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G. Christ, F.-J. Morche, R. Zaugg,
W. Kaiser, S. Burkhardt, A.D. Beihammer (eds.)

Union in Separation

Diasporic Groups and Identities
in the Eastern Mediterranean (1100-1800)



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Preface

“Union in Separation” might evoke current political and economic developments in the Eastern Mediterranean¹, be it in Cyprus, Egypt or Syria. It might also refer to the sometimes strained relationship between southern and northern member states of the European Union. However, we did not think of contemporary agendas when coining this title but of the medieval and early modern Mediterranean and its diasporas: a Mediterranean that was both a zone of contact and one of conflict. The aim of this volume is to investigate diasporas, specifically trading diasporas, in the Eastern Mediterranean during the long autumn of the Middle Ages (c. 1100-1800).²

The Mediterranean as a contact zone *par excellence* is an omnipresent *topos* in the research literature, which is often stressed in opposition to populist invocations of a clash of civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, the strong contemporary perception of the Mediterranean as an area of conflict and problems can hardly be denied: Mediterranean EU member states are experiencing severe financial difficulties; revolutions and civil wars are unsettling Arabic countries in the wake of the so-called “Arab Spring”, while trans-Mediterranean migratory flows are regarded as a serious threat to European identity and stability; permanent and seemingly unsolvable conflicts in Catalonia, the Maghreb, Corsica, Cyprus and the Middle East continue to stir up the region with given regularity. Acknowledged or not, the Mediterranean is set to remain in the public focus.

In contrast, the “intra-Mediterranean” perspective can be quite distinct from those of external observers and is most adequately described as a complex set of conflicting perceptions. Mediterranean policymakers have to operate under severe economic constraints (which, in addition, are sometimes denounced as northern straightjackets) in the face of unfavourable domestic realities shaped by defensive ideologies, fragile identities, infrastructural problems and partisan interests. Yet despite major political and economic challenges, the Mediterranean remains a popular destination for tourists and scholars alike.

1. We decided to capitalize “Eastern Mediterranean” as a distinct geopolitical region of central relevance to this volume.

2. Cf. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages. A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 6th ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976).

The present volume is firmly tied to this background. It originates from two international conferences organised by the Junior Research Group “Trading Diasporas in the Mediterranean 1250-1450” at the University of Heidelberg in May 2009 and February 2011. Events like these might look to some like nothing but another subsidised ephemeral travelling enterprise catering as much to the recreational as to the scholarly needs of itinerant historians.³

Yet, participants contributed meaningful investigations into the puzzling nature of Mediterranean diasporas and thus elucidated very real problems of a past, present and future marked by constant flows and encounters of people, objects and ideas. Thus, this book might shed a quantum of light on problems of conflict and cooperation in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean. It may also enable readers to reconsider today’s encounters – in the waters of Lampedusa, in a war zone in Syria, Libya or Israel/Palestine, in one of the many refugee camps in Southern Europe or in the conference rooms of politicians and businessmen – in a wider, historical perspective that might foster realism, modesty and perhaps also hope.

Two principal aspects of diasporic life in the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean are at the center of this volume:

1. *Transcultural legal frameworks*

We analyse how diasporic groups and their host societies coped with cultural antagonisms, which often had very real effects despite being at times “imagined” and “constructed”. We focus in particular on the legal challenges of transcultural cooperation and related strategies of reducing risk in transactions across different legal systems. Moral hazard tended to be greater in transcultural environments, while the recourse to institutional enforcement was typically more difficult.

2. *Informal mechanisms*

Yet many diasporic groups navigated successfully through multiple legal systems and cultural realms. A further aim is thus to identify the informal mechanisms that fostered (economic) exchange, created a basis for mutual trust and led to the development of transcultural skill- and toolsets that facilitated trade across different cultural zones.

3. The volume presents a selection of papers presented at two international conferences organized by the Junior Research Group “Trading Diasporas in the Mediterranean 1250-1450” at Heidelberg University in May 2009 and February 2011.

In focusing on the practical details of concrete encounters experienced by and around diasporic groups, we follow a very general understanding of cultural antagonisms that includes problems of social rank, religion, and economic interests. Conflicts might appear “imagined” upon closer scrutiny, but they were “real” insofar as they created narratives of identity and distinction.

We further define diasporas as *collective actors* for whom cultural encounters were a daily reality. Members of diasporic communities were required to share, negotiate and practice multiple allegiances, and to navigate between different cultural, linguistic and legal entities. They were at the same time a domestic and a foreign societal element, integrated but not absorbed, “accultured”⁴ but not essentially assimilated. This way of life was not necessarily deprived of privilege and could at times be quite comfortable. Yet it was also precarious: hybridity simultaneously signified weakness and strength, threat and opportunity.

Like the initial conferences, this volume offers insights from a wide range of very distinct academic disciplines such as (art) history, Islamic studies, and economics. The rationale of investigating diasporas from different methodological and theoretical angles was to gain a holistic approximation of their freedom of manoeuvre and daily realities. The dialogue between the historical and social sciences, however, remains cumbersome and difficult. We are, in fact, confronted with a cultural gap that may even be greater than those experienced by diasporic groups in the late medieval Mediterranean.⁵ Yet we are convinced that there is value in the attempt itself, as a lack of sincere interdisciplinary cooperation is a considerable threat for transcultural research, which is further enhanced by a widespread decline in appropriate language skills and research tools. This is a dire situation, especially since the self-perception of transcultural research as a particularly valuable endeavour grows bolder by the day. It almost seems to grow at the same speed at which appropriate research skills decline.

To overcome this dilemma, we propose an *ad hoc* approach of disciplined interdisciplinarity, that is, an efficient tactical dialogue across disciplinary divides based on linguistic and methodological expertise, yet without the requirement of becoming proficient in a new discipline beyond the general knowledge needed to sustain a dialogue.

