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Fear the Turk or Call on the Turk? Conflicting Emotions in Renaissance Italy

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Renaissance Italy was consumed by its fear of the Turk. This article will demonstrate that throughout the Renaissance the Turks were also associated with a set of positive emotions: hope in a system of justice that Christian authorities no longer seemed to ensure; a desire for vengeance against the untouchable ruling elite; the expectation of social, moral and even religious renewal. Historical memory has been pruned of these positive associations but it is important to keep in mind this ambivalent emotional conflict which tore apart all levels of society and broke up societal groups to the point of shaping them as much as the hostilities did.

The concept of conflicting emotions has emerged as a recognised historiographic category, and a particularly essential one in the light of situations such as urban violence or riots.¹ Historians have also explored the ‘emotional landscapes’ of fear, rage and tears experienced, for example, by medieval crusaders.² However, these concepts have rarely been used to study the great religious and political conflicts of the Renaissance. Yet Renaissance Italy was an epicentre of conflicting and contradictory emotions, which often carried over into international relations. This article will attempt to shed light on this complex phenomenon by examining the emotions and relationships of Italian states or societies with the Ottoman world throughout this period.

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¹Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling: a history of emotions, 600-1700*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *Emotions in the Heart of the City (14th-16th century). Les émotions au cœur de la ville (XIV^e-XVI^e siècle)*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

²Stephen J. Spencer, *Emotions in a Crusading Context, 1095-1291*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Renaissance Italy was consumed by its fear of the Turk. In 1453, Ottoman forces had conquered Constantinople, a bastion of Christendom.³ The Turks had then entered the Balkans, making their way through the Adriatic Sea before capturing Otranto, in southern Italy (1480-81), and had launched pirate and corsair raids on all shores. 'No nation is eternal!' Silvio Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II, is said to have cried when he received news of the fall of the Second Rome. 'The Romans were once masters of the world. Now, it is the Turks.'⁴ These historical events are well known and have left many a trace in memory, local tradition and in the cult of saints. They have even left their mark on the landscape in the form of maritime defence towers and fortresses along the north-eastern border.

And yet, throughout the Renaissance, the Turks were also associated with a set of positive emotions: hope in a system of justice that Christian authorities no longer seemed to ensure; a desire for vengeance against the untouchable ruling elite; the expectation of social, moral and even religious renewal. Historical memory has since been pruned of these positive associations but is important to keep in mind this ambivalence towards the Turks. Emotional conflict tore apart society at all levels and within societal groups to the point of shaping them as much as the hostilities did.

Two great wars chronologically bookend this article: the Fall of Constantinople (1453) and the Battle of Lepanto (1571). It was during this period that the myth of Ottoman invincibility reached its peak.⁵ Tracing the contemporary emotions may help us to construct a more integrated history of the Mediterranean and place it within the broader context of global history.⁶ Would such a path allow for a history of the Renaissance to break free from misconceptions? In other words, is it possible to write a less self-absorbed, more culturally open-minded history of the period?⁷

³Among others, cf. the synthesis of Jacques Heers, *Chute et mort de Constantinople. 1205-1453*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004).

⁴Agostino Pertusi, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, (Milano: Mondadori, 1976), II, p. 65.

⁵Julien Loiseau, 'De l'Asie centrale à l'Égypte: le siècle turc', in Patrick Boucheron (ed.), *Histoire du monde au XV^e siècle*, (Paris: Fayard, 2009), pp. 33-51.

⁶David Abulafia, 'Mediterraneans', in W. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 64-93; Edgar Morin, 'Penser la Méditerranée et méditerranéiser la pensée', *Confluences Méditerranée*, 28, (2009), pp. 33-47; Francesca Trivellato, 'Renaissance Italy and the Muslim Mediterranean in Recent Historical Work', *The Journal of Modern History*, 82, 1, (2010), pp. 127-155; Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁷Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Défense et illustration de la Renaissance*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2018), pp. 55-102.

