MIGRANT MENTALITIES: RECONSTRUCTING THE COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND WORLD OF VENETIAN MERCHANTS IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN

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In dissertation, I explore how late medieval Venetian merchants developed unique mentalities about space, geography, time, and trust in their sense of identity and community. The thirteenth to fifteenth centuries saw the advent of sedentary trade, wherein merchants lived abroad for longer periods of time than ever before, a transition away from travelling constantly with their wares. This transition, I argue, led them to become migrants who participated in and sustained long-distance networks and communities. I examine two types of “public” primary sources written by Venetian merchants between 1204 and 1453: Merchant manuals of comparing weights, measures, exchange rates and common goods sold between regions, organized geographically, and the crusade propaganda letters of Marino Sanudo Torsello. With these two genres, I explore how merchants interacted with others in their various long-distance communities both within and beyond merchants’ networks. As a result of that participation, they adopted new relations to communication and information
that in turn informed a wide variety of attitudes: they focused on the value of connections between regions and shifted their perspectives of the Mediterranean to look at the way different cities tied to one another; their use of merchant manuals to spread information also predicated spreading shared senses of space and imaginary geographies. They saw trade as a vehicle for sustaining non-mercantile networks through self-interested mutual goals among disparate regions, as well as Christendom as a whole. They transformed trade into an act of Christian service. As they engaged with long-distance communication that overlapped past, present and future, they altered their relationship with time: merchants hoarded knowledge from the past and turned to astrological divination of the future to utilize every tool in their arsenal for gathering information. Finally, the importance of communication in their networks led them to place exceptional importance on access to and control of information: they emphasized authority and trust derived from the experience of travel and the prestige of long-distance specialization.
For Valentine.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The late Middle Ages was an era of heightened motion. Pilgrims moved to holy sites, diplomats to foreign courts, peasants into cities, and merchants to fresh markets as long-distance trade revived across the Mediterranean and beyond. In the thirteenth century, the commercial revolution, sparked in “a few peripheral towns of Italy,” grew past its first flush and into the full bloom of exchange.¹

Scholars have recently begun to put forward an idea of a “Global Middle Ages,” and acknowledge that Europe did not function in an isolated bubble untouched by the outside world.² Castles and monasteries drape the skyline of popular imaginations of the medieval world, casting it in relative isolation, untouched by those outside an ill-defined yet somehow impervious “Europe.” Reorienting ourselves towards a Global Middle Ages, by contrast, encourages us to explore motion and change — how Europeans moved into new regions and new communities and how they were changed by these experiences of contact, conflict and cooperation, of cohesion, integration and separation, of new places and peoples. With

² Catherine Holmes and Naomi Standen, “Defining the Global Middle Ages (AHRC Research Network),” in Medieval Worlds: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies 1 (2015), 106-117.
this reimagining, scholars have sought to “transcend the hegemonic account of Western European- Mesoamerican links focused on 1492,” which depicts the opening of the Atlantic as a seminal moment of movement and to redress the static notion of the Middle Ages that has dominated conventional thinking.³

As medieval Europeans moved, they also anchored themselves in new places, becoming not just travelers, but migrants and residents. The late Middle Ages increasingly saw people who not only traveled abroad but stayed there, in contrast to that simultaneous heightened motion—merchants as grand as the famed Marco Polo who left his native Venice in his youth and spent nearly two-and-a-half decades in Asia, or like the more humble merchant Philip Gross of Nuremberg, who petitioned the Venetian commune for trading privileges lasting a full year for his stay in 1383.⁴ As long-distance trade boomed, merchants moved less and stayed more, sometimes for months, often for years or even decades. They shifted into what we call “sedentary trade,” where they conducted business abroad while rooted into new communities and separated from their native homes. As a result of the shift to sedentary trade, northern and central Italy saw a communication revolution beginning in the trecento.⁵ Merchants trading across the Mediterranean, Europe and the Far East sought new ways, and with a new intensity, to keep in contact with each other over distances. They constructed new communities which were, in turn, transformed by the

³ Ibid., 113.

⁴ H. Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venedig und die deutsch-venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen vol. I (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1887), 113-114.

