

LASTING FALLS AND WISHPFUL RECOVERIES: CRUSADING IN THE BLACK SEA REGION AFTER THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the Black Sea question in the second half of the 15th century, with special emphasis on crusading and religious questions. Based on selection of recently discovered Italian archival sources, the study focuses on a series of pivotal moments in the history of the region: the battle of Belgrade (1456), the fall of Caffa (1475) and the Ottoman conquest of Chilia and Cetatea Albă/ Akkerman (1484). All three events implied a succession of extreme reactions, both in military and in ideological terms, vivid proofs for the pressures and the stakes of those times. Such aspects tend to be particularly relevant if the religiously and ethnically mixed character of the areas under analysis is taken into account. Moreover, under these circumstances, it is highly noteworthy that “figures”, previously predominantly regarded as “traitors of the cross” become its “heroes” (e.g. the Genoese in 1456 or the Walachians in 1475), supplementing the number of the crusaders confronting the Ottoman power, in a time when also the ranks of the “partners” of the *Turk* was growing, until he was “officially” accepted as an “European partner” through the peace of Buda (1503).¹

KEYWORDS

Genoa, Jews, Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, Crusading.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Genoa, *Iudaei*, *Imperium Turcorum*, *Constantinopolis*, *Sacra crucis militia*.

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Prior to the decisive confrontations between the Ottoman army and the crusaders at Belgrade (July 21-23, 1456), 'the free Christian world' awaited a new disaster that had to complete the catastrophe of 1453 and open *Italia* and *Germania* as well to the Ottoman power. The almost desperate attempts of Serbian despot George Branković and Walachian ruler Wladislaw II (both, until then, the 'sworn' enemies of hero John Hunyadi) to halt Mehmed II's northern advance had ended badly in June. The 'crusaders of Belgrade' were one step away from fighting each other, for reasons of tongue or for motifs of social rank. Hunyadi's 'professionals' and Giovanni da Capestrano's 'penitents' had great chances of becoming martyrs if they did not kill each other before falling into Ottoman spears. However, the miracle took place. Mehmed had to retreat. The Christian dreams began. Constantinople was to be recovered, then Nazareth and eventually Jerusalem. For a good while, in that summer and autumn of 1456, many actually believed that Constantinople had been liberated².

At that time, John Hunyadi had died. Viewed as the true heir to the imperial crown of Constantine XI Palaeologus (by the Greeks in his entourage), as the mythical founder of Byzantium, the *Yanko bin Madyan* (by the Ottomans/Turks), the late hero

2. For the events of 1455-1456: Hofer, Johannes. "Der Sieger von Belgrad". *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 51 (1931): 163-212; Babinger, Franz. *Der Quellenwert der Berichte über den Entsatz von Belgrad am 21/22 Juli. 1456* (off-print *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, NS, VIII (1956). Munich: Bayr. Akad.d.Wiss., 1957); Housley, Norman. "Giovanni da Capistrano and the Crusade of 1456", *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, Norman Housley, ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004: 94-115; Simon, Alexandru. "The Lion in Winter: John Hunyadi from Kossovopolje to Belgrade", *Between Worlds. Extincta est lucerna orbis: John Hunyadi and his Time*, Ana Dumitran, Loránd Mádly, Alexandru Simon, ed. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academia Română, 2008: 491-522. For a documentary overview of the political context, we have selected data from the various reports that circulated through the Italian Peninsula in the summer of 1456: [...] *El Turcho* [Mehmed II] *era venuto verso le parte de Valachia* [ruled by Wladislaw II, who was eventually attacked from back and dethroned by the future Vlad III of Walachia, better known as Dracula, who abandoned John Hunyadi, whose captain he was at that time, and sided with Mehmed II] *e del/ despoto de Rassia* [George (Đurađ) Branković] *cum grande zente. El quale despoto credio havesse cum desordine/ cum alchune zente circha persone VIII^m ando per assaltarli, ma trovo li Turchi bene/ in ordine et hebe la pegore. Ne rimaso prexi et morti la piu parte d'essi VIII^m.* / *Poy el prefato Turcho sente ch'el Papa* [Calixt III], *la Maesta del Re d'Aragona* [Alphonse V] *et ducha de Burgogna* [Philipp the Good] *andavano/ overo mandavano alchuna possanza verso Constantinopoli, deliberrare indireto/ per provvedere a dicta citta de Constantinopoli. Et cossi ritorno cum una parte de sua/ zente piu utile. Li altri sono restati ad damni del prefato despoto e de Valachi.* / *El Brancho* [John Hunyadi, known in the Italian Peninsula as Brancho or Jancho too] *sta la vicino ad guarda del Danubio; aspetta grande exercito de/ Ungari, quali non porano metersi insieme fine non sia facto el recoito [...]* (Venice, 18th of July 1456). [...] *El Turcho e ad campo ad/ Belgrado in forma che non se speranza di securirlo. El Brancho e retracto doe giornate piu que qua. Se dice bene che Ungari se unischano per securilo, ma qua/ non se ha troppo bona speranza [...]* (Venice, 28th of June 1456). [...] *Del Turcho non ce altro de novo salvo che cum grande navillio e entrato in lo Danubio, ma che la peste e/ grandissima in lo exercito suo. L'imperatore* [Frederick III of Habsburg] *pero ha discordio cum lo conte de Cil* [Ulrich de Cilly] *et ha facto grande/ concentratione ad aiuto de Ungari. El ducha Steffano* [Stephen Košarca, duke of Saint Sabbas, the future Herzegovina] *christiano fa grande pratiche in Albania per li favori del Turcho, et persuadio ogniuno se arambi al Imperatore Turcho como/ al mazore signore del mondo. Et asay se dubita che degli Albanesi* [in example the local rivals of Skanderbeg] *non se lassano pravaricare/ ad dicti conforti del ducha Steffano quale de grande signore in dicte parte [...]* (Venice, 23rd of July 1456, the day the battle of Belgrade ended with the start of the Ottoman retreat). The quoted sources come from the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milano (ASM), Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, fasc. 343, 1456, fasc. 6-7, *Giugno-Luglio*, nn). Used abbreviations: ASM, Archivio di Stato di Milano.



had started as a misfit and reached immense power and prestige in the 1440s. It was time for another 'set' of misfits to take center stage and prolong the existence of the hopes and dreams born by the 'miracle of Belgrade'. That is at least what a letter in an Italian archive suggests. In fact, it was drafted before news of Hunyadi's death arrived. This might indicate that there was plenty of room for misfits which could have redeemed (the) Christian honor and resurrected an elusive dream. At any rate, it completed the background that enabled also some altogether sketchy plans for the canonization of the later hero. But he had been at least as mortal and sinful (given also his bribing that contributed to the crusader disaster of Varna) as the 'new liberators'³.

1. Crusading, Trade and Treason in the East

The Genoese had two crusader deadly sins: Nicopolis and Varna. In 1396, they had supplied to Bayezid I the plans of the crusader army. In 1444, they had provided Murad II with the ships that had allowed him to urgently return to Europe and take the 'new crusaders' by surprise. 'Obviously', not all Genoese had been involved. Nonetheless, the image of the centrifugal Genoese colonial empire bled because of the instrumental role played by the Genoese in the East during the Balkan and Pontic rise of the Ottomans and because of their slave trade (which, contrary even to 'more liberal rules', also involved many Christian slaves). However, the fall of Byzantium (for which they had been blamed too at first) had basically thrown them into the arms of the crusade. It was not just the theater of Christian duty. Venice too, Genoa's archrival, believed the crusader commitment of the Ligurian republic. It was not just a desperate involvement, but a practical one. Genoa had refused to support Hunyadi against the *Turk* because she viewed him as already too weak. In return, she had invested considerably in the fleet that had to attack Mehmed in the Eastern Mediterranean⁴.

3. See, for instance: Yerasimos, Stéphane. "Enquête sur un héros: *Yanko bin Madyan*, le fondateur mythique de Constantinople", *Mélanges offerts à Louis Bazin par ses disciples, collègues et amis*, Jean-Louis Bracqué-Grammont, Louis Bazin et alii, ed. Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1992: 213–217 (with reference also to the matter of the feared, by the Ottoman Turks, *Benī asfer* nations in the north, to which the Magyars/Hungarians too belonged); Szabó, Péter. "Heilige Haltungen und ritterliche Merkmale im Kultus des Johannes Hunyadi", *Between Worlds*, Maggie Goh, Craig Stephenson, eds. Oakville: Ricon Publishers, 1989: II, 169–171; Mureşan, Dan Ioan. "Le royaume de Hongrie et la prise de Constantinople: croisade et union ecclésiastique en 1453", *Between Worlds...: II*, 489–490.