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Of Christian Sovereigns and Their Turkish Allies

The conduct of Italian leaders will only be rapidly touched on below, though indirectly it will provide context for this analysis. Throughout the period, various European powers regularly conspired with the Ottoman Empire and other infidel potentates. In 1402, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, had already earned the title of *Italicus Baisettus* for his associations with Sultan Bayezid I.⁸ Following the Turkish triumph on the Bosphorus, affairs would escalate.⁹

In 1460, Pope Pius II considered granting Mehmed II ‘The Conqueror’ the imperial designation in exchange for converting to Christianity. In the same year, Sigismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini, sent the Sultan two ambiguous offerings, a military treaty and a map of the Adriatic.¹⁰ In 1477, Hapsburg Emperor Frederick III, with Leonhard of Gorizia, paved the way for Turkish raids on the region of Friuli in order to threaten Venetian interests. Nearly a dozen years later, in 1486, Boccolino Guzzoni, lord of Osimo and a rival of Pope Innocent VIII, offered his city to Bayezid II as a base for invading Italy. And in 1494, Pope Alexander VI, the Vicar of Christ, sought aid from the ‘Antichrist’, Bayezid II, to hinder the most Christian King Charles VIII’s Italian expedition and his plans for a crusade. Alfonso II of Aragon, King of Naples, would make a similar attempt, while in Mantua, Francesco II of Gonzaga openly displayed friendship with the Sultan. In 1499-1500, from Milan and Naples, Ludovico ‘the Moor’ and Frederick of Aragon offered to become vassals of Bayezid if he defended them against Louis XII of France. In 1526, Federico II of Gonzaga also sent cryptic promises of submission to Suleiman the Magnificent, who was preparing attacks on Hungary and Vienna. In 1552, Italian noblewoman Lucrezia Gonzaga di Gazzuolo implored Suleiman to help liberate her husband from Ercole II d’Este, Duke of Ferrara. And finally, in 1536, the French King François I negotiated capitulations – later baptised an ‘impious alliance’ – with the Ottomans to counter the power of Hapsburg Emperor Charles V.¹¹

⁸Eugenio Garin, *Interpretazioni del Rinascimento*, (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2009), II, p. 95.

⁹For what follows in this paragraph, cf. Giovanni Ricci, *Appeal the Turk. The Broken Boundaries of the Renaissance*, (Rome: Viella, 2018).

¹⁰Monica Centanni, ‘Fantasmi dell’antico alla corte di Rimini e nel tempio malatestiano’, in F. Muccioli and F. Cenerini (ed.), *Gli antichi alla corte dei Malatesta*, (Milano: Jouvence, 2018), pp. 33-59.

¹¹Giovanni Ricci, ‘L’empia alleanza franco-ottomana: una prospettiva italiana’, in C. Lastraioli and J.M. Le Gall (ed.), *Francois I^{er} et l’Italie. L’Italia e Francesco I*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 169-179.

Though a victim of raids on Friuli, Venice maintained a delicate balance with the infidels, in one way or another. In 1480, it supported the Turkish landing in Otranto at the expense of Federico II of Naples. In 1484, it championed Moorish resistance in Granada to keep the Iberian monarchs busy and far from Italy. In 1509, Venice accepted supplies from Bayezid following defeat at Agnadello by the League of Cambrai. La Serenissima would demonstrate her 'diplomatic' skills on still further occasions, leaving an indelible impression on the whole of Europe. Venetians were viewed as 'true procurators and protectors of the Turks' and the 'precursors of the Antichrist and procurators of Muhammad' according to poets of the early sixteenth-century French monarchy.¹² Spanish diplomats would refer to the Venetian Republic as '*Amancebada*', or the sultan's concubine. This reputation was echoed by Francisco de Quevedo in his literature expressing 'Indignation against Venice [...] the concubine of the Turks'.¹³

Genoa, though Venice's rival, would ally with the Turks all too frequently according to popular opinion. In 1444, Genoese galleys had, after all, transported the Turks beyond the Bosphorus during the Crusade of Varna. Furthermore, the Genoese colony of Pera, which faced Constantinople, commonly provided the Turks with information and equipment, to say nothing of their habit of supplying slave soldiers to the Mamluks of Egypt, who were fierce enemies of the crusaders.¹⁴

At this time, transgressing the taboo of associating with the Turks was so unremarkable that it was occasionally openly endorsed by the great rulers of Italy. In 1494, Ludovico the Moor, Duke of Milan, declared that, were he threatened, he 'would not only call upon the Turks, but also on the devil'.¹⁵ In 1499, a Neapolitan diplomat confided to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza that 'we prefer the Turks to the French, because unlike the French, the Turks leave us alone provided we pay their tribute'.¹⁶ Neither Christian affiliation nor prudence ever hindered such an attitude.

