship over both the Greeks and Bulgarians in 1373 and 1376 respectively, and captured the city of Nish in 1385 forcing the Serbians to submit a year later. Murad returned to Europe in 1389 to fight the Serbians at Kosovo and achieving a major victory. However, Murad was assassinated on the battlefield and was succeeded by his son Bayezid I (1389-1402). Bayezid gave up his father's policy of gradual expansion and pressed harder and faster earning the moniker 'Yildirim', lightning bolt. Under Bayezid the Ottomans obtained direct rule over much of the Balkans and began making major incursions into Hungarian and Wallachian lands, as well as beginning the first Ottoman siege of

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<sup>90</sup> Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder States*, p. 36; Donald M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c.1293-1383* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 77-9, 125-7.

<sup>91</sup> Kate Fleet, 'Rise of the Ottomans' in *New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. 2: The Western Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. M. Fierro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313-31, at 315.

Constantinople in 1394.<sup>92</sup> This rapid aggression was the impetus of the Crusade of Nicopolis and brought French, Burgundian, Hungarian, Venetian and other Christian powers to bring their forces to bear against the Ottoman threat for the first time.

#### **1.4 Venetian involvement in the Crusade**

With the siege of Constantinople underway the Ottoman threat from Anatolia was recognized and the plans for a new crusade began. This new threat to Christian power coming from the East needed to be put in check before it could expand. In response to this growing threat the target and purpose of crusades was shifted from its eternal goal of taking, or retaking, the Holy Land and instead aiming at taking down and countering the threat of the Ottomans. The Crusade of Nicopolis was the first of these crusades; although some contemporaries such as Charles VI, King of France, continued to view the crusade still saw this crusade as a precursor to a crusade to recover the Holy Land.<sup>93</sup> The crusade drew from most of the major powers of western Christendom, including the Venetians. Despite the loss of Tenedos and the weakened position of Venice at the end of the War of Chioggia, the commune had been able to rebuild and Venice was prepared to assist the Crusade of Nicopolis. They does seem to have been some hesitation on the part of the Senate, this can be seen when the ambassadors of the various interested parties arrived in Venice, to discuss the involvement of the Venetians and their fleet, the Senate delayed the meetings with them forcing the campaign to be delayed until 1396.<sup>94</sup> However, in the end Venice decided to join in the naval league that was formed in 1396 in order to support the crusade. This league contained ships from Venice as well as ships from the Hospitallers from Rhodes.<sup>95</sup>

##### **1.4.1 Preparations for the Crusade:**

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<sup>92</sup> Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder States*, pp. 37-8; M. Kiel, 'The incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman empire', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Vol. 1 – Byzantium to Turkey 1071-1453*, ed. Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 138-91; Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 2nd ed.), pp. 253-95.

<sup>93</sup> Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 46

<sup>94</sup> Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 76

<sup>95</sup> Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 223

The Venetians were already invested in the events of the Aegean before the plans for the crusade even began to take shape. Despite the loss of Tenedos in 1381 the city-state still controlled numerous other possessions along the Greek coast and islands such as Crete and Negroponte in the sea. The defence and protection of these territories was of great importance to the Senate, particularly because of the role these territories played in Venice's quick recovery from the devastations of the prior war. In March 1392 the Senate sends an ambassador to the Sultan to protect their hold on Negroponte. At the same time a galley was designated from Crete to be sent yearly to defend Negroponte.<sup>96</sup> This galley was instructed to protect Euboea and the Archipelago but to refrain from attacking Turkish ports. The protection of these islands and the peace that Venice held with the Ottomans seems to be of the greatest importance to them in the early 1390s. In 1394 the Senate sent word to the bailo of Negroponte to give up plans to annex Monemvasia. This order sent 5 March warns that it would anger the Turks and that they should not act in this manner without permission from the Senate in the future.<sup>97</sup> Fear of Turkish aggression then was a worry of the Venetians. On 6 April 1394 the Senate ordered the Captain of the Gulf to make a tour of the Aegean islands to confer with the rectors about what to do should Sultan Bayezid go on the offensive against the Duke of Athens.<sup>98</sup> This fear continued in to May when the Senate voted not to send out embassies during debates over what should be done about the Ottoman threat.<sup>99</sup> Later on 21 May two galleys were chosen to go to Constantinople to protect Venetian interests within the city. They were to instruct the bailo to express the sympathy of the Venetian Senate and suggest that the Emperor should send delegates to the Pope, the German Emperor, and the French King. However, the dispatch of these ships was postponed as the events in the area were progressing too

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<sup>96</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 42, f. 46v; 48v: TR, I, no. 810, p. 194 Interestingly the galley sent had extra provisos that it must be captained by a Venetian over the age of 30 who had lived on Crete for at least 10 years.

<sup>97</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 42, f. 155: TR, I, no. 844, p. 200 This also shows that the Senate and the commune of Venice desired to maintain a strict control over their overseas territories. If the Senate could limit their actions like this then they could maintain control and centralize the structure of their empire.

<sup>98</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 42, f. 158v: TR, I, no. 846, p. 201

<sup>99</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 42, f. 161: TR, I, no. 849, p. 201 The proposal failed 68 against to 17 for

rapidly.<sup>100</sup> In July 1394 the Senate replies to Emperor Manuel II insisting that he must remain within the city and because it would fall if the Sultan learned that the Emperor had left the city. They assured Manuel that if the situation worsened Venice would bring him to the city if he wished or to Lemnos.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, they refused the Emperor's offer to take control of Lemnos as they are not in the position to hold it. This refusal is interesting. It shows that Venice was consciously aware of their limitations of their own positions and the necessity for Venice not to reach beyond what they could comfortable and efficiently hold on to. In March 1396, they reported that the Hungarian king was planning a crusade to push down the Danube and to reach the Black Sea by June.<sup>102</sup> To show their support for the crusade the Senate withdrew their ambassador in Ottoman Sultan Bayezid's court and instead sent delegations to Constantinople promising aid and grain. Still wary of the wisdom of the campaign Venice sends only four ships in support of the crusade.<sup>103</sup> As plans progressed around them for the preparations of a campaign against the Ottomans the Senate replied to ambassadors sent by Sigismund of Hungary requesting aid and advice in 1394 for their planned campaign in May the following year. The Senate claimed they were willing to advise the King but replied that they could not provide aid unless other Christian princes also promised their aid.<sup>104</sup> In October 1394 Boniface IX issued anti-Turkish papal bull to preach the crusade in Austria and Venice, but in January the Venetian Senate banned Gian Domenico from preaching the crusade within Venice for fear of Turkish reprisals.<sup>105</sup> The plans and negotiations for the crusade continued and the Hungarian contingent planned for a fleet of 25 galleys to be raised to support the land crusade. Venice wrote in March 1395 to remind Sigismund that they were currently at peace with the Turks and had many merchants within Ottoman lands that would be threatened should Venice

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<sup>100</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 43, ff. 5-6v: TR, I, no. 851, p. 202

<sup>101</sup> ASV, Secr. Const. Rog., E, f. 93v: TR, I, no. 860, p. 203

<sup>102</sup> Donald Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: a Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988) p. 335

<sup>103</sup> Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, p. 336

<sup>104</sup> Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant 1204-1571*, Vol. 1 (American Philosophical Society: Philadelphia, PA, 1978) p. 342

<sup>105</sup> Setton, *Papacy*, Vol. 1, p. 343.



join the campaign against them. The Senate continued to say that if the King could convince Dukes of Burgundy, Orleans, and Lancaster to join the campaign they would provide a quarter of the planned ships as long as the fleet did not exceed 25 total ships.<sup>106</sup> On 9 December 1395, the Senate continued their hesitance to join in an answer to a Greek ambassador. The claimed that the entry of the commune into the anti-Turkish league would be inefficient as they had no land strength and were already constantly at war with them at sea. They argued that remaining neutral would be more effective and would allow them to bring supplies into the city and that Venice would arm a fleet that would scare the Turks in order to do this.<sup>107</sup> In February 1396 Senate received word that Hungary and Byzantium had successfully negotiated for the provision of ten ships for the campaign. The Senate responded by rescinding their embassy to the Ottomans, the ambassador's main directive had been to negotiate and maintain peace between the Ottomans and the Byzantines.

Then on 1 March 1396, new orders were sent to the Captain of the Gulf, the future doge Tommaso Mocenigo (1343-1423), sending him to Constantinople to inform the emperor that Venice would provide arms and wheat for the support of the city. These continued with orders to begin to solicit a renewal of the treaty concluded between Manuel II's nephew, John VII Palaiologos, and Doge Francesco Foscolo.<sup>108</sup> The Captain should also protect the merchant ships of Venice in the area, but should also remain near the city if he deems his presence there beneficial for the defence of the city or to the hindrance of the Turks.<sup>109</sup> In April 1396 the Senate wrote to praise Sigismund's planned march for May but reminded him that that their primary condition for joining the crusade, the participation of the Dukes of Burgundy, Orleans, and Lancaster, had not been met; however, the

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<sup>106</sup> ASV, Secr. Const. Rog., E, f. 108: TR, I, no. 870, p. 205: Setton, *Papacy*, Vol. 1, p. 344 It was discussed that this would cost 35-40,000 ducats a month. Venice agreed to arm the galleys 'out of respect for the Catholic faith and in deference to Sigismund'.

<sup>107</sup> ASV, Secr. Const. Rog., E, f. 120: TR, I, no. 892, p. 210.

<sup>108</sup> The original treaty had been concluded in 1390: G.M. Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levanticum*, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966), vol. 2, no. 163, pp. 301-2.

<sup>109</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 43, f. 117-117v: TR, I, no. 901, p. 211-2

Venetians would still provide four ships to be armed and sent to the Bosphorus and that they would reach there by mid-July and would await the army's arrival until mid-August.<sup>110</sup>

It is clear from this that Venice was indeed hesitant to join in with the proposed campaign. Having only just recovered from their previous major war against Genoa it is not unreasonable to believe that this hesitation was born from a lack of morale and a desire to keep their territories safe and defended. This is clear in their requirements that other alliances are gathered before Venice will even consider participation in the crusade. They attempted to maintain a level of neutrality while speaking on behalf of the Emperor in the negotiations with the Ottomans. Their overseas empire, which was only just beginning to grow. These territories were necessary for Venice's survival and a failed crusade could harm them more than help. Which led to the Senate requiring extra commitment before they would join in the campaign. Although as they told Sigismund they would join for the defence of Christendom and even though Sigismund was unsuccessful in obtaining the required Dukes the Venetians did still send four ships for the crusade.

#### **1.4.2 Actions during the crusade:**

There is almost no information for what the Venetians accomplished during the Crusade of Nicopolis. They sent four ships to assist from the sea, but aside from their promise to send them and a singular instance where the Hungarian King Sigismund is saved by Venetian ships after the crushing defeat of the army outside the city of Nicopolis, the Venetian participation in the actual campaign is entirely unknown. What is clear is that the French crusaders passed through Venice on their way East. Ogier d'Anglure comes across the French commanders in Venice during his passage back to France from a pilgrimage that covered much of Syria and Egypt. His party arrived in Venice 23 May 1396 and stayed there for six days obtaining passage, provisions, and horses. While in the city they met Lord Henri de Bar and Lord de Coucy and were meeting with the Count of Nevers before

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<sup>110</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 43, f. 112v: TR, I, no. 900, p. 211: Setton, *Papacy*, Vol. 1, p. 346

continuing on to Hungary.<sup>111</sup> From there the French either sailed down to the Dalmatian coast line before continuing over land, but this seems unlikely as it would have been a less well-known route for the French and would have been dangerous in the rocky terrain so close to Ottoman controlled territory. Or they marched on from Venice sticking to the mainland and into Hungary from there, this route was longer but much significantly safer and most likely much better known. The campaign started well, reaching Vidin in September 1396 which fell without a siege. The city had been held by a Bulgarian vassal of the Ottomans. The Ottomans within the city were slaughtered. Rahovo and Oryahovo were assaulted by the French contingent but are repulsed. The rest of the crusader army arrived later and began to siege the cities. The Ottoman defenders sought surrender, to which Sigismund accepted. However, the army sought to wipe out the Ottomans and loot the area and the castle was stormed against the orders of the King. The army arrived outside the city of Nicopolis on 12 September 1396 and set out to lay siege to the city. The fleet supposedly arrived on 10 September, but Atiya does not believe that the Venetian ships ever reached the city at all and instead stayed near Constantinople and the straits. Unfortunately, as is common with much of the discussion of the Crusade of Nicopolis, the comment is left unfootnoted.<sup>112</sup> During the siege the French knight Enguerrand de Coucy learned of Ottoman reinforcements approaching the city to provide aid and successfully led an ambush against them, striking a successful blow against them.<sup>113</sup> The ease of the campaign combined with this successful ambush made the Christian army arrogant. However, Sultan Bayezid was able to march his army to the city in time to bring aid to the defenders. On 25 September 1396 the Ottomans arrayed themselves, trapping the crusaders between the city and the relief force. The French forces charged the Ottoman lines against the Sigismund's commands

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<sup>111</sup> Michel Tarayre, Nicole Chareyon, and Jean Meyers (eds.) *Vers Jerusalem Itinéraires Croisés au XIV Siècle: Nicolas de Martoni, Notaire Relation du Pelerinage aux Lieux Saints (1394-1395) suivi de Ogier D'Anglure Journal de Voyage a Jherusalem et en Egypte (1395-1396)* (Les Belles Lettres: Paris, 2008) p. 316: François Bonnardot & Auguste Longnon (eds.) *Le Saint Voyage de Jherusalem du Seigneur D'Anglure* (Librairie de Firmin Didot et G.: Paris, 1878) p. 98

<sup>112</sup> Aziz Atiya, 'The crusade in the fourteenth century', *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton, 6 vols (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison WI, 1955-89), vol. 3, pp. 3-26, at 23.

<sup>113</sup> On Coucy's role, see H.L. Savage, 'Enguerrand de Coucy VII and the campaign of Nicopolis', *Speculum* 14 (1939), 423-42.

and were defeated by the terrain and the Ottoman army. The rest of the army was driven back and the King was able to flee to the river and escape to Constantinople.

The role of the Venetians up to this point is almost entirely unknown, the one thing that is agreed upon is that the Venetians saved King Sigismund from capture outside the city of Nicopolis. There is very limited information about this instance and the source material is debatable. Furthermore, there is debate over where the Venetians saved the king: either they were present for the battle at Nicopolis and were able to save the King as he fled the field or, the more likely case, that Sigismund escaped the battle in a small ship and made his way down the Danube before being rescued at sea by the Venetians and brought to Constantinople that way. Despite how common this claim is the secondary material is difficult to sort because this story always comes without citation.<sup>114</sup> A clear example of this is found in the works of Nicol who states in one work that it was not Venice that saved the king from the battle but the Knights of Rhodes;<sup>115</sup> however in a later work states that it was indeed Venice that saved the King.<sup>116</sup> Neither work, as is common with this claim in secondary works, is able to provide any source material to support either claim. The primary material does not provide any greater clarity to the situation, with conflicting stories or entirely skipping over the events of Sigismund's flight from the battlefield. The German, Schiltberger, was present at the battle as a runner for one of the lords and was captured following the crusaders' defeat. He states that the King fled on ships down the Danube but does not say to whom the ships belonged nor does he give any indication of the Venetians being present at the battle or during the campaign.<sup>117</sup> Bertrandon, who was writing roughly twenty five years after the crusade had ended,

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<sup>114</sup> Atiya, *Crusade of Nicopolis*, 94: Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, Vol. 1, p. 7: Setton even claims that the Venetian Senate called Sigismund to recognize their role in saving his life, but unusually for his work fails to provide a footnote to follow up on this claim: Aziz Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Kraus Reprint Co.: New York, 1970) p. 455: Donald Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, p. 335: These last two simply point to the earlier work of Atiya who does not provide a source material for this instances

<sup>115</sup> Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, p. 337

<sup>116</sup> Nicol, *Last Centuries of Byzantium*, pp. 304-5: He calls this the only practical thing that Venice did during the entire duration of the crusade

<sup>117</sup> J. Buchan Telfer (trans.) *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger: a Native Bavarian in Europe, Asia, and Africa* (Hakluyt Society: London, 1879) pp. 2-4

claims that he knew that the King fled on his own ships down the river. Again, there is no mention of Venetian involvement. But Bertrandon only records what he himself 'has seen or heard from undoubted authority' from his travels in the area.<sup>118</sup> The Morosini Codex, supported by the letter of Doge Tommaso Mocenigo, confirms that Sigismund was indeed saved by the Venetians.<sup>119</sup> According to the Codex:

...the said Lord, the king of Hungary, rushed with some of his barons towards the Danube to find out whether the Venetian, Genoese and Byzantine galleys were to be found there and he quickly reached the galleys where he boarded that of the Venetian captain Tommaso Mocenigo, to whom she showed great honour'<sup>120</sup>

Moncenigo would later receive a pension for his actions in saving Sigismund during the crusade.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, in a letter written in late August 1415 by the Venetian Doge Tommaso Moncenigo.<sup>122</sup> This letter was written in response to Sigismund's own letters sent to many princes and kings of Europe in which he claims that the Venetians were supporting and supplying the Ottoman Turks to the detriment of all Christendom. Moncenigo refutes this and over the course of his letter provides numerous examples of how Venice protected not just Christendom as a whole but also the Hungarians, whose accusations they are defending themselves from. The first paragraph of the letter incredibly lays out that it was the Venetians that saved the king after the battle at Nicopolis.

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<sup>118</sup> Thomas Johnes (trans.) *The Travels of Bertrandon de Brocquiere to Palestine and his Return from Jerusalem Overland to France During the Years 1432 & 1433* (Hafod Press: London, 1807) pp. 296-8

<sup>119</sup> Andrea Nanetti, *Il Codice Morosini: Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)* vol. 1 (Spoleto, 2010) pp. 190-2; Mark Whelan, *Germany, Hungary and the Crusade during the Reign of Emperor Sigismund, c.1400-1440* (Routledge: Abingdon, forthcoming- 2019): This upcoming work contains the translation and analysis of Moncenigo's letter to Sigismund

<sup>120</sup> Nanetti, *Il Codice Morosini*, Vol. 1, p. 191: the Latin for this section reads: 'Ma el dito misier lo re d'Ongaria chavalchè chon alcuni d'i suo baroni verso la Donoia per aver sentimento che le galie d'i veneciani e zenovexi e l'imperador se trovava eser là, e zionto quello a le galie subita mente elo montà sovra quele e vene su la galie del chapetanio d'i veneciani, zò è de misier Tomado Mozenigo, al qual el dito fexe grandissimo honor ...'

<sup>121</sup> R. Predelli, *I Libri Commemorativi della repubblica di Venezia- regesti*, Vol. 3 (Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria: Venice, 1876-1914) p. 245

<sup>122</sup> Whelan, *Germany, Hungary and the Crusade*: This upcoming work will provide a full translation of the letter as well as analysis of the relations between the Venetians and the Hungarian throne

‘We would first like to bring forward in witness against the lord King Sigismund, that when he was travelling to Byzantium, wandering and frightened after being defeated and put to flight by Bayazid, Lord of the Turks, it was the captain our armed fleet, which was present in those parts for the aid of Christians, who rescued the lord king (who was then terrified of everything behind and in front of him) from the jaws of the enemy and led him and many of his prelates and barons in our galleys honourably and humanely to Byzantium.’<sup>123</sup>

The upcoming work by Mark Whelan analyses the correspondence. Moncenigo was the captain of the galley that saved Sigismund and he bore witness to these events. The letter provides further proof that the Venetians did indeed save the king after the defeat. Furthermore by the wording it seems that the Venetian did not save him from the battle itself, but from his ‘wandering’ after he had escaped the battle. This upcoming work by Whelan shows great promise in providing further detail into the shadowed and largely unstudied events of the Crusade of Nicopolis and the Venetian role in it. It is clear from these sources that the Venetian did indeed save the king following the disaster; though whether it was from the battlefield or from the Danube is still debatable. It is curious however that there are few non-Venetian sources that corroborate these events. Not even the reports from the Byzantine emperor and of King Sigismund himself in letters that he wrote in following the defeat. The letters preserved in the work of Barker simply comments that Sigismund had made it to Constantinople ‘in a fashion other than that in which we were hoping to go’, an obvious reference to the defeat and his rescue.<sup>124</sup> He proceeds to discuss using the Venetian and Genoese ships to guard the city of Constantinople. Manuel II’s letters say nothing of the Venetian’s

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<sup>123</sup> Whelan, *Germany, Hungary, and the Crusade* (forthcoming)

<sup>124</sup> John Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick NJ, 1969) p 483

actions that protected the king's life.<sup>125</sup> Though it is interesting that the Venetians further carried the king homeward via the Dalmatian coast later in 1397.<sup>126</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the crusader army the Senate sought to protect themselves from any coming punishment from the Ottoman forces. On 29 October 1396 the Senate sent Giovanni Loredan to the Captain of the Gulf with further orders. The captain was to watch over the safety of the merchants and galleys in the vicinity of Romania, a bounty of 5000 ducats was provided for the maintenance of his ships for this mission. If threatened by the Turks the ships should flee and seek shelter at Negropont and remain there over winter but should not rearm.<sup>127</sup> The Senate then sought to deal with the Genoese and sought to regain or reuse Tenedos now that the position of Christendom was weakened in the Balkans by the defeat of the crusader army. On 30 January 1397, under the advisement of various Sages who council them, the Senate sent an ambassador to Genoa to discuss Tenedos. The main point used was the argument that the Venetians could use the island to increase the efficiency of their fleet's actions against the Turks. They requested that the Genoese relax their demand that the island remained unfortified. The ambassador was then to return to Venice immediately if the Genoese refused.<sup>128</sup> The negotiations continued throughout the early months of 1397. In February the Senate commissioned Pietro Emo as ambassador to Genoa. Emo was instructed to thank the Genoese for arming galleys for further protection in the Aegean but to explain to them that the King of Hungary, and others, blamed the demilitarization of Tenedos as the reason that the Ottomans were able to expand. He was then instructed to ask once again for them to allow Venice to refortify the island.<sup>129</sup> The Genoese suggested that the island be given to Papal control and the cost of its defence split between the two

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<sup>125</sup> G.T. Dennis (trans.), *Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus* (Dumbarton Oaks: Washington D.C., 1977) pp. 80-6: However, Dennis' footnotes again point to the work of Atiya when referencing the saving of the king on the Danube, again pointing to the root of this story that has been perpetuated but never successfully proven.

<sup>126</sup> Maurice Michael (trans.), *The Annals of Jan Długosz: A History of Eastern Europe from AD 965 to AD 1480* (Chichester, 1997) p. 358

<sup>127</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 43, ff. 158-158v: TR, I, no. 917, p. 214-5

<sup>128</sup> ASV, Secr. Con. Rog., E, ff. 138v-9: TR, I, no. 924, p. 216

<sup>129</sup> ASV, Secr. Con. Rog., E, ff. 140-140v: TR, I, no. 926, p. 216-7

trade powers of Venice and Genoa, but this is outright refused by the Venetians.<sup>130</sup> When these negotiations failed the Senate turned their attention back towards the East and desired to keep their options for peace open there. On 7 April 1397 Benedetto Soranzo was commissioned as Captain General of the Gulf and given orders to intervene in the negotiations and political scene in the east. His first point of call was to stop at Modon and confer there about the movement of the Turks, review the situation with local authorities, and ensure that the Byzantines had not yet treated with the Turks. They argued that the emperor should not give up any cities or change the current borders and promised aid from Venice in order to deter both Greeks and Genoese in Pera from treating with the Turks. They wanted to keep the option of treaties with the Ottomans open in case further aid from the West but was delayed. If negotiations were underway then the Senate demanded that Venice be included, with the vice-bailo of Constantinople serving as the Venetian representative. Before Venice would agree to any treaty the agreement must include: granting the Sultan maritime peace only within the straits, and the Turks must recognize the recent annexations of the Venetians: Argos, Nauplion, Athens, Scutari, and Durazzo. If Soranzo found Manuel II's nephew, John VII, on the throne he must also treat with him to ensure agreements between Venice and Greeks stood.<sup>131</sup> Venice also played a role in negotiating the release of the high-ranking prisoners captured at the battle of Nicopolis.<sup>132</sup>

### **1.5 Conclusion**

The defeat of the army at Nicopolis ended the crusade and dismayed many of the Christian kingdoms that had sent men to support this campaign. For many historians the Crusade of Nicopolis is seen as the last of the 'traditional crusade' where a multinational collection of Western Christian powers organised themselves into a major campaign against Muslims.<sup>133</sup> This seems disingenuous as

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<sup>130</sup> ASV, Secr. Con. Rog., E, ff. 142-142v: TR, I, no. 928, p. 217

<sup>131</sup> ASV, Secr. Con. Rog., E, ff. 146-147v: TR, I, no. 932, p. 218

<sup>132</sup> Christopher F.C. Wright, 'An investment in goodwill: financing the ransom of the leaders of the Crusade of Nikopolis', *Viator* 45 (2014), 261-97.