4. For Genoa's oriental policies: Gioffré, Domenico. *Il mercato degli schiavi a Genova nel secolo XV*. Genoa: Fratelli Bozzi, 1971; López, Roberto S. "Venise et Gênes: deux styles, une réussite", *Su e giù per la storia di Genova*. Genoa: Università di Genova-Istituto di paleografia e storia medievale, 1975: 35–42; Basso, Enrico. "From Cooperation to Clash of Interests: Genoa and the Turks in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *The Turks*, Hasan Celal Güzel, Cem Oğuz, Osman Karatay, Murat Ocak, eds. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002: III, 175–184; Somaini, Francesco. "Les relations complexes entre Sigismond de Luxembourg et les Visconti, ducs de Milan", *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Ein Kaiser in Europa*, Michel Pauly, François Reinert, eds. Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2006: 157–198; Origone, Sandra. "La fine del dominio greco nel Mar Nero". *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi*



The Jews bore the cross of treason. Virtually almost all crusader movements and actual crusades had been accompanied by pogroms or, at least, by anti-Jewish decisions. At best, the Jews got off, like in Hungary or Moldavia in the 1470s, with a mass-taxation and a persecution (in Moldavia). The, nevertheless 'accidental', moment when the Jewish army core would join Matthias Corvinus' conquering parade through the streets of Vienna (1485) was in the remote future. Besides, the Jews were perceived, at least as much as the *schismatics*, as loyal tools of the Muslim power. Their commercial rivalries with the Latins and the Greeks in the Orient further aggravated the condemnation of the Jews. It is certain only that, after the crusader triumph of Granada (1492), the Porte sheltered Moors and Jews alike. From this point of view, the political intelligence and the relative tolerance (namely until the second third of the 1500s) of the Ottomans was largely fatal for the crusader 'image of the Jew'⁵.

These pariahs of the Christian crusader world were 'granted' the glory of fighting over the already *holy* too city of Constantine. The honor was bestowed upon them by the Venetians. Half a joke, half a serious rumor (at any rate it was important enough to be recorded by the only network of informants comparable to that of Venice in the Christian world), this 'story' made its way via a copied letter into *Italia* at the end of August 1456. Still, like most contemporaries, including those at the papal curia or those who obtained the information for the interests of Milan, the author(s) of the news did not know that Hunyadi had died two weeks earlier (August 11). They talked of Capestrano, of Ladislas V, who, after fleeing the kingdom long before the arrival of the *Turk*, could have become the great victor of that year. With or without, John, the captain who had

Bizantini e Slavi, 8 (2006): 245-272 (here pages 249-254); Simon, Alexandru. "The 'Captain' and the 'Superba': Crusader Moments in the Relations between John Hunyadi and Genoa", *Between Worlds...: II*, 333-364.

5. Makki, Mahmoud. "The Political History of al-Andalus (92/811-897/1492)", *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Manuela Marín, eds. Leiden-New York: Brill, 1992: 84; Harvey, Leonard Patrick. "The Political, Social and Cultural History of the Moriscos", *The Legacy of Muslim...: 205*; Gow, Andrew. "The Jewish Antichrist in Medieval and Early Modern Germany". *Medieval Encounters*, 2/3 (1996): 249-285, McMichael, Steven J. "The End of the World, Antichrist, and the Final Conversion of the Jews in the 'Fortalitiu Fidei' of Friar Alonso de Espina (d. 1464)". *Medieval Encounters*, 12/2 (2006): 224-273. The Jews north of the Danube after 1453-1456: Simon, Alexandru. *Ștefan cel Mare și Matia Corvin. O coexistență medievală*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007: 280-282 (Translation: Simon, Alexandru. *Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus: A Medieval Coexistence*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007) (to which we add a document from spring 1475 misplaced, under the year 1493, in: ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 381, Giugno-Dicembre 1493, fasc. 4, Settembre. nn; according to Venice's plan presented before pope Sixtus IV, the Jews in Hungary and Moldavia could and should have supplied most of the resources needed for the crusade against Mehmed II, which led to a serious conflict between Stephen III of Moldavia and the Jews, a conflict so serious that in the early 1500s, the learned Elie Capsali of Crete, a Venetian subject, claimed that the conflict between the Moldavian ruler and the Jews had been the cause of the Moldavian-Ottoman war as Meh-med II stepped in to protect the Jews; for Elie Capsali: Halévy, Mayer J. "Les guerres de Etienne le Grand et d'Uzun Hasan d'après la 'Chronique de la Turquie' du candiote Elie Capsali (1520)". *Studia et Acta Orientalia*, 1, (1957): 189-197).



saved his posterity at Belgrade, the, until then, frightened ‘free Christian world’ was however ready to accept and to assume the liberation of Constantinople⁶.

6. ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 343, 1456, fasc. 8, Agosto, nn (August 25, 1456; both the sender and the recipient are otherwise unknown, even though Antonio Murin<i>o</i>, appears to have been one of the first Venetian recipients (and senders) of the news on the fall of Byzantium (the letters can be found in: ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 340, 1450-1453, fasc. 4, 1453, nn). One of his letters on the fall reached Milan via possibly the same Dulceto, recorded in the Milanese copy of the letter as *Alberto* [not as *Chilberto*, like in 1456] *Dulceto in Ferrara*. [...] *Sono avisato chome in Constantinopoli e stato tolto da Genovesi [...]/ El capitolo della lettera dice per essere el Turcho [Mehmed II] in campo haveva tolto molte/ monitoni fora di Constantinopoli et pro essere in dicto luogho grande mortalitadel et li Turchi che erano in guardia del detto luogho l’avianò abandonato et/ lasciato in guardia alli Giudei, et giognendo in Constantinopoli quattro navi/ grosse di Genovesi, con persone 1800 per nave, per andare in percorso di Capha [Genoese merchants, with such large vessels and “crews” on the road to their Crimean Caffa, were usually slave traders in the first place and “less crusaders”, although Genoa feared greatly a potential loss of the city, which the Ligurian government had been com-pelled to hand over to the Bank of San Giorgio after the fall of Byzantium],/ et pare per quello si dice che se missono in contencione con li Giudei, et così i Genovesi/ sono intrati in Constantinopoli [Milanese copy, preserved among the secret reports from Venice, of the letter of Antonio Murin<i>o</i>/ Qu<i>rin<i>o</i> [?] to Chilberto [?] Dulceto, and dated by the former: *Datum die XXV augusti, <Venice> in papariis 1456*]. [On the same sheet, in partial at least consonance with lines of the letter on the Genoese, another copied report, recieved also from Venice, followed]. *Copia alcune lettere de Venetiis// La nova de Ungaria vene confirmada si da terra come da mare et dice/ come fratre Giovanni da Capestrano* [notorious for his anti-Semitic preachings, yet forced on the eve of the siege of Belgrade to ask both Jews and *Schismatics*, previously his main targets, alongside the *Turks*, for aid] *predica e confortava la brigna* [instead of *brigata*; *brigna* (*prugna* in modern Italian) had a condescent meaning in regard to the ‘common’ crusaders and their mind (their *plum*)] *ad essi/ valenti, et come lo prevadore* [title still used for Hunyadi, though he had resigned as governor of Hungary in winter 1452-1453] *et lo Re de Ungaria* [Ladislas V] *ere d’acordo et fano/ grandissimo apare<c>chio per andare in persona contra al Turcho* [undated]. Capestrano in the context of the 1450s: Damian, Iulian Mihai. *Ioan de Capestrano și Cruciada Târzie*. Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română-Centrul de Studii Transilvane, (PhD Dissertation, 2008: 90-94. (Translation: Damian, Iulian Mihai. John Capestran and the Late Crusade. Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română-Centrul de Studii Transilvane, (PhD Dissertation, 2008). The Greek and Latin problematic of Byzantium as a holy city is well revealed in: Werner, Ernst. “Translatio Imperii ad Turcos”: päpstliche ‘Renovatio’ und Weltkaiseridee nach dem Fall Constantinopels”. *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 11 (1987): 465-472; Carile, Maria Cristina. “Constantinople and the Heavenly Jerusalem?: Through the Imperial Palace”. *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, 8 (2006): 85-104; Blanchet, Marie-Hélène. *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400-vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’Empire byzantin*. Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 2008. For the Milanese system: Margaroli, Paolo. *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali. Le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italica (1450-1455)*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1992. In this context, a passage from the letter sent by Giovanni, bishop of Pavia, to the duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, from Wiener Neustadt, might be interesting: *Illustrissimo Signore Mio, de novelle di Turchi poso la vittoria de Nandoralba [Belgrade] de la quale scripsi/ alla Signoria Vestra et mandavi la copia de le lettere de Jo vaynoda [John Hunyadi; no sign of abbreviation accompanies the name Jo] e sequiter/ la morte del dicto Jo [likewise] vaynoda. Item se dice della morte del Grande Turcho./ Item se dice che li Turchi sono caciati de Constantinopoli, non lo credo buono./ Lo Re [Ladislas V] se tira di lo Realme de Ongaria. El Conte de Cili [Ulrich von Cilly] fa tucto./ Monsegniore de Sancto Angelo [cardinal Juan Carvajal] e in Nandoralba. Grande quantita de crucisignati/ sono la. Io in tre die ne ho mettuto fora de Vienna circha/ VI^m bene armati, et li ho accompagnati fine alle nave, et lo Re sorpreso e/ venuto ad vedere. Se Dio me fa dar gratia de fare questa pace, ho speranza/ se ordenara grande exercito in questo paese [Austria] maximo per lo anno sequenter* (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze estere, Germania, cart. 569, 1450-1458, fasc. 7, 1456, nn 29th of August 1456; this was not a one of a kind message).*