Hence the first part of this book is devoted to methodological issues in an interdisciplinary perspective. Georg Christ proposes a framework for the study of diasporas in the pre-modern Mediterranean. Guillaume Saint-Guillain surveys prosopographical methods for the history of the Eastern Mediterranean based on medieval Venetian documentats. Sergio Currarini provides an introduction to the

4. In the sense of Ortiz’s *aculturación*, cf. Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar: (advertencia de sus contrastes agrarios, económicos, históricos y sociales, su etnografía y su transculturación)*, 5th ed. (Madrid: CÁTEDRA/ Música Mundana Maqueda, 2002), see also the first introductory chapter of this volume, pp. 19-36.

5. Cf. Carlo M. Cipolla, *Between Two Cultures – An Introduction to Economic History* (New York and London: Norton, 1991), p. X, original: *Tra due culture: introduzione alla storia economica* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1988).

theory of socio-economic networks, while Erik Kimbrough acquaints us with experimental methods in economic-historical research. Lars Börner and Battista Severgnini investigate the efficiency of late medieval Genoese and Venetian commercial institutions, using the velocity of the spread of the Black Death along commercial routes as a proxy for the intensity of trade. According to this measure, Genoa was commercially more successful than Venice in the early fourteenth century, which may relate to better political institutions and more favourable international trade agreements.

Model-inspired approaches such as those applied in experimental economics could become a promising tool in enabling historians to detach themselves from mainstream historical narratives, which normally are limited to causal or teleological methods. Game-theoretic modulation, in contrast, can contribute significantly to counterfactual history by highlighting possible pathways of societal evolution.⁶ These approaches were instrumental in broadening the historical horizon of the volume. It is our hope that readers may build on this ground by applying the here proposed models (or indeed other analytical methods) to their own historical data.

Yet, for the gathering of data and the subsequent establishment of narrative descriptions on the basis of historical sources, historians are well advised to take a step back and engage in what one might call the pursuit of traditional structural history. For the purpose of a first delimitation of a new field of investigation, this approach retains its merits as it provides the necessary probes and surveys to which more analytical methods can be applied. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concrete circumstances of historical encounters, the volume offers new microanalyses (or “thick descriptions”) of specific diasporic groups with respect to their locations, agents, and strategies of exchange.

Part two deals with the spread of diasporas in the territory of the former Byzantine Empire. Günter Prinzing discusses the Despotate of Epirus, a system of rule that emerged after 1204 from the fallen Byzantine Empire, focusing on the role of Jewish and Venetian merchants in the Adriatic trade. Ekaterini Mitsiou investigates the Empire of Nicaea as a transcultural society. The Empire was itself a diaspora of displaced Constantinopolitan elites, which consisted of a wide range of different minorities. The significance of the diaspora is seen primarily as an informational network. These notions are further explored by Dimitrios Moschos, who demonstrates the bilateral nature of trade relations and religious differences. Krijnie Ciggaar discusses merchant groups from Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa and Venice, as well as the knightly order of the county of Antiochia.

Part three, which contains contributions on diasporic groups in Mamluk Egypt, deals with social structures, economic patterns and perceptions of the slave trade, the import of new groups of slave soldiers into the Mamluk military elite, and the

6. Roland Wenzlhuemer, “Counterfactual Thinking as a Scientific Method. Kontrafaktisches Denken als wissenschaftliche Methode”, *Historical Social Research. Historische Sozialforschung* 34, no. 2 (2009); Juliane Schiel, “Was wäre gewesen, wenn...? Vom Nutzen kontrafaktischer Geschichtsschreibung”, *Viator* 41 Multilingual (2010): pp. 211-232.

trade networks of Frankish populations and Italian naval powers in the Levant. As Julien Loiseau argues, the shift from Turkish to Circassian slave soldiers from the end of the fourteenth century onwards caused a fundamental reorganisation and reorientation of late medieval Mamluk society with multiple ramifications for social identities and the newcomers' relations to their old homeland in the Qipchaq steppe. Yet another aspect of slaves as a diasporic group is discussed by Johannes Pahlitzsch, who examines the phenomenon of Greek captives of Turkish raiders in fourteenth-century Anatolia. The Byzantine veneration of saints and martyrs of the Orthodox faith illuminates the transfer and social conditions of slaves between Anatolia and Mamluk-ruled territories, as well as the spiritual reactions of indigenous Greek-Orthodox communities to the threats and challenges posed by the Turkish expansion. Frankish economic and trade patterns in the late medieval Levant are discussed by Peter Edbury with specific attention to the destruction of Acre and the expulsion of Western settlers from the Syrian littoral in 1291. The ports of Ayas in Armenian Cilicia and Famagusta in Lusignan Cyprus became important places of refuge and began to thrive as new commercial centres following forced population movements caused by Mamluk expansion on the Syrian littoral. Albrecht Fuess investigates Venetian and Genoese attitudes towards the Mamluk Empire in the aftermath of the sacking of Alexandria through the expeditionary forces of Peter I Lusignan of Cyprus in 1365. He identifies Venice's centralised *versus* Genoa's decentralised trading systems as the most fundamental difference between the two naval states. The stability and reliability of Mamluk commercial relations with the former stood in stark contrast to the hardly controllable activities of Genoese merchants shifting between trade and piracy.

Important aspects of Florentine perceptions of Mamluk Egypt are examined by Giuseppe Cecere and Cristian Caselli. The travelogues of three Florentine merchants, who went on a pilgrimage to Alexandria and the holy sites of Palestine in 1384, provide precious insights into the contemporary views of Christians living in Mamluk Egypt and Christian-Muslim relations more generally. Particular attention is given to legal and religious frameworks and to new conceptions of the "other" that gradually emerged in Florentine proto-Renaissance culture. The journal of the Florentine envoy and silk merchant Felice Brancacci, who in 1422 was sent on a mission to Cairo to conclude a trade treaty with Sultan Barsbāy, represents an official perspective on high diplomacy. Strategies of negotiation, the crucial role of dragomans as mediators, and the model function of previous treaties are among the principal themes arising from this document.