<sup>133</sup> Atiya, 'Crusade in the Fourteenth century', p. 26.



the Crusade of Varna in 1444 would see numerous contingents of Western Christians fighting an almost identical campaign roughly fifty years after the end of Nicopolis. If others truly believed that Nicopolis was indeed the last of the traditional campaigns it would likely have received much greater attention from the academics that study them. Instead this crusade has been relegated to a minor footnote in the story of late medieval crusading. For the Venetians, the defeat put them in an awkward position. Their hesitance for joining the campaign had led to a lack of support for it. Although not a major cause of the defeat as it seems that the fleet itself did not accomplish much of anything during the crusade, their participation put them at odds with the Ottomans. The Turkish threat could not be focused upon the Venetians if they were not careful to defend themselves and get an advantageous treaty, something they learned from the bad negotiations at the end of the War of Chioggia. They attempted once more to regain control of Tenedos to no avail and instead focused on ensuring that they would not be forced out of the Aegean by the Ottomans. This cycle of campaign and treaty would mark the future of all Venetian-Ottoman affairs and will be a common theme throughout the rest of this study and Venice comes to be seen increasingly as the Western Christian frontline against the Ottoman expansion.

## **Chapter 2: The Occupation and Defence of the city of Thessaloniki**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Over the course of the remainder of the fourteenth century Venice sought to recover its losses and heal its wounds. However, by the middle of the fifteenth century it would reach its height. One of the most important, if only briefly held, of these colonies was the city of Thessaloniki. The city sits on the coast of the Thermaic Gulf in the north-western corner of the Aegean Sea. The city was always considered highly important to the Byzantine Empire and earned the nickname of co-capital. After Constantinople, the city was the second city of the Empire in terms of both size and wealth. It was also a strategically placed port and easily guarded thanks to its impressive fortifications. It even enjoyed a lucrative pilgrimage trade based on the shrine of its patron saint, the soldier-martyr

Demetrius.<sup>134</sup> All these advantages made Thessaloniki an attractive acquisition for the Venetians and likely played heavily into the decision to accept the offer of the city when presented the option by the Greek rulers of the city. Investigation of this city will provide not only a key component to understanding Venetian involvement in the Aegean but also will help further our understanding of why Venice involved itself in anti-Ottoman action throughout the fifteenth century. This section will examine the acquisition of Thessaloniki and the Venetian Senate's votes and debates surrounding its acquisition, it will analyse the defence of the city and the supplies and manpower that Venice sent, and finally briefly discuss the fall of the city to the Ottomans in 1430 and show that Venice did not take the fall of the city lightly and looked instead to reclaim it if possible.

## **2.2 The Acquisition of Thessaloniki (1423)**

Venice acquired the city of Thessaloniki from its ruler, Despot Andronikos Palaiologos, brother of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1425-48), in 1423.<sup>135</sup> This was, in the eyes of Ruthy Gertwagen, Venice's first step towards a new policy of expansion with a focus on defence that would lead to the expansion of the *Stato di Mar* to its height later that same century.<sup>136</sup> The Ottoman Sultan Murad II (1421-44 and 1446-51) had laid siege to both Constantinople and Thessaloniki in June 1422 with a great army to punish the Byzantines for backing his uncle, Düzme Mustafa, in his bid for the Sultanate. The siege and its drain on the empire, combined with Andronicus' poor health, drove the Byzantines to offer the city to the Venetians to prevent it from falling into the hands of the

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<sup>134</sup> See Michael Vickers, 'The Byzantine sea walls of Thessaloniki', *Balkan Studies*, 11 (1970), 261-80; Robert Browning, 'Byzantine Thessalonike: a unique city?', *Dialogos* 2 (1995), 91-104; C. Bakirtzis, 'Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: the tomb of St. Demetrios', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), 175-92; Eugenia Russell, *St Demetrius of Thessalonica: Cult and Devotion in the Middle Ages* (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 9-28; Eugenia Russell, *Literature and Culture in Late Byzantine Thessalonica* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 23-54.

<sup>135</sup> *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, ed. Peter Schreiner, 2 vols (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1975-7), p. 310; John R. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Venetian Documents* (Padua: Unipress, 2002), p. 60; Doukas, p. 170; Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, trans. Anthony Kaldellis, 2 vols (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 388-9

<sup>136</sup> Ruthy Gertwagen, 'Contribution of Venice's Colonies to its Naval Warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Fifteenth Century' in *Mediterraneo in armi (secc. XV-XVIII) – Tomo I*, ed. Rossella Cancila (Palermo, 2007), p. 143

Ottomans.<sup>137</sup> The offer came with the condition that the Venetians should respect the rights, institutions, and traditions of the native Thessalonians. The Venetians then debated over whether or not to accept this offer and the potential the city offered on 7 July 1423. Of particular concern to them was the opinion of the Greek Emperor and whether or not the Venetians should allow for the city to be returned to the Byzantines at a later date.<sup>138</sup> The Senate brought in numerous sages, men chosen to advise the state before major decisions were made.<sup>139</sup> These men could not vote on the subjects upon which they advised but helped to understand the risks and rewards involved with the decision to be made, in this case the acceptance of the city of Thessaloniki. The Senate accepted the offer with a vote of 99 for, 45 against, and 11 abstentions. This is less than the number of total present that is reported by Roberto Morosini, indicating that either his account is mistaken or that some left before the count could be taken. Two proposals were made by members of the Senate; the first by Morosini who moved that Venice should leave the option for the Greeks to resume control the city of Thessaloniki from the Venetians if they repaid them for any expenses incurred in defence of the city itself. The proposal failed to pass after two votes receiving 5 and then 9 votes in favour of the option.<sup>140</sup> The second proposal by Fantin Michiel followed from Morosini's original but modified it to some extent. It also went to the vote twice failing with 30 and 47 votes.<sup>141</sup> Orders for their representatives to the city were drafted and by September 1423 the city had been handed over to Venetian control. Their representatives, Santo Venier and Niccolo Zorzi, were commissioned 27 July 1423 and their orders instruct them to travel first to Negropont where they should receive word from Andronicus and accept transfer of the city. Once they had control of the city they were

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<sup>137</sup> John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): a study in late Byzantine statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp.277-385; Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), pp. 318-38; Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 72-102

<sup>138</sup> ASV Secreti, Reg. 8, f. 110: Barker, *Manuel II*, p. 372

<sup>139</sup> ASV Misti, Reg. 54, f. 127: Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 30: Albano Badoer, Pietro Zeno the elder, Pietro Querini, son of the late Guglielmo, Francesco Trevisan, and Giorgio Vala-resso were all brought in to advice the Senate about how to proceed.

<sup>140</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 33

<sup>141</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 36

instructed to form a garrison using funds from the revenue of the city and then one should be chosen to serve as ambassador to the Ottomans.<sup>142</sup> Zorzi was chosen for this duty and went to meet with the Sultan to explain that Venice had taken over the city of Thessaloniki and that the city wished to continue the peace and friendship that the Venetians had with the Ottomans; instead, Murad had him arrested.<sup>143</sup> Venier was quickly instructed to secure the release of the Zorzi through the promise of annual tributes to the Ottomans while at the same time he was meant to secure the surrounding villages and defences of the city. In the meantime, the Senate selected Bernardo Loredan as Duke of Thessaloniki and Jacopo Dandolo as Captain of the city in May 1424 to replace Venier and Zorzi and assume a more direct command of the city and its defence.<sup>144</sup>

That Venice should decide to take over the city at this juncture was by no means a foregone conclusion. Under its new and more active Doge, Francesco Foscari (1423-1457), it was still recovering from the crisis following the War of Chioggia.<sup>145</sup> They had acquired the a few territories such as Argos and Nauplion in 1388<sup>146</sup> but had refused to take Thessaloniki when it had been threatened by the Ottomans in 1385. In 1395 they had refused to take Megara and Corinth and in 1397 had refused to take command of the city of Constantinople when it came under threat from the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid .<sup>147</sup> Venice, then, and particularly the Senate, contrary to the opinion of Stantchev, was cautious and thoughtful about the acquisition of new territories. Their taking of Thessaloniki is no different. The Senate takes the precaution to bring in numerous voices to advise them of the best course of action. It is not known what these men advised but they seemingly moved the Senate to vote in favour of claiming the city. Furthermore, the failure of the proposals to

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<sup>142</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 54, f. 131: TR, II, no. 1894, p. 206; *Il Codice Morosini: Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*, ed. Andrea Nanetti, 4 vols (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010), vol. 2, pp. 976-9; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant 1204-1571*, 4 vols (Philadelphia PA: American Philosophical Society, 1976-84), vol. 2, pp. 20-1.

<sup>143</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, p. 21

<sup>144</sup> Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, p. 22

<sup>145</sup> On Foscari, see Dennis Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari, 1373-1457* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>146</sup> Julian Chrysostomides, *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca: Documents for the Study of the Peloponnese in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995), pp. 97-8.

<sup>147</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 56

let the city fall back into the hands of the Greeks is further indicative of Venice's commitment to holding the city permanently. In hindsight if this clause had been passed they might have been able to escape the burden that would come to play out over the next seven years of siege and warfare; however, the Senate had made the decision to take Thessaloniki and was not willing to relinquish it. Not that the act of a state that was only half-hearted in its decision to assume control of new territories. Furthermore, the rapid creation of a Ducal title for the city and the filling of that post shows the hope that the Senate had for the city and the desire that install a more permanent leadership figure for the city under Venetian rule. This title would have increased interest among the nobility who might seek to hold it for prestigious reasons or for the salary that title would be afforded and thereby bring interest from the Venetian patricians to bring trade and investment into the city.<sup>148</sup> There was, of course, another consideration. In May 1423, the Senate heard that:

The people of Thessalonica had sent to tell the Lord Turk [Murad II] that they wished to give themselves up on these terms: they said that they were prepared to give him two thirds of their revenues and live off one third themselves, and to remain at peace, and if not, they would send to the [Venetian] regime of Negroponte so that they could give themselves to the dogal Signoria of Venice.<sup>149</sup>

The thought of the city being in Turkish hands might well have been what pushed up the required number of votes.

Before continuing to discuss the extent of Venice's contribution to the defence of the city there is one further point that deserves mention. Neither John R. Melville-Jones nor John W. Barker found any evidence of the rumoured payment made by Venice for their acquisition of the city. It was rumoured that Venice paid 50,000 ducats as payment to gain control of the city, a story that likely

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<sup>148</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, f. 24 and 26: TR, II, no. 1933 and 1935, p. 216: Both titles were two-year contracts with a salary of 1000 ducats a year with suite and stable provided. The latter document marks a provision for the companies each title was meant to maintain and the provision of money for their maintenance

<sup>149</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 27.

has its origin on the Byzantine side as it appears in several later Greek chronicles.<sup>150</sup> However, no record of this transaction exists within the Venetian documents and sources. Venice was not beyond paying for new territories but it does not seem to be the case here. It is possible that the rumour comes from a misunderstanding of the Venetian offer of a stipend to Andronicus, if he remained in residence within the city.<sup>151</sup> In any case, he chose not to and died on 4 March 1429 in the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople.<sup>152</sup>

### **2.3 Governing Thessaloniki (1423-30)**

Over the course of the next seven years Venice, as it will be shown, devoted a large amount of manpower and resources to the defence of the city. Stantchev argues that the resources spent on Thessaloniki do not compare to the amount of time, money, and resources spent with Venice's war in northern Italy that was running concurrently to the defence of Thessaloniki.<sup>153</sup> However, it becomes clear that instead of sending the minimum that they could Venice sent as much as they felt the city could spare. The distances involved and the necessity to defend the home city from war closer to home obviously meant a lesser amount could be spent on defending a far off city. Venice's ambitions for northern Italy were increasing as rapidly as their ambitions for the Mediterranean as the fifteenth century continued. War in Italy was closer to home there by allowing for faster transfer of men and supplies as well as orders and failure to win during such a contest between states could threaten the safety of the city of Venice itself. Thessaloniki was an important city and needed assistance so the Senate sent what they could when they could and much of the archives for this period records the exact nature of this assistance and helps to highlight the extent to which Venice,

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<sup>150</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, pp. 39-40; Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, p. 373. See for example, *Byzantium, Europe and the Early Ottoman Sultans (1373-1513): An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Seventeenth Century (Codex Barberinus Graecus 111)* trans. Marios Philippides (New Rochelle NY: Caratzas, 1990), p. 48; Chalkokondyles, vol. 1, pp. 340-1;; Pseudo-Sphrantzes in John R. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Greek Accounts* (Padua: Unipress, 2006), p. 22.

<sup>151</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 39

<sup>152</sup> George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: a Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*, trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 34 (xvi. 8).

<sup>153</sup> Stefan Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat, 1381-1453' in *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth Century Crusade*, ed. Norman Housley (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017) pp. 161-205

a city on the brink of economic crisis only thirty years prior, was able to devote to the defence of a faraway city, even while fighting an offensive war at home.

Immediately after taking control of the city the representatives of the Venetians, Santo Venier and Niccolo Zorzi, as discussed previously, were ordered to set up a garrison for the city using the revenues of Thessaloniki. Venice likely expected the city to be able to support its own defence at least to a point, though the years of siege and assault by the Ottomans had left the city poor and starving so it is of little real surprise that it was incapable of such a feat.<sup>154</sup> What followed was seven years of intense battling with Venice committing a wealth of resources to the city. The archival material records much of this but more may exist or have not survived to the modern period. From the material three main avenues of expenditure are evident. First is the provision of supply, mainly wheat but also weapons, secondly the provision of troops, ships, or the money to raise and maintain these and other defences, and finally is the advancement of negotiations and politics and the cost of embassies and ambassadors to the Ottomans as well as increasingly disadvantageous offers for Venice to be allowed to keep the city from the Ottomans.

Food was a constant issue for the beleaguered city and the arrival of the Venetians and their readily available fleet was a godsend for the starving city. Venice had better access to ships and was a significantly stronger naval power compared to the Byzantines at this time and could protect its sea lanes against most attacks allowing for better delivery of food. However, the drain of the constant need to supply the city became an overbearing issue for the Senate and eventually private Venetian citizens began transporting the necessary wheat for the city and were reimbursed or offered rewards by the government. Much of the wheat came from Crete or through the ports of Negroponte and Corfu having been purchased from markets there, while a few shipments came

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<sup>154</sup> On conditions in Thessaloniki, see V. Demetriades, 'Byzantine and Ottoman Thessaloniki', in *Manzikert to Lepanto: the Byzantine World and the Turks 1071-1571* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1991), pp. 265-74; Alan Harvey, 'Economic conditions in Thessaloniki between the two Ottoman Occupations' in *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400-1700*, ed. Alexander Cowan (Exeter: University Press, 2000), pp. 115-24; Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Latins and the Ottomans: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 39-115

from the markets in the city of Venice. The first reminder that survives comes from 19 December 1423 when the Senate sent word to both Crete and Negroponte to remind both that they were expected to supply the city with wheat.<sup>155</sup> Feeding of the city was a constant problem and was one of the many grievances addressed in the Senate's orders to the Duke of Thessaloniki in response to the delegation of Caloianni Radino, Thomas Crussulora (Chrysoloras) and George Jaica from Thessaloniki. One of the many clauses of these orders, which deal with everything from justice of crime to the payment of workers and the taxation of Jews, is for the provision of 2000 measures of wheat for the poor of the city per month while the Venetians hold the city.<sup>156</sup> Again in December of 1425 the need for wheat was growing and the purchase of 14,000 staia of wheat to be bought in Venice, Puglia, and Corfu.<sup>157</sup> It quickly becomes clear that the winters and the mid-spring time seem to be when the calls for food are dealt with and that may not be accidental. In the winter the besieged city needs food to survive the colder months and had little access to its own hinterland for the harvest while in the spring the Ottomans would have been pressing their attacks and campaigning to take the city further preventing the collection of food. On 8 February 1426 Crete is reminded that all available wheat should be sent to the city to prevent starvation.<sup>158</sup> The island was further ordered to send its wheat 22 July 1426.<sup>159</sup> Crete was not the only sources of these shipments however and on 13 August 1426 the bailo of Corfu was ordered to provide 1400 staia of wheat for Thessaloniki.<sup>160</sup> Then 22 July 1427 wheat is needed again for the city and 8000 staia was purchased.<sup>161</sup> The next three documents that deal with the problem of Thessaloniki are all found in quick succession and deal with the payment for and provision of wheat for the city that the Senate handled directly. These occurred on 30 December 1427 when more money was found for 2200 staia

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<sup>155</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 54, f. 165v: TR, II, no. 1914, p. 211

<sup>156</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, ff 139-42v: TR, II, no. 1995, pp. 229-30

<sup>157</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, f. 179: TR, II, no. 2012, p. 233

<sup>158</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, f. 75-7: TR, II, no. 2015, p. 234

<sup>159</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56 f. 37: TR, II, no. 2033, p. 238

<sup>160</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56, f. 44: TR, II, no. 2035, p. 239

<sup>161</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56 f. 113: TR, II, no. 2064, p. 244



of wheat to be delivered to the city<sup>162</sup>, on 28 February 1428 when 3-4000 staia of wheat were ready to be sent to the city and must leave before 31 March<sup>163</sup> and finally another order was placed 26 March 1428 for 12,000 staia.<sup>164</sup> As time progressed the Senate and the state it seems could not keep up with the demand of the city. On 17 September 1428, Giacomo Badoer was reimbursed for the money he spent shipping wheat to Thessaloniki.<sup>165</sup> It is possible that more nobles and merchants took on these shipments and sought reimbursement or payment later for the provision of food for the city the Senate was attempting to save. As the end neared the strain placed on the rest of the Venetian *Stato di Mar* became greater and on 2 March 1430 Negroponte and Crete were ordered to stop withholding wheat bound for the city.<sup>166</sup> The total combined effort to deliver a constant supply of food to the starving, besieged city of Thessaloniki demanded a heavy toll on the city of Venice who had no source of wheat itself. Venice required its own supplies as well as those it had to send off to Thessaloniki and other territories within its budding overseas empire.

Aside from the supply and feeding of the city of Thessaloniki Venice became responsible for the defence of the city as well. This took the form of not only soldiers but also the fleet that came to defend the city when threats of attack were imminent. Venice may have expected the city to support its own defence but many of the ships came from Venice and from Crete and the money and troops came from throughout Venice's lands. When Venier and Zorzi first took command, their orders instructed them to create a garrison from the revenues of the city. However, the city needed naval defence so on 19 December 1423 Crete was ordered to prepare two galleys. They recognized that a strong naval presence was required, though at this point Thessaloniki was not specifically called out as needing protection. The correlation however is easily made between the acceptance of this city and the order to strengthen the fleet.<sup>167</sup> In June 1424 a shipment of 2000 ducats bound for

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<sup>162</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56 f. 141: TR, II, no. 2077, p. 247

<sup>163</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56 f 169: TR, II, no. 2078, p. 247

<sup>164</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56 f 176: TR, II, no. 2081, p. 248

<sup>165</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57 f 39: TR, II, no. 2113, p. 254

<sup>166</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57 f. 199: TR, II, no. 2183, p. 271

<sup>167</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 54, f. 165v: TR, II, no. 1914, p. 211

Tana was diverted and half of it was left with Thessaloniki to help cover the costs of its defence. To recover these losses customs agents in Venice were made to pay the duties of two and three percent of all goods brought into the city by 15 July.<sup>168</sup> Later in June 1424 one hundred foot-soldiers were sent to the city to make up for 'losses'. It is clear that fighting was a continuous event at the city and troops were needed to recuperate the losses suffered.<sup>169</sup> In the same response and orders to the Duke that the Senate presented to the delegation of Thessalonians on 7 July 1425 the early sections of the orders concern the protection of the city and the fortification of Kassandreia, the fortifications that protected the harbour and peninsula of the city as well as the repair of portions of the city's walls.<sup>170</sup> 23 July 1425 they ordered that the tower defending the city should be repaired while Murad is distracted. The Captain of the Sea is then ordered to leave his galley to defend the city if peace had been made between Venice and the Ottomans, but if not, he should continue to harass and attack the Ottomans. The Senate also provides 14,000 ducats to pay for the men of the fleet that were protecting the city through their aggressive actions.<sup>171</sup> On August 29 1425, the Captain General of the Sea requested 200 soldiers for the defence of the city a further indication of the losses the city was suffering. The Senate in Venice is only able to send 50-60 Paduan crossbowmen.<sup>172</sup> Despite numerous attempts, peace with the Ottomans was not concluded so the Senate commanded that two new galleys should be sent to Thessaloniki from Crete on 8 February 1426.<sup>173</sup> Two more were to be sent to Modon if possible. In April, Niccolo Trevisan, the Supervisor of the Gulf, was sent to Corfu and Modon to report on the situation in Thessaloniki as well as Genoese plans before travelling on to the city of Thessaloniki itself. There he was meant to deliver 3000 ducats for the defence of the city and bring the two old galleys from Crete back home since they had already been replaced.<sup>174</sup> In April of 1426 along with their new diplomatic offer for Murad's consideration the Senate instructs

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<sup>168</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, f. 36v: TR, II, no. 1942, p. 217-8

<sup>169</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, f. 38v: TR, II, no. 1944, p. 218

<sup>170</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, ff. 139-42v: TR, II, no. 1995, p. 218

<sup>171</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, ff. 24-5: TR, II, no. 2000, pp. 230-1

<sup>172</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55 f. 158: Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 133

<sup>173</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, f. 75-7: TR, II, no. 2015, p. 234

<sup>174</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, f.108-9: TR, II, no. 2017, p. 234

the Duke and the Captain of Thessaloniki to use the 3,000 ducats sent with the ambassador for the troops defending the city.<sup>175</sup> By September of that same year the Senate gave instruction to the Captain of the Gulf to on what to do with the fleet before his return to Venice. If peace had been made with the Ottomans then the captain should decide whether or not to leave the galley at Thessaloniki to defend it; however, if peace had not been concluded then the galley must be left behind for the defence of the city.<sup>176</sup> In July of 1427 the situation in Thessaloniki seems to have grown desperate as the White Tower there was granted to the governor of Crete, thereby tying him to the city's fate and requiring him to send fifty troops for the defence of the city. This was to be matched by fifty troops from Venice and these troops and their equipment were transported to the city via Negroponte aboard a galley.<sup>177</sup> On 25 July 1427 the Senate elects Paolo Orio the new Captain of Thessaloniki but he was unable to join the galley sailing to the city and travels later on another carrying more troops for its defence.<sup>178</sup> Later in September the Captain of the Gulf is ordered to guard the city and a galley from Crete is sent to support this action.<sup>179</sup> In an interesting case of compensation one Antonio Contarini was paid for equipment that was taken from him to outfit a warship in anticipation of a Turkish assault on the city.<sup>180</sup> This may indicate that the city was not always aware of incoming assaults by the Ottomans, nor in a position to always be able to answer them immediately. On 23 January 1429 the large galley that defended the city was deemed completely out of service and a replacement was ordered, that ship was sent 7 February.<sup>181</sup> In March of that year the captain of the city was captured by Murad and the Senate sent 3 galleys to assist the city. One of these suffered damage and Crete was made to pay for the replacement.<sup>182</sup> In April the new captain was elected and departed immediately for the city with new ships.<sup>183</sup> Venice continued

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<sup>175</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9 f. 109-10: TR, II, no. 2018, p. 234-5

<sup>176</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, ff.162-3: TR, II, no. 2036, p. 239

<sup>177</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56, f. 111: TR, II, no. 2062, p. 244

<sup>178</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 56, f. 114: TR, II, no. 2067, p. 245

<sup>179</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 10, f 80: TR, II, no. 2073, p. 246-7

<sup>180</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57 f. 24: TR, II, no. 2101, pp. 251-2

<sup>181</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57 f. 64: TR, II, no. 2121, p. 256

<sup>182</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57 f. 86-7: TR, II, no. 2127, p. 258

<sup>183</sup> ASV, Misti. Reg. 57, f. 91: TR, II, no. 2129, p. 258

to provide support for the city with what they believed could be sent to save the city. It is clear that the Senate did not send the troops requested by the defenders of the city. Stantchev argues that they should have been able to supply more troops and defences to the city based on their expenditure and troop numbers for their northern Italian wars fought concurrently with the defence of Thessaloniki.<sup>184</sup> However, it was very likely that this concurrent warfare was the cause of the Senate's inability to send greater defences to the city. A loss of in the Aegean could be disastrous and set back Venetian plans of expansion; however, a loss in northern Italy could mean the loss of Venice entirely. Therefore, it is understandable that the Senate would focus most of its time and resources on the threat closer to home.

Finally, the Senate spent more than a small fortune on numerous embassies and diplomatic overtures in hope of securing peace with Murad II. The first recorded peace offer for the city between the Venetians and the Ottomans comes from April 1426.<sup>185</sup> The Senate demanded that Venice remain overlords of the city but are willing to pay 100,000 aspres a year from the sale of salt, as had been the practice when Andronicus had ruled the city. Furthermore, it Turks would be given the right of trial by the *cadi* for matters of money but by Venice for all other things. Fugitive slaves would be exchanged by both sides and the gates of the city would be opened for trade and commerce would be allowed to continue. This agreement was never agreed upon. The next attempted offer came July 1427 and kept the same conditions and agreements but increased the yearly tribute from 100,000 aspres to 150,000.<sup>186</sup> This was also rejected. And the final attempt at diplomacy before the fall in 1430 came in August 1428. This agreement offered 300,000 aspres from the revenue of the city and only added that two ships recently capture in the Dardanelles be returned to Venice.<sup>187</sup> Venice it seems was desperate to maintain control over the city so greatly that it was willing to offer ever increasing tribute to the Ottomans to retain their dominion over it.