⁵ Sedentary, here after, specifically refers to merchants who no longer traveled personally with their wares, but instead lived long-term in local “quarters” of foreign cities, in the fundaqs and fundai, while their trading partners shipped goods to them, and to the period of time where merchants were migrants abroad, as defined later in the introduction.
distance, time and travel inherent to long-distance communication.\textsuperscript{6}

The movement that enabled that communication was constant and on the rise across the late medieval Mediterranean, but it was also — critically — slow. People — and their knowledge, their culture, their mentalities — moved at a pace only distantly imaginable to us now in the so-called Age of Information. Today, we are so used to the constant hum and thrum of information flowing past us that we forget what it must have been like to know that every piece of “news” was in fact quite old, delayed by the time it took to reach its destination. In the age of e-mails, text messages and video calls, we rarely consider the ways delayed transmission could impact not only the spread of information itself, but how people integrated that information into their lives and how they thought about knowledge itself.

And yet, the late Middle Ages was also an “Information Age,” in the words of Peter Murray Jones, much as the globalization of the Middle Ages mirrors growing interest in the world’s globalization through communication today.\textsuperscript{7} Medieval Europeans moved and changed as all humans do, but they did so at a pace and in ways now foreign to us. Much as technology’s rapid flow of information changes us, so too were medieval people changed and moved by their own accumulations of knowledge and information. The very pace and nature of that communication molded their culture in the same way that our instantaneous

\textsuperscript{6} Of course, when we talk of globalization today, much of that globalization is, in fact, a sedentary and motionless globalization facilitated by technology — the internet, especially, and its ability to enable conversations and communications between people sitting in their own familiar homes with thousands of miles between them. People sit aglow in the light of their computers and build friendships, ties, and communities with people they have never met in person. The removal of direct contact was, as we shall see, a source of trouble for medieval merchants who were accustomed to direct, oral communication but came to rely upon written communication as a substitute — or, rather, hybrid — of oral communication.

communication shapes us today. The nature of that change, the impact it had upon their networks, identities and culture is a warped mirror to the changes in our own, darkly familiar.

**Historiography, Frameworks and Limitations:**

Before the mid-thirteenth century, most Venetian merchants traveled abroad to buy and sell their goods in person. They sailed from port to port, following the coast of the Mediterranean, but they rarely remained in a city for longer than it took to sell their goods.\(^8\) Traveling merchants went abroad frequently, but always returned home at the end of each journey and never stayed in a single location long enough to call it "home." They moved across the Mediterranean with the current, a constant flow of people across the sea.

After the Fourth Crusade, late medieval urbanization and the revival of the silk route’s connections to the Mediterranean, trade both intensified and became more routine. The flow of merchants continued across the Mediterranean, but the movement of their people, cultural and information changed in character, becoming a deeper, slower current rather than just surface waves. Italian merchants grew more intimately familiar with major ports. And they began to move abroad and live there long-term. Merchants now routinely and willingly left their home cities, friends and family to live in foreign lands. They integrated themselves into their new towns and communities even as they struggled with isolation and separation from their native communities.\(^9\) Venetians created a new community of migrant merchants.

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In this dissertation, I explore the impacts of distance, migration and travel on a newly growing, long-distance and fundamentally scattered communities. I focus on Venetian merchants living abroad from the first decades of the thirteenth century until the fall of Constantinople. The unique perspectives of Venetian merchants, together with the rich source base they produced during these centuries, make this a particularly interesting diasporic community to study.

I deliberately distinguish travel from migration, though I recognize the two terms are imperfectly distinct. I use travel to refer to any form of movement, however short term, from one place to another. This includes the travel that migrant merchants facilitated, such as when they sent messengers to deliver the letters that were the lifeblood of their communities, or when they negotiated for agents to carry their merchandise to a foreign port. The term also includes the voyages that merchants themselves took, whether weeks or months long, that culminated in their own long-term settlement abroad for months, years or decades. I use migration as a subset and byproduct of travel: the significant time a merchant spent in a city or region at the end point of their journey, whether that time abroad was extended and indefinite (e.g. Marco Polo’s decades spent in China and Mongolia) or comparatively finite (e.g. the two years Marino Sanudo Torsello’s in Negroponte on family business that, once resolved, saw him return to Venice by 1293). Merchants both traveled and migrated: travel was the foundation of their long-distance communities, as they journeyed to new regions themselves, and relied on others (messengers, agents) to venture out on their behalf.