Part four extends the focus to the Black sea trade and the Armenian community. On the basis of extensive archival research, Angeliki Tzavara discusses aspects of Venetian life in fourteenth-century Trebizond in the wake of intensified Persian-Venetian relations, focusing on problems encountered by the Venetians in their mercantile activities, the news they received and their relationship with the local Greek emperor. She also adds a comparative dimension with the Venetian community in Tana in a separate contribution. An additional investigation into Venetian and more generally diasporic life in Tana is provided by Ievgen Khvalkov who highlights the puzzling integration of different diasporic

groups into Genoese society on the basis of Venetian notarial records. Evelyn Korsch compares the Armenian diasporas in Venice and New Julfa in the early modern period, examining their strategies of integration and assimilation. Alexandr Osipian analyses the symbiosis between the Armenian diaspora and the Italian trade networks in the Black Sea region in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Part five is devoted entirely to Hospitaller Rhodes. It was here that a fertile milieu for the growth of, and mutual cooperation between, different diasporic groups emerged despite frequent periods of dissent. These diasporas performed important functions with respect to the relations of this *Ordensstaat* to other Mediterranean powers. Anthony Lutrell describes the structure of Hospitaller Rhodes as consisting of a commerce-oriented society in the port city and an agriculture-oriented rural area. Diasporas in a strict sense appear to have been of minor importance in Rhodes; instead, Western European, Jewish and Syrian minorities were rather well integrated. This framework is partly questioned by Teresa Sartore Senigaglia, who investigates the position of Jews in late medieval Rhodes. Pierre Bonneaud conducts a micro-study on visiting merchants, with specific respect to their changing attitudes towards the Hospitallers. Jürgen Sarnowsky investigates Muslims and Jews in Rhodes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Their circumstances varied starkly according to their social position and function, yet the policies of the Knight Hospitallers remained remarkably pragmatic especially with respect to the Muslims. Finally, Nicolas Vatin investigates the position of Rhodes in an international system of trade. He shows that even during the final phase of the Hospitallers' presence in Rhodes, their integration into the local oriental context was limited despite the Order's good relations with the local population, its engagement in regional trade and its expertise in Ottoman affairs.

Part six examines cross-cultural encounters and conflicts between Greeks and Franks in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. Alexander Beihammer explores ideological aspects of hegemonial identity in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Cyprus, with specific respect to the interplay between Byzantine perceptions of Frankish rule and Lusignan strategies of projecting and fostering their authority towards their Greek subjects and the secular and ecclesiastical representatives of the Byzantine Empire. Investigating the intensity of religious antagonisms between the Greek Orthodox and Latin Churches in Frankish Greece, Margit Mersch identifies phenomena of cross-religious symbiosis. Latin-Orthodox religious devotion and "shared spaces" in churches and sacred places came into being despite theological disputes and numerous social, economic and judicial differences between indigenous groups. The Islamic dimension in conjunction with papal policies in the fourteenth-century Aegean is explored by Mike Carr. His analysis primarily concentrates on Genoese and Venetian petitions for exemptions from the apostolic trade embargo on Mamluk Egypt. The papal licenses served as tools of limited exchange across a cultural-religious divide, yet they also contributed to the construction of a new barrier between Franks and Turks by fostering the idea of a crusade against the Turkish emirates in the Aegean.

Part seven illustrates the exchange of goods, technologies, and financial techniques across cultural and political divides from both empirical and theoretical

perspectives. David Jacoby describes transfers of industrial technologies in three key industries of the later Middle Ages, namely silk textiles, glassmaking, and the production of weaponry, from the Mongol lands via the Arabian peninsula to the European centres of commerce and manufacturing. Heinrich Lang complements this approach with a case study on the specific role of Florentine financiers in the import of Eastern rugs, whose introduction to Europe triggered a process of cultural adaptation. Similar processes of adaptation also played a role in the financial sphere and specifically in the context of commercial credit. Benjamin Arbel shows that doctrinal restrictions on the use of the bill of exchange put Jewish merchants at a disadvantage to their Christian competitors, which may have led to a decline in Jewish involvement in international trade.

Part eight further explores the commercial institutions governing diasporic trade. Jared Rubin suggests that the new European dominance in international trade that emerged in the later Middle Ages may have resulted from Europe's steady trajectory towards impersonal exchange that was partly induced by the establishment of commercial branches. His analysis is based on a game-theoretic model of branch creation. Franz-Julius Morche illustrates the incentive structures of family partnerships, principal-agent relationships and cross-cultural commercial exchange in late medieval Venetian long-distance trade. Christof Jeggle analyses the role of diasporic merchant communities in the emergence of competitive markets, which are described as an extension of commercial exchange between networks. The institutionalisation of exchange and commercial techniques is discussed by Regina Grafe, who demonstrates that international trade in early modern Europe was subject to a flexible structure of commercial governance that allowed merchants to choose from a wide range of institutional solutions.

Finally, part nine contains contributions on the western fringe of the Eastern Mediterranean from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. In this politically fragmented region, migrant merchant groups from both inside and outside the Italian peninsula acted as agents of interregional entanglements. As shown by examples from Livorno, Naples, Sicily, Venice and Zara, these groups tied themselves in quite different ways to local societies and institutions, ranging from smooth integration into the social fabric of urban elites to strategies of self-segregation. Guillaume Calafat demonstrates the significance of trading diasporas as autonomous communities on the basis of a case study of a legal dispute between Armenians and Jews in early modern Livorno. Processes of integration are highlighted in Stephan Sander's study on Zara, a Dalmatian port town whose population was very heterogeneous in terms of geographic origin. In contrast, Roberto Zaugg discusses the strategies of segregation adopted by the British merchants in Naples, whose position in southern Italy was characterised by denominational diversity, and the members of the similarly heterogeneous French "nation" of Naples. Similar observations are made in Fabien Faucher's chapter on Venetian residents in Sicilian ports who tended not to marry local women and were visibly not interested in naturalisation.

Genoese residents in Renaissance Venice, as shown in Andrea Caracausi's chapter, stood in between these two poles. Focusing on formal mechanisms of

contract enforcement in long-distance trade, Caracausi shows that Genoese merchants used both the intermediation of their own consulate and the judicial interventions of Venetian courts to settle their conflicts and secure their interests. Isabella Cecchini analyses the bankruptcy of the Florentine Strozzi bank in sixteenth-century Venice, showing how a lack of community support influenced the course of events. Laws, institutions and their social applications played a crucial role in defining the position of diasporic actors. Factors of community-building were therefore not limited to common linguistic features, geographical origins or religious faith.