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<sup>184</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', pp. 172-3

<sup>185</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 9, f. 109-10: TR, II, no. 2018, pp. 234-5

<sup>186</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 10, f. 65-7: TR, II, no. 2066, p. 245

<sup>187</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 10, f. 174-5: TR, II, no. 2111, pp. 253-4

Once again this appears to be an action born of careful consideration and thought to keep what was deemed to be an important city to the Venetians. Despite the problems it caused the republic the Senate continued to send vast resources and multiple diplomatic overtures in an effort to keep the city in their possession.

Although it was agreed that the Venetians would take the city from the Greeks and hold it against the Ottoman incursions, not all Greeks were pleased with the situation. While preferable to Ottoman occupation, it was not long before problems arose between the Venetians and their Greek subjects within Thessaloniki. The Venetian Senate received complaints from the Greek population twice: the first in 1425 with various complaints about the administration of the city by the Venetians in charge, and again in 1429.<sup>188</sup> The first letter of complaints discusses various taxation and duties that had been placed on the Thessalonians and limited or competed with their rights to the sale of goods such as cloth and linen.<sup>189</sup> It also discussed the expenditure of money, in times of peace, to honour St. Demetrius, patron saint of the city, for his feast days. This may indicate that Venice was not upholding their promise to the Greeks, the condition of their acceptance of the city, that the people of the city would be allowed to keep their rights and religious practices without interruption. The second brings forward many of the same complaints and indicates that the state of relations between Greek population and their Venetian overlords had not improved in the preceding four years of occupation. This second letter of complaint focuses mainly on the defences of the city and the demand for further protection by the Venetians, but also requested that the rights of the Archbishop be recognised and his jurisdiction within the city.<sup>190</sup> It also dealt with the return of Greeks who had previously fled the city and wished to return. It is clear from these records that the Venetians were not upholding their promises to the Greeks; however, they were also helping defend the city from the Ottomans and were likely acting as best they could to counteract the assault on

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<sup>188</sup> John R. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Greek Accounts* (Padua: Unipress, 2006), pp. 6-7

<sup>189</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, ff. 139-42v; TR, II, no. 1995, pp. 229-30

<sup>190</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57, ff. 129-32; TR, II, no. 2149, pp. 263-64

their newly acquired city. Including cracking down on the rights and freedoms of the inhabitants. It is known that four Thessalonians, one of which died in prison, were arrested by the Venetians and sent first Crete and later to Venice itself.<sup>191</sup> Later, there is mention of two Thessalonians imprisoned in Padua who are released because of the expense it is to keep them held captive.<sup>192</sup> These Greeks were deemed a threat to the Venetians for collusion with the Ottomans during the siege. The Greek accounts further highlight the feelings of feelings of discord between the Venetians and their subjects. Symeon, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki before his death in 1429, was a strong supporter of keeping the city Orthodox and while he supported the fight against the Ottomans was not a supporter of the Venetian occupation. He praised the enthusiasm that the Venetians held for defending against the Ottomans at first but comments that the city remained 'suffering and oppressed'.<sup>193</sup> While it is not recorded that the Greeks ever did revolt against the Venetians the Greek chronicles and authors certainly believed that it was possible and in one case had actually happened. Doukas records that to prevent rebellion from the Greeks the Venetians moved many Greeks out of the city. According to the Greek author this was reported to have been done under the guise of reducing the drain on the city's resources.<sup>194</sup> These nobles were sent to Euboea, Crete, and Venice. There does not seem to be much support for this; however, it was not a tactically unsound move if truly carried out by the Venetians. Before Venice even took charge of the city of Thessaloniki many Greek nobility that could relocate already had due to the constant threat of the Ottomans. One Greek, Kougeas, who left the 'unfortunate city' due in part to the Venetian occupation. Fleeing on April 8 1425, he made for Constantinople 'on account of the great and dreadful and unbearable occurrences' in Thessaloniki including the siege and 'because that wretched city had come under

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<sup>191</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 10, f. 202; TR, II, no. 2115, p. 254

<sup>192</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 57, f. 214; TR, II, no. 2197, p. 274

<sup>193</sup> Symeon, *Logos*, in Melville-Jones, *The Greek Accounts*, pp. 89-142, at 126. In general on Symeon, see: Eugenia Russell, 'Symeon of Thessalonica and his message of personal redemption', in *Spirituality in Late Byzantium*, ed. E. Russell (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 33-43; Russell, *Literature and Culture in Late Byzantine Thessalonica*, pp. 61-84.

<sup>194</sup> Doukas, p. 170.

control of the Venetian Franks'.<sup>195</sup> His departure from the city predates the Venetian response to the ambassadors sent to the Senate, but he likely knew of the grievances posed in their embassy. One source claims that the Greeks were in open revolt against the Venetians but no other source claims or even hints that the Greeks ever reached that level of opposition to the Venetian rule.<sup>196</sup> It seems that the Venetians, despite their efforts to defend the Greeks, were not welcome. Some, like Symeon, even refused to attribute the help of the Venetians as an assistance. The arrival of food on ships is often described as a surprise and attributed to the miracles of St. Demetrius throughout Symeon's account.<sup>197</sup> The Venetians were 'neglectful... quarrelling with one another and there was no human agency to help us [the Greeks], no ship, no galley, no sustenance'.<sup>198</sup> This in contrast to the known expenses and effort Venice put into defending the city against the Ottoman threat.

#### **2.4 Losing Thessaloniki (1430)**

Despite the efforts of the Venetians and the Senate the city fell to the Ottoman army on 29 March 1430. The Greek author and eye witness to the events of the Venetian occupation and the siege, John Anagnostes, recorded the events of the final assault and the fall of the city to the Ottomans. His account, often critical of the Venetians displays them as a cowardly group and suggests that they abandoned the city and the people. From Anagnostes we know that most of the Venetian forces were what he called *Tzetarioi*, a 'collection of robbers brought together from various places'.<sup>199</sup> These were the mercenary soldiers that the Venetians brought in to help defend the city at what was likely not an insignificant cost to themselves. Melville-Jones explains that they were mercenary soldiers hired from around the Balkan area. The surviving archival material does not mention these mercenaries; however, it is likely that the Duke and Captain of the city may have hired them as their commission provided for the maintenance of a force for each and implies that they were required to

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<sup>195</sup> Kougeas, *Notizbuch*, in Melville-Jones, *The Greek Accounts*, pp. 28-9

<sup>196</sup> Barberini Chronicle in *Byzantium, Europe and the Early Ottoman Sultan*, p. 48; and in Melville-Jones, *The Greek Accounts*, p. 33

<sup>197</sup> Symeon, *Logos*, pp. 127, 133

<sup>198</sup> Symeon, *Logos*, p. 127

<sup>199</sup> John Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, in Melville-Jones, *The Greek Accounts*, pp. 145-79, at 157. On Anagnostes' account see: Russell, *St Demetrius of Thessalonica*, pp. 133-45.

have these soldiers for the defence of themselves and the city.<sup>200</sup> These mercenaries were used to make up for the lack of Venetian soldiers within the city. According to Anagnostes, the Venetians lined their men along the walls and found them not only in poor supply of weapons but also they numbered only 'one man standing there for every two or three merlons'.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, the mercenaries were used to watch over the Greek soldiers whom the Venetians deemed untrustworthy, likely stemming from the issues already discussed that plagued relations with the Venetians and the previous plot to betray the city to the Ottomans previously.<sup>202</sup> The Venetians, worried over their ships sitting in the city's harbour and fearing attack by Ottoman ships withdrew their archers from the walls and repositioned them to defend the three galleys in the city at that time.<sup>203</sup> According to Anagnostes this was done without the knowledge of the other defenders and many Greek believed the Venetians were retreating from the walls and not repositioning to better defend from a sea attack. The Venetian insight is proven correct when shortly after this, the Ottomans did strike from the sea but were defeated by one of the Venetian galleys. This is recorded as a rare point of praise from Anagnostes, though he does finish the passage with the lamenting words '...if only this [the victory at sea] had been so with the disaster which took place during the day'.<sup>204</sup> It seems that the Venetians had prior knowledge or idea that the Ottomans may strike from the sea first and thus their move was a smart tactical decision to help repel the ships should any of the Turkish vessels break through into the city. While not tactically sound to not inform their allies along the walls of this decision, it likely stems to the growing distrust between the Venetians and their Greek co-inhabitants of Thessaloniki. If the Venetians felt they could not trust the Greeks, as Anagnostes helpfully points out, they may have believed that informing the Greeks of the shift in the defenders may have reached the ears of the Ottomans, prompting an attack when the defences were weakened. The assault on the city began on the fourth day of the siege with the personal foot-

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<sup>200</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg. 55, f. 80-80v; TR, II, no. 1965, p. 223

<sup>201</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 154

<sup>202</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 159; Chalkokondyles, Vol. 1, pp. 388-91.

<sup>203</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 160

<sup>204</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 161



soldiers of the Sultan Murad focused on the district of the city known as the Trigonion, because he saw that the walls there were 'rotten' and that the city would fall easily through this section.<sup>205</sup>

Anagnostes provides a vivid account of the assault and the fall of the city on 'third hour of the fourth day' of the siege, 29 March 1430.<sup>206</sup> The Ottomans swarming into the city drove into the city towards the inhabited areas, particularly towards the harbour. As the city fell the inhabitants took shelter wherever they could, hiding in homes, churches, tunnels, and tombs in fear of the attackers. Others fled towards the harbour in attempts to board the galleys and other ships that waited there. Here, Anagnostes seems to highlight the height of the Venetian cowardice. The fleeing citizens of the city fled towards the tower, called Samareia or Samaria, because it was near the shore and was well stocked and defended. However, the Venetians 'of high rank and some of the *Tzetarioi* who were acting as their bodyguards made their escape there, then they blocked the entrance to the rest'.<sup>207</sup> These high-ranking Venetians then fled across the mole and boarded the galleys that had been moved from the harbour to wait for them there. There are no surviving Venetian accounts of the siege and the fall to counteract the claims of cowardice or fleeing the city. Other later Greek accounts continue to tell of this act of cowardice and anti-Venetian sentiment.<sup>208</sup> It is interesting though that one of the few Ottoman account of the siege makes no distinction between Venetians and Greeks, noting only that the sultan was opposed by 'infidels'.<sup>209</sup>

Immediate reactions to the loss of the city do not appear to have survived in the records of the state, if they were recorded at all. This has led to the belief that the city meant very little to the

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<sup>205</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 162

<sup>206</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 164-5

<sup>207</sup> Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, p. 166

<sup>208</sup> For example: Chalkokondyles, Vol. 1, p. 390-1; Marios Philippides, *Emperors, Patriarchs and Sultans of Constantinople: An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Sixteenth Century* (Brookline MA: Hellenic College Press, 1990), p. 31. On the fall of Thessaloniki, see Speros Vryonis, 'The Ottoman conquest of Thessaloniki in 1430', in *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society*, ed. Anthony Bryer and Heath Lowry (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1986), pp. 281-321 and the critical comments about this article by Colin Imber in *Osmanlı Arıstırmaları* 5 (1986), 65-81.

<sup>209</sup> *An Early Ottoman History: The Oxford Anonymous Chronicle (Bodleian Library, Ms Marsh 313)*, trans. Dimitri J. Kastritsis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 161-2.

Venetians. However, it becomes clear from two key instances that the Senate had every intention of reclaiming the city if possible. The first instance can be found not long after the fall. The Senate sends orders to the Captain of the Sea to continue to strike out at Ottoman ships and harass their territories like Gallipoli in an attempt to achieve a more favourable treaty. The goal of this treaty was to regain the lost city if at all possible.<sup>210</sup> Reports from the captain's actions do not survive, so it is unclear whether or not he was successful in striking any meaningful targets. However, as the terms of the treaty, signed 4 September 1430, did not include the return of Thessaloniki to the Venetians it seems unlikely that his harassment achieved much at all.<sup>211</sup> The order however does indicate that the Venetian Senate did not simply accept the loss of Thessaloniki and sought to find a way to reverse this. The second instance occurs fourteen years after the loss of Thessaloniki, in the lead up and events during the Crusade of Varna in 1444-5. These will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter; however, it should be mentioned here. In the lead up to the departure of the crusading fleet from Venice, which consisted of ships from Burgundy as well as ships under command of the Papal legate and ships from Venice itself, the Senate sent out a letter to the bailos and captains of its holdings overseas. These instructions told them to gather information on likely targets for the fleet to hit the Ottomans where they were weakest with several suggested locations listed, this list included the city of Thessaloniki. The response to this order has not survived if there was one; however during the crusade itself the Venetian fleet detoured into the Aegean. The next chapter deals with this crusade and the possible conclusions that can be drawn from these events and the goals of this diversion.

Venetian occupation of Thessaloniki did not last long, only seven years from acquisition to loss, but it provides a clear example of the extent and limit that the city of Venice was willing to go to protect their investment, even during a time of war closer to the home front. They provided the

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<sup>210</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 11, f. 101-2: Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 229

<sup>211</sup> For the terms of the treaty, see: George Martin Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum*, 2 vols (New York: Bert Franklin, 1879), vol. 2, pp. 343-5, trans. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, pp. 232-5.

city with food, protection in men, weapons, and ships, and sent numerous diplomatic missions to sue for peace with the Ottomans and allow Venice to retain control of the city. The deliberations and choices of the Senate leading up to their occupation of the city were not the actions of a state that was acting on reflex or haphazardly. Sages were brought in to advise the Senate and careful consideration was placed before taking the city, having rejected a chance to take the city previously. Venice likely planned to use Thessaloniki as a main port and possibly a centre for managing their Aegean holdings if they could keep a hold on the city for long enough. The loss of the city led the Senate to seek to reclaim it on several occasions. The expansion of their overseas empire was of utmost importance to the Venetians and the city of Thessaloniki was a significant jewel to add to their collection.

There remains the question of whether the Venetians in any way considered themselves to be defending the Christian faith in their efforts to hold on to Thessaloniki. Antonio Morosini seems at first sight to sum the whole thing up as a matter of finance:

The community of Venice has spent in all, counting soldiers on land and men at sea, with many shiploads of grain and other foodstuffs, and the arming of galleys, in total 740,000 ducats.

However, he does address the disaster in religious terms, presenting it as not just a defeat for the Venetians but a divine punishment for the whole of Christendom:

All this is because of ours sins, and those of the whole of Christianity, because we have not shown gratitude to the Eternal God for the favours that He has so often bestowed upon us, and that we have not recognised, and it seems to many that in this life these things happen so that we may gain a better understanding.<sup>212</sup>

Whatever the wounded feelings of Venetians and Greeks, Thessaloniki seems to have recovered from its fall quite quickly. When the Italian humanist Cyriac of Ancona (1391-1452) visited a few years

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<sup>212</sup> *Il Codice Morosini*, vol. 3, p. 1419; trans. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica*, p. 220.

afterwards he could happily wander around the city where the monuments, including the church of St Demetrius were all intact. The biggest change was demographic but the shift was to a Jewish rather than a Muslim population.<sup>213</sup>

### **Chapter 3: The Crusade of Varna: the Condulmer Family and Venetian Involvement**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

In any discussion of Venice's decision to participate in a crusade in the later Middle Ages, the military and naval expeditions that have become collectively known as 'the Crusade of Varna' must be included. It is worth pointing out at the outset that there was a naval aspect to this campaign, since the most of the current secondary works largely ignore it.<sup>214</sup> As a small city-state unable to field a large army, when it comes to the participation of Venice and Venetians, it is the naval campaign that must be the focus of attention, although the fate of the land army was intimately bound up with it. As will be seen, the focus will be two-fold, discussing first, the Venetian promoters and participants who were based outside Venice in the papal curia in Rome: Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) and other members of the Condulmer family. Second comes Venice itself, and how its government responded to the call for a crusade, and to the news of its progress. The chapter will argue that in the case of the Condulmer family the primary motivation for involvement was to vindicate the primacy of the pope in the face of the challenge mounted by the conciliar movement. Nevertheless, the actions of some members of the family during the crusade seem to display residual ties to their native Venice and to the policies of its government. In analysing the response of the Venetian government, it will be argued that the republic's participation was influenced by an additional consideration, more than

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<sup>213</sup> Francesco Scalamonti, 'The Life of Cyriac of Ancona', in *Cyriac of Ancona: Life and Early Travels*, ed. and trans. Charles Mitchell, Edward W. Bodnar and Clive Foss (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 1-171, at 72-3; Heath W. Lowry, 'Portrait of a city: the population and topography of Ottoman Selânik (Thessaloniki) in the year 1478', *Diptycha* 2 (1981-2), 254-92.

<sup>214</sup> Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-1445* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006); John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad: The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from 1438-1444* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012) pp. 222-5 and 393-5 cover the actions and preparations of the fleets

simply the defence of Christendom, the recovery of Thessaloniki. This, however, is not necessarily to imply that the Venetian participation is somehow lacking in commitment nor dedication to the cause of the crusade. Furthermore, examination of the sources will attempt to bring to light the Venetian participation in a crusade for which they have received little or no credit from modern historians.

### **3.2 The Condulmer Family in the Papal Court:**

The Venetian Condulmer family played a significant role in the background and genesis of the Crusade of Varna and while Pope Eugenius IV preached the Crusade, another of their number, Francesco Condulmer (1390-1453) served as the appointed papal legate of the crusading fleet and actively worked in Venice to complete its preparations.

Pope Eugenius IV was born Gabriele Condulmer in Venice around 1383 to a seemingly unimportant noble family. The family only came to prominence in 1381 after the War of Chioggia, but did possess a prestigious home within Venice, the Tolentini Palace located at St. Simeon the Prophet in the direction of St. John the Evangelist.<sup>215</sup> When Gabriele was 15 he entered into the canonry of the cathedral of Verona and in 1406 was invited to Rome by his maternal uncle, Pope Gregory XII (1406-1415).<sup>216</sup> He was given the Bishopric of Siena in 1407 due to his ties with his uncle and remained in that position until he was recalled to Venice by his family where he, along with his cousin, Antonio Correr, founded an Augustinian monastery at S. Nicolo di Lido, which they later moved to S. Giorgio di Alga. He was briefly given the bishopric of Corone but resigned from the position when he was made Cardinal of S. Clemente 12 May 1408. He was appointed vicar of the Sees of both Corone and Constantinople in January 1409 and in 1417 upon the death of their uncle, both Gabriele and Antonio attended the Council of Constance supporting reform within the Church. Gabriele served under Pope Martin V (1369-1431) until the pope's death at which time he was

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<sup>215</sup> *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 43 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960) p. 496; Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, ed. E. George and E. Waters (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 17-31.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph Gill, *Eugenius IV: Pope of Christian Union* (London: Burns & Oats, 1961) p. 3. Pope Gregory XII was born Angelo Correr in Venice and was elected Pope 30 November, 1406

elected pope himself 3 March 1431.<sup>217</sup> Eugenius IV's reign began in a troubled time for the papacy, with the start of the Council of Basel and the challenge that it presented to the authority of the Papacy. He would spend the next decade working and fighting against them. His contests with the Council defined his role as a Pope and he focused on ensuring the power of the Papacy held firm and that the position of the Pope maintained its worldly and spiritual importance. Furthermore, through the involvement of the Orthodox Greeks and the Byzantine Emperor himself, the struggle between the Pope and the Council directly led to the launching of the Crusade of Varna.

Francesco Condulmer's rise to power came directly from his uncle's position. Eugenius' appointment to the papacy in March 1431 made Francesco's rise nearly unstoppable. Throughout his career he stuck close to his uncle and collaborated with him to safeguard the power of the papacy within the Church. Francesco Condulmer was born in Venice around 1390. Under Gabriele's instruction Francesco joined the canons in the Convent of St. John of Padua where he studied law and history.<sup>218</sup> After Gabriele's election in 1431 Francesco quickly rose to greater heights being appointed Cardinal of S. Clemente on 19 September of that same year.<sup>219</sup> Francesco became ever more tied to Eugenius and was increasingly called upon to handle issues throughout Italy and Christendom: in April 1435 he was called upon to study problems between Naples and the Roman Curia, and in 1438 he was ordered by a bull to take control of the activities of the third Franciscan order of Venice and to remove the habit of those in rebellion. He also gained numerous positions including director of Amiens in June 1436, Archbishop of Besançon in 1437, the bishopric of Verona in October 1438, and the position of vice-chancellor in 1439.<sup>220</sup> Despite the titles he was given, Francesco remained in Rome with his uncle much of the time. In 1442 he was appointed by Eugenius as legate of the fleet for the Crusade of Varna. His work both during the Council of Ferrara-Florence

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<sup>217</sup> Gill, *Eugenius IV*, pp. 16 and 27

<sup>218</sup> *Dizionario Biografico*, vol. 27, p.760

<sup>219</sup> Conrad Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi ... ab anno 1431 usque ad annum 1503* (Münster: Libreria Regensbergiana) p. 7

<sup>220</sup> *Dizionario Biografico*, vol. 27, p. 761

and during the Crusade of Varna followed the policies of Eugenius IV. Like his uncle, Francesco focused his efforts on improving the position of the papacy and championing papal authority.

Aside from the prominent figures of Gabriele and Francesco, two other Condulmer family members played an important role in the family's fight against the Council of Basel and both are reported to have participated in the Crusade of Varna, though in less prominent roles. Marco Condulmer born c.1405-08, like Francesco, entered into an ecclesiastical career at the urgings of his uncle, Gabriele. By 1427 he was in Rome with Gabriele and was appointed to the offices of Dean of Patras, sub deacon of the Holy See and the Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>221</sup> In 1430 Pope Martin V appointed him bishop of Avignon. On February 8, 1433 Marco took possession of Bologna in place of Fantino Dandolo, however the city rose against him and he was captured along with Venetian ambassador Paolo Tron. He was appointed to the metropolitan See of Tarentaise (modern day Moutiers in Savoy) in 1434. However, in keeping with the traditions of the Condulmer family he remained in Rome instead of moving to his newly appointed position. He later took an active role in the action against the Council of Basel.<sup>222</sup> In 1437 he was sent with the delegation to Constantinople to bring the Greek Emperor and his entourage to the Council of Ferrara-Florence. And in 1439 he was present for the drafting of the Decree from the Council of Ferrara-Florence.<sup>223</sup>

Our final figure of importance, Antonio Condulmer, is almost completely unknown. Unlike the other members of his family whose backgrounds are traceable through their ecclesiastical career, Antonio was a layman making records of his life much harder to investigate. Aside from a few documents discussing his involvement in the fleet that went to Constantinople during the contest between the Council of Basel and the Council of Ferrara-Florence and a mention of his service in the crusader fleet during the Crusade of Varna little is known of him.<sup>224</sup> Antonio provides an interesting contrast to the other members of the Condulmer family, who forwent their places in Venice to

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<sup>221</sup> Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi*, p. 765

<sup>222</sup> *Dizionario Biografico*, vol. 27, p. 764

<sup>223</sup> Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959) pp. 77, 79, 80, 82.

<sup>224</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 1, f. 226v: TR, III, p. 109

follow ecclesiastical careers and tied themselves largely to the power of papal authority, while Antonio remained a layman and likely remained in Venice for much of his life.

### **3.3 The Council of Basel and the Conciliar Movement:**

To understand the involvement of Eugenius IV and his kinsmen in the Crusade of Varna, it is essential to place it in the context of the ecclesiastical politics of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and the challenge that was being mounted to the traditional claim of the pope to authority over the whole Church. This challenge took the form of the conciliar movement which began in no small part due to the schism caused in the Western Church by the death of Pope Gregory XI (1370-1378). After numerous attempts to unite the Church it was decided that a general council was needed to solve the issue of the Schism. Thus in 1409 the Council of Pisa was held, the main purpose of which was to decide which of the sitting Popes, Gregory XII (1406-1415) or Benedict XIII (1394-1423), had the legitimate claim.<sup>225</sup> The delegates rapidly and unanimously elected Pope Alexander V (1409-1410) as replacement to both Benedict and Gregory. The remainder of the Council of Pisa dealt largely with the forgiveness of Cardinals from both other parties after which the council dispersed. However, neither Benedict nor Gregory agreed with the Council's ruling and refused to step down leaving three sitting Popes over the Western Church.<sup>226</sup> Alexander died only months after the completion of the Council of Pisa and John XXIII (1410-1415) was elected to replace him. By 1414 the situation had grown out of control leading John to call together another council, the Council of Constance 1414-18. The main goals of Constance were much the same as Pisa: to unite the Church under a singular pope, to deal with certain concerns over heresy, and to discuss reform within the Church. Constance, unlike Pisa, attempted to ensure that it would succeed where the previous council had failed, by asserting the power of the Council over that of the Pope within the Church. To this end it produced two main decrees: *Sacrosancta* or *Haec Sancta*, which agreed

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<sup>225</sup> C.M.D. Crowder, *Unity, Heresy, and Reform 1378-1460: The Conciliar Response to the Great Schism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) p. 4

<sup>226</sup> Crowder, *Unity, Heresy, and Reform*, p. 5



that the Pope and his Curia would continue to oversee the day to day running of the Church but that the Cardinals held the right to call for general councils.<sup>227</sup> This had been at the core of the failings of the Council of Pisa as it lacked legitimate backing from the sitting Popes and had not been able to secure a decree stating its superiority over them. The second decree, *Frequens*, called for a series of Councils to be held at regular intervals that would deal with any future concerns and needs of the Church.<sup>228</sup> Constance succeeded in electing Pope Martin V (1417-1431), Eugenius IV's predecessor, and removing the other claimants from their seats, thus reuniting the Western Church under one Pope seated at Rome. However, the conciliar movement had proven that it could deal with the internal matters of the Church, held the power to call and hold general councils, and had even chosen a Pope to rule over the affairs of the Church. In 1423 in accordance with *Frequens* the Council of Pavia was called but Martin V in a position of relative power by this point was able to disperse the council before much was achieved.<sup>229</sup> The Council of Basel, however, which began in 1431 again in accordance with *Frequens* was called to session by Pope Martin V shortly before his death. Upon his election Pope Eugenius IV himself confirmed the Council. The council's main concern was the Hussite heresy but quickly turned once more to the question of papal supremacy within the Church.