(London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 217-261. Both discuss the ways Venetians’ identities and culture were shaped by time abroad.

Still, I consider the merchants I study here as migrants rather than travelers in order to highlight the long durations of their time abroad. For them, not only was the initial journey from home important; the experience of long-term removal from their native communities and their long-term participation in a scattered, disparate community also shaped them and the texts they composed for posterity. Long absence changed how they engaged with, understood and related to their communities, while they also developed new relationships with people over long distances and for long periods of time. I considered other terms, such as settler or colonist, rather than migrant. But I concluded that those terms conveyed a sense of permanence, or intended permanence, compared to migrant, and implied a different relationship between the merchant and his (temporary, albeit long-term) place of residence. Both settler and colonist put the focus on the traveler’s new home: the settlement or the colony, and less on the merchant’s continued interactions with home communities and other merchants elsewhere.

Between the two poles of travel (a journey from here to there) and settlement (permanent relocation), migration falls somewhere in the middle: it is a journey across significant distance, a longer time spent abroad, and the intention of returning home at the end of their stay. The term migrant retains the emphasis on travel that I see as integral to the medieval merchant’s identity; while still capturing the longer duration of their stays abroad, a phenomenon equally important to the development of their sensibilities.

**On Merchants:**

In the last decades of the thirteenth century, a young Venetian, Marino Sanudo, one of five brothers born to the noble Marco Sanudo, made his first venture to Acre just before
it fell into Mamluk hands. He likely went to visit his family’s resident agent, “possibly a relative, who like himself, was learning the family business.” He stayed there for several years, familiarizing himself with the people and customs of this foreign land, before returning home in 1289. Soon after he was on the move once more, this time to Negroponte for two years to accompany his brother Marco Michiel in a two-year post as bailo of the Venetian outpost. By 1293 he was back in Venice once more but was swiftly sent out by his father to Naxos to meet another branch of the Sanudi family who had managed to earn that island’s dukedom during the Fourth Crusade. In time, his travels as merchant and noble politicker would take him to Rome, Sicily, Alexandria and Romania. He was, like many Venetian nobles, a man with fingers in many pies — politics both domestic and foreign, trade and, especially, crusade, and a man whose time abroad reflected those interests abroad. These departures were always made with the presumed intent of eventual return and with frequent contact with those back home, but they lasted months, years or even decades. In this, Sanudo was like many other merchants who pursued new opportunities abroad, but also faced new problems of communication, compounded by the impacts of time, distance and travel. These challenges shaped the nature of the long-distance communities that merchants created and transformed their own identities in the process.

Merchants took part in larger Mediterranean travel and migration patterns that also included missionaries, crusaders, exiles and diplomats, who made up the ebb and flow of

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15 Sanudo generally introduced himself as “Marino Sanudo, called Torsello,” in his letters, presumably to differentiate him from the half-dozen other Marino Sanudos peppered across Venice, and the nickname “Marino Sanudo Torsello has stuck with him.


people from port to port and city to city. They were, however, distinct in how they moved independent of a larger community; in their reasons for travel and living abroad; and in the regions in which they stayed and which they valued as “important”. These three factors are so central to their perception of the world and of their construction of identity that they merit independent study.

Merchants’ intentions and purpose in moving abroad innately shaped their mental maps, worldviews and their mentalities about identity, information and community within that world. Missionaries and crusaders both had intentions of religious opposition, contention and conversion with the local Muslim populace. By contrast, political concerns generally motivated exiles and diplomats. And their goals transformed their experiences of their travels — both in how they conducted their journeys, whom they encountered, and how they perceived those people and their journeys themselves — so we see, for example, in the Embajada a Tamerlán, a narrative account of a Castilian ambassador’s journey to the court of Timur, as “a simultaneous mapping of empire and the inscription of Timur’s political

18 Johnathan Riley-Smith, The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986); Benjamin Z. Kedar, Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 116. From here on, I use the terms “mental map” and “imaginary geography” to refer to how merchants viewed the Mediterranean – which places they were interested in, which places they ignored, which places they connected to one another through trade; I seek to effectively “map” the spaces discussed in my sources, to show the distortions of how they imagined the world compared to its physical “reality” of geographically accurate maps we use today. I also use the term “worldviews” to discuss how merchants (specifically, how Marino Sanudo Torsello) conceived of the world not only in geographical terms and boundaries, and more in a broader sense, in terms of its peoples and communities, and in the values and ideals that different places could represent.