The volume thus covers a wide variety of historiographical themes, methods, disciplines and regions. It is a due and faithful reflection of the wider research project from which it emanates; not a conclusive survey, but a modest testimony to our efforts to grasp the oscillation of Mediterranean diasporas and their host societies between union and separation.

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Abstracts and Keywords

GEORG CHRIST

Diasporas and Diasporic Communities in the Eastern Mediterranean.
An Analytical Framework

Complementary to studies of diasporas that could be described as diaspora-centric, this chapter will propose an analytical framework for a contextualised investigation of diasporas focusing on diasporic groups in their local context. This will sharpen our understanding of these groups as self-constituted entities in a precarious state of simultaneous separation from, and union with, the place of origin and ethnic descent as well as the place of residence and the host society.

Transculturality, entanglement, Eastern Mediterranean, historical geography

GUILLAUME SAINT-GUILLAIN

Venetian Archival Documents and the Prosopography of the Thirteenth-Century
Byzantine World: Tracing Individuals Through the Archives of a Diaspora

The scope of this paper is methodological. It intends to give a general introduction to the various categories of thirteenth-century archival material available in Venice (kept for the most part at the Archivio di Stato di Venezia), both in their nature and in their structure. The purpose of this introduction is to display and to illustrate through some examples in which ways this material has been and can be used in the future for prosographical studies, to reconstruct the networks of individuals active in the Aegean area during the thirteenth century. Through these documents one can approach not only the Venetian merchant and colonist diaspora, but also various other groups of individuals with whom it interacted during that crucial century.

Thirteenth century, Aegean, Venice, Byzantine Empire, Archives, Public records, Notary records, Prosopography, Merchant diaspora, Medieval colonialism

SERGIO CURRARINI

Socio-Economic Networks. An Introductory Discussion

This chapter contains an introductory discussion on the use of network theory in economics and social sciences. This by no means aims to be a complete review of the recent work on this subject nor a precise mathematical introduction to networks. Instead I will illustrate and discuss issues, methodologies and problems that are involved in the use of networks for socio-economic analysis. For this reason I will often leave the exact mathematical formulations and definitions in the background, and try to deliver a qualitative analysis and to summarise results.

Networks, local interaction, economics, social structure, games

ERIK O. KIMBROUGH

Economic History in the Lab. The Impact of Institutional History and Geography on the Development of Long-Distance Trade

Incentivised, human-subject laboratory experiments provide a useful method of analysis for historians of trade. By developing simplified laboratory models of historical situations with systematic variation of aspects of the model, we shed light on the process of economic change and behaviour. As an example, we summarise a research program highlighting the role of institutional history and geography in shaping the development of trade.

Experimental Economics, Trade, Institutions, Geography, Methods

LARS BÖRNER, BATTISTA SEVERGNINI

Genoa and Venice. Traders of Prosperity, Growth, and Death

This chapter quantifies similarities and differences in fourteenth century trade between two of the most prosperous cities on the Mediterranean Sea: Genoa and Venice. After analysing the political, social, and economic characteristics of these two cities, we measure their commercial performance by applying a methodology introduced by Börner and Severgnini (2012). We assume that the speed of the spread of the plague is a valid indicator of the intensity of medieval trade. We show that the velocity of the contagion and the intensity of trade flows are closely related and corroborate that by the beginning of the 14th c. Genoa was more prosperous than Venice and had a greater economic impact in the Mediterranean area.

Plague, trade flows, Genoa, Venice

GÜNTER PRINZING

In Search of Diasporas in the Byzantine “Successor State” of Epirus (c. 1210-1267)

Was there a “trading diaspora” in “Epirus” until 1267? The core territory of Epirus comprised the area between Arta, Corfu, Dyrrachion and Naupaktos, and from

December 1224 until 1246 also Thessalonike with parts of Aegean Macedonia and Thessaly. Venice no longer dominated trade with Epirus after 1210, Ragusa did instead. However, merchants from diaspora groups (Jews, Ragusans) in Epirotic towns can only rarely be observed in the sources (trading privileges for Ragusa and a few further documents from Corfu or Dyrrachion). The decree allegedly issued around 1229 by Emperor Theodoros Doukas for the confiscation of Jewish assets in Epirus is doubtful owing to its apparently propagandistic background and purposes.

Trade, Privileges, Jews, Ragusa, Epirus, Corfu, Venice, Dyrrachion, Adriatic, Theodore Doukas

EKATERINI MITSIOU

A Transcultural Society? The Empire of Nicaea (1204-1261)

The question of “transculturality” has been one of the central issues of cultural studies in the last years. This paper applies the main ideas of this modern theoretical approach to the period after the capture of Constantinople by the crusaders of the Fourth Crusade (1204). It focuses on the “trading diasporas” and on minorities which were present in the so-called Empire of Nicaea (1204-1261) as well as the cultural exchange between the various groups. With the help of further methodological tools like the scholarship of state collapse and world-systems, we are able to see the developments in this successor state from an unusually broader spectrum.

Transculturality, Nicaean Empire, Trade, Diasporas, collapse

DIMITRIOS MOSCHOS

Negotium Graecorum: Trade as Theory and Practice in Ecclesiastical Contacts between the West and the World of Late Byzantium

Religious differences affect trade and economic relations. We examine the reverse process in the relations between the Christian East and West. We realise that these relations are affected by trading activities in a broader sense like gifts, papal embargoes and military alliances for the facilitation of trade and above all the use of commercial infrastructure for ecclesiastical contacts. Trade as practice is slowly digested also by the conservative Byzantine elite thus influencing the image of the Christian ‘Other’.

Crusades, Church Union, maritime transport, Venice, diplomacy

KRIJNIE CIGGAAR

Merchants in Frankish Syria: Adaptation, Isolation, Segregation and Union

The chapter focuses on the commercial activities of the Italian city states like Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa and Venice in the Principality of Antioch during the Crusader period. Information on such activities by the Military Orders is scarce and can mainly be found in the works of a few contemporary authors familiar with Outremer, like William of Tyre (the “Chronicon” and its Old French translation “Eracles”) and Jacques de Vitry

(letters, sermons, exempla and the *Historia Orientalis*). A few French literary texts, written in the same period or shortly later, equally mention this trade that provided Western Europe with a variety of luxury products.