¹²Jonathan Dumont and Florent Lilia, *L'imaginaire politique et social à la cour de France durant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494-1525)*, (Paris: Champion, 2013), pp. 315-316.

¹³Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, (Roma: Viella, 2013), pp. 26-30; Federica Cappelli, 'La repubblica de Venecia... 1617 attribuita a Francisco de Quevedo', *Rivista di filologia e letterature ispaniche*, 6, (2003), p. 267.

¹⁴Carlo Bitossi, 'Genova e i Turchi. Note sui rapporti tra genovesi e ottomani fra medioevo ed età moderna', in F. Meier (ed.), *Italien und das Osmanische Reich*, (Herne: Schafer, 2010), pp. 91-97.

¹⁵Carlo Vianello, 'Testimonianze venete su Milano e la Lombardia degli anni 1492-1495', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 4, (1939), p. 418.

¹⁶Marco Pellegrini, *Ascanio Maria Sforza. La parabola politica di un cardinale-principe del Rinascimento*, (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2002), p. 741.

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Turkish Horses on the Altar of Saint-Peter

The common people also held to this position, though the cost could be greater for them than for the powerful. Typically, more prudent public figures such as scholars were, astonishingly, of the same viewpoint. In 1465, Pope Paul II sent exiled Byzantine scholar George of Trebizond to Constantinople 'to investigate and understand the conditions of the inhabitants and the country of the Turks.' According to Agostino de Rubeis, a Milanese ambassador to Rome, the Pope still hoped to convert the Sultan. The mission was however a complete fiasco. Trebizond had not even been granted an audience. Yet he had begun to portray the Sultan as '*imperatorem romanorum et orbis*', emperor of the world. Upon returning to Rome, Trebizond was imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo. Like other Byzantine survivors, George of Trebizond had reinterpreted history, attributing the growing power of the Turks to providential significance. He is also said to have sent letters to Istanbul 'informing the Turks of [Italian] affairs, of the discontent of the populations, and inviting him to come quickly to Italy.'¹⁷ To escape from his imprisonment, Trebizond was forced to sign a declaration stating the distinction between public gestures and the inner sentiments of the soul. It read: 'I deny that [the Sultan] is king and emperor of the Romans, notwithstanding what I have said.' He was also made to rectify his interpretation of the Fall of Constantinople:

I renounce all I have said: that he had occupied the city of Constantine by divine will [...] I saw in him only military virtues, by which means only did he take the city. I retract all statements of this nature, those I remember and those I have forgotten.¹⁸

Not long after, in 1468, an unusual conspiracy concocted by members of the Roman Academy – Bartolomeo Platina, Giulio Pomponio Leto, Filippo Buonaccorsi, among others – was uncovered. It was said that they had secretly wished to depose the pope. They had allegedly planned to appeal to Mehmed II, and to convene a council to attribute the title of Restorer of the Church to the Turks. They were all arrested.¹⁹ Most other contemporary humanists had renounced the efforts made by their medieval peers to understand Islam, but these Roman scholars felt more sympathy

¹⁷Angelo Mercati, 'Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 9, (1943), pp. 68-69.

¹⁸John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic*, (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p. 359.

¹⁹Paola Medioli Masotti, 'L'Accademia Romana e la congiura del 1468', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 25, (1982), pp. 189-204; Andrea Gardi, 'Congiure contro i papi in Eta moderna', *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, 11, (2003), pp. 36-38.

than horror towards the Turks.²⁰ A short stay in the jails of the Castel Sant'Angelo nevertheless convinced them to revise their opinions.

In 1489, Pacifico Massimi, a poet errant who had been in contact with the Roman conspirators, published a collection of one hundred philosophical and homoerotic elegies. The texts expressed even more radical criticism than that of his peers in the Academy, though his denunciations were lost in a sea of Latin verse and received limited distribution. In his writings, Massimi severely reprimanded the corruption of clerics ('You who have turned dominant Rome into a house of prostitution!'), which he felt was grounds for calling on the sultan to march on Rome. And 'when your horse feeds on the altar of Peter,' he wrote, 'and in a human voice says, "Come"? If the Parcae let me live, I shall see it, for it is destiny.'²¹ Though it is not unusual to encounter nonconformist words and gestures throughout the period, this is one of the most extreme pro-Turkish messages – by a talking horse, no less! – that we have discovered to date. The Burgundian court had previously introduced this image of the conquering horses of the Turks to make a case for a crusade.²² The equine metaphor would survive in this revised form for centuries, though the enemy Turks would eventually be replaced by the Bolsheviks.