2. The Genoese Recovery of Byzantium

In that summer (and not only) there was mixture of hope and confusion revealed also by the letter's dating: *in the porridge of <the year> 1456*.

*Sono avisato choe in Constantinopoli e stato tolto di Genovesi per lo modo infradiecto./ El capitolo della lettera dice per che el Turcho [Mehmed II] in campo haveva tolto molte/ monitioni fora di Constantinopoli et perche esse in dicto luogho grande mortalitade/ et li Turchi esi erano in guardis del dicto luogho havano abandonato et/ laserado in guardis alli Giudei, et giongendo in Constantinopoli quattro navi/ grosse di Genovesi cum persone 1800, per nave, per andare, in percorso di Capha/ et pare per quello si dice essere missono in contencione con li Giudei, cosi i Genovesi/ sono intrati in Constantinopoli (August 25, 1456; Milanese copy, preserved amongst the Venetian secret reports, of the letter sent by patrician Antonio Murino to his friend Chilberto Dulceto, both otherwise virtually unknown characters; dated by the former: *Datum die XXV augusti, [in Venice] in paparis 1456*).*

[On the same sheet, in partial at least consonance with lines from above, another copied report, also from Venice, followed].

Copia alcune lettere de Venetiis// La nova de Ungaria vene confirmada li da terra come da mare et dice/ come fratre Giovanni da Capestrano predica e confortava la brigna [prugna in modern Italian; it had an obviously condescent meaning in regard to the 'common' crusaders and their mind, that is their plum] ad essi/ valenti, et come lo prevadore [title still used for John Hunyadi, who had resigned as governor of Hungary three years ago] et lo Re de Ungaria [Ladislas V the Posthumous] ene d'acordo e fano/ grandissimo aparecoso per andare in personi contro al Turcho.

At least, for a Milanese perspective, the only time span comparable, in terms of intensity and mixture of news and plans of anti-Ottoman essence with those months of 1456, was later the period marked by the arrival of the news on the fall of Caffa and on the Moldavian-Hungarian campaign in Walachia (August 1475-November 1476). Then, for more than a year, basically not one day passed without at least one report or news on pro or anti-Ottoman activities. However, seemingly, no other 'liberation of Constantinople' surfaced, though plans were still drafted for its recovery. Perhaps, the desperation and relief were not that great as they had been three years after the fall of Byzantium. Maybe also the personalities of the 1470s lacked the career and the 'panache' of those at Belgrade. Possibly, all was due also to the fact that the Genoese had lost Caffa, while the Jews, at least those in king Matthias' service had other tasks too⁷.

7. In this context, in direct relation to the other crusader Christian-Muslim front: Gómez, Lino. *Un español al servicio de la Santa Sede, Don Juan de Carvajal: cardenal de Santi'Angelo legado en Alemania y Hungría, 1399?-1469*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-Instituto Jerónimo Zurita, 1947; Navarro, Miguel. *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo frente a la Cruzada*. Valencia: Ajuntament de València, 2003. For the 1470s: Simon, Alexandru. "The Costs and Benefits of Anti-Ottoman Warfare: Documents on the Case of Moldavia (1475-1477)". *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 48/1-2 (2009): 37-53. The effectives of the 'Genoese armada' were clearly exaggerated. 7.200 men on 4 ships was an immense figure, even if consider that most of them could have been slaves. The figure itself came close to that of the troops which Hunyadi had under his command at Belgrade (see the studies quoted in note 1 and in particular that of Babinger). On the other hand, voluntarily or involuntarily, this figure also tends to increase the credibility of the information, given, for instance, the fact that



The plague ravaged the Balkans since the end of spring 1456. It had pushed the Ottomans out of Constantinople. According to the ‘overwhelming’ Christian version of the events, the plague was also fatal to John Hunyadi. On the other hand, we have the Ottoman form of ‘poetic justice’. A ‘lost’ Ottoman arrow would have ended John's life. Each version has its strengths and weaknesses. The Ottoman version also has the ‘advantage’ of shaping an image of ‘Cid of the Balkans’ for John, as the Ottomans did not reattack Belgrade afterwards (but no contemporary seems to have made use of this ‘possibility’). Regardless of how we choose to look at these depictions of one and the same summer, a unique confrontation between despairs arises, even from Ottoman perspective. Like never before or after, Mehmed II forced the decisive blow, when the resistance of adversaries could have been patiently and surely eroded. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder why Christians claimed that the sultan had wanted to commit suicide when he had realized the magnitude of his failure or why there was repeated news of the reconquest of Byzantium⁸.

Aside from the exaggerations of the Franciscans, who tried to make the most out of their brother's exploits, from the popular exaltations that aroused Pius II's irony (jealous of the glory won by Capestrano), or older or newer millenarist interpretations, an almost strange idea of a basically confused redemption emerges from the utopic liberation (if we were to draw a parallel, based on political affinities and general attitudes towards *Greeks*, the Genoese ‘would be’ the more tolerant Dominicans, whereas the Venetians ‘would be’ the ‘determined’ Franciscans). Slave traders (for this is what

probably the constant Ottoman garrison of Constantinople consisted of approximately 1.200 men (see also the analysis of: Zattoni, Piero. “Le forze militare Ottomane secondo Jacopo de Promontorio”. *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, 8 (2006): 305-330, namely pages 309-314). As to Antonio Murino, an intriguing, yet virtually unknown, figure, we have to note the fact that he was actively involved, as a recipient and (then) as a sender, of the first news on the fall of Byzantium that reached Venice in 1453 (Simon, Alexandru. “Unknown Dispacci on the Fall of Byzantium”. *Jahrbücher für Österreichische Byzantinistik*, 54 (2010), forthcoming; the four dispacci containing the, very, fresh news on the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople are preserved in the ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 340, 1450-1453, fasc. 4, 1453, nn. On the other hand, in reference to the events in the 1470s, one other peculiar case should be recalled, maybe as intriguing as the ‘Genoese conquest’ of Byzantium. In 1477, after the attempt to defeat Mehmed II in 1476 had ended with a crusader disaster, leading to renewed major conflicts in the crusader camp and especially to threats of withdrawal from it from the main military anti-Ottoman forces in the South-East (Hungary and Moldavia), Rome and Venice were in virtually desperate position. Sixtus IV even considered ‘saving the day’ by reactivating the Templar Knights in Venice and on Rhodes, which also reveals how limited Rome's means were. [Yet another experienced Milanese diplomat, Leonardo Botta, wrote] *Che al presente de ordinatione della Santità del Papa e del Gran/ Magistro di Rodi [Pierre d'Aubusson] debbeno venire qui a Vinetia a fare capitulo tuti li/ Cavallieri del Templo perche voriano che li prosperosi andasseno a habitare/ qualche anni a Rodi et li intabili li desseno subsidio pecuniario [...]* (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 365, 1477, fasc. 11, *Novembre*, nn; 14th of November 1477; report sent from Venice).