Quite apart from the Council's challenge to the centuries old power of the Pope, the Condulmers may also have felt themselves to be directly threatened. In 1430 the city of Avignon revolted against Marco Condulmer who had been appointed bishop of the city by Pope Martin V. The city turned against Marco due to his refusal to leave Rome and reside in Avignon itself. This rebellion was later backed by the Council of Basel which in 1431 attempted to appoint Cardinal Abionso Carillo as vicar of Avignon. Marco refused to meet with the Council to mediate the situation.<sup>230</sup> Eventually the

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<sup>227</sup> Joseph Lynch and Philip C. Adamo, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2014) p. 330

<sup>228</sup> Lynch and Adamo, *The Medieval Church*, p. 330

<sup>229</sup> Crowder, *Unity, Heresy, and Reform*, p. 28

<sup>230</sup> *Dizionario Biografico*, vol. 27, pp. 763-4

conflict was resolved when Pope Eugenius IV removed Marco and appointed Pierre de Foix as legate of Avignon. This is the first of many issues that the Pope had to contend with in his struggles against the Council of Basel. The Council's power grew by attracting many of the most important figures of the church including Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini (1398-1444). Cesarini arrived in Basel in September 1431 and under his leadership the Council fought against the Pope until he changed sides and joined the Papacy. It seems that by the beginning of the Crusade of Varna the two had reconciled as Eugenius IV trusted Cesarini enough to appoint him legate to the crusader army in Hungary.<sup>231</sup> In December 1431 Eugenius, possibly sensing the threat that the Council could pose, attempted to disperse it but the council refused to comply and renewed the decree *Sacrosancta* that was established during the Council of Constance (1414-18).<sup>232</sup> After a long battle Eugenius admitted some level of defeat and in December 1433, two years after he called for the dissolution of the council, he rescinded the order. In 1434 the Council of Basel backed a revolt against the Pope and his family in Rome. Eugenius escaped down the Tiber River but Francesco Condulmer was captured by rioters and imprisoned in Florence until 1435.<sup>233</sup> In 1437 Eugenius attempted to transfer the council to Ferrara, closer to the Papal States, in attempts to counteract the Council of Basel and he succeeded in luring away a number of its delegates. In response to his attempts to take power and respected figures of the Church away, the Council of Basel suspended Eugenius as Pope and in 1439 elected Duke Amadeus VIII of Savoy, a layman, as his successor. He took the name Felix V. Eugenius, however, continued to hold power within Italy.<sup>234</sup>

### **3.2.1 The Condulmers' fight against the Council of Basel**

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<sup>231</sup> Gill, *Eugenius IV*, p. 40

<sup>232</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, p. 342

<sup>233</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, p. 56; Dizionario Biografico, vol. 43, p. 498

<sup>234</sup> For more on general knowledge on the 15<sup>th</sup> century Church see: Gill, *Council of Florence*; Crowder, *Unity, Heresy, and Reform*; Lynch and Adamo, *The Medieval Church*; Jonathan Harris, *End of Byzantium*, (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press); K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1978)

Eugenius' attempts to fight back against the Council of Basel led to the creation of his own council now known as the Council of Ferrara-Florence since it was moved from Ferrara to Florence in early 1439 after a plague outbreak. The Council of Ferrara-Florence was Eugenius' main tool to counter the Council of Basel and from this council he fought back and eventually won out over the conciliar movement.

The event that would bring success to the Condulmers and that would ultimately spell the end of the Council of Basel came in the form of a diplomatic contact with the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1425-1448). John began his reign in a period of fierce aggression from the Ottomans. The Ottomans had laid siege to Thessaloniki in 1422 and a year later the Despot Andronikos Palaiologos (1408-23), John VIII's brother, granted the city to the Venetians in an attempt to save the city from falling. The emperor was desperate for allies to aid in the protection of his remaining lands and sought them wherever possible. In 1421 he had married Sophia, daughter of Theodore II of Montferrat (1381-1418), in an attempt to gain alliances.<sup>235</sup> In the 1430s with the division in the Western Church coming to a head, John saw the perfect opportunity to gain further support from the West. Hoping to lure support he approached Eugenius in 1431 with overtures of the promise of unification between Orthodox and Occidental Churches. The Pope however was initially resistant to John's approaches, so with the rise of the Council of Basel, John VIII sent delegates to the Council in an attempt to gain support from them instead, or at least to play the rivalling parties against each other.<sup>236</sup> With the start of Eugenius' Council in Ferrara the two competing councils each sought to gain the attention of John VIII in an effort to achieve unification of the Church. For the important mission of enticing the Emperor to come to the Council of Ferrara-Florence and not to the Council of Basel Eugenius, unsurprisingly, chose two of his nephews, Marco and Antonio Condulmer. They were

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<sup>235</sup> Harris, *End of Byzantium*, p. 75

<sup>236</sup> Harris, *End of Byzantium*, pp. 130-131

given the task of travelling to Constantinople and bringing the Emperor to Italy.<sup>237</sup> Marco served as the chosen legate and spiritual ambassador for the venture while Antonio, who was a layman, served as commander of the fleet that travelled to collect the Greek delegation. This event highlights the deep commitment of the Condulmer family in championing Papal supremacy over the Council. Upon their arrival in Constantinople, they discovered a fleet from the Council of Basel had arrived to carry out similar orders from their own council. Antonio Condulmer despite being a layman showed great loyalty to the position of his uncle, Pope Eugenius, when he began threatening and planning to attack the fleet from the Council of Basel. His plan was only waylaid by the intercession of Emperor John VIII, who warned that they would be wrong to start a war within his lands.<sup>238</sup> The Emperor eventually agreed to travel to the Council of Ferrara-Florence largely due to the lack of decision making and arrogance of the remaining members of the Council of Basel. Eugenius was adaptable and more conciliatory when dealing with the Emperor and agreed to meet him at his leisure following the negotiations previously discussed between Pope Martin V and the Emperor for a trip that never happened. The Council of Basel however refused to negotiate with the Emperor about a meeting place, as the Emperor did not want to travel further than Italy, while the Council demanded he travel to Basel to meet them. Eugenius IV conversely agreed to meet in Italy and even reportedly allowed that they could meet in Constantinople if necessary. This allowance and his cordial attitude won out and the Emperor travelled with the Condulmers' fleet to Venice and from there to the Council of Ferrara-Florence.<sup>239</sup> This visit shows the influence Eugenius held in Venice. Not only did Venice allow Antonio Condulmer to take a fleet of ships under his command to Constantinople, Venice agreed to play host to the Emperor in the lead up to his meeting with the Council. They also agreed to host the Emperor and the delegates for up to twelve days and to provide an allowance not

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<sup>237</sup> Georg Hofmann(ed.), *Epistolae Pontificiae ad Concilium Florentinum Spectantes pars I: Epistolae Pontificae de Rebus Ante Concilium Florentinum Gestis (1418-1438)*, (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1940) pp. 76-77 Doc. 76

<sup>238</sup> Sylvester Syropoulos, *Les Mémoires du Grand Ecclesiarque de l'Eglise de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence*, V. Laurent (ed.) (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971) pp. 177-8

<sup>239</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, pp. 52-9

exceeding 3000 ducats during the Emperor's stay.<sup>240</sup> This was in line with their promise in 1436 to not only host the Emperor should he travel to Italy but also to provide for the defence of Constantinople in his absence.<sup>241</sup> This promise may also have influenced John VIII's agreement to come with the papal ambassador to the Council of Ferrara-Florence and not to the Council of Basel as the Venetian protection may not have been offered had he done so. On top of the allowance provided, the Venetian Senate allowed the Greeks to bring any provisions they brought with them into the city without charge. The Doge of Venice, Francesco Foscari, welcomed the Emperor to Venice and held a pageant in the Emperor's honour which included the use of the Doge's barge equipped with the imperial eagle mounted between the winged lions of St. Mark. After playing host to the Emperor the Venetian Senate kept watch on how the Council played out and advised the Pope on a number of matters.<sup>242</sup> This included warning him against shifting the location of the council again to prevent rumours of incompetence should the council move again without achieving anything.<sup>243</sup> Upon completion of the negotiations between Eugenius IV and John VIII the declaration of the union of the Churches was announced in 1439. The Greeks then approached the Venetians about transport homewards. The Byzantines requested the use of a trade fleet heading to Tana to provide extra protection for the Emperor's ships; however, the Venetians denied this as it would have delayed the trade fleet and disrupted the route. Instead they offered the protection of a galley and two other ships that were bound for Crete as protection along the journey.<sup>244</sup> The meeting between the Emperor and the Pope largely marked the end of the conflict with the Council of Basel. Eugenius was successful in not only gaining the prestige of recognition of the Byzantine Emperor by his agreement to come to his council and not the Council of Basel, but he had also obtained promises from the Emperor to promote a unification of the Church in exchange for an organized

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<sup>240</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, vol. 3 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902) p. 32

<sup>241</sup> ASV, Sen. Sec. Reg. 13, ff. 246-7: TR, III, doc. 2418, p. 53

<sup>242</sup> Syropoulos, *Les Mémoires*, pp. 212-17

<sup>243</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, p. 277

<sup>244</sup> ASV, Misti, Reg 16, f. 169, 170, 172, 174: TR, III, docs 2510-3, pp. 77-8

expedition to the East in the defence of Byzantine lands. This promise, which would be upheld by Eugenius, though not so by John VIII, led to the preaching and subsequent launch of the Crusade of Varna. The emperor faced opposition in Constantinople led by Mark Eugenikos (d.1445) and later George Scholarios (c. 1400-1473), and others like Syropoulos. This anti-union faction was able to undo much of the work that had been done at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, in large part due to John's half-hearted attempts to control the eastern Church.<sup>245</sup> The anti-unionists saw the emperor's allowance for the debates at Xylalas Palace as a sign that he did not want the unification but it had been forced upon him at Florence. Despite this fact, the Council of Basel had been completely outmanoeuvred by Eugenius and the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Basel remained in existence protected by the supporters of their chosen Pope Felix V until finally dissolving in 1449.

### **3.3.2 Francesco and the Preparations for the Crusade of Varna**

The Crusade of Varna was launched by Eugenius as he had promised Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, in return for the Emperor bringing the news and process of unification to the East. On January 1 1443 Eugenius pronounced the crusade through the Papal bull *Postquam ad Apicem*.<sup>246</sup> The bull proclaims the need for both an army and a fleet to fight against the Turks and to gain victory in Hungary. Furthermore, it claims that the Cardinals have given consent to the raising of the tithe from their benefices. It not only boosted the Pope's prestige and essentially ended the Pope's conflict with the Council of Basel but it also allowed the Pope to launch a crusade against the Ottomans to protect and possibly extend the reach of Christendom. Eugenius appointed two legates to serve as the Papal representatives on the crusade. Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, who had reconciled himself with Eugenius after heading the Council of Basel in the early period of its conflict with the Pope, was selected as the legate to the land army. While Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, Eugenius'

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<sup>245</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, pp. 401-2

<sup>246</sup> Hofmann, *Epistolae*, vol. 3, doc. 261, pp. 68-75; Harris, *End of Byzantium*, p. 148; Thaddeus V. Tuleja, 'Eugenius IV and the Crusade of Varna', *Catholic Historical Review* 35 (1949), 257-75.

nephew and the serving vice-chancellor of the Papal Court, was chosen as legate to the fleet.<sup>247</sup>

Eugenius IV chose these cardinals to ensure that the Papal court was well represented and to ensure that the prestige of a successful campaign was attributed to the Papacy.

It is difficult to judge Francesco Condulmer's actions as no documentation written in his own hand has survived; however, the records of the Venetian Senate provide an account of many of his while he was in Venice preparing the fleet for the crusade. What is apparent from these documents is that from the beginning of the crusade Eugenius and Francesco wanted to maintain control over all aspects of the campaign. One clear concern was that Francesco Condulmer wanted to ensure that the Papacy would not foot the majority of the bill for the fleet that would serve the crusade. Francesco was Eugenius' camerlengo, or vice-chancellor, and knew that the Papal treasury was relatively empty after hosting the Council of Ferrara-Florence, even though Cosimo de' Medici had covered the cost once the delegates moved to Florence.<sup>248</sup> Upon his arrival in Venice in 1443 Francesco immediately began a long-running debate with the Venetian government over prices, who should pay for the ships, and how many ships the Papacy would actually provide for the campaign. During the high point of the debates, rumours abounded that Francesco was mishandling the funds that Venice had provided for the construction of ships.<sup>249</sup> However, there seems to be no corroborating evidence to support this accusation and it may have been lodged against Francesco simply to discredit him in attempts to lessen his influence within the city and to counter his argument of needing more funds for the preparation of the fleet. The Papacy originally promised to provide 10 galleys for the crusade while Venice and Burgundy promised 8 and 4 galleys respectively.<sup>250</sup> These ships were meant to convene in Venice where they would be armed and supplied, while others were constructed there. It was a costly endeavour to prepare these ships and

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<sup>247</sup> Condulmer's appointment date May 8, 1443; For Condulmer: Hofmann, *Epistolae*, doc. 264, p. 79 and a letter of congratulations from Venice upon his appointment dated to May 20 1443

<sup>248</sup> Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas*, p. 304

<sup>249</sup> Iorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, doc. 190, pp. 138-9

<sup>250</sup> Iorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, pp. 125-6

Condulmer was meant to ensure the ships were prepared and the funds were appropriated and used responsibly. On May 25 the Senate sent a letter to Eugenius stating that they had learned that the Pope had changed the number of ships that the Papacy was to supply.<sup>251</sup> The Papacy was now dropping its contribution from 10 galleys to 6; the letter from the Senate points out that they had previously advised from their own experience that this would leave the fleet with too few ships to hold the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits effectively.<sup>252</sup> Despite their warnings however, the papacy would have to reduce its contribution because of a lack of funding. The Venetian letter went on to say that the tax on the clergy would not be gathered fast enough to prepare the ships in time to reach the Straits. The Senate proclaimed that they would provide 20,000 ducats for its part and provide a further 2000 ducats to prepare each of the galley crews it would provide to the Duke of Burgundy's vessels. The Pope would need to provide the money to cover the rest of the cost and the Senate suggests the imposition of a tithe. Eugenius, however, was finding this difficult in other areas of Europe, namely England. For this job the pope selected the Bishop elect of Concordia, Baptista of Padua as his agent in England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, and Germany.<sup>253</sup> However, King Henry VI (1422-1461) of England was not willing to create a mandate for the Pope to impose taxation on the clergy of England, so instead he met with the primates of England and it was decided that instead of having the tithe raised on the clergy instead England would freely donate to the cause. Henry sent word that England would do this if peace was made with France. However, the money never came. The instance is one of the best-known times of a Pope attempting to raise a tithe in England but it is unclear where it went wrong even to modern historians. Lunt attributes it to a confusion in communication that England would provide the money only after France and England had secured a peace, which did not happen.<sup>254</sup> However, Baptista records that the English had promised to pay. Whatever occurred it was clear that Eugenius could not raise the tithe in England through

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<sup>251</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 13-13v: TR, III, doc. 2608, p. 102

<sup>252</sup> Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas*, p. 397

<sup>253</sup> William E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327-1534* (Cambridge MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1962) p. 132

<sup>254</sup> Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy*, p. 139



mandatory or voluntary payment and was therefore in need of funding from other locations throughout Europe.

The change in the number of papal ships was only the beginning of the tension between the Papacy and the Venetian government. The contest continued in August when Eugenius levied the tithe in Venetian territory without formally informing the Doge and the Senate.<sup>255</sup> Francesco arrived in August 1443 having been sent to oversee the construction of the fleet that he would lead east. In September of 1443 the Senate seems to have become increasingly annoyed and angered by the actions of the Papacy and its Legate. A letter from the Senate to the Pope tells of Francesco's demands that Venice pay for the safe conduct of the galleys that Alfonso V of Aragon (1416-1458) had promised to provide for the crusade.<sup>256</sup> The Senate further mentions that there are still 10 galleys awaiting the necessary funds for armament and that Alfonso did not need to fear any attack from Venice.<sup>257</sup> It is unclear why Francesco would have made the demand that the Venetians should pay for the safe-conduct of the Aragonese, but it seems to have been the will of the Papacy. The Aragonese King had promised ships to the crusade, though they would never arrive or participate. Eugenius and Francesco were likely attempting to ensure the Aragonese fleet would participate in the crusade by any means necessary. The Pope needed every participant he could get in order to ensure the success of the campaign. In February 1444 the Senate replied to Francesco stating that they would not provide the 500 ducats he demanded from the tithe that had been collected from Venetian lands for the sending of reports and expenses of the fleet, stating that he should use the tithes collected in Florence, Lombardy, and other northern Italian provinces first. The Venetian tithe, they assured the Cardinal, would always be available to him but that if he used the Venetian money first, the Senate feared that the other states would refuse to pay leaving Venice with the full weight of the cost of this crusade.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg 16, fol. 30v: TR, III, doc. 2627, p. 106

<sup>256</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg 16, fol. 37-37v: TR, III, doc. 2618, p. 104-5

<sup>257</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg 16, fol. 37v: TR, III, doc. 2618, p. 104

<sup>258</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg 16 fol. 61v: TR, III, doc. 2628, p. 107

It could be seen as detrimental to the preparation of the crusade to have the Cardinal Legate arguing with the main contributor to the fleet. However, the wrangling should be seen in the context of the goal of the Papacy which was not only to ensure the successful completion of this crusade but to ensure that the Papacy came out as the primary benefactor of its success. Francesco, as camerlengo under his uncle, knew that the Papacy could not afford to pay for the fleet from its own coffers so it needed to ensure that the costs of the fleet were provided. This led to conflict with the Venetian government who desired simply to be treated fairly and their contributions to the crusade recognized. The second half of this chapter will focus on the Venetian side of this debate to fully understand how their role in this debate and the crusade came about.

### **3.3.3 Francesco Condulmer on Crusade**

Francesco left Venice with the fleet on 22 June 1444 arriving in the environs of Constantinople in September.<sup>259</sup> Francesco Condulmer, as legate, maintained full control of the movement and actions of the fleet. This was seemingly accepted by the other primary commanders of the fleet. Alvise Loredan was instructed by the Venetian Senate to follow the orders of Francesco Condulmer, even to the extent that if questioned to say that the entire fleet was under the command and control of the Papacy.<sup>260</sup> This was obviously a defence mechanism so that Venice could protect itself against Ottoman reprisals should the crusade fail or the fleet be destroyed and people captured, but it also meant that Loredan was subservient to the Legate while on campaign. Waleran de Wavrin, the commander of the Burgundian fleet, seemed to accept this fact as well, as he regularly consulted the legate with any plans and ideas in order to obtain his blessing before carrying them out. However, Francesco was not the sole Condulmer to participate within the fleet. Antonio Condulmer is recorded to have commanded ships within the Venetian portion of the fleet; however, aside from

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<sup>259</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, f. 103: TR, III, doc. 2655 p. 114: Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 27, Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, Edward W. Bodnar (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge and London: Yale University Press) pp. 91-5. Cyriac met with the papal fleet and visited Alvise Loredan, the Venetian commander, near Lapsaki and Gallipoli 27 September 1444: Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, p. 397. The fleet travelled via Corfu, arriving around 6-7 July, and Modon, arriving 17 July, before heading off toward Constantinople.

<sup>260</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 100 and 101 v: TR, III, doc. 2651, p. 113

this sole mention, the extent of his involvement is largely unknown.<sup>261</sup> Due to the previous close ties observed between the Condulmer family and their relative on the Papal throne it is not a difficult assumption to make that Antonio participated more in line with the Papacy's goals and not the Venetian.

Francesco was alone in his role as head of the fleet once the ships departed from Venice. The distances involved made timely communication with Eugenius, or indeed anyone in the West, impossible. This meant that Francesco alone was charged with carrying out the plans he and Eugenius had laid out for themselves. So while on crusade Francesco needed to maintain tactical and political control over the fleet. Upon arrival in the Bosphorus, Francesco, with several of the other leaders within the fleet, went to Constantinople to meet with the Emperor while the rest of the fleet split into two divisions, the first group consisted of the Burgundian ships which were sent to cover the Bosphorus north of Constantinople, while the Papal and Venetian ships guarded the Dardanelles to the south. This was done in an attempt to ensure that the Ottoman army of Asia Minor was not able to cross and reinforce the Ottoman army of Europe. Despite Francesco's rocky relationship with the Venetian government during the preparations of the fleet it seems that the legate and the Venetians on the crusade had a cordial and co-operational attitude towards each other.<sup>262</sup> This may be due to the orders to Alvise Loredan to follow his command as mentioned before, but it did mean that Francesco had at least one contingent within the fleet that he could rely upon to carry out his orders. This was not always the case with the various other factions within the fleet or its supposed allies.

Francesco arrived in Constantinople expecting help and compliance from the Greeks and from Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. Upon his arrival in the city, however, it seems that the Emperor was

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<sup>261</sup> ASV Sen. Mar, Reg. 1, f. 225v: TR, III, doc. 2638, p. 109

<sup>262</sup> This is difficult to judge as the main source for the fleet's involvement is the chronicle written by Jehan de Wavrin, the uncle of the crusader Waleran de Wavrin, participant and leader of the Burgundian fleet, even the Venetian Senate's records are largely silent on the events of the crusade itself making it difficult to judge fully the action and reasons of Francesco and others.

neither overly welcoming nor did he provide the pomp and regalia that Francesco had expected to receive. Instead the Emperor made the legate wait and upon their eventual meeting, according to Syropoulos (a major opponent of the unification of the Church) relations were less than cordial and the attitudes of both men were quite cold.<sup>263</sup> It was clear that the Emperor had not fulfilled his part of the promises to the Council of Ferrara-Florence to begin the process of unification. This would likely have been very clear to Francesco early on in his visits within the city causing conflict between emperor and legate. The Condulmers, particularly Eugenius, had preached and launched the crusade almost specifically to help reduce the pressure the Ottomans had placed upon the Byzantines but the Emperor had failed to obtain widespread support for the Union of Florence among the people of Constantinople. Without the writings or personal thoughts of Francesco it is impossible to know what the legate himself thought of this, but it is clear that the legate and the Byzantine Emperor did not begin the crusade on good terms which would later be a possible detriment to the survival of the crusade.

Meanwhile in the Bosphorus, the Ottoman armies on both sides of the strait were gathering their artillery and bombarding the Burgundian fleet. De Wavrin wrote to Francesco who was still in Constantinople to ask the Emperor to lead his army out and attack the Ottoman army on the European coast. However, the Emperor refused, claiming that to do so would risk leaving the city undefended and vulnerable to attack.<sup>264</sup> This may have been the case. However, it is also possible that the Emperor was simply unwilling to help the legate and deemed the threat too negligible for him to deal with directly. This of course was a mistake as the bombardment by the armies, along with possible help from the Genoese, allowed the Ottoman army to cross the straits and once united with its European counterpart to march to Varna where it attacked and defeated the land army of the crusade leading to the deaths of both the King of Poland and Hungary, Vladislav III (1424-1444),

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<sup>263</sup> Syropoulos, *Les Memoires* p. 350

<sup>264</sup> Jehan de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne, a present nomme Engleterre*, Edward L.C.P. Hardy (ed.) (London: Longman Trubner, 1884) vol. 6, p. 60: Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 127

and the Papal Legate Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, at the battle of Varna in November 1444. Francesco would return to Constantinople at the end of the crusade to take part in the debates held at Xylalas Palace over the viability of a unification of the Churches. At this point, it would seem Francesco's own goals and plans to ensure the Papacy retained control and to unite the churches of East and West Europe had been disrupted. The lack of help from the Emperor had weakened the chances for overall success for the crusade and the fleet's ability to involve itself. After the defeat of the land army the fleet decided to winter in the straits to further protect Constantinople while the crusading army recovered from its defeat and word reached Constantinople that the Hungarian general and later regent John Hunyadi would be marching against the Ottomans once more in the spring.<sup>265</sup>

Francesco Condulmer needed to maintain control over the tactical decisions of the fleet as well. Previous crusades throughout the Middle Ages had proven that strong leadership from a single source, or at least a small council of leaders, was needed to maintain control over the crusading armies and fleets. This was a lesson learned through the failures of the earliest crusades; including the First Crusade which despite its success had numerous delays and internal fighting due to a large and disunited leader base. Crusading efforts brought together groups of soldiers and followers from various places throughout Medieval Europe. These groups shared a common religion and enemy but often very little else. Tension between the various cultural groups was not uncommon. One of the inbuilt purposes of the Papal Legate was to provide a single unifying leader to act as the Pope's representative and religious leader. The legate therefore was meant to encourage co-operation between the various cultural factions within a crusade movement. This also meant that the legate needed to maintain control over the army and use his layman commanders as advisors. Francesco seems to have been rather successful at this.<sup>266</sup> His ability to maintain tactical control of the fleet helped him maintain his goal of full papal control and authority over this campaign.