Bologna, 1508: Better a Government by the Turks than One by Priests

In 1494 the citizens of Pisa proclaimed that they would rather submit to the Turks than be delivered up to Florence, which was Charles VIII's wish.²³ The following year, the inhabitants of Apulia, though traumatised by the recent Ottoman conquest of Otranto, wrote to Venice that they 'would have called on the Turks to avoid the

²⁰Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 43-87; Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 65-116.

²¹Pacifico Massimi, *Hecatelegium*, (Florentiae: Miscomini, 1489), f^o N2v-n3r; for modern editions: Pacifico Massimi, *Les cent élégies. Hecatelegium. Florence 1489*, ed. Desjardins J., (Grenoble: Éditions de l'Université de Grenoble, 1986); Pacifico Massimi, *Les cent nouvelles élégies. Deuxième Hecatelegium*, ed. J. Desjardins Daude, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008); James Wilhelm, *Gay and Lesbian Poetry. An Anthology from Sappho to Michelangelo*, (New York, London: Garland, 1995), pp. 290-302. Franco Bacchelli, 'Celio Calcagnini, Pacifico Massimi e la simulazione', *I castelli di Yale*, 8, (2005), pp. 127-131.

²²Jacques Paviot, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l'Orient*, (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), p. 28.

²³Michele Luzzati, *Una guerra di popolo. Lettere private del tempo dell'assedio di Pisa (1494-1509)*, (Pisa: Pacini, 1973), pp. 31-37.

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French, who were lazy, dirty and depraved.²⁴ In Pisa, better the Turks than the Florentines; in the south of Italy, better the Turks than the French. Similar comments were made by Ludovico the Moor and by Cardinal Sforza. It is little wonder that ensuing events unfolded as they did.

In 1500, Pope Alexander VI of Borgia took advantage of the Jubilee year to issue a papal bull calling for a crusade in an attempt to curb Bayezid II's aggressiveness. The only monarch to truly respond to the call was Louis XII, and it would be the final crusade of the most Christian Kings.²⁵ The mission would end in 1501 with French defeat on the island of Mytilene, in the Aegean Sea. 'Just now I have come from Turkey, where I was taken prisoner during the ill-fated attack on Mytilene', Rabelais would biting write.²⁶ In 1494, the Pope had sought aid from Bayezid when Charles VIII had marched on Italy but by the turn of the new century, circumstances had already changed.²⁷ In a letter to Niccolò Machiavelli, chancellery official Agostino Vespucci (cousin to the more famous Amerigo) related how Alexander VI was frightened when the bad news arrived from the East, and had even thought to flee Rome. Despite his panic, the Pope chose not to abscond. He remained entrenched with 'his illicit flock of whores and pimps', every night bringing 'at least twenty-five females to the palace, as if it were a filthy brothel.' Vespucci would inevitably conclude that 'the Turk now seems a necessity, since the Christians are incapable of extirpating this human carrion feeder.'²⁸

²⁴Marin Sanudo, *La spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, ed. Fulin R., (Venezia:Visentini, 1873-82), p. 344. Carole Kidwell, 'Venice, the French Invasion and the Apulian Ports', in D. Abulafia (ed.), *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494-95. Antecedents and Effects*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), pp. 295-308.

²⁵Nicolas Vatin, 'Le siège de Mytilène (1501)', *Turcica*, pp. 21-23, (1991), pp. 437-459; Jonathan Dumont, 'Entre France. Italie et Levant. Philippe de Clèves et la Croisade de Mytilène (1501)', in J.-M. Cauchies (ed.), *Bourguignons en Italie. Italiens dans les pays bourguignons (XIV^e-XVI^e s.)*, (Neuchâtel: Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes, 2008), pp. 51-68.

²⁶*The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel by François Rabelais*, trans. J.M. Cohen, (London: Penguin Group, 1955), p. 201; cf. Hope Glidden, 'Ces paillards Turcs: Rabelais devant le Levant', in L. Zilli (ed.), *L'Europa e il Levante nel Cinquecento. Cose turchesche*, (Padova: Unipress, 2001), pp. 15-24.