8. In general: Hegedűs, András. “Isten segedelmével a török császárt a fent mondott várból kivetettük: Hunyadi János levele Szécsi Dénes esztergomi érsekhez a nándorfehérvári győzelemről”. *Magyar Sion*, 44/1 (2008) (Translation: Hegedűs, András. “With God's Help, with have chased the Turks out of the fortress: John Hunyadi's Letter to Denis Szécsi, archbishop of Esztergom, on the Battle of Belgrade”, *Magyar Sion*, 44/1 (2008): 110-120); Fodor, Pál. “The Ottoman Empire, Byzantium and Western Christianity. The Implications of the Siege of Belgrade, 1456”. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 61/1-2 (2008): 43-51; Simon, Alexandru. “Notes on John Hunyadi's Actions and Images”. *Analele Universităţii Oradea. Istorie*, 18 (2009): 35-51 (the main source on Hunyadi's ‘alternative death’ remains the altogether very well informed chronicle of Tursun Bey).



Genoese merchants, with such large vessels, on the road to Crimean Caffa, were in the first place) freed the city, resanctified by its punishment of May 1453, from the hands of the first primal enemies of Christ. Whether or not the author(s) of the news and those who circulated it (until, in fall, the winds of success stopped blowing) saw, willingly or unwillingly, such meanings, is a question that can hardly be answered, first of all, due to practical reasons dating back to 1456. A few months after the miracle, Hungary entered the civil war that Hunyadi would have had to face, had he lived, while the crusader fleet in the Mediterranean drowned in piracy and financial dispute⁹.

3. The Ottoman Conquest of Caffa

In 1471 a pope of Genoese descent took on Saint Peter's succession. Genoese popes, like Genoese crusaders, were a rarity. Sixtus IV had neither the 'genes', nor the time for an all too favorable image. Matters did not improve for him over the next years. Still, he continued to try to compensate for them by promoting crusading and humanism. Popes before him had usually done the same. Sixtus' successor's largely upheld the pattern, in particular one of his own nephews, the future Jules II. But, by the time when Jules took up his cross, his family's Genoese heritage, as well as Genoa's glory, seemed to be in the remote past, both in the Italian Peninsula and in the East. In 1475, Caffa had fallen. By that time, for more than two decades, Caffa had ceased to be the Crimean pride of the republic. It had turned into, more or less, a 'private enterprise' ran

9. Paschini, Pietro. "La flotta di Callisto III, 1455-1458". *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 53-55 (1930-1932): 177-254; Marinescu, Constantin. "Le Pape Calixtus III (1455-1458), Alfonse d'Aragon, roi de Naples, et l'offensive contre les Turcs". *Bulletin de la Section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine*, 19 (1935): 77-97; Delacroix, Claudine. *Les Dominicains et la Chrétienté grecque aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*. Rome: École française de Rome, 1997; Millar, Bonnie. "Sanctity, Savagery and Saracens in *Capystranus*: Fifteenth Century Christian-Ottoman Relations". *Al Masaq*, 14/2 (2002): 113-121; Damian, I.M. "Fonti e ideologia della 'crociata dei minori'", *Between Worlds...* II, 447-462; Simon, Alexandru. "Milanese Perspectives on the Hungarian Events of 1456", *Miscel-lanea Historica et Archaeologica in Honorem Professoris Ionel Cîndea*, Valeriu Sârbu, Cristian Luca, eds. Brăila: Muzeul Brăilei-Editura Istros, 2009: 249-260 (the start of the civil war). In these crusader and Hungarian matters, the following passages, drawn from Milanese reports sent from Vienna and Buda, are quite relevant: *Qua se dice ch'el Conte de Cile [Ulrich von Cilly] e morto et che lo figliolo della bona memoria de Johannes/ Uniad [Ladislav (László) Hunyadi] lo habbia amazato sotto pretexto ch'el dicto conte de Cile voleva amazare/ luy. E questo e stato in Ungheria. E alchuni pensano male del stato del Re de Ungaria/ perche dicto Conte de Cile faceva fare al dicto Re [Ladislav V] su e giu come voleva/ luy. I Ungari sono infideli e imbecilli e inconstanti homini verso li loro Signori/ e maxime <verso> li Principi, et se dice etiam che tutti li consiglieri e grandi maestri/ ch'erano con el Conte de Cile siano presi e sostenuti, et che tucta la robba/ a havere con si el dicto Conte de Cile sia stata saccomanata. Et in queste/ parte ognuno se alegra della morte del dicto Conte de Cile, e qua communiter/ se dice ch'era cason de questa guerra che se faceva al imperatore [Frederick III] e ch'era uno/ tiranno che voleva guastare e mettere male usanze e graveze in tucta Alemagna [...] // [Likewise] lo ho voluto sentire della sconfita di Turchi [i.e. the battle of Belgrade] e trovo per tre o quattro persone con/ che ho parlato quale se sonno personaliter ritrovate in quella guerra, e chi de loro/ so serito, e chi strupiato de schioperi in quella guerra e sconfitta. E dicono/ che li Turchi hanno havuto poca rotta e che se ritrovano XXXX^m morti, tanti/ Christiani che li Turchi, e che lo maggior danno che habbiano havuto Turchi el la perdita della munitione e della armata d'aqua. E dicese che lo Turcho fa/ maggior apparato ad guerra che may e ch'el fa come fa lo liono quando el humilato (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Germania, cart. 569, fasc. 7, nn, 31 dicembre 1456, Wiener Neustadt; the report by Giovanni de Ulesis, Francesco Sforza's experienced diplomat).*



by the Bank of San Giorgio, the true, the most constant at least, ruler of Genoa in those decades¹⁰.

The peak of crusader attention given to the Black Sea had been in the final hours of Byzantium (1452-1453). Later Roman, Venetian or Genoese Pontic plans were less energetic. Uzun Hassan's rise, the Venetian rediscovery of the Russian and Tartar anti-Ottoman reservoirs, as well as Venice's own anti-Ottoman misery, brought the area back to major crusader attention (1472-1474). The Bohemian involvement of John Hunyadi's royal son, Matthias Corvinus, the main figure on Christendom's Ottoman border, had also pushed this attention eastwards. His political return to the south, largely made possible by Mehmed II's eagerness to teach him a lesson at home for his mingling in the Porte's Walachian affairs, was accompanied by Stephen III of Moldavia's anti-Ottoman rise (1474-1475). But, not others followed. When Caffa fell, only two states were in fact at war with the *Turk* (Rome was 'still', by definition, forever at war with the *Turk*): Hungary and namely Moldavia. Not even Genoa was at war with the Porte, whereas Venice had concluded in March 1475 a six month truce with the empire¹¹.

10. See, in this context, in particular: Baletto, Laura. "Sisto IV e Gem Sultano", *L'eta dei Della Rovere. Atti del Convegno, Savona, 7-10 novembre 1985. Atti e Memorie della Società Savonese di Storia Patria*. Savona: Società savonese di storia patria, 1988: II, 153-170; Martignone, Franco. "L'orazione di Ladislao Vetus per l'obbedienza di Mattia d'Ungheria a Sisto IV", *L'eta dei Della Rovere. Atti del Convegno, Savona...*: 205-249; Matschke, Klaus-Peter. "Der Fall von Konstantinopel in den Rechnungsbüchern der genuesischen Staatschuldenverwaltung", *ΠΟΛΥΤΥΛΕΥΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Cordula Scholz, Peter Makris, eds. Munich-Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2000: 204-220; Kolditz, Sebastian. "Mailand und das Despotat Morea nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel", *Geschehenes und Geschriebenes. Studien zu Ehren von Günther S. Henrich und Klaus Peter Matschke*, Sebastian Kolditz, Ralf Müller, Klaus-Peter Matschke, Günter S. Henrich, eds. Leipzig: 2005: 367-407; Papacostea, Șerban. *La Mer Noire carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales 1204-1453*. Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2006. For the conquest of Caffa: Babinger, Franz. "Die Aufzeichnungen des Genuesen Iacopo de Promontorio de Campris über den Osmanenstaat um 1475". *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 8/9 (1957): 24-31; Cazacu, Matei; Kévonian, Keram. "La chute de Caffa en 1475 à la lumière de nouveaux documents". *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 17/4 (1976): 495-538 (Caffa was the largest city north-east of both Istanbul and Venice, with a population of approximately 70.000; Baletto, Laura. "Caffa 1467", *Genova, Mediterraneo, Mar Nero (secc. XIII-XV)*. Genoa: Civico Istituto Colombiano, 1976: 269-290. In this context, we recall what seems to be one of the most eloquent samples of Christian collective hope and individual survival, at the same time, in that period: [...] *L'armata del Turcho e intrata in Mare Maggiore alla via de Capha/ per questo anno siamo liberati da terrore. Esso sta in persona a/ Constantinopoli, et questo anno non ha a moverse, potra forse mandare/ el suo bassa de Romania cum lo exercito a la via de Moldavia/ per cerchar de vindicarsi del dampno et iniuria quale ell dicto bassa have questo zenario in dicti parti di Moldavia* [in example the battle of Vaslui, 10th of January 1475], *che li fuorono tagliati in peze piu de 30^m Turchi, che s'el andara, prego/ Dio la secunda cavalchata corresponda ala prima* [...] (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, *Turchia-Levante*, cart. 647, fasc. 1, *Albania*, nn; 29th of May 1475; report sent from Ragusa to Venetian authorities and copied for the chancery of the Milanese duchy).