Principality of Antioch, assessment/appreciation of Western mercantile activity, Military Orders, Jacques de Vitry, Guillaume de Tyr/William of Tyre

PETER EDBURY

Reflections on the Mamluk Destruction of Acre (1291)

This chapter sets out to examine the context of the destruction of Acre and the expulsion of the Western settlers from the Syrian littoral in 1291 in the economy of the Eastern Mediterranean, and how the merchants and the survivors who found refuge on Cyprus adapted to the new situation. The Mamluks had presumably concluded that the elimination of the Christian presence there outweighed the economic advantages it brought, but is that in itself evidence for economic decline?

Acre, Cyprus, Lamberto di Sambuceto, Mamluks, Famagusta

JULIEN LOISEAU

Soldiers Diaspora or Cairene Nobility? The Circassians in the Mamluk Sultanate

In the later Middle Ages Egypt and Syria were ruled by a military elite recruited through slavery: the Mamluks. From the end of the 14th century onwards, slave soldiers brought from the Qipchaq Steppe were removed from the main military positions to the benefit of Mamluks claiming a common origin, the Circassians. The chapter investigates the shift in terms of social identity from ‘Turks’ to ‘Circassians’ as the main core of the Mamluk society. Despite the preservation of its Turkish component, a new social identity became dominant among the Mamluk elite. Based on a partly alleged claim, this identity was also reinforced by regular relations with the ‘homeland’. However, its elevation was more a question of integration into a new nobility, rather than of origin and kinship.

Mamluks, slave trade, identity, ethnicity, kinship

JOHANNES PAHLITZSCH

Byzantine Saints in Turkish Captivity in Anatolia (Late Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries)

This chapter examines reports on Byzantine saints in Turkish captivity in Anatolia from the late 13th to the 14th centuries. Because the saints’ experiences were reported in very different literary sources, the chapter aims to research the function of the respective texts according to their literary genre. These texts include the Lives of Saints, especially of the so-called neo-martyrs as well as rhetorical texts and letters.

Hagiography, neo-martyrs, captivity, Christians under Muslim rule, Ottoman Empire, Byzantium

GIUSEPPE CECERE

Between Trade and Religion: Three Florentine Merchants in Mamluk Cairo

The “religious side” of Italian trade in medieval Egypt remains largely unexplored, especially from the viewpoint of the history of mentalities. This chapter compares three different late 14th c. reports by three Florentines on the same voyage bringing them to Egypt. The focus is on the perceptions of these Florentine authors on Muslim customs and culture with respect to their own Christian identity. Special attention is given to the religious and legal framework of interactions between Muslims and Latin Christians in medieval Egypt, on the background of theoretical rules and actual practices governing trade and social intercourse with the “Infidels”. On the basis of these analyses a complex attitude of economic need and religious disdain for the “other” emerges as articulated on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Christian-Muslim relations, Florence, Levant Trade, travelogues, Mamluk Egypt, Decameron

ALBRECHT FUESS

Why Venice, not Genoa: How Venice Emerged as the Mamluks’ Favourite European Trading Partner after 1365

The present contribution deals with the relationship of the Mamluk Empire with the Italian seafaring city-states of Venice and Genoa. Their approach towards the Mamluk Empire differed considerably after the Cypriot attack on Alexandria in 1365. Although both Venetian and Genoese ships participated in this expedition, how Venice and Genoa dealt with the Mamluks from that time onwards led to different results. The Venetians cooperated as a stable and reliable trading partner with the Mamluk Empire through the help of their centralised trading system. Genoa in contrast had a decentralised trading system where Genoese individual merchants were more flexible but harder to control. This led to a series of cases where Genoese merchants turned into pirates when approaching Mamluk shores. The aggressive stance of the Genoese earned them the status of the arch villain in popular Mamluk folk literature whereas the friendly Mamluk-Venetian relations led to the increasing appearance of Mamluk motifs in Venetian paintings.

Venice, Genoa, Mamluks, trade, Cyprus

CRISTIAN CASELLI

Strategies for Transcultural Trade Relations: Florentine Attempts to Reproduce the Venetian Commercial System in the Mamluk Empire (First Half of the Fifteenth Century)

In 1422, the city of Florence sent ambassadors to Cairo in order to reach a trade agreement with the Mamluk Sultan Barsbāy. The voyage is recorded in a journal written by one of the envoys, the silk merchant Felice Brancacci. The chapter examines

the strategies carried out by the Florentine diplomats to accomplish their mission. In particular, the chapter focuses on the importance of Mamluk-Venetian treaties as models and on the role played by mediating figures such as the dragomans.

Florence, Venice, safe-conduct, citizenship, dragoman

ANGELIKI TZAVARA

Conflicts, Caravans and Silk: Some Aspects of the Venetian Presence in Trebizond (1371-1376)

This study aims to examine the Venetian presence in Trebizond during the troubled years of the first half of the 1370s. At this time, after the promising opening of the Persian government to the Venetians aimed at restarting the travels to this region, the Venetians had to face problems in Trebizond itself. These included maltreatments suffered by the bailo and several Venetian merchants, unpaid debts and lack of justice, just to mention some. A series of official documents allows us to trace the Venetian policy regarding these events. Unpublished archival material, though, such as letters of commercial and private nature, reveals the feeling of the Venetian merchants present in Trebizond, personally involved in the turmoil, but also insider information on the political and commercial situation and policy in the Empire and Anatolia. The conflict with the Emperor peaked but was later resolved by a new, even if forced agreement, quite unfavourable for him.

Trebizond, Venice, caravans, silk, Alexios III, Arran

IEVGEN KHVALKOV

Ethnic and Religious Composition of the Population of the Venetian Tana in the 1430s

The Italian trading stations in Tana were important in the system of long-distance trade of the Italian maritime republics. The deeds of two Venetian notaries who had been working in Tana reveal some aspects of the life of Italian and Oriental trading diasporas during the 1430s, when the commerce in the Black Sea region was recovering from crisis. The ethnic structure of the trading stations was diverse and comprised both Western Europeans and Orientals. Despite the hidden tensions between Venice and Genoa in the 1430s, there was a great deal of interaction. Greek merchants were numerous, active, and wealthy. In summary, the trading diasporas of Tana constituted a money-oriented, prosperous society that was diverse in terms of ethnicity and tolerant in terms of religion.