²⁷Giovanni Ricci, 'Les lettres de 1494 entre Alexandre VI Borgia et Bâyezid II: les effets indubitables d'une documentation douteuse', in B. Dumézil and L. Vissière (ed.), *Épistolaire politique. II. Authentiques et autographes*, (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016), pp. 233-243.

²⁸Niccolò Machiavelli, *Opere*, ed. Vivanti C., (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), II, p. 34.

The poor nobles of central Europe, principal participants in the crusades, now felt 'disgust' for the holy war. Italian popular literature often expressed pro-Turk sentiments.²⁹ This burgeoning contempt for the crusade was consistent with the context. In a commemoration of the 1464 crusade Pius II had called, the Bolognese chronicler Fileno dalla Tuata had surmised that 'the monies extorted from the people to fight the Turk were used instead to fatten wolves and pigs.' To raise funds for Alexander VI's crusade, however, the priests had needed to 'absolve both the living and the dead from the most incredible sins so the money would come... I will say no more, it would cause too much scandal.'³⁰

Marin Sanudo confirmed the 'scandal' in his analysis of Charles VIII's descent in 1494. He recounted that, in Venice, the Austro-German cardinal Matthäus Lang had argued in favour of 'the expedition against the Turks' promised by the king. What were his reasons? It seems that Lang 'was a poor cardinal, with little income. *Unde*, in preaching against the infidels, *ergo*,' he could keep some of the fruits of his declamations. Needless to say, 'This thing [the crusade] was refused by Venetians, by virtue of the peace [they] had made with the Grand Turk.'³¹

Sanudo was of the oligarchy and represented the political views of La Serenissima. Fileno dalla Tuata was a different case. Though of very little education (he did not know Latin, for example), he echoed the popular anticlerical sentiment of derision and disrespect towards the Church which flowed through Renaissance Italy. The scandals surrounding Pope Alexander VI of Borgia only served to underscore the negative cliché.³² In 1508, before being hanged for rebellion, the tanner Giacomo Rabuini declared to the papal legate in Bologna, 'Better a government by the Turks than one by the priests!' And Fileno would judiciously comment, 'Well, he was right, but it was not the time for saying it.'³³ The words that had sent George of Trebizond to prison in 1466, or that Agostino Vespucci had written to Machiavelli in 1501, were openly

²⁹Xavier Hélyary, 'Le dégoût de la noblesse française à l'égard de la croisade à la fin du XIII^e siècle', in M. Nejedly and J. Svátek (ed.), *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge*, (Toulouse: Framespa, 2009), pp. 17-30; Francesco Tateo, 'Crociata e anticrociata nella letteratura umanistica e nella novellistica volgare tra XII e XIV secolo', in H. Houben (ed.), *La conquista turca di Otranto (1480) tra storia e mito*, (Galatina: Congedo, 2008), I, pp. 309-317.

³⁰Tuata Fileno dalla, *Istoria di Bologna*, ed. B. Fortunato, (Bologna: Costa, 2005), pp. 315, p. 324 & p. 434.

³¹Sanudo, *La spedizione*, p. 265.

³²Ottavia Niccoli, *Rinascimento anticlericale*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2005), pp. 49-78.

³³Fileno dalla, *Istoria*, p. 529.

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echoed by the common people. This shows that the Turkophilia was directly proportional to the anticlericalism, both rising and falling together.

Crusades and Anti-Crusades

In 1518, rumour spread that the Turks would invade Italy. This presage would curiously resonate in the form of a comedy written by Machiavelli, entitled *La Mandragola (The Mandrake)*. In one scene, after complaining a little wistfully about how her 'brute' of a husband sometimes treated her, a falsely naïve woman asked a monk of dubious virtue: 'Do you think that the Turks will invade Italy this year?' She then added: 'My word! Heaven help us, then, with those devils! I'm terrified of that impaling'.³⁴ Machiavelli admired Ottoman military discipline. He even integrated his comedic and sexual fantasies into his political thought. But if the Florentine scholar's objective was amusement, it was no jest for others.