11. For a selection of sources and analysis: Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Armadi (Arm.), XXXIX-7, f. 83r-83v (4th of April 1457); XXXIX-10, f. 127 (128)^r [document issued after the 16th of April 1472]; *Miscellanea*, Armadi (Misc., Arm.), II-7, ff. 387 (391)^v-390 (394)^r, 469 (473)^v-473 (477)^r (6th of May and 13th of July 1472); II-30, f. 33 (38)^r (30th of May 1472); II-56, f. 225 (235)^v (6th of August 1475); "Acta Vladislao Jagellonide Regnante". *Fontes Rerum Polonicarum e tabulario reipublicae Venetae*, ed. August Cieszkowski. Poznań: Typis Officinae Dziennik Poznański, 1890: I-2, 131-150 (doc. n° 53-64); Bogdan, Ioan. *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*. Bucharest: Socec & Co. 1913: II, 319-347 (doc. n° 143-156); *Cronaca di Anonimo Veronese 1446-1488*, ed. Giovanni Soranzo. Venice: A spese della Società, 1915: 307; Mehmet, Mustafa A. "La politique ottomane à l'égard de la Moldavie et du Khanat de Crimée vers la fin du règne du sultan Mehmed II 'le



Towards the end of the year, the 'crusader' tension reached a high level not touched since the fall of Negroponte (1470-1471) or even Pius II's final years (1463-1464). Sixtus IV tried to offer the best response possible to Caffa's fall. The Genoese however provided however a much weaker response. Their actual response came in fact much later, following the Ottoman conquest and the 'holy recovery' of Ortanto (1480-1481). In spring 1475, several Genoese officials, not only from the Crimea, viewed the fall of Caffa as inevitable. Like other Italian politicians they seemed unimpressed by the recent Ottoman defeat in Moldavia that Venice and Buda tried to present as one of the greatest defeats in Ottoman history. If they accepted the news on the battle and on its magnitude, they were generally frightened by what was to come. Still, Genoese defensive precautions were limited, almost formal. After Caffa's conquest, it seemed that for some the

Conquerant". *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 13/3 (1974) : 512-515. Venice would have turned the truce of spring 1475 into a peace, if in October, the same year, Mehmed II's demands would have been smaller. Buda and Suceava too had attempted in (late) spring 1475 to reach arrangements with the sultan. But in particular in relation to Stephen III (who, officially, only became the vassal of Matthias Corvinus, a month after the fall of Caffa), the sultan was not willing to accept any compromise, only full submission. Impulsive and seemingly over-confident alike, Mehmed II pushed for more in autumn, to the horror of the *West* (at that time, the Tartar fights had divided the Tartar power into two, into the Golden and Great Horde, and consequently influenced pro- and, namely, anti-Ottoman conduct in Tartar lands, but still, at that time, did not pose a major problem in the East to the sultan, who had asserted his dominance and created an Ottoman-Tartar power center, by compelling khan Mengli GHIRAY, very eager otherwise to secure a large portion of the Genoese heritage in the Crimea to join the Ottomans at the siege of Caffa). In the end it should however be remembered that the Christian impact of the fall of Caffa was compared to that of Constantinople and that, had the sultan's health been in better condition, he could have conquered the other old Genoese colonies in the Black Sea area in that summer. For a selection: [...] *Questa hora XV la Signoria per uno suo secretario me ha mandato/ ad monstrare doe lettere de di ultimo del passato che eadem hora dice havere ricevute per/ uno correro ad posto del suo ambasciatore de Ungaria, per una delli quali li significa/ una pessima novella, videlicet ch'el Re de Ungaria [Matthias Corvinus] e stato advisato dal Vaiuoda/ Valacho [Stephen III of Moldavia], como l'armata del Turcho ha debellato et preso Caffa con tute le forteze/ et ha tagliato a peze tuti li italiani, et principali del dicto loco, como piu diffisamente/ per la copia della dicta lettera, la quale mando qui inclusa Vestra Sublimita vederà. Questa/ perdita de Caf-fa secundo me ha dicto el prefato secretario dicta Signoria la risposta/ importantissima et pericolosissima ad Cristiani, per la intelligentia seguita tra Turchi et Tartari, in Dio permitti quello sia per il meglio [...]* (14th of July; report from Venice) [...] *Ello ha acquistato duo sedia, per uno de soy figlioli, che e de maiore botta la/ perdita di Caffa a Christiani, che non fu quella de Constantinopole quod spachieva/ tutto quello cantone et forno che habilitater poterò correrè fin in gaudro, poy che ello/ ho prexo Caffa, ello ho prexo tutta la Signoria di Gotia [the Principality of Thedoro], che sono Greci, solius/ in resto uno castello nominato Teodoro, al quali sono a campo tutti, non e apicato/ al ello, sed alla fine lo prenderà per asedio. La sua armata adhuc e in quelle/ parte, noy eravamo de opinione, che la dicta armata dovesse andare a Mocado [Moncastro/ Maurocastro/ Cetatea Albà, at the Dniestr Mounds, the old Genoese colony under Moldavian control], lo/ terra maestra alle marine del Velacho, no a qui non gli e andato et sub/ opinione per questo anno non la andara. Io mi credo che la peste grande che e in/ Turchia et in Grecia et maxime in Constantinopole, che in dicto loco li morano lo/ forno ottocento li habia roto delli desegni assay per questo anno [...]* // *La persona sua e in Adrianopole, con grande oste, dicano octantamillia, era per / intrare in Velachia, fin a qui non lo ha facto, ne se estime lo debia fare [...]* (18th of August; report from Rhodes). [...] *Hogi è gionto la nave Salvaga, che se è partita un mese fa da Chio./ Alarano Salvagio, patrono d'essa, dice che la si haveva per certa la perdita/ de Caffa, et che fuo presa senza altra defensione quamprimum gli gionse/ l'armata dil Turcho, laquale non si era ancora partita da quelle parte/ dil Mare Maore et ch'esso Turcho si era reducto in Andrinopoli cum/ XXX mille homini, per timore della peste chi è in Constantinopoli et che haveva/ saputo dil paramento faceva il Valacho [Stephen III] et Ungano [Matthias Corvinus] (25th of September; report from Genoa). ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Genova, cart. 691, 1475 Agosto-Settembre, fasc. 2, Settembre, nn (25th of September); *Turchia-Levante*, cart. 647, fasc. 2 (18th of August); *Venezia*, cart. 361, fasc. 6, Giugno, nn; fasc. 7, Luglio, nn (14th of July).*



fall had been in fact a mean of cutting lose, with the sultan's hands, a costly appendix that had outlived its usefulness. No unholy recovery followed¹².