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<sup>265</sup> Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 6 p. 72

<sup>266</sup> Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 6, pp. 76, 80; Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, pp. 135-7, 143. De Wavrin tells us of many times in which Francesco took counsel from various commanders in the fleet and seems to have met with them during times of tactical planning such as before sieges.

An example of this control can be seen in the events around the capture of Castle Turquantan. The fleet, after wintering in Constantinople, decided to press up the Danube River and assist John Hunyadi's campaign against the Ottomans in 1445.<sup>267</sup> After reaching Silistria and fighting a few skirmish actions around the city, Francesco met with several of the commanders and it was decided that the city was too well defended and would take too much time and manpower to take which would delay the fleet from its proposed meeting with the Hungarian army. With the decision to press on made, de Wavrin and the ships under his command left and sailed past Silistria and further upriver while the rest of the fleet under Condulmer's command prepared to set out later that same day. That afternoon, de Wavrin's ships arrived in sight of Castle Turquantan where they stopped to await the arrival of Francesco and the rest of the fleet. In the meantime, a faction of Wallachian soldiers that had joined de Wavrin's fleet convinced Waleran to attack the castle. Initially, Waleran declined to attack it for he had not been given permission from the legate to do so, but by evening when the rest of the fleet still had not arrived the Burgundians and Wallachians attacked the weakly defended castle and were successful in their attempts to capture it.<sup>268</sup> Francesco Condulmer and the rest of the fleet arrived the next day. Condulmer was furious with de Wavrin for proceeding with the assault on the castle without waiting for him. Condulmer's ship had run aground outside Silistria forcing them to unload the ship to launch it before reloading it all while defending themselves from harassing attacks from the city. This caused the delay in the legate's arrival at Turquantan. Condulmer and de Wavrin argued over the capture of the castle which caused a rift between the two leaders. According to de Wavrin's recounting of the crusade the two men remained at odds with neither seeking nor offering counsel for a time afterwards. Eventually the two reconciled after de Wavrin fell ill and was unable to participate in combat.

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<sup>267</sup> Cyriac, *Later Travels*, p. 193 Cyriac was on Crete at the time and on his way to meet with Francesco Condulmer, the letter was dated to 12 August 1445 but Cyriac was delayed from his until November which would have placed his arrival in Constantinople well after the fleet had returned from its excursion up the Danube.

<sup>268</sup> De Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 6, pp. 87-9; Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, pp. 145-7

This event highlights Condulmer's desire to maintain total control over the fleet. In fact, his delay likely made it possible for Turquantan to fall as the Ottomans were too nervous of the fleet that remained outside the walls of Silistria to send troops to reinforce the castle itself. Waleran argued this but Condulmer dismissed his defence and insisted that de Wavrin should have waited for the legate's arrival and permission to attack the fortress. Its capture without the knowledge and permission of the legate undermined his authority over the rest of the fleet and diminished the prestige of the legate's position. Francesco Condulmer did not want to lose control over the fleet and have the crusade spiral out of control of the papacy. So he punished and berated de Wavrin for his actions and while temporarily causing a rift between the two commanders of the fleet maintained control over it. Unfortunately, the fleet's campaign came to a lacklustre end. Upon reaching Nicopolis the fleet joined up with Hunyadi's army and together attempted to lay siege to city. However, after a time it was decided that the fleet needed to sail back down the Danube River before the weather shifted and the river began to freeze.

After their excursion up the Danube River, Francesco and the fleet returned to Constantinople where he remained until 1446. However, Francesco had further duties to perform as a papal legate, to serve ambassador to the east. Despite the promises made by Emperor John VIII Palaiologos during his visit to the Council of Ferrara-Florence to bring about the Unification of the Church the Emperor had returned to the East and done very little to gain acceptance of the Union of Florence. Therefore, it fell to Francesco to help mollify the opposition to the Union that was now being led by the monk Gennadios, formerly George Scholarios. Scholarios had joined John VIII's entourage when the emperor had travelled to the Council of Ferrara-Florence and had initially been resistant, though not outright opposed, to the unification of the Churches and had left the council early.<sup>269</sup> In a last attempt to bring the Greeks under the papal fold a series of debates was held at Xylalas Palace. While there is some contention over when the debates were held in Constantinople it seems likely

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<sup>269</sup> Harris, *End of Byzantium*, p. 158

that they were not held until after and the return of the fleet from its unsuccessful attempts to help John Hunyadi's campaign. If it was held earlier it likely would have been at least mentioned in de Wavrin's text, which while focused on Waleran de Wavrin's movements does quite often comment on the whereabouts and actions of the legate and other leading figures of the fleet. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a mention of the legate appearing for the debates in his text if they took place in 1444 during the crusade. Instead it is likely that Condulmer was busy with running the fleet. The debates are more likely to have been held in the late summer or autumn of 1445 after the return of the fleet from its campaign up the Danube as Condulmer did not return to Venice until 1446.<sup>270</sup> There must have been something keeping him in Constantinople and it is probable that the debates were the cause. Regrettably, we only have Syropoulos as a record of these debates. Syropoulos was stringent supporter of the anti-unionists within Byzantium and did not have a high opinion of Condulmer himself who he saw as pretentious and presumptive.<sup>271</sup> We know very little about Condulmer's actions during the events of the debates. Syropoulos only provides a truncated summary of the events of the debates and celebrates that due to the poor showing of the crusade and the help provided by the West, the actions and presumptions of Condulmer, and the lack of support for the cause of the unionists in the East a unification was avoided. It is unclear if Condulmer acted as a judge or moderator or did he actually speak and present arguments to the debates himself. In the end all that is certain is that Condulmer attended the debates and upheld his and his uncle's attempts at ensuring that the Papacy was represented and its authority and prestige enforced. Though a unification was not achieved Eugenius was still able to trigger debates in the East over whether to follow through with the unification or not. The papacy under Eugenius IV had successfully survived the crisis presented by the Council of Ferrara-Florence and nearly nullified

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<sup>270</sup> Gill, *Council of Florence*, p. 365-6. Gill lays out a well-reasoned idea of when the debates were held based on the dates of the crusade as well as the dates of the death of Mark Eugenikos and the accession of the new Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory

<sup>271</sup> Syropoulos, *Les Mémoires*, p. 572



them entirely, it had launched a crusade in defence of Christendom, and begun the process of potential unification of the Churches.

We have seen how the Condulmer family worked to strengthen the position of the Papacy throughout the 1430s and 1440s. Despite their origins in Venice they are seen as a family be focused almost entirely on preserving and emboldening the figure of the Pope. However, there is one curious incident during the Crusade of Varna that has as yet been untouched by modern historians.

Francesco Condulmer spent much of the Crusade of Varna enforcing his superiority over the fleet in the name of the Pope. However, in the spring of 1445 after the crossing of the Ottoman army, the subsequent defeat of the crusading army at Varna in November, and the wintering of the fleet at Constantinople Condulmer chose to enact a plan that almost solely benefitted the Venetian contingent of the crusade and could have led to disaster for the remnants of the Crusade. In the spring of 1445 de Wavrin planned to sail around the Black Sea to learn the truth about the defeat of the army at Varna including the fate of the Hungarian king who was said to have been killed by some but was said to have survived the battle and be in hiding in a friendly fortress around the Black Sea by others. Condulmer, according to de Wavrin's account, praised his actions and gave him his blessing and permission to carry out this mission. In the meantime, however, Condulmer allegedly departed from Constantinople with the Venetian fleet and travelled to the Aegean Sea in order to see what could be captured there.<sup>272</sup> This diversion and removal of the fleet from Constantinople was not only not in keeping with the crusade or the Condulmer family plan to enhance the papacy's position it was potentially very dangerous. The crusade had no scope for protecting or recovering lands in the Aegean, Condulmer's absence from Constantinople meant that progress could not be made on the unification of the church and indeed the debates at Xylalas Palace could have been held during this period instead of after the crusades defeat, and it also left Constantinople open to attack. Furthermore, had the fleet engaged in any battles while in the Aegean, it would have risked the life

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<sup>272</sup> De Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 6, p. 60

of the papal legate. Unfortunately, there is little known about this diversion; however, it is a singular ripple in Francesco's attitudes and drives and could be the key to understanding why the Venetians participated in the Crusade of Varna at all and therefore merits further study in the second part of this chapter.

### **3.4 Venetian Involvement in the Crusade of Varna**

Venice's involvement in the Crusade of Varna has never been specifically addressed by modern scholarship, even though much of the crusade fleet was composed of Venetian vessels. The work that has been done on Varna focuses on the crusading land army with some small attention paid to the actions of Francesco Condulmer and the fleet. However, few discuss the fleet's movements after the defeat of Varna and do not seem to count the 1445 campaign, led by the regent of Hungary John Hunyadi, which the fleet supported from the Danube. Even more important, previous works have almost all neglected to mention the fleet's brief foray into the Aegean in the spring of 1445 before the Danube campaign. One of the few who has is Stefan Stantchev but he plays down the episode and does not perceive its importance. In this section, it will be argued that Venice initially joined the crusade as a willing if semi-reluctant participant and was enticed into being more cooperative through the reports of early victory. It will be argued, moreover, that willingness was enhanced by the possibility of conquering or regaining territory. Among the territories in question was the city of Thessaloniki which Venice had ruled between 1423 and 1430 when it had been conquered by the Ottoman Turks. This ambition has not been adequately appreciated and indeed it has even been specifically denied by one recent scholar. It is, however, central to any understanding of Venetian involvement in the Crusade of Varna.

#### **3.4.1 Venice and Thessaloniki**

To understand one of the key reasons for Venetian involvement in the Crusade of Varna, the recovery of lost territory, one must first understand what Venice had lost and what might entice them to join an armed campaign against the Ottomans. Venice, as has been discussed above,

obtained the Byzantine city of Thessaloniki from the despot of the city, Andronikos Palaiologos (1408-23), in 1423.<sup>273</sup> It had already been besieged by the Ottomans for many years at this point and the weakening Byzantine Empire believed it could no longer hold the city against the Turks. Therefore, they approached the Venetian bailo Daniele Loredan who brought the question of acquisition to the Venetian government. A council was formed to judge the viability of their ability to hold on to the city themselves.<sup>274</sup> The council held the vote for the acquisition of the city on July 7, 1423.<sup>275</sup> It was decided that Venice would take possession of the city and they refused several proposals that would allow for the Greeks purchase the city back from the Venetians. Venice still spent a vast fortune on manpower and supplies for this distant city. Despite the city's loss in 1430, it is clear, as will be shown in this chapter, that the Venetians never truly gave up on the city and that it viewed expeditions, like the Crusade of Varna, as possible avenues for reclaiming their lost city.

The city had already been the target of numerous attacks and sieges by the Ottoman European army and these did not let up after the Venetians took charge of the city. This was not, however, the first time Venice had acquired cities due to the threat of the Ottomans.<sup>276</sup> Over the course of this struggle the city sent constant supplies of manpower, equipment, and food from across their maritime empire. Much of the food came from the island of Crete that had increasingly become the breadbasket of the Venetian Empire, while the men provided for the defence of the city were often hired mercenaries.<sup>277</sup> Stantchev believes that these figures however are nothing when

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<sup>273</sup> The city is also known as Salonica and Thessalonica. For more on Venetian Thessaloniki see: John R. Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Venetian Documents* (Padua, 2002); John Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Greek Documents* (Padua, 2006); Harris, *End of Byzantium*, pp. 123-8:

<sup>274</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 28

<sup>275</sup> ASV, Sen. Sec. Reg. 8, f. 110 and Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 30

<sup>276</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 56; Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 169. The cities of Nauplion and Argos were acquired in similar situations in 1388: Stantchev lists Venice's major acquisitions often in the face of Ottoman expansion were Corfu, Dalmatia, Durazzo, Argos, Nauplion, Zonchio, Athens, and Patras,

<sup>277</sup> ASV, Sen Sec. Reg. 8, ff. 100-111v; 111v-112v; 113v-114; Reg. 9, ff. 24-5; 45-46; 75-7; 106; 108-9; 109-10; 141-2; 156; Misti, Reg 54, ff. 131; 141; 141v; 165v; Reg. 55, f. 24; 26; 36; 38; 74; 118-9; 120; 139-42; 145; 179; Reg. 56, ff. 38; 40; 44; and others. These all document the time, effort, resources, and money spent by the Venetian Senate in their long battle against the Ottomans to hold the city between 1423 and 1430. Others like

considered next to the amount of resources spent on Venetian expansion into the Italian mainland which according to him dominated Venetian interest from 1402 onwards.<sup>278</sup> Using figures from the wars Venice fought with Milan in 1425-6 and 1427-8 Stantchev states that the Venetians sent only a few hundred men to protect the city of Thessaloniki while agreeing to arm '8,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry in 1426, and... led an estimated 20,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry into battle against the Visconti armies in 1426.<sup>279</sup> He then compares the total expenses for the War of Thessaloniki at 200,000-740,000 ducats and around roughly 60,000 ducats a month while the War with Milan in 1431 was supposed to cost 70,000 ducats a month from the Republic. There are however key differences between the city of Thessaloniki and the attempted conquests in northern Italy. First and foremost, in Italy Venice had allies it was relying on to help them in the fighting. In the 1425-6 war Venice had an agreement with Florence to arm soldiers providing Venice with an ally that could not only help for the payment of soldiers but also to pick up any slack that Venice could not cover itself. Furthermore, as can be seen in the shifting number of ships provided for the Crusade of Varna, numbers promised and numbers arrived were rarely the same. Conversely, in Thessaloniki, Venice had few close allies to help protect the city, they were, for all intents and purposes, alone. They had acquired the city from the Byzantines because the Greeks felt they could not hold it against Ottoman aggression and the other main player in the region, the Genoese, were no ally of Venice to provide support. This left them alone to send as much as they felt they could provide. Second, the Wars with Milan were less defensive in nature. Where Venice was trying to hold the city of Thessaloniki and its immediate surrounding areas from Ottoman assault, the War with Milan was meant to increase Venetian control in the Italian mainland. This type of campaign would require more troops for fighting and holding locations versus a solely defensive action that could rely, at least ostensibly, on the defences of the city and the inhabitants of that city. Lastly, the campaign in Italy was significantly

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Misti, 56, f. 104: TR II no 2058 show that Venice was cautious in their planning for the protection of the city, in this instance rejecting a proposal by Alvise Michiel to combat the Turks and provide transports to Thessaloniki

<sup>278</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 163

<sup>279</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 174 these figures are pulled from Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p.146

closer to home and therefore would have been significantly easier for Venice, despite its sizable fleet's presence, to send men, money, and supplies into northern Italy than to take the long journey to Thessaloniki. Therefore, the comparison of the War with Milan and the War for Thessaloniki is far from equivalent. Furthermore, the sources that the Senate's own records provide shows that while they were sending less to Thessaloniki than to northern Italy they were still actively sending support, food, and other resources to the city with some regularity throughout the seven years of occupation and war.

Eventually however, Sultan Murad II decided to take the city once and for all.<sup>280</sup> The fall itself happened after only a few days of fighting and the Venetians within the city fled to their ships in the harbour. The defeat hurt Venetian-Byzantine relations both due to the reported treatment of the Byzantines under Venetian rule as well as the reported cowardice of the Venetian flight from the city. This however, is not the focus of the study here, instead simply to show that the city fell 29 March 1430. Venetian records immediately following the loss of the city are rather limited.<sup>281</sup> However, they show that the Venetians remained at war with the Ottomans for a time after the fall of Thessaloniki with the Senate issuing orders to their Captain General of the Sea to harass and raid Ottoman holdings throughout the Aegean Sea and Gallipoli using the Romanian fleet in hopes of obtaining a treaty that would return Thessaloniki to them.<sup>282</sup> They were unsuccessful in their endeavours and the Venetians concluded a treaty with the Ottomans in September 1430.<sup>283</sup> This treaty was based around a previous treaty concluded between the Ottomans and Venetians in 1419.<sup>284</sup> The treaty stipulated that Venice would not harass unarmed Ottoman vessels in the Aegean Sea that Ottoman armies would not attack thirty-eight named territories under Venetian control,

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<sup>280</sup> Chalkokondyles Vol1, pp. 389-91: Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975), pp. 171-2: John Anagnostes, *Diegesis*, translation in John Melville-Jones, *Venice and Thessalonica 1423-1430: The Greek Accounts*, (Padua: Unipress, 2006) pp. 146-79. Provide the best summaries of the fall of Thessaloniki, though all from Greek standpoints.

<sup>281</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, pp. 225-35

<sup>282</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 229. This order went out July 28 1430.

<sup>283</sup> George Martin Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levanticum*, vol. 2 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966) pp. 343-5

<sup>284</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', pp. 165-6

and that Venice would pay tribute for Lepanto and three Albanian fortresses (the 1430 treaty reduced this tribute as some of the Albanian territories had been recovered by the Ottomans). Through this treaty Venice was able to maintain their Aegean and Black Sea trade links but were unable to reclaim the city. Later in February 1431 the Venetians were allowed to open a consulate within the city of Thessaloniki.<sup>285</sup> The loss of this major safe harbour on the Aegean was a hindrance to the expansion of the Venetian trade empire especially if Venice wanted to turn the city into a second Venice.<sup>286</sup> Thessaloniki was still in the hands of the Ottomans in 1444 when the preaching of the Crusade of Varna began.

### **3.4.2 Preparations for the Crusade**

Venice had joined the crusade by May 1443 and preparations of a fleet began to form in the city.<sup>287</sup> This fleet was originally meant to consist of ten Papal ships, six Venetian ships, and four Burgundian ships which would form the core of the fleet with the prospect of other ships joining the fleet after it had departed.<sup>288</sup> Francesco Condulmer arrived in Venice in August 1443 and the difficulties between himself and the Venetians began almost immediately as discussed previously. These difficulties arose around the payment of the necessary preparations of the crusade and of the selection of Alvise Loredan as lay commander of the fleet. However, there was a definitive shift in the Venetian attitude which was tied to reports of the early success that the army was having against the Ottomans. It may be argued that the Venetians did not see themselves as obstructing the crusade and instead simply that they were attempting to protect themselves from being exploited as

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<sup>285</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 235

<sup>286</sup> Eugenia Russell, 'Symeon of Thessalonica and his Message of Personal Redemption' in Eugenia Russell (ed.), *Spirituality in Late Byzantium: Essays in Presenting New Research by International Scholars* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) p. 39; Doukas, p. 170

<sup>287</sup> Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 14

<sup>288</sup> Ships were likely to join from the Aragonese fleet that had been promised by King Alfonso of Aragon but would never arrive, as well as from some of the Venetian territories in the Aegean such as Crete and Negropont. There may also have been some consideration that some Greek ships might join the fleet upon the crusaders' arrival at Constantinople, though this is merely speculation.

well as ensuring that the crusade could proceed without significant delay and with the utmost possible chance for success.

As discussed in the previous section, the Venetians' greatest challenge was to provide for the construction and/or provisioning and outfitting of the Papal, Venetian, and Burgundian ships that would comprise the core of the crusading fleet. This was a costly undertaking to accomplish and would require Venice to focus all of its efforts to ensure that the ships were prepared in a timely fashion so as not to delay the fleet's departure. Furthermore, it would require the Venetians to suspend their trade and focus all efforts on constructing the fleet necessary to carry out the crusade. This cost had to be covered by someone, of course, but as mentioned previously the Papal coffers had been severely depleted during the long confrontation between Eugenius' Council of Ferrara-Florence and the Council of Basel. It was the Pope's and Legate's prerogative to ensure that other parties paid for the crusade and the necessary support and preparations. It seemed, at least to Venetian eyes, that the majority of that financial burden fell upon them. Much of the surviving correspondence surrounding this period between Venice and the Legate or the Pope deals with the necessity of payment and the fact that Venice did not think it fair that they should cover the vast majority of the expenses. However, this was not simply the Venetians trying to skimp out on paying for their share of the crusade, instead they wished to be given fair treatment and to have others bear some of the immense financial burden. In at least one missive to Eugenius IV the Senate wrote that they were committed to the crusade and were willing to pay for their fair share. They pointed out, however, that the money in Venice would always be accessible to the crusade while other areas around northern Italy including Florence and Lombardy, were also obliged to provide the tithe but had not collected this.<sup>289</sup> The Venetian Senate were not trying to dodge the bill but were giving useful alternatives for the collection of money while Venice would remain the constructor of and willing participant in the fleet. Throughout their missives the Venetians claimed to be committed to

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<sup>289</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 61v, 116v-17: TR, III, doc. 2628 and 2663, pp. 107 and 117

the crusade and the need to expedite the construction of the fleet so that it could be in position to prevent the Ottoman army of Asia Minor from crossing and reinforcing the Ottoman army of Europe.

Some may see these as platitudes while Venice tried to negotiate its way out of paying for the fleet thereby protecting their fortunes. However, this does seem unlikely as they were still helping cover some of the costs and willingly accepted the raising of the tithe in their territories. They agreed for the tithe to be collected with the stipulation that Venetian officials were present during collection to prevent misuse of the funds.<sup>290</sup> Furthermore, when Eugenius IV announced that the Papacy would send eight ships not the originally agreed upon ten the Senate protested against him.<sup>291</sup> The government wrote that from their own experience against the Ottomans this would provide too few ships to effectively hold the straights around Constantinople, despite the fact that this would mean a cheaper and quicker turn around, but meant the fleet would be less successful. Later they even provided a sum of money to help speed the process along before they finally relented, providing the remaining funds necessary for the completion of the fleet.<sup>292</sup>

Trouble further brewed around the Papal selection of the lay commander to the crusader fleet. Pope Eugenius IV and Francesco Condulmer both selected the well-regarded naval commander Alvise Loredan for the position of Captain of the Fleet. He would serve as the lay commander and would for all intents and purposes be subservient solely to Francesco Condulmer himself while on campaign.<sup>293</sup> The Loredan family were well renowned sailors and had numerous accolades attributed

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<sup>290</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, f. 30v: TR, III, doc. 2615, p. 104. In another letter the Senate complains of the misuse of funds by Francesco Condulmer. This is interesting but ultimately unprovable without further evidence though many of the Senate's documentation specifically discuss measures to ensure the appropriate use of the funds provided

<sup>291</sup> ASV, Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 13-13v: TR, III, doc. 2608, p. 102

<sup>292</sup> ASV Sen. Mar, Reg. 2, f. 8: TR, III, doc. 2648, p. 112. The Senate provided 5000 ducats for the completion of the fleet in June 1444 but stipulated that the money went straight to the dock master to ensure it was used appropriately.

<sup>293</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, f. 65: TR, III, doc. 2631, p. 108 The exact command structure of the fleet is unclear other than Francesco Condulmer had overall control of the fleet and all of its various parts and factions. It seems, based on the writings of de Wavrin that the Burgundian fleet was under the command of Waleran de Wavrin, while Loredan was the lay commander of both the Papal and Venetian ships, with both men subservient to Condulmer's overall command.



to them through their numerous successes at sea. Alvise Loredan himself had had a successful naval career prior to this. This is almost certainly why the Condulmers chose Alvise Loredan to be the lay fleet commander. There was a significant issue with their choice however. The Loredan family had a long-standing feud with the current Doge of Venice, Francesco Foscari. This rivalry between the two families prompted Foscari to bring before the Senate a proposal that no Venetian should serve a foreign power for money or glory.<sup>294</sup> The Senate voted against this measure and allowed for the selection of not only Alvise Loredan but other Venetian commanders to positions throughout the fleet. It is impossible to know if the Condulmers knew about this rivalry between Loredan and Foscari or if they knew that the selection of Loredan would cause Foscari to attempt to block their appointment of him. It is possible since certain members of the Condulmer family were still patricians in Venice despite the family's growing power within the Papal Court.<sup>295</sup> However, this delay and conflict did not arise from a Venetian sense of hindering the campaign but instead was caused by internal political intrigue within the government and society of Venice.