The Fifth Lateran Council in Rome was dissolved in 1517. There, Cardinal Giles of Viterbo related a prophecy announcing the end of the sect of Muhammad.³⁵ The Ottomans, as if to contradict him, promptly conquered Mamluk Egypt.³⁶ Pope Leo X reacted to this by calling for a crusade.³⁷ His decision to do so was also spurred by his near-death experience during a corsair raid, in 1516, while on a hunt along the Roman coast.³⁸ On April 29, 1518, Fileno dalla Tuata recorded the journey to Bologna of 'three cardinals sent to gather funds to counter the coming of the Turks.' Among them was Giles of Viterbo, who was to reach Hungary. Processions and ostentatious displays of relics were organised, but to Fileno it all seemed a scheme to collect money. It was not that he was ignorant of the danger the Turks presented, however. On June 4 the same year, he described an incursion of corsairs not far from his city on the Adriatic coast: 'They pillaged and burned a village, after having slit everyone's throats.' How then can his aversion to crusades or his fondness for the Turks be explained? It seems that Fileno never passed up the chance to criticise the ecclesiarchs. A few weeks

³⁴Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Mandragola*, in *Five Italian Renaissance Comedies*, ed. by B. Penman, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 33.

³⁵Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani dei Cinquecento*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), p. 24.

³⁶Benjamin Lellouch and Nicolas Michel, *Conquête ottomane de l'Égypte (1517)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013).

³⁷Hans Pfeffemann, *Die Zusammenarbeit der Renaissancepäpste mit des Türken*, (Winterthur: Mondial, 1946), pp. 174-181; Ottavia Niccoli, *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1987), pp. 110-114.

³⁸Bram Kempers, 'Sans fiction ne dissimulation. The Crowns and Crusaders in the Stanza dell'Incendio', in G.-R. Tewes and M. Rohmann (ed.), *Der Medici-Papst Leo X. und Frankreich Politik. Kultur und Familiengeschäfte in der Europäischen Renaissance*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 381-386.

before the cardinals responsible for the crusade came through Bologna, Fileno had disparagingly noted the supremely wealthy cardinal Luigi d'Aragona's visit to the city. Though it was Lent, d'Aragona and his company 'ate nothing but capon, partridge and pheasant, in blatant disregard of believers.'³⁹

Let us return to our brave tanner hanged in Bologna in 1508. Though the anticlerical faction had prepared his declaration on the government of priests and of Turks, the tanner had had no intention of abjuring his Christian beliefs. His reasoning was much like that of the Eastern Christians, who claimed: 'Better the turban than the tiara.'⁴⁰ In other words, the Turks, who were more open to granting legal status to infidels in exchange for tribute, were a more palatable alternative than the Latin Church, which hounded schismatics with proselytism (and also demanded tribute). The notion of 'Ottoman tolerance', which historians continue to debate, had something to do with this, as did the memory of crusaders pillaging Constantinople in 1204.⁴¹ But powerful emotions were indeed stirring if, in a city such as Bologna, which belonged to the pope and was in the heart of the Western world the avarice and gluttony of its prelates were more scandalous than murderous corsair attacks.

Lepanto: The Flip Side

In 1571, the Battle of Lepanto aroused a new wave of emotions. The Turks had just besieged Malta and its defending Knights, and had recently conquered Genoese Chios, the Latin Duchy of the Archipelago, and Venetian Cyprus.⁴² A Holy League was

³⁹Fileno dalla, *Istoria*, p. 747.

⁴⁰Elizabeth Zachariadou, 'Τα λόγια κι ο θάνατος του Λουκά Νοταρά' [Words and the Death of Luca Notaras], in Ch. Maltezos, Th. Detorakis and Ch. Charalabakis (ed.), *Ροδώνια. Τιμή στον Μ.Ι. Μανουσάκα* [Rose garden. In honour of M.I. Manoussakas], (Rethimno: University of Crete, 1994), pp. 135-146; Roderich Reinsch, 'Lieber den Turban als was? Bemerkungen zum Diktum des Lukas Notaras', in C. Constantinides, N. Panagiotakes, E. Jeffreys and A. Angelou, *Philellen. Studies in honour of Robert Browning*, (Venezia: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini, 1996), pp. 377-389.

⁴¹Marc Baer, Ussama Makdisi and Andrew Shryock, 'Tolerance and Conversion in the Ottoman Empire: A Conversation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51, (2009), pp. 927-940.