4. The Ottoman End to a Crusader Dream

In the summer of 1484, the Ottoman Empire conquered the last major free Christian harbors in the Black Sea area and Bayezid II saved his reign. Within less than a month, Bayezid II conquered Moldavia's entire maritime façade, which at the time stretched apparently beyond the Dniestr Mounds. Later Ottoman-Moldavian talks and

12. In this respect: Archivio di Stato di Genova (ASG), Genoa, Archivio Segreto, *Diversorum Communis Januae*, 3056, 1475, nn (21st of January 1474, 13th, 18th of February, 27th of March, 18th of December 1475); *Sezione Manoscritti*, Mss. 849, *Caffa: Estratti dall'Archivio di San Giorgio*, no. 115 [April 1475]; Gali, Antonio. *Commentarii de rebus Genuensium et de navigatione Columbi. 1466-1494*, ed. Emilio Pandiani. Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1910: 60-64; 68-69; 71-72; Neri, Archille. "Lettera di Laudivio da Vezzano sulla caduta di Caffa". *Giornale linguistico di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 2 (1875): 137-153; Balard, Michel. "Caffa 'Januensis civitas in extremo Europe'". *Rivista di Bizantinistica*, 3 (1993): 165-182; Pistarino, Geo; Tacchella, Lorenzo. *Tre cabellesi consoli di Genova in Crimea nel secolo XV. Giovanni Renzi da Cabella, Barnaba da Cabella e Antoniotto da Cabella. La caduta di Caffa (Teodosia) nel 1475*. Milano: Biblioteca dell'Accademia Olubrense, 2001. As an example for the Ottoman crusader pressure in that time, if we add together only the reports in the Roma and Venezia series of the Ducal Archives of Milan, let alone the data in the 'oriental' departments, there was virtually no day, for up to 15-16 months (August/October 1475-November/ December 1476), without one (at times even three) reports on crusader talks or on (anti-/ pro-) Ottoman activity. The tension remained at that level for almost a year until it became clear for many that the anti-Ottoman (short term) successes in Serbia and Walachia could not compensate for the failure in Moldavia (the land was ravaged by Mehmed II, who, however could not take any major city, but the main crusader aim had been not to repel Mehmed, but to trap and defeat him between the armies of Moldavia and of Hungary, from the West). Mehmed was still standing. The 'anti-Ottoman energy' redropped to its level of mid 1475. Italian affairs moved along. In 1475, Rome and Milan had been concerned, like Florence, each for its own purposes, that the fall of Caffa virtually left Venice, and then Naples, as the only real Italian seapowers to the East. Furthermore, no Genoese crusader energy, anger, or fear was to surface in the manner of 1453/1454-1456 (which seems rather explainable under the circumstances). Besides, propaganda aside, there seemed to be no hero, like Hunyadi, to fuel and capture responses. His second (the first one was Skanderbeg) successor as an athlete of Rome, Stephen III of Moldavia made a very handsome profit in trading Caffese captives and goods, a profit that could have been as high as two thirds of the yearly papal budget at that time; *Item, per molte altre littere de persone privar de Levante, se intende el dictoTurco essere/ molto indignato et incrudelito verso Genuesi et la casone de tale indignatione afferiscono/ essere perche una nave genuese, chiamata la Nigrona, piu di sono caricho in Caffa/ robe de Turchi de valuta circha ducentomilla ducati et alcuni puti che erano/ mandati al dicto Turcho. Et post alle vele per venire ad Constantinopoli mutato/ consilio, parue al patrone d'essa che le richeze et il tempo li fusse molto comodo ad/ fare uno bono quadagona. Et cosi presi et morti tuti li Turchi erano sopra dicta/ nave. Se adrizo alla volta del Danubio et ando con tute queste faculta ad trovare il/ Vayvoda Steffano, et con esso divise la roba a suo modo. Per la quale violenta/ animosita scriveno el Turco indignato havere facto incarcerare tuti li Genuesi/ erano in Pera, in Metelino et nelli altri lochi circumstanti, et tollotti tute le loro/ faculta, et havere deliberato vedre il firie di Syo. Che se queste cosa fusseno della / natura se scrivero veramente Genuesi seriano in una miserissima exterminatione./ Et etiam sono alcune altre liere che dicono esso Turcho eodem modo haver facto/ incarcerare tuti li Franchi, videlicet tuti li Cristiani, erano in Pera et in quelli lochi/ circumstanti. Tamen queste ultime novelle non se hanno de lochi ben autentii (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 365, fasc. 5, Maggio, nn; 11th of May 1477; report by Leonordo Botta; in these matters, see further: Andreescu, Ștefan. "Autour de la dernière phase des rapports entre la Moldavia et Gênes". *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 21/2 (1982) : 257-282; Baczkowski, Kryzstof. "Nieznanie listy Baltazara z Piscii do papieža Sykstusa IV z lat 1476-1478 ze zbiorów weneckich". *Prace Historyczne*, 89 (1989): 242-248, app. n°1; Pienaru, Naghi. "Un document otoman necunoscut din 1476". *Revistă Istorică*, 13/1-2 (2002): 229-241.*



arrangements namely those of 1486 and 1501-1503, failed to significantly change the situation in Moldavia's favor. Stephen III no longer held the *keys* to Hungary (Chilia) and Poland (Cetatea Albă), as the two most important former Genoese colonies under Moldavian control were viewed at that time. Poland and Hungary too had failed to render any efficient aid. The events were an embarrassment for the Christian powers with interests in the region. The 'weakling' Bayezid was neither dethroned nor (at least) halted. Still, Bayezid did not over emphasize matters not even when, in early August, he hurried to announce his victory to both his subjects and his neighbors. This was not so much a question of balanced tactics, but of methods of conquest, contrary to his desired image¹³.

13. For an overview: "Historia politica constantinopoleos a 1391 usque ad 1578 annum Christi", *Historia Politica et Patriarchica Constantinopoleos. Epirotica*, Immanuel Bekker, ed. Bonn: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1849: 54; "Aus der Chronik des Oruç, Aus dem Anonymus Hanivaldanus", *Der fromme Sultan Bayezid. Die Geschichte seiner Herrschaft (1481-1512) nach den altos manischen Chroniken des Oruç und des Anonymus Hanivaldanus*, Richard F. Kreutel, ed. Graz-Vienna-Cologne: Styria, 1978: 43-44; 212-215; Cristea, Ovidiu. "Campania din 1484 in lumina unor noi mărturii venețiene", *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt: Atlet al credinței creștine*, Ștefan Sorin Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, eds. Putna: Mușatinii, 2004: 187-274; Maxim, Mihai. "Stephen the Great and the Sublime Porte: New Turkish Documents". *Transylvanian Review*, 14/1 (2005): 19-21. The following pages largely draw on our study: Simon, Alexandru. "The Contested Sultan: The Backgrounds of Bayezid II's Moldavian Campaign of 1484". *Eurasian Studies: Journal for Balkan, Eastern Mediterranean, Anatolian, Middle Eastern, Iranian and Central Asian Studies*, 7 (2009): 17-50. In late spring 1484, Venice, Naples, Rhodes, Buda and Suceava felt (equally) threatened by Ottoman war preparations. To different degrees, their fears were justified. Eventually, Moldavia, the harbors under her control, was the target of the attack. In fact, she had been the Porte's cible since the beginning of the year. In spite of his costly power displays, Bayezid II was unwilling, at the time, to risk an open confrontation with a Latin rite power. Faced with major foreign and domestic troubles, the sultan had been compelled to promise a highly profitable campaign for all those which would have followed Bayezid on his endeavor. In particular, the Janissaries, which had rebelled against him in the winter of 1483-1484, were asking for money and, at the same time, for a proof of the sultan's military abilities, for he was the son of Mehmed II (Bayezid's brother and rival Djem had taken refuge with the Knights Hospitallers and was still very popular in the Ottoman Empire). The unique privileges issued by Bayezid II on the occasion of his 'sudden' Moldavian campaign of 1484 also show that the campaign was a matter of survival. Eventually in that summer, Bayezid II conquered from Stephen III of Moldavia around 6 harbors (Chilia, Licostomo, Cetatea Albă, 'Czernigrad', 'Sevastople', Illice and thus half of the urban population of medieval Moldavia. For a time, Stephen III seems to have lost his capital city of Suceava too. The Christian failures were largely the result of the fact that, on military and diplomatic soil, Stephen III (influenced also by Sixtus IV attempts to relaunch the crusade in the East in order to escape the Italian pressure the pope was under) and Matthias Corvinus (caught in his conflict with emperor Frederick III of Habsburg) underestimated the sultan, who, nevertheless, was in a seemingly impossible situation. In this respect, we recall a rather eloquent eastern report that reached Milan via Naples prior to the fall of the harbors: [...] *Delle cose del Turco: aviso la Vostra Excellentia noviter essere venuto di Constantinopoli/ uno nepuote del conte camerlengo, che referisse essere partito da Constantinopoli trenta giorni fa, et lo Grande Turco essere levato da dicta cita per andare ad camparsi contra/ lo Signor di Valachia, et questo per che era stato tre anni che non haveva pagato lo censo del/ certe castelle che tene censuario nomine da sua Signoria, et havendogli mandato ad offerire/ di pagarli di presente, lo ha recusato, con dire che vole le castelle, et ch'el prefato Signor di Valachia hagli risposto che le castelle non sono sue, ma sono del serenissimo Re di Ungaria. Questo/ medesimo etiam se affirma per lettere de Ragusei del primo del presente, per le quale referiscono/ esse Gran Turco havere misso nel Mar Maggiore centocinquanta velle per volere debellare/ questo Signor di Valachia, dicendo che questa armata l'haveva instructa ad effecto di/ mandarla parte in Puglia ad instantia di Venetiani, et parte contra Rodiani, perche gli era significato suo fratello [Djem] essere morto. Et che essendoli persuaso da uno grande/ maestro suo assistente de drizzare questa armata contra lo Signor di Valachia haveval mutata sententia, et sequito il suo consiglio facilitando questa impresa, et persuadendolil <verso> [...]ta puoi poteria venire alla impresa di qua. Narrando apresso/ [...] Re di Ungaria havere mandati li soi ambasciatori per/ [...] pace et havere nominato in essi capituli per aderente lo dicto Signore/ [...] non haverli voluto consentire ne accettare la pace; parendoci/ [...]gnosa cossa havere facto tante apparato contra esso Signore per ritrarsi*