Trading station, notary, deeds, ethnicity, interaction

ANGELIKI TZAVARA

Nunc habitator Tane. Venetian Merchants as Long-Term Residents in Tana (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)

Through a series of examples this chapter aims to study Venetian merchants' long-term residence in Tana. After providing a brief historical background, this study examines

the presence of the Venetian merchants in the city for extended periods of time, a subject which has usually been overlooked in the bibliography. Based on archival evidence, the research in the notarial deeds can offer the material for “biographies” of Venetian merchants in Tana in order to study the following: a) the length of residence in the city, which is in close relation with their b) social position in Venetian society, c) the possession of estate property, d) relationships between merchants resident there and local women and e) the existence of off-springs, f) the integration of the latter in the Venetian Tana and g) the cultural exchanges between Venetians and the local society through christenings and bilingualism.

Venice, Tana, Venetian society, Venetian merchants, immigration, integration

ALEXANDR OSIPIAN

Practices of Integration and Segregation. Armenian Trading Diasporas in Their Interaction with the Genoese and Venetian Colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea (1289-1484)

This contribution highlights three stages of Armenian migration in the Northern part of the Black Sea region – in 1250s-1290s, in the first half of fourteenth century, and in 1360s-1390s. There, Armenian merchants used the trade and transportation infrastructure created by Italians, including, first of all, the network of shipments by sea. In turn, Armenians supplied their Italian partners with the merchandise they transported from the remote inland territories of modern Ukraine, Russia, Romania and Moldavia.

Armenians, Genoese, the Black Sea, the Golden Horde, cooperation.

EVELYN KORSCH

The Sceriman between Venice and New Julfa: An Armenian Trading Network and its Sociocultural Impacts (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)

The Armenian diaspora in Venice and the sociocultural impacts related to its Eurasian trade activities serve to explore the interactions between trading networks and cultural exchange. As a case study the Sceriman exemplify the career of a family of merchant bankers with a worldwide trading network and their settlement in Venice. The family sustained emigration and establishment twice: one of them enforced to Persia and the other by choice to Italy. Considering the commercial and social activities of the Sceriman in two different cultural contexts as New Julfa and Venice, the strategies used for achieving assimilation and integration into the host societies are analysed.

Sceriman, Armenians, trade, banking, Persia, Ottoman Empire, Venice, New Julfa

ANTHONY LUTTRELL

Mixed Identities on Hospitaller Rhodes

After 1306 the Hospitallers secured the defence of Rhodes by encouraging the creation of an “island order state” through the development of a commercial society in the harbour

town and of an agricultural population in the countryside. The Greeks, many of them immigrants themselves, were numerically predominant; they had to acknowledge the supremacy of the Roman Pope but were reasonably fairly treated. Other communities, notably Western Europeans, Jews and some Syrians, were assimilated into the urban population, forming not so much a diaspora as a successfully managed multi-ethnic community capable of generating the resources needed to defend the island.

Rhodes, Hospitallers, Latins, Greeks, Ordensstaat

TERESA SARTORE SENIGAGLIA

Empty Ghetto: Being Jewish on Hospitaller Rhodes between Discrimination and Representation

In the Middle Ages the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of Saint John ruled Rhodes from 1309 to 1522. During this epoch, Rhodes, a small island strategically positioned between the Levant and the Occident, was inhabited by different diasporic groups. Starting from the analyses of a 1422 document from the Archive of Malta, this chapter will focus on the micro-historical analyses of an episode of expulsion of the Jewish community and its interpretation in a wider transcultural context.

Rhodes, Hospitallers, order of Saint John, Philibert de Naillac, Antoni Fluvià, Jewish, Community, expulsion, integration, diaspora, transculturality

PIERRE BONNEAUD

The Influential Trade: Community of Western Merchants on Hospitaller Rhodes (1421-1480)

At a time when Hospitaller Rhodes was repeatedly assailed by the Mamluks and by the Ottoman Turks, numerous Western merchants visited the island, used its port for their embarkations and its main town as a basis for their trade operations or as their residence in the Levant. This survey, based upon a sample of 202 merchants documented in the Malta archives, emphasises their national and social identities, the policies conducted by the Hospital in controlling and taxing their trade activities, as well as the part played by the merchants in financing the Order, supplying vessels, mercenaries and armaments, or acting as diplomatic agents.

Merchants, Convent of Rhodes, International trade, Finance, Defence of Rhodes

JÜRGEN SARNOWSKY

Muslims and Jews on Hospitaller Rhodes (1421-1522)

The different religious groups on Rhodes under Hospitaller rule (1309-1522) included Muslims and Jews. While Muslim merchants received generous letters of conduct, the slaves lived under severe restrictions. And though the Order employed Jewish doctors who had certain privileges, the other Jews living on Rhodes partly faced hard measures, up to their expulsion in 1503. Nevertheless, in general the Hospitallers

followed a pragmatic approach which gave both groups at least a certain legal status. Hospitallers, Rhodes, Muslims, Jews, Caoursin, Pragmaticae Rhodiae

Rhodes, Hospitallers, order of Saint John, Philibert de Naillac, Antoni Fluvià, Jewish. Community, expulsion, integration, diaspora, transculturality

NICOLAS VATIN

The Insertion of the Order of Saint John in the Eastern Mediterranean between the Two Sieges of Rhodes (1480-1522)

In the late XVth century, the Hospitallers' Rhodes was a local state in the Levant, dealing with its subjects' needs. Rhodes was an international market. The Order itself engaged in trade. It posed as a go-between with the West and an expert in Ottoman affairs.

The Order kept good relations with the locals; its members were in contact with them. Some use of spoken Greek hints at an insertion in the Oriental world. But the Hospitallers were Latins. As individuals, the Knights could not become a part of the Levant. As an institution, the Order was able to do it only to a point.