Word spread of the early success of the land army of the Crusade of Varna. The Crusade set out in earnest in October 1443 under the command of King Vladislav, John Hunyadi and Cardinal Cesarini. The crusaders crossed the Danube into Serbia at a time in which they may have expected the Ottoman armies to have returned to their lands for harvest.<sup>296</sup> They met with initial success defeating an Ottoman force in Serbia and then pushed as far as the town of Sofia. However, the Ottoman army had been able to muster enough forces to confront the invading crusaders and delivered a crushing defeat at the Zlatitsa Pass around Christmas 1443.<sup>297</sup> During their retreat from this defeat Hunyadi was successful in defeating their pursuers and allowed the rest of the army to retreat. Reports which trickled west exaggerated the successes and victories of the land army and

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<sup>294</sup> Dennis Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari, 1373-1457* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007) pp. 108 and 144-6

<sup>295</sup> Antonio Condulmer remained in Venice and never pursued an ecclesiastical career

<sup>296</sup> Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 16

<sup>297</sup> Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 17

omitted much of the troubles and the defeat. It is difficult to tell when exactly Venice received their reports and from whom they were sent. They may have heard of some of the early successes of the army as early as December 1443 before the battle of Zlatitsa Pass from the Bailo of Corfu but the Senate does not seem to have chosen to act upon this information without confirmation.<sup>298</sup> By January 1444 Venice had become more favourable toward participating in the crusade. On 17 June 1444 the senate sent its instructions to Alvise Loredan and the captains of the papal ships laying out their advice and what should be done to help the crusade proceed.<sup>299</sup> It seemed that Venice wished to get the crusader fleet moving and to get into position so that it could support the army when needed.

Venice had numerous reasons for avoiding active participation in the crusade. First and foremost they technically had a treaty with the Ottomans from 1430 after the Ottomans had attacked the Venetian held city of Thessaloniki.<sup>300</sup> Because of this treaty the Venetians were less inclined to declare a direct war upon the Ottomans as the treaty provided them some semblance of protection from direct confrontation with the Sultan and his armies. Furthermore, participation and the inevitable backlash should the crusade fail would fall first and foremost upon the Venetians, or so they seemed to believe. Venice formed what Norman Housley dubbed an 'antemurale state', a frontline buffer against the Ottoman threat to Western Christendom.<sup>301</sup> Directly involving themselves with a crusade could make them the target of any retribution. Venice still relied heavily on its trade with the east and particularly its lands in the Aegean, primarily Syria and Egypt.<sup>302</sup> War with the Ottomans would make this trade impossible.<sup>303</sup> It is reasonable to understand the Venetian

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<sup>298</sup> Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, p. 18

<sup>299</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 100 a 101v: TR, III, doc. 2651, p. 113. These instructions included that all captains were subservient to Condulmer, that they should avoid Rhodes at all costs, and a list of galleys that they could expect to rely on including ones from Negroponte, Nauplion and Tinos, as well as the Archipelago.

<sup>300</sup> Thomas, *Diplomatarium*, vol. 2, pp. 343-5

<sup>301</sup> Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat 1453-1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>302</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 163

<sup>303</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 119v-20: TR, III, doc. 2668, p. 118-9 In the orders the Venetian Senate give to Alvise Loredan he is instructed to claim that if questioned by the Ottomans to state that the fleet is not a Venetian one but a Papal fleet so as to give some space for negotiation and innocence to the Venetian participation.

hesitation to dive unhindered into conflict against the Ottomans without the chance or belief of some level of success. Therefore it is unsurprising and understandable that the Venetians were less inclined to participate in the Crusade of Varna until they learned of the successes of the land army, however exaggerated they might be. Much of what we learn can be seen in the orders given to the bailos of Venice's holdings and to those given to Loredan upon his departure from Venice. These orders give insight into Venice's actions and involvement during the fleet's campaign which is fortunate as there is little literary evidence that exists today that describes Venice's actions during the campaign.

### **3.4.3 Venice on Crusade**

The fleet set out from Venice May-June 1444. Cyriac of Ancona, who was in regular communication with Cardinal Cesarini throughout the period of the Crusade, wrote once more to the cardinal to inform him of the arrival of the fleet and of Cardinal Condulmer around 12 September 1444.<sup>304</sup> Cyriac continues to inform Cesarini that the fleet has divided into two parts to watch the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. However, beyond this point knowledge of the contribution of the Venetians is limited. De Wavrin, the major contemporary source for the fleet's campaign, focuses, unsurprisingly, on the Burgundian contingent and their commander, Waleran de Wavrin. Instead historians must rely on what little de Wavrin says about the Venetian-Papal fleet and the actions and orders of the Venetian government.

It is known that several Venetian nobles were chosen as commanders in the fleet and were under the command of Francesco Condulmer and Alvise Loredan and would have followed what orders these men gave.<sup>305</sup> Loredan himself was ordered by the Senate to serve below the Legate himself, so it is not a stretch to believe that these other commanders would have been given similar

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<sup>304</sup> Cyriac, *Later Travels*, p. 87

<sup>305</sup> ASV Sen. Mar, Reg. 1, f. 226: TR, III, doc. 2638, p. 109. Captains chosen: Antonio Condulmer, Marino da Molin, Niccolo Contarini, Pietro Zeno, Paolo Loredan, and Lorenzo Moro

instructions.<sup>306</sup> Two sets of instructions sent to Loredan have survived. The first, dated 17 June 1444 dealt with the running of the fleet and what the fleet should accomplish upon arrival in the east while the second dated 9 November 1444 informed Loredan on diplomatic matters.<sup>307</sup> The first set of orders is extremely important to the study of Venice in the Crusade of Varna as it serves as one of very few sources for the actions of the Venetian fleet. The Senate instructed Loredan to defend the Dardanelles with the fleet and to expect to be joined by galleys from Euboea, Nauplion, Tinos, and the Archipelago. De Wavrin confirms that the Venetians with the Papal ships held the Dardanelles while the Burgundian fleet moved to protect the Bosphorus Strait. The Senate further instructed Loredan to avoid Rhodes, to not engage with the fleet of Rhodes, as well as preventing the Burgundians from going to Rhodes. This was done to avoid conflict with the Knights of Rhodes who were allied to the Genoese and often in conflict with the Venetians. This first set of orders also confirmed that Francesco Condulmer was the overall commander of the Papal-Venetian fleet as well as the Burgundian one and that Loredan should serve under him. It specifically laid out that all councils of war should be completed in the presence of Condulmer as well. Although it does not provide the exact actions of the fleet these orders are no less important for laying out what the fleet likely did as well as providing useful information into the command structure. The second set of instructions is perhaps more telling of Venice's attitude towards the crusade and the political state of the Republic and the eastern Mediterranean at the time. Here Loredan was instructed that if the Hungarians made peace with the Ottomans, he should as well, for Venice was unable to continue to fight on alone. He was instructed to explain to the Sultan that the fleet belonged to the Pope and not to the Republic. He was to explain that this was the case despite the fact that the fleet was manned mainly by Venetians. It confirmed that Loredan had been given power to accept the best peace possible for Venice and to return with the entire fleet. This second set of orders shows how Venice viewed the conflict with the Ottomans; a war they could not fight alone. Without the other

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<sup>306</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 100, 101v, and 119v-20: TR, III, doc. 2651 and 2668, pp. 133 and 118-9

<sup>307</sup> TR, III, pp. 113 and 118-9

participants both in the army and in the fleet, they did not believe they would be able to fight against the Ottomans. We also see the Senate's prepared explanation to the Ottomans whom they had an existing treaty with about why Venetians were among the fleet by claiming it was Papal and not Venetian. This is obviously a defence mechanism that may or may not provide any protection against Ottoman reprisal for the crusade. One final thing of importance from these orders is the comment that the fleet was manned primarily by Venetians. It is unclear if this is a comment about the fact that many of the commanders were Venetian or if the sailors themselves came from the republic. However, the latter is highly possible and even likely due to Venice naturally having a large number of skilled sailors that could man the ships of this fleet which was constructed and provisioned in Venice. Overall, it seems that Venice while participating in the crusade was attempting to maintain a low profile by keeping their commanders subservient to the Papal legate, instructing Loredan to make peace quickly and safely should peace be made, and by calling the fleet Papal and not Venetian.

In the summer de Wavrin writes that Condulmer arrived with some ships at the mouth of the Danube. This was after the fleet had travelled into the Aegean and returned, seemingly having completed nothing of any significance. The Venetians are not mentioned in relation to the crusade throughout the rest of de Wavrin's account, not even the Venetian commander Alvise Loredan. Instead the account focuses on the Burgundians' and Condulmer's actions. However, if we are to believe the letters sent to Loredan by the Senate, since most of the Papal ships were manned by Venetian sailors they would have still played a key role, if an unspoken one, in the rest of the crusade.

Despite the lack of information about the Venetian contribution there is at least one Venetian source that sheds some, though somewhat dubious, light on how Venice viewed their participation in the Crusade of Varna. Giovanni Maria Angiolello writes a very short summarization of the Crusade of Varna in his work *Historia Turcessa* where he mentions the successes of 'our'

fleet.<sup>308</sup> It does not provide much, but this brief mention could show that the Venetians were proud of their participation in the Crusade of Varna. They may have seen it as an inclusive action in which the Venetians, along with the other crusaders, had some success. They viewed themselves as participants to the crusade and not separate from the rest. Furthermore, it ties the events of 1445, the actions of the fleet, and John Hunyadi's campaign down the Danube with the rest of the Crusade of Varna, a fact that modern historians of the crusade ignore.

#### **3.4.4 The Aegean Diversion**

Though our knowledge of the exact actions of the Venetians during the Crusade of Varna is limited, there is one curious event in which they were involved in that has been largely overlooked by modern historians; a diversion of the fleet into the Aegean. While it does not appear that this diversion accomplished much of anything it does provide hints of the motives behind Venice joining this campaign as well as deeper connections than what some might previously have thought between the Condulmer family and their home city. This expedition is being classified as a diversion for several reasons; first of which is the timing of the trip, which as we will see is at a time when the rest of the crusading fleet is accomplishing other important tasks. Secondly, the goals of this expedition are solely for the benefit of the Venetians and not to the benefit of the crusade as a whole. Finally, the diversion put the life of the Legate, Francesco Condulmer, at risk and endangered the leadership of the entire crusade. Therefore, although the fleet would have passed through the Aegean on its travels to Constantinople, this specific trip can be seen as a purposeful diversion from the Crusade of Varna.

The diversion occurred late winter to early spring 1445 as best as can be discerned from De Wavrin who mentions the diversion of the Venetian and Papal ships during this time.<sup>309</sup> The timing of Francesco and the Venetian fleet's departure seems poorly chosen. After the defeat of the crusader

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<sup>308</sup> Giovanni Maria Angiolello, *Historia Turcesa (1300-1514)*, I. Ursu (ed.) (Bucharest: Editunea Academiei Romane, 1909) p. 12ff The difficulties of this text arise from the separation of time between event and writing. Angiolello was not born until 1452 and was writing much later after a life of servitude to the Ottoman Sultan.

<sup>309</sup> de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 6 p. 60

army at Varna in November 1444 there is confusion and uncertainty among the surviving participants. John Hunyadi had retreated back up the Danube into Hungary and was planning his next move. However, the fleet received conflicting reports of the battle and the fate of King Vladislas. The Ottomans claimed the king was dead and even produced a head before several of the Burgundians as proof; however, word from the Hungarians and others reported that the king had survived the battle and was laying low in a fortress on the Black Sea. After wintering near Constantinople, the fleet commanders met and de Wavrin announced that he planned to seek out the Hungarian king. Condulmer praised him for his foresight and approved his plan and a date was set to meet at the mouth of the Danube to sail up the river to support Hunyadi's coming campaign. In the meantime, the Venetians with Francesco would, according to de Wavrin, travel into the Aegean Sea. This meant that while the Burgundians sought out the Hungarian king and the fleet was meant to be protecting the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, the Papal-Venetian fleet set out into the Aegean on an unknown, at least to de Wavrin, mission. It seems a poor choice by the commanders of the fleet; however, it may have been the first chance the Venetians had to possibly gain something out of this crusade.

Venice, despite the interpretations of Stantchev, had not taken the loss of Thessaloniki in 1430 lying down. Immediately after its capture the Senate released orders for the Captain of the Sea to attack Ottoman held areas along the coast, in particular Gallipoli.<sup>310</sup> This was done in hopes that they may be able to make a favourable peace treaty with the Ottomans and possibly regain the city either through siege or through the treaty. It is unknown what, if anything, the Captain was able to achieve but we know from the treaty of 1430 between Venice and the sultan they did not regain Thessaloniki.<sup>311</sup> However, that was not the end for Venetian ambition over control of the city. During the preparations in Venice before the crusade fleet launched, the Senate sent out a call to their

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<sup>310</sup> Melville-Jones, *Venetian Documents*, p. 229

<sup>311</sup> Thomas, *Diplomatarium*, vol. 2 pp. 343-5

bailos throughout the Aegean to look for targets that might be good to hit with the fleet.<sup>312</sup>

Thessaloniki, along with Gallipoli and a few other locations, was specifically named in this order. The Senate stated that they did not wish to take these locations for themselves but would instead guard them in the name of Christianity. It is impossible to know if Condulmer had a hand in this plan. He had already arrived in Venice when these orders were sent out and may have been privy to the decision to put such a plan into action. However, it is clear that he approved of the action later since he himself participated in it. The potential for this plan to regain territory for Venice is undoubtedly one reason the commune joined in the campaign. It furthermore highlights that Venice still had a keen interest in regaining their line of defences against the Ottoman threat in general as well as specifically regaining Thessaloniki, further indicating that they viewed the Ottomans as a threat in the early fifteenth century and not as a 'minor trade partner and a secondary geopolitical concern'.<sup>313</sup>

The diversion was a huge risk for the legate as well but may hint at a deeper connection between the Papal focused Condulmer family and their birth home of Venice than previous studies realized. As previously stated the diversion came at a time when the crusade had lost much of its momentum and important members of its leadership. Both Cesarini, the papal legate for the army, and King Vladislas, the secular leader of the army, had fallen in the battle at Varna. While the fate of these men may not have been fully known to the fleet commanders, shown by de Wavrin's expedition to find the king along the Black Sea, the events of the defeat were known to them, making this expedition into the Aegean Sea an odd decision on which the remaining legate would risk himself on. There was a serious possibility that Condulmer would be placed in unnecessary danger. Unfortunately, without any records from Condulmer himself it will likely never be known why he agreed to go through with this plan. The legate may have been fulfilling promises he made to the Venetians during their negotiations leading up to the departure of the fleet from Venice. By

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<sup>312</sup> ASV Sen. Sec. Reg. 16, ff. 104-104v: TR, III, doc. 2656, p. 114-5

<sup>313</sup> Stantchev, 'Venice and the Ottoman Threat', p. 164



agreeing to investigate possible targets in the Aegean, Condulmer may have been able to gain further support from the Senate and ease the tensions that had arisen between the legate and the Republic. This diversion therefore could have been his way of fulfilling that promise. Or having seen the crusade failing the legate may have wanted to see the crusade achieve something of note. The diversion could have provided the legate with a simple solution for two problems, fulfilling the Venetian desire to secure lands in the Aegean and striking the Ottomans where they were less focused. Whether he was attempting to secure even a minor victory for the Christians or not, Condulmer was assuredly helping promote the agenda of his native Venice during this diversion and, uncharacteristically of the Condulmer family, not acting in support of the papal agenda. While he was gone on this expedition Condulmer could have instead attended the debates at Xylalas Palace discussed earlier. If the debates had been held during the crusade, even though it was after the defeat at Varna, the pro-Unionists would still have been able to leverage possible future success of the campaign as a reason for proceeding with the Union of Florence. However, Condulmer was away from Constantinople during the spring of 1445 and in the early summer met with de Wavrin and proceeded up the Danube River to support Hunyadi's campaign. Thereby leaving limited time for the debates to actually take place during this time and making it much more likely that they happened after the fleet had returned from its failed trip up the river.

### **3.5 Conclusion:**

The Condulmer family, led by Pope Eugenius IV, was ultimately successful in their battles against the Council of Basel and through keen diplomacy and guile were able to outlast the Council and turn many of the most powerful lay leaders of Europe against them. Thus, they achieved their ultimate goal of protecting the power and position of the Pope. Through their actions they sparked the beginnings of the Crusade of Varna with the promises of defending the Greeks in the east in exchange for possible unification between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The success of this venture would further increase the prestige of the Papacy and bring about a closing of the schism

that had begun centuries before. The Crusade of Varna began with promises of greatness but ultimately achieved little and its failure largely contributed to the broken promise of unification. Venetian participation within the Crusade of Varna is a factor that has been largely ignored by modern historians. The commune provided guidance and leadership to the fleet as well as serving as the bankroll and construction site for many of the ships that comprised it. Though initially hesitant to join the crusade due to the threat of the Ottomans should the crusade fail and their existing treaty with the Sultan Murad II the Venetians joined in earnest in early 1444. Though they had looked towards the potential of regaining lands they had previously lost to the Ottomans in the 1430s, particularly the city of Thessaloniki, I do not believe they joined solely for this reason. It was not until June or July 1444 that the orders to target the city were sent out and by that time the Senate had already begun to more willingly pay for the fleet. The Venetians it seems were not joining simply to use the crusade to their own benefit but instead were joining to help counteract the ever-expanding Ottoman threat. A threat that would continue to grow and leave Venice increasingly isolated on the front line.

#### **Chapter 4: Venetian Response and Participation in aid of the City of Constantinople, 1453**

##### **4.1 Introduction:**

The fall of the city of Constantinople to the Ottoman army under the leadership of Sultan Mehmed II (1444-1446 and 1451-1481) in 1453 has received vast amounts of scholarly attention.<sup>314</sup> However, despite the vast amount of study that the period leading up to the siege, the siege of Constantinople itself, and the aftermath of the city's fall by historians there are still many unexplored aspects of this

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<sup>314</sup> These are but a few of the many works that cover the fall, see bibliography for full list: Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); David Brewer, *Greece: The Hidden Centuries* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); David Nicolle, *The Fall of Constantinople: The Ottoman Conquest of Byzantium* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2007); Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1978); Michael Angold, *The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans*, (Harlow and New York: Pearson, 2012); John R. Melville-Jones, 'Venice and Constantinople, 1450-1454' in E. Chyrsos and E.A. Zachariadou (eds.) *Captain and Scholar: Papers in Memory of Demetrios I. Polemis* (Andros: Kaïreios Vivliothēkē, 2009)

event that require further investigation. Chief among them is the involvement of the Venetians during the siege. Most secondary work acknowledges that Venetians, under the command of Alvise Diedo and their bailo Girolamo Minotto, participated in the defence of the city. These studies use the work of the Venetian surgeon and diarist of the events of the siege, Nicolò Barbaro, to relate the events of the fall of Constantinople to the modern audience. However, some historians, like Franz Babinger, continue to view the Venetians as uncaring of the outcome of the siege and unwilling to risk their lives, profits, and treaties by disrupting the peace they had with the Ottomans.<sup>315</sup> The Venetian Senate is blamed for acting overly cautiously and reacting too slowly to the events transpiring in the East or worse that they were unwilling to even come to the aid of the Greeks. To date there has been very little work investigating the real response of the Venetian Senate to the plight of the Byzantines and the surprisingly rapid fall of a city or the difference between the official state response posed by the Senate and the feelings and opinions of the Venetians who were present in Constantinople and who participated in the defence of the city. This disconnect between the available sources and the modern scholarship comes primarily from how the siege is addressed. Most works focus on exploring a particular aspect of history and use the siege of Constantinople as their example. The siege itself is laid out almost identically across all histories of the siege. There has been very limited analysis of what the sources can tell us about the individuals whose records are used to examine the events and instead are used to lay out the events of the siege. Unlike the previous events discussed in this thesis, from the Crusade of Nicopolis to the Crusade of Varna or even the fall of the major city of Thessaloniki, the fall of Constantinople has an unprecedented amount of written material that has survived from Venetian witnesses to these events. These sources provide unmitigated insight into how the Venetian participants themselves viewed the siege, what they thought of the decision to stand and fight, and how they viewed the defence of one of Christianity's greatest cities. Yet secondary sources, such as the work of Donald Nicol, believe that

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<sup>315</sup> Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 79: Babinger claims that Venice did nothing but send a few letters. This, as this chapter will show, was just the beginning of Venice's involvement and dedication to the city of Constantinople.

because the state response was slow or half-hearted that indicates an uncaring attitude toward the plight of the city, which in fact does not bear itself true with a deeper investigation into the actual actions of the Senate in response to a threat that had been discussed many times in the preceding century nor the information passed down to us from the Venetian written accounts of the defence of the city.<sup>316</sup> This chapter will focus firstly on laying out the main source material that will be used; primarily the diary of Barbaro and the Dolfin-Languschi text, which has only recently come to light. The chapter will then look at the Venetian involvement and response to the siege first by the Senate, taking a deeper investigation into their actions and the timeline of events, and then at how the Venetian accounts, primarily the diary of the siege from Nicolò Barbaro, portrays the opinions and positions of the Venetians on the ground in the city during the siege. Using these conclusions the chapter will show that the Venetians were not only willing participants in defence of Constantinople, they saw it as their duty not only for the further success of the Venetian state in the east but also to protect their fellow Christians brothers from an attack from a heathen army that threatened all of Christianity; a direct contradiction to the typical model of Venetians as heartless businessmen and merchants willing to sell out others to advance their own profits and position.

## **4.2 The Sources**

Unlike the campaigns discussed previously the defence of Constantinople has survived in the accounts, letters, and reports of various survivors a number of whom were Venetians. These Venetian sources provide tremendous insight into not only the events surrounding the siege of the city, the battle for the city, and the aftermath but also to Venetian opinions and attitudes towards the city, the fight to defend it, and the participants of the siege. Of these surviving Venetian documents the most important by far is Nicolò Barbaro's *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople*, which

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<sup>316</sup> Nicol, *Last Centuries* p. 363: Nicol claims here that Venice, while still maintaining a trade hub within the city of Constantinople, had lost all interest in the city and because of their treaty signed with the Ottomans in 1446 they had little desire to disrupt that peace or to fight against the Ottomans in defence of the city.

is heavily relied on by all historians of the fall of the city.<sup>317</sup> There are however other sources that are equally important if only due to the fact that they are sources from a Venetian viewpoint, a very rare occurrence in the study of the Venetians and their involvement in the religious conflicts of the later middle ages. Before discussing Venice's involvement in the defence of Constantinople these sources, their limitations and their uses, will be examined and briefly discussed to form the proper framework and narrative that this study will draw from for the examination of the siege of Constantinople.

Nicolò Barbaro's diary is the longest and most in depth account of the fall of Constantinople and has been used by nearly all historians of the fall of the city. Through his diary, Barbaro relates the siege day by day recording the events both within the city and in the Ottoman camp outside. His source provides the chronology that most historians use for the siege and where possible to corroborate between his work and others Barbaro's diary is usually reliable.<sup>318</sup> Barbaro's position of surgeon aboard the Venetian galleys would have given him access to the major decision makers and allowed him to attend many of the meetings and councils that he describes allowing for accurate record of the decisions made throughout the course of the siege. There are of course some issues with Barbaro's text most of these revolving around issues of bias, particularly against the Genoese and the Greeks. This can be easily seen in a number of places throughout his text. When the Venetians develop a plan to launch a night attack against the Turkish fleet in hopes of sinking them Barbaro accuses the Genoese of Pera of warning the Ottomans and names them 'enemies of the Christian Faith'.<sup>319</sup> The great Genoese captain, Giovanni Guistiniani, whom Barbaro calls Zuan Zustignan the Venetian dialect spelling, who arrived with a contingent of men and was placed in

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<sup>317</sup> Nicolò Barbaro, *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*, John R. Melville-Jones (trans.) (New York: Exposition Press, 1969)

<sup>318</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 1

<sup>319</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 39 For more on Genoese involvement in the defence of Constantinople see: L. Balletto, 'I genovesi e la caduta di Costantinopoli: riflessi negli atti notarili' in *Nέα Πώμη: Rivista di ricerche byzantinistiche* 1 (2004), 267-312; L. Balletto, 'I genovesi e la conquista turca di Costantinopoli (1453): note su Tommaso Spinola e la sua famiglia', in *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Medievalea* 26 (2005), 795-833; G. Olgiati, 'Notes on the participation of the Genoese in the defence of Constantinople' in *Macedonian Studies* 6.2 (1989), 48-58

charge of the entire defence of the city by the Emperor himself features only briefly throughout. When the Ottomans broke through the walls of the city and begin to pour into the city Barbaro blames Guistiniani and claims that he abandoned his post and fled.<sup>320</sup> However, the other accounts from numerous sources including Leonard of Chios and the Greek historians Doukas and Laonikos Chalkokondyles all claim that Guistiniani was wounded and secretly sought aid to prevent panic amongst the men when he left the walls.<sup>321</sup> Equally suspect are the conversations that he records of the Sultan Mehmed II within his diary which are almost certainly fabrications. Of course, it would have been impossible for Barbaro to have access or knowledge to the events within the Ottoman camp. These made up scenes were likely placed within the text to allow Barbaro to give his impression of the Sultan, particularly that of a 'man possessed of evil thoughts' and the Ottomans.<sup>322</sup> His opinion of the Greeks is not much better, particularly when compared to the Venetians.<sup>323</sup> Despite these minor issues Barbaro's solid chronology and attention to detail prove extremely useful.