Stephen III had come to the rescue of Chilia and was crushed outside the city. All Moldavian survivors were executed at the city gates, which fell shortly after, if it had not fallen prior to the clash. These executions shocked Cetatea Albă. She surrendered almost immediately after Bayezid set foot in front of her. The Ottoman sources kept perfect silence on the less than heroic actions. Venice recorded what had actually occurred. Yet, she did not remind the sultan of them, but greeted his envoy with the news of his master's victory. Regardless of their rite, for motifs that stretched from personal shame to collective failure, Christians played along. As time went by, the duration of the sieges was prolonged, up to a month in later Ottoman sources. Back in Chilia, Bayezid II had announced his complete victory to Ragusa. He soon realized that his victory could be detrimental to him, if he did not provide an alternative perspective of what had happened in July and in previous months as well, when his rule had been severely threatened. Other examples of such *Christian* acceptance of a *Muslim* story are hard to find¹⁴.

puoi/ [...], et per questo lo prefato Re di Ungaria li haveva ma dato/ [...] uno valoroso capitaneo con grande copia di gente per aiutarlo. Et che esso/ [...] sera munito et fortificato talmente che non temeva lo advento suo/ [...] evasi anchora in dicte lettere che la gentedarme del prefato Signore Gran Turco/ era malcontenta da la sua Signoria et che universalmente desideravano lo fratello confortaria essi Ragosei la sua Maiesta di haveve esso fratello nelle mano/ per sicurezza dello stato suo et di tutta la Christianità, significandoli ch'el prefato Signor Gran Turco haveva preso gran sditione ad emulazione che Venetiani/ havessero preso Galipoli, et intrati in questo reame [...] (ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Napoli, cart. 244, fasc. 2, nn (9th of July; highly damaged report, authored by Milan's able spy Branda di Castilono; the Venetians however had not taken Galipoli, but, as fearful of preserving the peace with the Empire and as anxious of even regaining, by the sultan's goodwill, some of the possessions lost during the war of 1463-1479, as they were, the Venetians had to take into account the possibility of the collapse of Bayezid II's reign, case in which the republic had to avoid being 'caught' of the Ottoman sultan's side).

14. Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Senato Secreti, *Deliberazioni*, reg. 32, 1484-1485, c. 92^r (16th of September 1484); *Dispacci Constantinopoli*, F[ilza], 1A, 1484-1567, *Dispacci al Senato del Segretario Giovanni Dario*, 1484, 31 maggio 28 februario mv [1485], no. 24a (5th of August 1484; edition: 22 *Dispacci da Constantinopoli al doge Giovanni Mocenigo*, ed. Giuseppe Calo. Venice: Corbo e Fiore, 1992: 82 (doc. n° 24^b); Makusev, Viaceslav. *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium vicinorumque populorum e tabularis et bibliothecis italicis derompta*. I-1. Ancona-Bononia-Florentia. Warsaw: typis Districtu Sscholastici Varsaviensis, 1874: 554 (doc. n° 9); *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium vicinorumque populorum e tabularis et bibliothecis italicis derompta*. I-2. Genua, Mantua, Mediolanum, Panormus et Taurinum. Belgrade: Typographia Regni Serbiae, 1882: 134 (doc. n° 14); Nagy, Iván; Nyáry, Albert B. *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából 1458-1490*. Budapest : A M. Tud. Akadémia, 1875-1878: 36-37 (doc. n° 33) (2nd of August 1484; a copy from the 24th of December, 1484, of Bayezid II's letter to the city of Ragusa was preserved also in: ASM, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze estere, *Illiria, Polonia, Russia, Slavonia*, cart. 640 [1450-1531], fasc. [1], *Illiria*, nn); Antalfy, Andrei. "Două documente din biblioteca egipteană de la Cairo". *Revista Istorică*, 20/1-3 (1934): 38-40; Sanudo, Marino. *Le vite dei dogi (1474-1494)*, ed. Angela Caracciolo. Padua: Antenore, 1989-2001: 472, 476-477 (based on the same manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, the data on the fall of harbors was edited prior to the Italian edition of the chronicle in Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki: *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, ed. Ioan Slavici. Bucharest: Academia Română și Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice 1894: VIII 27-28 (docs. n° 29-30); Bogdan, Damian P. "Știri despre români în cronici publicate la Moscova". *Revista Arhivelor*, 54/4 (1977): 443-446 (Stephen III lost however far more than the 200 men, claimed by a contemporary anonymous (Russian) Lithuanian chronicle). [Extracts from Marino Sanudo's *Vite dei dogi* regarding the events of 1484]. *In questo tempo* [prior to the 5th of September 1484] *per uno grippo venuto da Corphù con lettere di Sier Piero Bembo <figlio> quondam sier Lorenzo, Baylo nostro a Constantinopoli, et di Zuan Dario, Secretario nostro* [these letters or other letters on the fall of the Moldavian harbors had been sent from Istanbul to Venice already on August 5 and 6], *se intese come il signor Payseta turcho* [Bayezid II], *che andò nel pa-exe dil Valacho di* [passage missing from the manuscript in the



After Stephen III's first failed attempt to retake Cetatea Albă, the councillors of Ferdinand of Aragon, knew for a fact that one of the harbors lost during the previous summer had been reconquered by Stephen III in early 1485. It was not true. A year later, in Pskov, in the remote Muscovite lands, monks wrote that Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III, Moscow's allies, and Casimir IV Jagiello of Poland and the Teutons, Moscow's enemies, had retaken the harbors and rode towards Istanbul (1486). Such a dream of liberating even Constantinople had not arisen after Stephen's celebrated anti-Ottoman victory of 1475. Disaster made it possible. Apparently, immediately after receiving news on the Ottoman triumph of July 1484, Sixtus IV, much weakened by his defeat in the war with Venice, had died. His successor, Innocent VIII proclaimed the crusade¹⁵.