Order of Saint-John, Rhodes, Ottoman Empire, Hospitallers, colonial rule

ALEXANDER BEIHAMMER

A Transcultural Formula of Rule: The Byzantine-Frankish Discourse on the Formation of the Kingdom of Cyprus

Over the past few decades “cross-cultural contacts” and “acculturation” have become keywords in the scholarly discussion on the Latin East in general and the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus in particular, shifting the focus from bipolar conflict patterns to forms of interaction, permeation and coexistence. The present chapter deals with ideological aspects of hegemonial identity in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Cyprus, namely with the relationship between Byzantine perceptions of the Frankish lords' concepts of rule, on the one hand, and the Lusignan court's strategies of projecting and fostering their authority towards their Greek subjects and the secular and ecclesiastical representatives of the Byzantine state, on the other. These phenomena are primarily investigated on the basis of narrative sources and official documents originating from the Cypriot royal court. Additional information can be gathered from the texts of Byzantine historians referring to the Frankish conquest of Cyprus and the subsequent relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Cyprus.

Cyprus, Byzantium, Lusignan kingdom, cross-cultural contacts

MIKE CARR

Papal Trade Licences, Italian Merchants, and Changing Perceptions of the Mamluks and Turkish Beyliks in the Fourteenth Century

In the fourteenth century the Genoese and the Venetians petitioned the papacy for trade licences (exemptions from the apostolic trade embargo). At times they justified

their requests by arguing that limited trade with Mamluk Egypt would allow them to sustain military action against the Turks in the Aegean. These licences thus acted as informal coping mechanisms which, on the one hand, allowed limited transcultural exchange across a cultural-religious divide, between Latins and Mamluks, but, on the other, constructed a divide between Latins and Turks in line with papal ideology.

Venice, Aegean, Genoa, Zaccaria (family), Crusades, trade, Turks, Papacy, Levant

MARGIT MERSCH

Churches as “Shared Spaces” in the Eastern Mediterranean (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)

The late medieval Latin dominions of the Eastern Mediterranean region generated fundamental political and theological confrontations but also produced remarkable trans-cultural practices of daily life. This preliminary survey of written and material sources discusses some indications for cross-religious symbiosis in Greece and Cyprus throughout the 13th to 15th centuries comprising popular forms of religious devotion shared by both Latin and Greek Christians and the joint use of Eastern Orthodox, Greek Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches and sacred places.

Latin East, transculturality, sacred space, lay religiosity, Venice, Lusignan

DAVID JACOBY

Cross-Cultural Transfers of Industrial Technologies in the Later Middle Ages: Incentives, Promoters and Agents

Transfers of industrial technologies occur in specific political, military, economic, social and cultural contexts, which largely determine their nature, modalities, purpose, and implications. This chapter deals with some aspects of cross-cultural transfers from East to West in the weaving and dyeing of silk textiles, glassmaking, and the production of crossbows in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The mobility of skilled workers, whether enforced or spontaneous, merchants and entrepreneurs, as well as material agents contributed to the transfer and diffusion of technologies. Transfers were sometimes limited to borrowing, as with crossbows, and did not always lead to the upgrading of existing technologies, as with crossbows, while in other cases they involved creative adaptation and transformation, as in silk textiles and glass.

Silk textiles, glassmaking, crossbows, technological transfers, Mongols, Arabs, West

HEINRICH LANG

The Import of Levantine Goods by Florentine Merchant Bankers:
The Adaptation of Oriental Rugs in Western Culture

This contribution shows how Oriental rugs were transferred from the Levant to the West in a case study based on documents taken particularly from Florentine sources. It focuses on the organisation of trade and on the market of rugs to ask how these

products were transferred from their cultural contexts of origin and re-interpreted in a new cultural context. Hence, this cultural adaptation of Oriental rugs in the Italian and French Renaissance will be described as a multifaceted process of social, material and cultural transfer occurring in parallel with trade relations.

Levant trade, material and cultural transfer, specified market, Oriental rugs, Florentine merchant bankers

BENJAMIN ARBEL

Mediterranean Jewish Diasporas and the Bill of Exchange: Coping with a Foreign Financial Instrument (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)

The question of a distinctiveness of Jewish economic behaviour is addressed here by examining the issue of commercial credit. At the focus of this study stands the widely-used financial instrument of Late Medieval and Early Modern times – the bill of exchange. The core of this study is based on an analysis of early Jewish involvement in the exchange market as well as on a comparison between the policy of the Catholic Church in this regard with the attitudes of authoritative Jewish rabbis. The cultural background of the economic agents is also taken into consideration. It is argued here that Jewish merchants who acted within the Jewish commercial networks were at a disadvantage, compared to Christian entrepreneurs, because of rabbinical strictures. Rabbis were ready at the most to allow the use of a less developed form of this technique – the sea exchange – which involved higher transaction costs compared with the bill of exchange. Two exceptional views expressed by Venetian rabbis are attributed to the economic crisis of the 1630s. The gradual disappearance of this topic from rabbinical discussions after the mid-seventeenth century is interpreted as either a reflection of a relative decline in Jewish involvement in international trade, or of a tendency of Jewish merchants to settle their disagreements outside the rabbinical courts.

Bills of exchange, credit, Jews, religion, responsa, international trade

JARED RUBIN

Bills of Exchange, Financial Networks, and Quasi-Impersonal Exchange in Western Europe and the Middle East

What pushed medieval Europe on the path from personal to impersonal exchange? Why did such a path not evolve in the medieval Middle East despite similar economic conditions? This short chapter provides a discussion of the role of branching as an intermediary step on the path to impersonal exchange. Theoretical and historical analyses suggest that different incentives existed to branch in Europe and the Middle East due to different returns available from bills of exchange, the most important financial instruments of the period.

Community responsibility system, bills of exchange, quasi-impersonal exchange, suftaja, branching

FRANZ-JULIUS MORCHE

The Dolfin Connection: A Medieval Venetian Trade Network (1418-1420)

In late medieval Venice, family business networks complemented strong formal institutions of capital generation. Yet the interdependence of public- and private-order institutions has thus far only rudimentarily been explored. This chapter interprets a late medieval Venetian family network as a complex system. Comparing the incentive structures of intra-family, intra-Venetian, and transcultural trade partnerships, it devotes particular attention to the respective roles of family representatives and non-kin trade agents. Whereas the latter seem to have profited from individual transactions either by receiving commissions or by being given the benefit of membership in a wider trade coalition, the utility streams of family agents appear to have been internalised by the family enterprise. I propose an internalisation hypothesis that characterises the Venetian merchant family as an institution of collective liability, allowing members to increase their expected future utility streams by resorting to the collective reputation of the family.