Of great interest to this study Barbaro's heritage as a Venetian. Venetian accounts of anti-Ottoman campaigns are very rare and have not been properly studied for what they can inform modern historians about the motivations and actions of Venetians present during conflicts like the defence of Constantinople or the crusades of Nicopolis and Varna. Barbaro's diary itself has not received much investigation to this end yet provides a great resource of why the Venetians within the city and aboard the ships stayed to fight and can be used to counter the view of the Venetians as uncaring merchantmen who sought profit over all else.

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<sup>320</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 68-9: Barbaro states 'Zuan Zustignan... decided to abandon his post, and fled to his ship, which was lying at the boom ... he went through the city crying "The Turks have got into the city!"'

<sup>321</sup> Leonard of Chios in John R. Melville-Jones (trans.) *The Siege of Constantinople 1453: Seven Contemporary Accounts* (Amsterdam: Adolf Hakkert Publisher, 1972) p. 36: Doukas, pp. 222-3: Laonikos Chalkokondyles, vol. 2, p. 193

<sup>322</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 35

<sup>323</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 36

There is one other Venetian source for the fall of Constantinople that can provide insight into not just the siege and its defence but also the Venetian position, opinion, and actions concerning the siege and the defence of the city. The account of Languschi is of immediate concern as it has not received much attention yet. The text was found buried within Zorzi Dolfin's text. Melville-Jones who has translated and collected many of these sources recognized that the Languschi text lies within Dolfin's account but does not provide translation or analysis of the text itself.<sup>324</sup> To Melville-Jones, the Dolfin account is 'the least original' with much of the narrative being a reproduction, with some inaccuracies, of Leonard of Chios.<sup>325</sup> It is difficult to decipher where Languschi ends after he is introduced by Dolfin and it is unclear as to how much of the source is Dolfin and how much is Languschi. Furthermore, the text ascribed to Languschi may or may not itself be a collection of first-hand accounts and not the experiences and words of Languschi.<sup>326</sup> Languschi certainly uses Leonard of Chios' letter as well as the writing of Cardinal Isidore of Kiev and Filippo da Rimini. However, there are certain points across his account that do not coincide with any of these sources. Philippides posits that some of this information comes from the lost reports of Alvise Diedo to the Venetian Senate upon his return to Venice following the fall of Constantinople.<sup>327</sup>

Aside from the Venetian sources there are a few other first-hand accounts that recall the events and mention the Venetian involvement. The first is the Florentine Giacomo Tedaldi's text which is short and overall not seen as an overly useful source. The text is useful for corroborating the accounts of other sources where they overlap. Melville-Jones records that there are several versions that have survived but comparison between them and internal evidence shows that none of them reproduces Tedaldi's own words.<sup>328</sup> Little to nothing is known of Tedaldi himself apart from the fact

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<sup>324</sup> Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. xi

<sup>325</sup> Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. x

<sup>326</sup> For more on Languschi see: Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2012); Georg Thomas (trans.), *Belagerung und Eroberung von Constantinopel im Jahre 1453 aus der Chronik Zorzi Dolfin* (Munich: im Verlage der K. Akademie, 1868)

<sup>327</sup> Marios Philippides, 'The Fall of Constantinople 1453: Bishop Leonard Giustiniani and his Italian Followers' in *Viator* 29 (1998) p. 209

<sup>328</sup> Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. vii

he was among the survivors that was able to escape the fall of Constantinople and arrived in Negropont where he gave his own account.

Another non-Venetian source that discusses at length the involvement of the Venetians is the Genoese born Leonard of Chios, the Latin archbishop of Mytilene, who wrote a letter to Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455). The account was finished by 16 August, 1453 with the events of the siege fresh in the archbishop's mind.<sup>329</sup> Leonard was in the city to aid Cardinal Isidore of Kiev, Cardinal of Russia, in bringing about the unification of the Greek and Roman churches and much of his concerns were in that direction. It is unknown if he knew and had befriended Cardinal Isidore before this period or if he met the Cardinal as the latter travelled to Constantinople and stopped at Chios where Leonard was.<sup>330</sup> He is recorded by Barbaro as being present for at least some of the meetings between the Venetians and the nobility of the city concerning the actions of the fleet and whether or not the Venetian ships would leave the city or stay and defend. His text is an important source for the military disposition of both sides of the conflict but he is also inclined to underplay the importance of the Greeks, many of whom still opposed the union of the Greek and Roman churches. Furthermore, it is largely recognized by modern historians that Leonard's letter forms the anchor of more contemporary accounts than any other source. Pseudo-Sphrantzes, Languschi-Dolfin, and the unknown author of the *Ignatus* are all well-known copyists of Leonard's work.<sup>331</sup> The popularity of his text likely comes from its early translation into Italian and its merit as a source of information and news at the time. His letter to the pope was preceded by letters from Crete and others that were disregarded. Leonard's letter provided a concise and detailed and trustworthy account of the events.<sup>332</sup>

There is also a major Greek work that discusses the Venetian involvement in the defence of Constantinople, Doukas. His writing has survived in both Italian and Greek; however, there is some

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<sup>329</sup> Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. viii

<sup>330</sup> Philippides, 'The Fall of Constantinople' p. 198

<sup>331</sup> Philippides, 'The Fall of Constantinople' p. 204

<sup>332</sup> Philippides, 'The Fall of Constantinople' p. 198



debate over how useful and worthy of study his text is. Miller believes that Doukas is an important source for the siege of Constantinople due to Doukas' truthfulness and clarity of speech and his status as an eyewitness.<sup>333</sup> Melville-Jones on the other hand does not see the merits of the work as it was written many years after the events after others had recorded the events; however, he does give credit to Doukas' ability to portray characters in the narrative and setting dramatic scenes even if he doubts the work's importance to historical study.<sup>334</sup> Doukas is a very religiously charged writer who despises the Turks. He openly praises the death of Murad II and calls Mehmed II the pupil of Satan.<sup>335</sup> He viewed the Turks as a divine punishment on the Christians by god and each Turkish victory is treated as a divine mandate.

Furthermore, there are two other sources for the fall of Constantinople; Chalkokondyles and Kritovoulos. Both authors were Greeks and record in their accounts the fall of Constantinople; however, neither provides accounts of the Venetians in the defence of the city. When discussing outside assistance they talk about 'Italian' aid but not specifically Venetian. Chalkokondyles mentions the Venetians twice in his account of the siege. He mentions that many of the Greeks fled to the harbour to board the Venetian and Greek ships there to escape the city after the Turks had breached the city walls. Later the Venetians reappear in his account as prisoners of the Turks and states that the 'governor of the Venetians was brought before the sultan and executed.'<sup>336</sup> Kritovoulos on the other hand mentions that there were six Venetian ships but that they had not come for war.<sup>337</sup> The Venetians receive no other attention from these sources, despite the fact they do feature later in both works.

#### **4.3 The Venetian State Response**

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<sup>333</sup> Miller, 'The Historians Doukas and Phrantzes' in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 46 (1926) p. 63

<sup>334</sup> Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. x

<sup>335</sup> Miller, 'The Historians Doukas and Phrantzes' p. 65

<sup>336</sup> Chalkokondyles, , Vol. 2, pp. 195,201

<sup>337</sup> Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, Charles T. Riggs (trans.) (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970) p. 39

Historians that study the fall of Constantinople often examine the reason the city was unable to hold out against the Ottoman forces. A common conclusion is that the city did not receive the help it needed to survive from the West.<sup>338</sup> This arises largely from the sources of the period that essentially say the same thing; that without outside help from the West Constantinople will fall.<sup>339</sup> Few are blamed more for their lack of response to the Byzantine calls for aid than the Venetians; whom it seems modern historians expect to have come rushing to the aid of the beleaguered city and provided further defence. It is a seemingly common belief that the Venetian government did not care at all for the fate of the city and were half-hearted in providing any aid. However, as will be shown here, the Senate continued to act in the best manner it could determine in order to provide aid for the city which they expected to hold out for longer than it did. When Venice received Constantine's ambassador in February 1452 it was likely unthinkable that the city of Constantinople would fall in just over a year later. During that year the Senate would send aid via supplies in order to aid the city as well as treat with various parties of Western Europe to encourage others to march in defence of the city. Before the year was out, Venice would send two groups of ships to Constantinople, which would arrive in the vicinity of Negroponte just as the survivors of the siege arrived from the fallen city.

#### **4.3.1 Diplomatic Measures taken by the Venetian Senate**

On 14 February 1452, an ambassador arrived in Venice from the court of the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos (1449-1453), who spoke before the Senate informing them that the Ottomans had truly invested in the city and there remained little doubt that they planned on sieging it and taking it for good. The Senate responded that they sympathized with the plight of the Byzantines and offered to assist the city if the ambassador would travel onwards to the Florentines

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<sup>338</sup> Angold, pp. 85-6: who argues that the Venetian government was not overly concerned by the events as they unfolded and that the West did not do much to help.

<sup>339</sup> The ambassador Emperor Constantine sent to Venice in 1452 feared that without outside assistance the city was doomed and these fears are expressed within much of the Venetian correspondence with other western powers.

and to the Papal Court. They expressed a desire to help but would be able to provide more assistance if other powers were able to lend aid as well.<sup>340</sup> Further they agreed to sell the gunpowder and armour for the price they discussed.<sup>341</sup> This last clause may seem disingenuous to promise aid but then demand payment for supplies provided but as has always been true the Venetians were businessmen and merchants. The cost of producing and transporting the supplies the Venetians had that could aid Constantinople was not insignificant and they required compensation for their efforts. The Venetians had at that time a commercial treaty with Mehmed that had been renewed as recently as 1451.<sup>342</sup> This did not protect them fully from attacks by the Ottomans, however, and any supplies delivered to the city could be seen as a threat and could lead to the loss of men, ships, and the supplies. Furthermore, the request of the Senate for further aid to be found was not a new nor uncommon request. As has been discussed in previous chapters the Venetian state was not large or populous. Their small size limited their total prospects in terms of manpower and the provision of supplies, instead they relied heavily on mercenaries for fighting and provision through trade and mercantile dealings. Any aid they could provide would amount to a not insignificant portion of their available resources and if other states could provide aid as well that would mean a smaller drain on the Venetian state. Therefore, this request for the ambassador to work and plead with others was not a sign of half-heartedness on behalf of the Senate but a recognition of the limitations of the Venetian state and the necessity that if the Ottomans had fully invested in the city more aid was required than simply what the Venetians could provide. The Senate however was not idle in seeking aid for the city of Constantinople either; although they had sent the Byzantine ambassador onwards to other Western states to plead for aid the Senate began to discuss and send out their own messengers and ambassadors to seek aid for the city, a task that was neither asked nor required of them. On 30 August 1452 the Senate gave Barbo Morosini, the ambassador to

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<sup>340</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 19, f. 122: TR, vol. 3, no. 2881, p. 173: Melville-Jones, 'Venice and Constantinople, 1450-1454' pp. 201-2

<sup>341</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 19 f. 122: TR, III, p. 173

<sup>342</sup> G.M. Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levanticum*, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966), vol. 2, no. 209, pp. 382-4

Naples, a mission to meet with the king of Aragon and Naples, Alfonso V.<sup>343</sup> Barbo was ordered to communicate the most up to date news from Constantinople, particularly the letters from July 16.<sup>344</sup> Morosini was then meant to impress upon the king that there was no longer any doubt what Mehmet's plans were and that if nothing was done he would seize the city. He should then tell of the preparations to lend aid that were taking place in Venice and solicit the support of the king and his sizable naval forces. As preparations progressed in 1453 and Venice prepared its fleet to set sail towards Constantinople further diplomats were sent out to Pope Nicholas V, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, King Alfonso V of Aragon and Naples, and the King of Hungary Ladislas V, who had taken the throne on February 14 of that year, ending the regency of John Hunyadi who had held the position since the death of the previous king in 1444.<sup>345</sup> These various leaders were informed of the preparations that Venice continued to make<sup>346</sup> and they were informed that despite Venice's preparations if the west did not act as well, then Constantinople would surely fall. Lastly, the day after the commission of Giacomo Loredan as Captain General of the Sea,<sup>347</sup> on 7 May 1453, the Senate chose Bartolomeo Marcello as ambassador to Mehmed II.<sup>348</sup> His commission ordered him to board Loredan's ships and travel to a Greek port, or Constantinople if Loredan was able to reach the city. While Loredan began preparations for the defence of Constantinople, Marcell was ordered to travel to Mehmed and inform him of the peaceful intention of the Venetians and attempt to bring about peace between the Ottomans and the Byzantines. If questioned the fleet was there solely for the protection of Venetian trade and their interests within the city. Once he had treated with Mehmed, Marcello should then return to the city and attempt to bring about the peace with Constantine if the terms offered by the Sultan were deemed acceptable.

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<sup>343</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 148v-149: TR, III, p. 178

<sup>344</sup> Unfortunately, Thiriet does not record the letters of July 16

<sup>345</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 19, f. 187: TR, III, p. 182

<sup>346</sup> See section 2.2 for the preparations made in February 1453

<sup>347</sup> Loredan's commission and orders are discussed in further detail below

<sup>348</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 187-187v: TR, III, p. 186

These plans by the Senate show that the Venetians did not sit idly by while the city of Constantinople was assaulted as the common narrative suggests. The Senate did debate how best to proceed but also recognized the limitations of their own state. Therefore, as was common of Venetian diplomacy, they sought outside aid before they promised any of their own assistance. This was their *modus operandi* when it came to diplomatic issues surrounding combatting enemies of Christendom and not just enemies of their own state. When approached requesting their participation in the crusades of Nicopolis and Varna, the Venetians had responded very similarly claiming they would provide assistance if other states were involved, while making their own preparations in the meantime. This was not a sign of half-heartedness or uncertainty but a recognition that Venice alone could not provide the required assistance. Furthermore, they actively sought out and attempted to push for aid from other western powers, from Pope Nicholas V to the Holy Roman Emperor. This was not a necessary step for the Senate to take. Ambassadors were chosen to spread the word of the beleaguered Byzantine state and the threat that further Ottoman expansion posed and requested aid, while at the same time as we shall see began to prepare their own ships and men to travel to aid in the defence of the city of Constantinople. No one expected the city to fall quite so quickly.

#### **4.3.2 Physical Response of the Venetian Senate**

Beyond the diplomatic attempts of the Senate in searching for others that could help aid the city, the Venetians did, if slowly, send their own aid towards the city. This began at first as ships meant to protect their own investments and the trade vessels. In August 1452 the Senate passed a measure that would send two light ships to travel to Negropont as reports arrived in Venice that travel in the area was increasingly dangerous. These ships would be under the command of Gabriele Trevisan, the vice-captain of the Gulf, and would work with the bailo of Negroponte to decide how best to proceed based on the situation and the positioning and disposition of the Ottoman fleet.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 147v-148: TR, III, p. 177-8

This decision passed 74 to 7 after the provision that claimed the ships would travel to Constantinople and defend the city was removed. Understandably the removal of this clause is understood to be a hesitation to protect the city and disrupt the status quo. However, this was not the first time the city was under threat from the Ottomans or other outside attackers and had previously held out against sieges; therefore the immediacy of the threat was likely not of great concern in the fall of 1452. Furthermore, the Senate may have considered that two small ships armed to provide protection of trade convoys would not have provided much in the way of aid for the defence of the city. If the ships were able to ensure the safety of their trade fleet and return while Venice prepared a larger force, which they did begin to do, then Venice would be able to gain further information about the events transpiring in the East and send their relief when it was ready. Over the course of the winter of 1452 and with the collection of reports and hopes of further aid from other western powers the Senate began to ensure that preparations were made to aid Constantinople. In February 1453 the Senate, having received reports from some of their Romanian trade ships which made clear the peril that Constantinople was in, decided to arm two large transport ships each mounted with 400 troops. These ships should have a capacity of 500 botte and travel with 15 galleys. The captain that would be elected to command this fleet would have a salary set at a fixed level of 80 ducats per month.<sup>350</sup> This was followed by a program to ensure that the preparations were made and paid for in a timely manner. It was decided with a vote 143 to 10 with 1 abstention that merchants who had a stake in the Romanian and Black Sea trade routes would split the outstanding cost of arming the vessels amongst themselves.<sup>351</sup> This was calculated at 16,000 ducats. Furthermore, grain should be sent to Corfu and Negropont for the preparation of 2000 biscuits and the anticipation of 2000 more for the men of these galleys. Finally, the decision was made for Crete to provide a further two galleys to be sent to Negropont under the command of Zaccaria Grioni, who had been to Constantinople and knew the situation there best. Between March

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<sup>350</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 170-170v: TR, III, p. 181

<sup>351</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 170-170v: TR, III, p. 181-2

and April 1453, it was recognized that Venice's preparations needed to be completed faster in order to reach the city in time to aid in its defence and fines were put in place for those who had not yet paid for the fleet's preparations.<sup>352</sup> Additionally, in preparation for the arrival of the main fleet the Senate decided on 13 April 1453 that Alvise Longo, patron of the armed vessels for the defence of Constantinople, should lead two ships to Negropont and Tenedos to gather information about the events transpiring at Constantinople and await the main fleet. Once the fleet arrived he was to join the fleet under the control of its commander and provide information and suggest how the fleet should proceed in the defence of the city.<sup>353</sup> Longo was further ordered to work with the bailios of Negropont and Tenedos and to protect the city of Constantinople but is ordered to directly avoid fighting within the straits itself. Finally, on 7 May 1453 the Senate commissioned Giacomo Loredan as Captain General of the Sea and commander of the fleet that would be sent to defend Constantinople.<sup>354</sup> His commission laid out the orders from the Senate as to how Loredan should proceed with the defence of the city. He was first to collect the remaining galleys from Corfu and Crete as well as the biscuit that had been prepared for the fleet at Negropont before sailing on to Tenedos. Once he had reached Tenedos, Loredan was instructed to sail straight to Constantinople and avoid conflict with the Ottoman fleet within the straits. If Emperor Constantine had made peace with Mehmed the fleet should return to Corfu leaving a galley at Modon to cross to the Cape of Malea, otherwise the fleet should place itself at the whim of the emperor and fight to defend the city. Loredan was told to inform the emperor that Venice had not hesitated to slow its efforts in Lombardy in order to aid his city. These orders are similar to those that we have which were given to previous commanders during the Crusades of Nicopolis and Varna and contain similar limitations on attacking parties outside the main conflict the fleet was prepared for, in this case warning Loredan not to attack Catalan pirates. The clause informing the emperor of Venice's lack of hesitation in

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<sup>352</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 178 and 185: TR, III, pp. 182-3 and 185: The fine for not paying was set at 500 ducats and the deprivation of office.

<sup>353</sup> ASV, S. Mar, Reg. 4, f. 184-184v: TR, III, p. 184: These orders originally place Alvise Longo's departure on 17 April but is later delayed to 19 April 1453

<sup>354</sup> ASV, Secreti, Reg. 19, f. 193v-194v: TR, III, p. 185

coming to his aid was also typical of Venetian aid. They saw their reputation and image as an important tool and would use their image in trade and diplomacy, therefore it needed to be pointed out publicly when Venice answered the call to aid to show its support and therefore mark a reliable count of due that Venice could then use for later diplomacy.

Loredan's fleet unfortunately did not arrive in time to assist in the defence of Constantinople. The city fell to Mehmed II and his army on 29 May 1453. In the aftermath of the fall many Venetians, Greeks, Genoese and others fled the city by any means possible and began making their way to safer ports. Many of the Venetian survivors travelled to Negropont as it was the nearest, largest Venetian enclave that was deemed safe. From the Venetian sources we learn that Loredan's fleet arrived the day after many of the refugees did.<sup>355</sup> In the margins of Nicolò Barbaro's work, Marco Barbaro comments that the Senate 'would not believe that the Turks could bring a fleet against Constantinople. They decided, however, to arm fifteen galleys and two ships... but did not begin to send them until they knew that the Turks had begun the siege'.<sup>356</sup> This remark carries some amount of scathing but does indicate that the Senate did consider the defence of Constantinople to be important. They, within a year of receiving word from the Emperor that the Turks had invested in the city and that the Sultan's intentions were clear, worked to raise awareness of the plight in the west and armed and prepared a fleet, comparable in size to the fleets that Venice had armed and sent to participate in crusades, to come to the aid of Constantinople. Was their reaction too slow? That is a question that can never be truly answered. However, what is clear is that the Venetian Senate did deem the city important and did act in order to save the city even if they were too late. The Senate was decisive, made clear judgements on how to proceed, and even raised heavy penalties against those of their own state who hindered the preparations of the fleet. These are far

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<sup>355</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 78: Tedaldi in Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. 9: Tedaldi laments the late arrival of Loredan and his fleet and believes that had they arrived only a few days earlier the city would have been able to hold out against the Turks entirely: Zorzi Dolfin in M. Philippides and W.K. Hanak, *The Siege and Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography and Military Studies* (Farnham and Burlington VT, 2011), p. 12

<sup>356</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 78



from the acts of an indifferent state. The Venetian people, as we shall now discuss, viewed the city as an important location not just for their own purposes but an important ally and brother under God and it was their Christian duty to aid their brothers in faith in their desperate fight against the Turks.

#### **4.4: Barbaro's Account and the Reaction of Individual Venetians**

The diary of Nicolò Barbaro is the most complete and detailed eye witness account of the siege of Constantinople in 1453. Many historians rely on his day by day telling of the events that happened both within the city and in the Ottoman camps surrounding it. However, while its use as a record of the siege is undeniable there has been very little study into what Barbaro tells us about the attitudes and motivations of the Venetians that remained within the city. Many historians point to the slow and half-hearted attempts of the Venetian Signoria as evidence of an unwillingness to fight for the defence of Constantinople or defend Christendom from the aggression of the Ottoman Turks.

However, Barbaro, whose bias for his fellow countrymen can be problematic when investigating the activities of the Greeks and the Genoese, focuses heavily on the actions and opinions of the Venetians who were on the ground fighting to defend the city of Constantinople. He recorded their thoughts and ideas when discussing whether or not they should defend the city, their planned responses to the threat of the Ottomans and what they would do should the Signoria send orders to them, and he also recorded at least his own view if not the typical Venetian view of the Ottoman Turks. These records are unique in the study of Venetian conflict with the Ottomans providing a solely Venetian perspective that is lacking for the Nicopolis and Varna crusades and shows a deeper insight into how the typical Venetian not making decisions in the Senate viewed the situation.

##### **4.4.1 Venetian thoughts on defending the city:**

According to Barbaro, the Venetians began arriving from around the Black Sea area from February 1452. The first to arrive were the ships from Tana led under the guard of Gabriele

Trevisan's two light galleys that had been sent from the Senate to protect the trade galleys.<sup>357</sup> On 10 November Girolamo Morosini was able to slip through the Turkish toll blockade after taking fire from the Turkish garrison at Rumeli Hisar.<sup>358</sup> Two weeks later, another galley commanded by Antonio Rizzo was not so lucky and was sent to the bottom by a direct hit. Although the captain and crew managed to make it ashore, they were all executed.<sup>359</sup> Later between 2 and 4 December galleys from Trebizond arrive under the command of Giacomo Coco the elder.<sup>360</sup> The crews of these ships would join with the Venetians already living within Constantinople under the bailo of the city Girolamo (Jeruolemo) Minotto. On 13 December Barbaro tells of a celebration of Union between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches that was held at Church of Saint Sophia under the guidance of Cardinal Isidore of Russia. It is during this celebration that the Greek nobility first begin the discussion that the Venetian ships should remain within the city to help them against the Turkish forces.<sup>361</sup> The following evening a meeting was held on the Venetian ships in the harbour between the Cardinal Leonard, Bishop of Mytilene, the Venetian captains and merchants, and several members of the Greek nobility with the purpose of discussing whether or not the fleet should stay and fight or leave. According to Barbaro, Cardinal Isidore began the meeting by pleading for the ships to remain in the city and help hold the city.<sup>362</sup> The Minotto then spoke agreeing with the Cardinal and pleading 'for the love of God, the honour of the Christian faith, and the honour of the Signoria of Venice' the ships should remain and help Constantinople. However, Trevisan responded that he had been specifically instructed by the Senate that he is to retrieve the Black Sea trade galleys and escort them homeward and was ordered not to remain in the area for more than ten days.<sup>363</sup> It is clear that there was some

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<sup>357</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 10

<sup>358</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 11

<sup>359</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, pp. 9-10; Doukas, pp. 200-1.