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana; probably the missing passage of text of the chronicle read either *Carabodan* or *Moldavia*], *havia preso la terra fortissima chiamata Nicostomo, et roto 25^m cavalli de' coradori di ditto Valacho, per il che li custodi et habitatori di Moncastro* [the Genoese name of Cetatea Albă], *vedendo la crudeltà dil Turcho fata a Nicostomo* [in example Licostomo; the Genoese name(s) for Chilia and the urban settlements in her vicinity] *li mandoe le chiave di ditto città, et senza altra bataglia avé quel Dominio* [in spite of Suceava's efforts to increase her control over the southern harbors, these cities still enjoyed a very large autonomy as a particular 'domain' within Moldavia's statal sphere]. [...] *A dì 18* [September 1484] *dil ditto mexe arivoe in questa città uno ambador dil signor Bayseto, Principe d' i Turchi. El qual fo honorato iusta el solito, et venuto in Colegio apresentoe la lettera dil suo Signor, che avisava la vittoria auta e l' aquisto di le terre dil Valacho, et che, come nostro bon amico, mandava ad alegrarsi di la sua vittoria. Poi esso orator, qual havia inzegno, havendo per camin inteso di la paxe fata, si congratulò col Principe, dicendo il suo Signor l' averà molto a grato ad intender tal nova, per la bona amicitia e paxe l' ha con questa Signoria. Et, stato ditto orator qui alcuni zorni, fo risposto a la lettera dil Signor ralegrandosi di tal vittoria; et lui fo vestito et la soa fameglia, et apresentato; poi se partì molto contento // Ma pocho dappoi, se intese esso Signor Turcho havia auto una rota di molta di la soa gente da Hongari et Croati adunati insieme con le zente dil Valacho, li in Valachia. Per il che, di novo esso Signor feva exercito per andar in persona contra di questi.*

15. Rinaldo, Odorico. *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi desinit Cardinalis Baronibus auctore Odorico Raynaldo accedunt*. Colony, 1693: XIX, 345^b-346^a (doc. n° 64-68); 346^b (doc. n° 71); 349^b-350^a (doc. n° 3-5); *Correspondenze degli ambasciatori fiorentini. Corrispondenza di Giovanni Lanfredini (maggio 1485-ottobre 1486)*, ed. Elisabetta Scarton. Salerno: Carlone, 2002: II, 140-141; Panaitescu, P. P. "Ștefan cel Mare în lumina cronicarilor contemporani din țările vecine". *Studii și cercetări științifice. Istorie*, 11/2, (1960): 219-220 (the chronicle from Pskov). Through the offices of Sixtus IV (at that time, unlike in 1484, one of the greatest supporters of both Matthias Corvinus and Ferdinand of Aragon), the king of Hungary had married the daughter of the king of Naples, Beatrice, in 1476, whereas, in 1483, the daughter of Stephen III, Helena, had married the son and heir, Ivan, of Ivan III of Moscow, with the blessing of Matthias Corvinus, Stephen's suzerain, thus securing the long desired Hungarian-Moldavian-Muscovite alliance against Poland-Lithuania. The first attempts for this alliance had been made soon after the fall of Caffa (usually an adversary of both Ivan III and Stephen III), when Stephen III had written a most passionate letter to Ivan III, urging the latter, in the name of their common Eastern rite, to join forces against the Ottomans and the Tartars who had just conquered the Crimean metropolis. As he had done in 1472-1473, just after his marriage to Zoe Palaeologus (the cousin of Stephen III's second wife, Mary of Theodoro, whom he had married in 1472 too), and as he would do in 1484-1485, Ivan III nonetheless kept his distance from the Ottoman front, though by marriage as well (his wife, Stephen III's wife and Usun Hassan wife, Helena Cantacuzenos, were, for instance, all three the nieces of cardinal Bessarion, Venice's favorite and the Greek spearhead of papal crusading against the Ottomans), he had strong connections to the anti-Ottoman camp. In 1486, when Casimir IV of Poland (who had reluctantly agreed to aid Stephen against Bayezid II, after Matthias had failed to significantly aid the Moldavian ruler) asked Ivan III to come to Stephen III's aid, the Muscovite grand-knjaz responded that Stephen's neighbors have the Christian duty to help him, for he, Ivan, cannot do that, though he wants to, because Moscow is too far away from the southern battlefields (*Relațiile istorice dintre popoarele URSS și România în veacurile XV-începutul celui de al XVIII-lea*. Bucharest-Moscow: Nauka, 1966: I, 64 (n° 10)). In this respect, given also the general Russian, in particular, reaction to the Church Union and crusading after 1439 (the Union of Florence) 1448 (the official Muscovite rejection of the union), the chronicle of Pskov, its lines refering to the year 1486, illustrate a quite rare Orthodox stand towards anti-Ottoman warfare.



The former Genoese colonies at the Dniestr and Danube Mounds (better known however as the *Habors of the Hungarian* to Byzantines and Ottomans alike) did not return into Christian hands, though rumors of their recovery still arose from time to time¹⁶.

16. For the *harbors of the Hungarian*, in reference to the Genoese colonies under Moldavia's (very disputed) control since the 1380s, see for instance: *Fonies Historiae Daco-Romanae*, IV, *Scriitori și acte bizantine, secolele IV-XV*, Horațiu Mihăilescu, Radu Lăzărescu, Nicolae-Șerban Tana-șoca, Tudor Teoteoi, eds. Bucharest: Editura Academiei republicii socialiste România, 1982: 560-562 (doc. n° LXXII-5, 6, 7); 567 (doc. n° LXXIII (*Manolis Sclavos*)). In December 1485, Cetatea Albă was also named *dy Deuthsche Weysenburgk*, like the other fames *White Castle of the age* (Nandorlaba/ Belgrade) was named the *Greek White Castle/ Griechische Weissenburg. Acta statuum terrarum Prussiae regalis*, ed. Karol Górski, Marian Biskup. Toru: Societas Scientiarum Torunensis, 1955: I, 392 (doc. n° 212). The 'Hungarian status' of the harbors went probably back to John Hunyadi's time. However, unlike Chilia, retaken from under Walachian-Ottoman control by Stephen III of Moldavia, with Matthias Corvinus' approval in 1465, Cetatea Albă had never housed a Hungarian garrison. It is possible that John Hunyadi requested Cetatea Albă, in order to aid Byzantium (and his interests), from Alexander II of Moldavia, most likely, in parallel with his request (eventually granted by the Byzantine emperor) for Messembria, made to Constantine XI Palaeologus in 1452-1453. In early 1448, Peter II of Moldavia had been forced by Hunyadi to surrender Chilia to the governor of Hungary who installed a Hungarian garrison in the harbor (the garrison was driven out in late 1464, while king Matthias Corvinus was on his second Bosnian campaign and the inhabitants of the city viewed the garrison as detrimental to their commercial interests that ran through the Ottoman Empire). The probably best known rumor of a recovery of the harbors lost in 1484 dates from 1497. Jan Albert of Poland left for his crusade against the Ottomans (the only crusade not officially sanctioned by the papacy in the late 1400s, even though pope Alexander VI thought it wise to approve the raise of funds for it in Poland and Lithuania, in order to keep a balance between the rival powers in the region). Jan Albert's plan was to first recover Chilia and Cetatea Albă and then (if possible) to continue further south (not to the east). On the way however, he wanted to dethrone Stephen III of Moldavia. The latter, according to his own promises and to the obligations imposed upon him by Venice in exchange for the secret funds she sent him, had to support such an anti-Ottoman campaign. Yet he knew of John Albert's secret plan and he further knew that Wladislaw II of Hungary and Bohemia, John Albert's brother, wanted to disposes Stephen of his Hungarian estates, while also pushing for the dethronement of Radu IV of Walachia. With support from Bayezid II, Maximilian I of Habsburg (the main adversary of the Jagiellonians), the Hungarian elite hostile to the Jagiellonian brothers, Ivan III of Moscow (who prevented Lithuania from aiding the king on campaign) and Radu, Stephen eventually crushed John Albert's army at the end of autumn 1497. Yet, until then, in Venice there had been several semi-official rumors that Wladislaw, John Albert, Ivan and Stephen, all together (sometimes joined in these rumors by Tartar khan Mengli Ghiray as well) had retaken the harbors and were riding towards Constantinople. Venice (maybe even unaware of John Albert's 'secondary' intentions) apparently had high hopes. In 1498 she ordered a full inquiry into the matter and namely on how Stephen had misused/ embezzled her subsidies. Venice's involvement in the 1497 crisis took her one step closer to a new war with the Porte, which eventually irrupted in 1499 (Nowakowska, Natalia. "Poland and the crusade in the reign of King Jan Olbracht, 1492-1501", *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century Message and Impact*, Norman Housley, ed. Houndmills-Basingstoke-Hampshire-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004: 128-147; Simon, Alexandru. "The Dying Crusade: The Hungarian Royal Elections of 1490 as Moldavian Prequel to the Polish Crusade of 1497", *Worlds in Change. Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Christian Gastgeber, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Oliver Jens Schmitt, Alexandru Simon, eds. Cluj-Napoca: Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2009: 391-410.