⁴²Anne Brogini, *Malte, frontière de Chrétienté (1530-1670)*, (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2006); Philip Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island. 1346-1566*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); Ben Slot, *Archipelagus turbatus. Les Cyclades entre colonisation latine et occupation ottomane: c. 1500-1718*, (Istanbul: Nederlands historisch-archaeologisch instituut, 1982), pp. 66-72; Chryssa Maltezos, *Cipro-Venezia: comuni sorti storiche*, (Venezia: Istituto

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arranged in response to this expansion, while in the churches believers recited the prayer *contra paganos*, exchanging 'paganos' (pagan) for 'Turcas' (the 'Turk').⁴³ At the same time, taxes were raised, causing discontent among the people to surface. Just prior to this, in 1570, Doge Pietro Loredan had drawn his last breath in Venice. During the funeral service, the crowd had dared cry out, 'Long live Saint Marco and the Signoria, the Doge of famine is dead!'

A contemporary anonymous versifier composed a *Lament of the Venetian Fishermen* which seems a counterpoint to the fervour for war. Echoing popular sentiments of egalitarianism, he mocked the oligarchs with: 'they who fear that the Grand Turk will come steal their melons.' And, in response to religious millenarianism, he stigmatised Christian sins: 'It is not the Turks, but God himself who wages war against our practice of usury and our weaknesses. It is a miracle the earth does not open up and swallow us whole.' The would-be poet concluded his interminable series of scandalous observations by declaiming that, 'not wanting the tyrants to reign supreme over this world, God had arranged for the Grand Sultan to dispense justice. [The Turk] took back what was taken by the tyrants and gave them war and misfortunes in return.'⁴⁴ The victory at Lepanto would be decisive, but dissension among the victors prevented them from fully reaping its benefits.⁴⁵ While official – and sincere – enthusiasm for anti-Turk sentiment raged, to the point of elevating Lepanto as a new Battle of Salamis,⁴⁶ the author of the *Lament*, paying no heed to Greek history, perpetuated the tradition of pro-Turkish appeals.

ellenico di studi bizantini, 2002); Vera Costantini, *Il sultano e l'isola contesa. Cipro tra eredità veneziana e potere ottomano*, (Torino: Utet, 2009), pp. 43-74.

⁴³*Episcopale Bononiensis Civitatis et Diocesis. Raccolta di varie cose che in diversi tempi sono state ordinale dal [...] cardinale Paleotti*, (Bologna: Benacci, 1580), p. 96 v.; Gianclaudio Civale, *Guerrigieri di Cristo. Inquisitori, gesuiti e soldati alla battaglia di Lepanto*, (Milano: Unicopli, 2009).

⁴⁴Manlio Dazzi, *Il fiore della lirica veneziana*, (Venezia: Neri Pozza, 1956), pp. 441-449.

⁴⁵For an original overview: Onur Yildirim, 'The Battle of Lepanto and Its Impact on Ottoman History and Historiography', in R. Cancila (ed.), *Mediterraneo in armi (secc. XV-XVIII)*, (Palermo: Mediterranea, 2007), II, pp. 553-556.

⁴⁶Carlo Dionisotti, 'La guerra d'Oriente e la letteratura veneziana del Cinquecento', in A. Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente tra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento*, (Firenze: Sansoni, 1966), pp. 471-493; Francesco Sorce, 'Metafore in bianco e nero. Propaganda antiturca nelle stampe di Nicolò Lelli', in Francesco Sorce, *En blanc et noir. Studi in onore di Silvana Macchioni*, (Roma: Campisano, 2007), pp. 47-60; Álvaro Alonso, 'Lepanto como Nueva Salamina: un tópico hispano-italiano entre Mal Lara y Viruès', in L. Secchi Tarugi (ed.), *Oriente e Occidente nel Rinascimento*, (Firenze: Cesati, 2009), pp. 475-485.

Conclusion

This article has explored the views of one Byzantine scholar and some Roman academics, Pisan citizens and inhabitants of Apulia, a chronicler and a tanner from Bologna, an official and a writer from Florence, one cosmopolitan poet, and Venetian fishermen. Yet we have scarcely begun to scratch the surface of public opinion towards the Turks, and the more political version of the pro-Turk sentiment of princes and popes has also barely been touched on. Nor have the many who converted to Islam been mentioned in this article. Nonetheless, we can observe that the geography of positive emotions towards the Turks is as varied as its sociology. Though it is impossible to measure the true extent of this phenomenon, it is unlikely to be negligible. Perhaps what we glimpse flowing over Renaissance Italy was but the tip of the iceberg in a geopolitical conflict of emotions of far greater importance.