<sup>360</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 11

<sup>361</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 12

<sup>362</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 13: The Bishop of Mytilene and the Greek nobles present agree with the Cardinal

<sup>363</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 13: He even claims that he will leave the city even though much of the cargo has not been loaded onto the ships. As discussed above the Senate had decided to send Trevisan and these ships to help protect their trade ships with the vote succeeding only after the commission was amended to state that the light galleys would not stay within the city and would not fight to protect it.

division between the members of the ships and those Venetians living within the city. Those within the city likely agreed with the bailo Minotto. Their livelihood relied on the city of Constantinople, they had friends and family within the city and all of their businesses and fortunes lay within the walls of the Greek capital. Furthermore, as Minotto pressed, it was for the honour not just of Venice but of Christianity and the love of God that the Venetians remain within the city. Those Venetians on the ships did not have the same connections as those in the city; however, there was still the call to defend Constantinople for their faith and to protect their fellow Christian brethren as well as fellow Venetians. Trevisan's only response to the pleas to stay are that he had been ordered to leave but not that he does not want to stay and assist. Though as many of Barbaro's speakers point out it is believed that the Senate would agree that the ships should stay and help defend. This division would lead to a number of Venetians escaping the city aboard ships later. Following this initial meeting Minotto and many of the merchants and other Venetians then held a Council in the Church of San Marco to decide what should be done. It is agreed in a vote 21 for to 1 against that the ships should remain in Constantinople and the men should aid in its defence.<sup>364</sup> The Venetian merchants within the city feared that the fine alone would not be enough to keep some of the captains from just accepting the fine and fleeing the city anyway and came together to write a letter condemning such cowardly acts.<sup>365</sup> Once the decision had been made to stay, the Council of Twelve, who became the leaders of the Venetians within the city for the duration of the siege, elected Zuan Diusiagi to travel to Venice with letters from the bailo, the merchants, and from Diedo. These letters informed the Senate that unless they sent a reply instructing the defenders otherwise, the Venetians and their

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<sup>364</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 15 The agreement had several conditions added to it: the ships would stay and help defend the city unless orders came from the Signoria, if the Turks did not attack the city and the immediate threat passed the ships would be allowed to continue onwards to Venice, the Emperor would provide 400 ducats a month and food and drink for the crews of the large galleys and food for the crews of the light galleys for as long as they remain within the city, and finally a penalty of 3,000 ducats is to be paid by any captain who breaks with this decision

<sup>365</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, pp. 16-20: The letter from the merchants lays out that they themselves created the Council of Twelve, though twenty-two are present, that would meet and make decisions on the fate of the Venetians within the city and calls out Diedo and Trevisan by name announcing their initial lack of commitment to the defence of the city.

ships would remain within Constantinople.<sup>366</sup> Once it was decided that the Venetians would stay they began to make themselves useful in the defence of the city, lending aid in constructing defences, protecting parts of the walls, providing aid with their ships and council in plans of attack and defence. By January 1453 the Venetians were becoming tired of the mistrust placed on them by some of the Greeks and the bailo spoke to the Emperor about this. He requested that the emperor must stop treating Venetians like captives and allow for the loading and unloading of their ships as they pleased. This sparked debate between the Emperor and the Venetians with the Emperor claiming that the only thing preventing the Venetians from fleeing the city and abandoning him to the Turks was that their goods were not aboard their ships. Barbaro records much of the debate but the Emperor eventually relents and allows for the loading and unloading of the ships after the Venetians swear oaths not to abandon the city to the Turks.<sup>367</sup> It seems that the Venetians, as represented by Barbaro, were willing to fight and to help defend the city. They had committed themselves to fight and would risk everything to protect their fellow Christians. This of course does not apply to all those that were there as there were a number of them that did flee the city. In particular, Piero Davanzo, fled the city aboard his ships and was followed by six ships from Candia taking around 700 people with them. This betrayal must have really bothered Barbaro who is notorious for his dislike of the Genoese as Davanzo's cowardice is countered earlier that same day by the arrival of Giovanni Guistiniani, the renowned Genoese captain to whom the Emperor gave control over the entire land defences.<sup>368</sup>

There are however several sources that would contradict Barbaro's overly generous version of the Venetian participation in the defence of Constantinople. Whereas Barbaro claims that they stayed to defend the city for the good of all Christianity and because it was the right thing to do both Doukas and Leonard of Chios give contrasting accounts of the purpose the Venetians played. Doukas

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<sup>366</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 20

<sup>367</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 20: They swear not to flee on the honour of Venice and their own heads though there are no promises on honour of Christianity or God.

<sup>368</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 22

claims that the Venetians stayed not for the good of all but because the Venetians within the city and the Emperor would not allow them to continue.<sup>369</sup> This is not entirely a contradiction to what Barbaro claims. The meeting between the merchants and Venetians that is held within the Church of San Marco do discuss whether or not to allow the ships to continue. The merchants themselves even write a letter in an attempt to ensure the ships would not leave. All of this is recorded within the diary of Barbaro. However, Leonard of Chios claims that the Venetians were not forced to stay or chose to stay, instead he claims they were paid a large sum of money by the Emperor to stay and defend the city.<sup>370</sup> This is a very damning claim as to why the Venetians remained in the city. It completely counters Barbaro's point of view that the Venetians stayed for the good of all. However, Leonard's claims could be a misunderstanding of the deal made between the Venetians and the Emperor that is also recorded by Barbaro in which the Emperor would provide a salary and food for the crews of the ships. It is unclear; however if the Venetians did stay for money it is a complete contradiction to why Barbaro claims they remained.

#### **4.4.2 Venetian Actions in Defence of the City:**

Nicolò Barbaro's diary of the siege tells of numerous instances throughout his account of the Venetians within the city and their actions to defend it. Although Barbaro was biased in his overly high opinion of his fellow countrymen, especially when compared to the Greeks and Genoese,<sup>371</sup> his records do show that the Venetians were dedicated to protecting the city, they were willing to do their part, and contrary to what some would believe were unafraid to display themselves as allies to the Greeks. Early on in the siege Emperor Constantine approached the Venetians requesting their aid in bolstering the defences of the city and guarding areas of the wall.<sup>372</sup> He first approached the

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<sup>369</sup> Doukas, p. 211

<sup>370</sup> Leonard of Chios, p. 23

<sup>371</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 36: Barbaro directly calls out what he perceives as weakness among the Greeks and strength in the Venetians saying '... in every part of the world there are valiant men full of courage; and so there were found a few men in the city of Constantinople, Venetian gentlemen, who were much more full of spirit than the Greeks were'

<sup>372</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 23

captain of the galley from Tana who agreed 'for the honour of God and the Christian faith' to aid the emperor. The Venetians then began preparing defensive ditches and ensuring the walls of the city were well defended and strong enough to repel the attacks of the Turks. Each captain and his men took up positions in the Chinigo (Blachernae) area and according to Barbaro did it for the love of God. Once they had taken control over the area they were charged with defending, the nobles of Venice approached the emperor and requested that he ensure the safety of the four gates and their keys to them.<sup>373</sup> The emperor agreed and the Venetians held a section of the walls themselves.

While these were not the most important places nor the locations most attacked by the Turks, those were instead given to the command of Giovanni Guistiniani, they still required protection and the Venetians willingly provided it. Once the siege had begun in earnest the Venetians participated and, according to Barbaro, the emperor requested that they parade before the walls to show the Turks that strong and united people defended the city against them.<sup>374</sup> While Barbaro does not give a detailed image of this event, simply stating that the Venetians left their ships and were well armed and orderly, it is likely that the Venetians, being a proud people, would have brought out their standards and the decorations of their heritage which would have been on display for all to see.<sup>375</sup>

Unlike some of the other conflicts discussed in this thesis, in which the Venetians attempted to keep a veneer of neutrality this parade would have been a clear sign that the Venetians were not hiding behind their treaty. Instead, this was a clear declaration that the Venetians were fighting to defend the city against the Turkish attackers.

The Venetians did not solely provide manpower to ensure the safety of the walls of Constantinople, they were also largely in charge of defending the city from the sea. Although the

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<sup>373</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 25: The emperor consented and gave over the keys to the gates: Cresca or Golden gate was given to Catarin Contarini, a second unnamed gate was given to Fabruzi Corner, the Pigi or Fountain gate was given to Nicolo Mozenigo, and the Palace gate (probably the Kalligaria) was given to Dolfin

<sup>374</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 29

<sup>375</sup> Leonard of Chios in Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. 23: Claims that the Venetians continued their typical practice of acting against the Turks in secret so that they could maintain their neutrality; however, it would have been incredibly difficult for the Venetians to have maintained the secrecy of their involvement in the defence of the city, particularly after manning sections of the walls and parading before them in defiance to the approaching attackers.

chain had been raised across the harbour from the city to Pera, the Turkish fleet was still a threat to the city. This was particularly true after the Ottomans had portaged their ships overland and into the waters behind the chain. The Council of Twelve met 23 April 1453 to determine how best to deal with the Turkish ships and since the Venetian ships outnumbered those of the Greeks and Genoese it was left to them to counter the Turks. A plan to attack during the day was originally proposed but was voted down in favour of Jacomo Coco's, master of the galley from Trebizond, plan to burn the ships in the night.<sup>376</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> Coco took two ships of around 500 botte and prepared them with extra protection of wool and cotton to protect them from cannon fire. That night the captains met to discuss the best time to launch the attack but, according to Barbaro, were persuaded by the Genoese from Pera to wait at least a day so that they could join in the attack. The Venetians agreed, but, according to Barbaro, were betrayed the next morning by the Genoese who sent a messenger from Pera to the Turks warning them of the plan.<sup>377</sup> On the night of 28 April the Venetians finally enacted their plan. However, as they approached the enemy, Coco broke the line and attacked 'seeking greater glory' and his ship was sunk.<sup>378</sup> The other ships pressed the attack but without Coco's ship to aid them were forced to turn back without inflicting much damage to the Turkish fleet.<sup>379</sup> Shortly after Diedo chose Dolfino as Coco's replacement and assigned him as the captain of Coco's ship.<sup>380</sup> Though to his credit Dolfino continued to man his place on the walls after receiving this great honour. Later, on 10 May in an attempt to ensure that any future plans that required the fleet were carried out with greater unity and success Diedo was elected by the Council of Twelve as captain general of the fleet giving him full control over all the ships at their disposal.

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<sup>376</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 38

<sup>377</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 39; Doukas p. 218: Barbaro's bias against the Genoese is a well-known quality of his work however Doukas also relates that the Genoese of Galata warned the Turks ahead of time of the plan to burn the Ottoman fleet. However, Doukas attributes the plan not to the Venetian leadership but to Guistiniani the imperial appointed leader of the defence.

<sup>378</sup> Barbaro, p. 39; Tedaldi in Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. 4

<sup>379</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 40

<sup>380</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 43

The Venetians had decided to protect the city of Constantinople and stuck by their decision. They helped bolster the defences of the city, they repaired walls in the brief pauses of the constant day and night bombardments by the Turkish cannon, they fought and died on the walls and on their ships and only after the city had been breached and defeat certain did many of them flee aboard their ships, often taking as many people with them as they could safely aid.<sup>381</sup> Barbaro records lists of those Venetians of note that were killed, captured, and ransomed by the Turks in the ensuing months after the defeat. The bailo of the city Girolamo Minotto and his sons were brought before the Sultan and were executed for their role in defending the city against the Ottoman assault. The city served as a home to many Venetians who lived and worked within the quarter that had been created there, defending the city meant defending Venice and of all Christendom.

#### **4.4.3 The Language of Barbaro and the Venetian Opinion of the Ottomans:**

The defence of Constantinople was not a proclaimed crusade and as such did not receive the same indulgences nor the support of the papal bureaucracy to raise funds and awareness of the need for Christians to mobilize in defence of the city. However, the language of Barbaro indicates that the Venetians, whom while some argue were unwilling participants of crusading actions, were actually dedicated to the protection of Christendom. Venice and Venetian men participated in many crusading campaigns dating back to the 1090s and the very first crusade. Though plagued by their reputation of desiring little aside from greater wealth and power and a general distrust in their motives and actions accounts like that of Barbaro show that the average Venetian could still be relied upon to do what he thought was his duty not just to Venice but to all of who shared his faith and beliefs. This is especially interesting as it shows that the Venetians who were at Constantinople in the 1450s and who fought against the Ottomans were not simply fighting for some reward or for

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<sup>381</sup> Tedaldi in Melville-Jones, *Siege of Constantinople*, p. 8: Claims that the Venetians waited until midday after the city walls had been breached before fleeing the city aiding all those that were trying to flee the Turkish attackers who were looting and pillaging.



some benefit or gain for the Venetian State, the Venetians were fighting because it was the right thing to do and in defence of Christendom and their brothers in faith against a heathen enemy.

Throughout this chapter I have highlighted when Barbaro states when the Venetians took action for the love or honour of God and Jesus Christ. This continues throughout much of the text and he also attributes the successes of the Venetians and other Christians to the provenance of faith. God is praised highly when on 18 April the Turks attacked en masse and the defenders were unharmed despite killing over 200 Turks. Furthermore, Barbaro alludes to the impending loss of the city when he praises the 'Eternal Lord' for protecting the city and 'not allowing a great scandal at this time'.<sup>382</sup> And a few days later on the 20<sup>th</sup> when four Genoese ships sailed up the Dardanelles and were set upon by the Turkish fleet Barbaro again praises the 'Eternal Lord' who heard the prayers of those in the city and led the Christians to victory. Once more God intervened on behalf of the defenders and protected them from the heathens. It is clear that to Barbaro this fight was a religious struggle defending a bastion of Christianity in the east against Muslim aggression into Europe.

Barbaro's stance on this conflict as a war between Christianity and the heathens becomes even clearer when he discusses the Ottoman Turks. When the Janissaries attacked the walls in waves and were slaughtered by the defenders, Barbaro refers to their charges and attacks as if they were 'not afraid of death but they came on like wild beasts'.<sup>383</sup> When the Turks came to collect their dead around the walls Barbaro then compares them to swine.<sup>384</sup> These references to beasts and comparing them to swine some of the derogatory claims that are typical of many accounts like Barbaro's. It is unknown how much Barbaro understood of the Islamic faith and teachings but his comparison to pigs may have been a further slander based on the Quran's ban on the consumption of pork. In his description of the April 18 victory the defenders won a great victory against the 'heathen' to their 'great shame'.<sup>385</sup> And during the sea battle fighting for the fate of the four

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<sup>382</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 32

<sup>383</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 32

<sup>384</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 32 'carrying them on their shoulders as one would a pig'

<sup>385</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 32

Genoese ships the 'enemy of the Christian faith' are attacking the ships.<sup>386</sup> Furthermore, Barbaro's description of the Sultan Mehmed are also full of derogatory phrases. He is described as 'man possessed and full of evil thoughts' after his admiral fails to stop the ships on 20 April.<sup>387</sup> When the Ottomans plan to portage their ships to reach the waters behind the chain that blocked the harbour Barbaro calls the Sultan 'an evil pagan' and a 'dog' who devised 'the evil plan'.<sup>388</sup> Barbaro reduces the Ottoman Turks to an enemy that is less than themselves and marks them as evil and pagan or heathen. It is not a stretch to believe that this was a commonly held opinion by the Venetians and that he was not the only Venetian who viewed this conflict as a religious struggle and a matter of faith. Unfortunately, the lack of Venetian accounts of other campaigns makes comparison difficult to see how Barbaro's writing measures up to Venetian accounts of crusades and other religious conflicts that the Venetians faced. However, this account does lend aid to the idea that the Venetians, while commonly seen as businessmen, merchants, and bankers who cared little for anything except how to expand their fortunes and investments were in fact willing to lay down their lives and fight to defend their faith against its enemies when fighting on the front lines. Many studies only take into account the archival material of the bureaucratic state of Venice but the work of Barbaro hints of a deeper and more complex truth to the Venetian state and their opinion of religious conflict against the Turks in the fifteenth century.

#### **4.5 Conclusion:**

Venetian participation in the defence of Constantinople is undeniable. The ships that were caught up in the conflict decided to stay and help their fellow countrymen and their fellow Christian brethren defend the city against the Muslim aggression despite the fact that they had orders from the Venetian Senate to return home and despite the treaty, and symbolic peace it represented, between the Venetian state and the Ottomans. Venetians fought and died and were captured and executed

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<sup>386</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 35

<sup>387</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 35

<sup>388</sup> Barbaro, *Diary*, p. 37: 22 April 1453

for their role in defending the city. The Venetian sources are clear, they did not fight to gain lost territory or better trade agreements or an increase to profit. Instead they fought because they believed it was the proper thing to do. For its part the Venetian Senate worked to provide aid to the beleaguered city. They sought to spread word of the plight of the Greeks and the need for a reaction by the West and they prepared a fleet to come to the rescue. The Venetians themselves passed recorded their own actions, ideas, and opinions in their own accounts for the fall of Constantinople. These documents are a treasure trove of information for how the Venetians saw their actions and the events unfolding around them. Barbaro's diary and the accounts presented by other Venetians provide a unique insight into the Venetian viewpoint of the conflict with the Ottomans. The defence of Constantinople was not a crusade, it was not given the attention and the indulgences from the Pope and Venice was provided no promise of immediate or even potential gain for coming to the rescue of the city. Unlike the Crusade of Varna which offered the potential of retaking the lost city of Thessaloniki, the defence of Constantinople promised no such rewards. Instead Venice and its citizenry acted out of the interest of Christianity and for the defence of a city important not just to them but to the survival of the Byzantine Empire and Christian Europe. It is not a stretch to think that had records from Venetians survived from earlier conflicts examined here in this thesis they might show a similar dedication and importance placed not just on the gains of the state but also on the importance of the wider Christian community and more altruistic reasons for joining with these campaigns. The Venetian state was never shy to demand compensation for its involvement and did often seek to gain whatever it could through tough diplomacy and hard bargaining; however, as a small state limited by its meagre and separated lands and reliance on trade and shipping for much of its income and survival these acts of diplomacy were necessary for the survival of the state. Without the discovery of new source material from Venetian hands it will forever remain debated whether or not the Venetians were as willing and dedicated to the earlier campaigns as they were to the defence of Constantinople, but it can be shown through the works of Barbaro and others that the

Venetians fought and died to protect the city of Constantinople and were not simply fighting for personal gain.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

The participation of Venice in the later middle ages has been a topic that many historians have skirted around and failed to interact with directly. Venetian historians fail to focus on their role in the crusades due to a focus on the growth and development of the city of Venice itself and the social, political, artistic, and cultural expansion of the city. Their focus on trade and the expansion of the overseas empire that Venice developed, such as the case of F. C. Lane in his large work on the city of Venice, is the focus of a few chapters or small sections. The crusades, if featured at all, are given simplistic summaries with little in the way of analysis as to why Venice participated in these actions or what Venice contributed to the campaign. Conversely historians that focus on the crusades of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do not take the Venetian contributions seriously and fail to provide in-depth analysis or research into them. Venice's contributions are seen as 'typical' of the minor state or 'minimal' to the point of being negligible. Much of this negligence is born from a bias that has persisted throughout the historiography of the study of Venetians as crusaders. They are seen as half-hearted crusaders that desired simply to expand their territory and gain further wealth and power, not to fight for the defence of Christendom. Furthermore, Venice's inability to field large numbers of troops or knights is another detractor for many traditional crusade historians who focus mostly on the military campaigning and battles between standing armies of men. This is a disingenuous treatment of the Venetian contribution to the crusades. As this thesis has worked to show, the Venetians were able to provide and participate in these crusades and the other anti-Ottoman actions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Venice provided naval support, food, weapons and armour to the armies and cities that were the goals of these crusades. Their involvement was heavily sought out by the other contemporary crusaders. In the case of Nicopolis the campaign was delayed by a year while negotiations with the Venetians continued about what the commune would provide for the crusade. While during the Crusade of Varna the

Venetian fleet was pushed for by the papal legate Francesco Condulmer, who pushed for the fleet to depart as soon as possible to support the land army. Their role was not minor nor unappreciated by the other participants of the crusades. While often critical or even hostile towards the Venetians, even the Greek sources acknowledge the contributions of Venice to the defence of their lands and their participation in the crusades. This paper, then, set out to show that the Venetian contribution was not insignificant and to understand further why the Venetians participated and how their approach shifted between the Crusade of Nicopolis in the 1390s and the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

In the case of the Crusade of Nicopolis the Venetian Senate was at its most hesitant to participate in the campaign proposed. The city had only a decade before brought a close the War of Chioggia, which they had fought, and won, against the Genoese. However, the treaty that had brought this war to a close also diminished Venetian control and power both overseas with the loss of the island of Tenedos and their Dalmatian territories, as well as at home. The city was left demoralized and bankrupt from the fighting both on land and at sea. When the crusade planning began Venice was still recovering thanks in no small part to its overseas territories. Their hesitance to join this crusade therefore was two-fold: first they could not risk another war so soon, and the threat of war with the Ottomans should the crusade fail to strike a strong enough blow may have been a powerful deterrent. Secondly, and tied closely to the first point was the need to defend and protect their overseas territories against Ottoman, and potential Genoese, reprisals. However, the Venetians did eventually agree to send a contingent of ships. Unfortunately there is little material surviving that gives an accurate account of what the Venetians accomplished with their ships during the actual campaign. Aside from saving King Sigismund of Hungary after the defeat of the army outside Nicopolis, there is no known evidence of the accomplishments of their participation. While Venice was hesitant to join the crusade in 1396 by the time of the Crusade of Varna in 1444 this hesitation had greatly reduced. They joined the Crusade of Varna at the insistence of Pope Eugenius IV and his nephew Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, both native Venetians. For this crusade they

provided not only the ships for the papal fleet, to be led by the Cardinal who was serving as papal legate, but they also built and outfitted a fleet of their own ships which was sent to support the land army marching from Hungary. While the fleet was not prepared in time to support the campaign for 1444, they were in position in time to assist the continuation of the crusade in 1445, led on land by John Hunyadi, the regent of Hungary after the death of the King in 1444. This part of the campaign has often been ignored by historians of the Crusade of Varna who end their discussions with the death of the King at the Battle of Varna. This then ignores the bulk of Venetian contributions to the latter half of the crusade. Their participation in the crusade and their willingness to join can be measured by the strength that Venice had been able to rebuild since the late fourteenth century. They had been able to expand their overseas empire and acquire new islands and ports in the Aegean and southern Ionian Seas. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the Senate desired to reclaim the city of Thessaloniki which had been lost in 1430. They had attempted to reclaim it immediately after its fall but had failed. In the preparations to the Crusade of Varna they began to seek the potential of reclaiming the city and while on campaign the legate and the Venetian ships sailed in the Aegean to harass the Ottomans over the winter of 1444-5. From these examples it could seem that Venice only joined in the reactive and defensive anti-Ottoman actions for the sole purpose of their own personal gain. However, the other two studies of this thesis help to argue against that. Those being the occupation and defence of the city of Thessaloniki 1423-1430 and the defence of Constantinople in 1453.

While these were not crusade actions they were struggles against the Muslim Ottoman Turks and took on a religious connotation and a struggle of Christian versus the heathen. Venice had accepted the city of Thessaloniki in 1423 after significant debate. They worried over their ability to hold the city and the cost that might be incurred to protect it. Although it seems likely that they had hoped to convince the Ottomans to allow them to hold the city and pay tribute for it. It was finally decided that the city was better off in Venetian hands and in the hands of a Christian power than falling to the Muslims. Additionally, the natural defensive position of the city and its lucrative

harbour enticed the Venetians to acquire Thessaloniki. The Ottoman siege was already underway when the Venetians arrived and lasted the next seven years. The works that describe the fighting of the city and the continuing struggle record the religious nature of the fighting. While these texts are Greek and not Venetian and do not portray the Venetians in the best light, they do provide the feelings of the inhabitants of the city and the religious nature of the conflict. This is particularly true of the record of Symeon of Thessaloniki who was Archbishop during the early years of the siege before his death. The Venetians found themselves in a similar position twenty years after the loss of Thessaloniki when they participated in the defence of Constantinople in 1453. However, unlike all the two crusades and the defence of Thessaloniki, there still exists Venetian records of the defence, penned by Venetian eyewitnesses to the events that unfolded. Barbaro's diary of the events during the siege of Constantinople are suitably focused and over inflated of the importance that the Venetians within the city held. It is clear in his writings that the Venetians were convinced of the need to defend their Christian brethren from the Muslim attackers. The Senate had demanded that the trade fleet that took refuge in the city should flee and return to Venice while they provided a defence fleet. This relief would be sent too late and arrive the day after the city fell. However, the captain decided to remain in the city. Some claim they were forced to stay and others that they were paid to stay but there is little evidence of this. The Venetians needed Constantinople to maintain their trade lanes and protect their citizens that lived within the city. So the captains decided to stay and fight and to protect Christendom, and thereby their interests, from the Muslims.

This work set out to explain the Venetian participation in the crusade of the later middle ages, particularly those of Nicopolis and Varna, as well as the defence of Constantinople against the Ottoman Turks in 1453. This subject, which has been only loosely discussed by previous historians, is a rich topic that still requires further investigation and exploration. This work will hopefully provide the basis of further investigation and study, extending the timeline both past the 1453 and the Venetian Ottoman wars of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as to the earlier crusades prior to the 1390s. The opinion of the Venetian contribution as self-serving and linear is

easily disproven with some further investigation into their motives, the shifting political position of the lagoon based commune, and the strength and weaknesses of both Venice and their enemies.



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