Public-order institution, private-order institution, Venice, Biagio Dolfin, Lorenzo Dolfin, family, firm, reputation

CHRISTOF JEGGLE

Merchant Communities, Commercial Networks, and the Constitution of Markets

While merchant communities are increasingly studied as social and cultural groups, it remains rather unclear how these groups of merchants were related to markets. After a short outline on the shortcomings of economic theory to analyse markets as a differentiated form of social interaction, the chapter introduces sociological approaches to develop an approach for analysing the emergence of markets within the networks of merchant communities. The chapter discusses the hypothesis that the specific characteristics of markets provide a useful interface for merchants exchanging goods between two different commercial networks, operating in market places abroad from their places of origin. In contrast to transfers within a particular network which build on established social relations, markets do not necessarily rely on established social relations, but offer the opportunity to transfer goods to alien business partners of all kinds on the basis of occasional contacts.

Merchant networks, market, commercial networks, transcultural trade, production markets, économie des conventions

REGINA GRAFE

Was There a Market for Institutions in Early Modern European Trade?

This chapter argues that early modern European commercial development was not globally successful because it adopted a succession of first-best institutions that improved efficiency. Instead there was a market for institutions that allowed traders to pick, choose and combine different institutional solutions to their commercial problems. This was possible because institutions were typically multifunctional: a diaspora

might help information flows as well as settle commercial disputes, but they were also complementary, thus traders combined diaspora networks with family firms.

Commercial associations; multifunctionality; complementarity; market for institutions; diversity

GUILLAUME CALAFAT

Osmanli-Speaking Diasporas: Cross-Diasporic Relations and Intercommunity Trust between Marseilles, Tunis and Livorno (1600-1650)

This article examines a lawsuit opposing Armenians and Jews in 1620s Livorno. The case study aims at documenting several aspects of “classic” diaspora history and cross-diasporic interactions, namely the beginning of the Armenian settlement in the Tuscan port, the Jewish specialisation in diamond dealings, and the brokerage activities of Greek merchants. Legal proceedings describe the multiple steps of an intercommunity personal exchange, putting forward the role of the Ottoman Turkish language in the sociability of Greeks, Armenians, “Levantine” Jews and Turkish slaves, and in the crossing of religious and ethnic boundaries. Common features of so-called “trading diasporas” emerge, especially the role of community, jurisdictional autonomy and collective reputation in the making of trust, but also the quick circulation of men, goods and news thanks to diasporic networks.

Intercommunity trust, Livorno, Ottoman language, collective responsibility, Armenians, Jews

FABIEN FAUGERON

The Venetian “Nation” in Sicily in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century: The Example of the Valier Brothers’ Company

This contribution studies the Venetian presence in Sicily through the example of an exceptionally well-documented trade company, covering a period that starts in the 1470s and sees the growth of the Venetian “trading diaspora” which hitherto had been small. The analysis of this firm’s commercial correspondence highlights a specific Venetian feature: contrary to the Tuscans or Genoese, the Venetians did not try to insert themselves permanently into the host societies but focused their private lives entirely on Venice. Nevertheless, these merchants played the economic and political machine efficiently and targeted key individuals to gain access to resources crucial for the successful pursuit of their commercial activity which appears to have been generally compatible with the Sicilian economy.

Venetians, Sicily, nation, Valier family, grain trade

STEPHAN SANDER-FAES

Merchants of the Adriatic: Zadar’s Trading Community around the Mid-Sixteenth Century

This chapter describes the mercantile community of Zadar, one of the main cities of the Venetian Adriatic, around the middle of the 16th century. The approach is twofold:

after a short introduction the origins and trades of merchants are identified and placed within the framework of Venetian rule. In a second step, their economic and social integration into Zadar's society reveals that they cannot be classified as a typical mercantile 'diaspora' despite their distinct listing in the sources.

Venice, Stato da mar, Adriatic, Dalmatia, Zadar (Zara), 16th Century, merchant, trade

ANDREA CARACAUSI

Foreign Merchants and Local Institutions: Thinking about the Genoese "Nation" in Venice and the Mediterranean Trade During the Late Renaissance

This chapter aims to add new empirical evidence on the debate about the role played by legal institutions in the world of business, with a focus on the Mediterranean trade during the late Renaissance. Using an empirical approach based on the Genoese "nation" in Venice, I shall show that diasporas used a wide spectrum of local legal resources, and explore how they recurred more to the public rather than private or corporative institutions. Secondly, whilst this legal system sustained the commercial exchanges and fostered economic growth, that situation depended more on the power relations between Genoese and Venetian merchants rather than on the "abstract" role of these institutions. Finally, I shall demonstrate how foreign merchants used the legal framework in order to build their identity in the local context.

Genoese, Venice, nation, consulate, institution, contract enforcement

ISABELLA CECCHINI

Florence on the Lagoon: A Strozzi Company in Early Modern Venice

This contribution outlines the activities of a Florentine trading and banking firm in early modern Venice, until it went bankrupt in 1622. The Strozzi could claim a long and successful trading experience in Venice. However, this contribution questions the hypothesis that the lack of active support from the Florentine merchant community and from its representatives in Venice might have harmed the consequences of a bankruptcy.

Banking, network, Florence, Venice, Strozzi (family), bankruptcy.

ROBERTO ZAUGG

On the Use of Legal Resources and the Definition of Group Boundaries: A Prosopographic Analysis of the French Nation and the British Factory in Eighteenth-Century Naples

This chapter examines the geographic origins, the political belongings and the confessional profiles of the members of the two most important mercantile nations of eighteenth-century Southern Italy: the French nation and the British factory of Naples. Taking into account their pronounced prosopographic heterogeneity, it shows how legal resources and their social uses played a crucial role in defining the boundaries of such groups.

Merchants, consulates, diaspora, legal privileges, France, Great Britain, Naples, 18th c., prosopography

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