19 Eric Dursteler, Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 63. Dursteler discusses how exiles from Venice frequently settled near the periphery of the Venetian state in order to have better access to political agents, such as baili, that allowed them to temporarily enter the empire either to visit family or pay off the debts that had incurred their banishment, thereby ending their exile. Their settlement was thus often politically motivated, because they chose to live in regions based on the political tools that would enable them to return to their original communities. Where merchants chose to move abroad, despite the fact that it meant leaving behind their communities, exiles settled abroad specifically in the hopes that it would enable an eventual return.
body onto the geography of the East.” The author, Ruy González de Clavijo, focused on the political unity that the Timurid Empire had imposed over the relatively scattered geographic expanses; in his view, space and political power merged. For merchants, neither politics nor religion was a primary motive. Eric Dursteler observes that there was a “certain ambiguity in merchant identity” which had, at their cores, “familial and commercial, much more than religious or political, considerations.” The prominent role that commercial motives played in merchants’ sense of identity sets them apart from groups who traveled and lived abroad for religious or political reasons.

Furthermore, merchants’ migrations do not match the travel patterns of missionaries and crusaders, nor those of exiles and diplomats. While crusaders and missionaries focused on Islamic territories, and exiles and diplomats focused on empire peripheries (exiles) and political centers (diplomats), merchants settled primarily along trade routes. Commercial, much more than political or religious, boundaries and connections shaped merchants’ travel patterns (though, of course, we cannot completely dissect these three borders from one another, so this is an imperfect distinction). While the religion of the dominant population and government significantly shaped merchants’ experiences in different regions, if we were to look at merchants exclusively in a religious framework we would inevitably ignore the

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21 Dursteler, Venetians in Constantinople, 136.

22 David Abulafia, The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 359. The trade routes merchants spread across the Mediterranean, "crossing the boundaries between Christendom and Islam," which marked "a clear sign that a single economic system was emerging in the Mediterranean" after the fall of Acre in 1291.

experiences of merchants who went abroad outside Muslim territories. This is not to say that
religion and politics played no role in shaping the mentalities of merchants, rather that these
roles were distinct from their place for crusaders, missionaries, exiles and diplomats.

Merchants were not motivated to go abroad for exclusively or primarily religious
reasons, and therefore, they did not perceive a world as readily divided in two by religious
differences. Whether they lived in territories under Christian or non-Christian, Venetian or
non-Venetian control, they were unmoored from their previous, familiar communities. They
needed to construct new communities while maintaining ties to the old all while at least
partially integrating into the local community. We must look at all their experiences abroad,
both in Christendom and outside it, together, beyond the conventional framework of
Christian-Muslim contact. By looking at merchants in isolation, rather than together with
other travelers and migrants of the Mediterranean and Europe, we can better see how
migration itself shaped their perspectives, as something more than a secondary element of
cross-religious or cross-cultural interactions. Because the merchant community stretched
beyond the confines of exclusively Christian or Muslim lands, they had shared experiences
across religious and cultural divides; as a result, we must consider the way these common
experiences shaped a uniquely “merchant” identity and perspective on the world.

Moreover, in no small part because of their travels, merchants developed a particular
need — and response to that need — to a degree unseen in any other social category: their
demand for information gave birth to rapidly developed literacy. Merchants were more
literate than almost any other social group in the late Middle Ages, excepting the clergy (and
they were almost certainly more numerate than the latter), thanks to that need to keep track
of increasingly complex mathematics and to keep records for their business transactions.
Merchants grew literate at rates and proficiencies well beyond other lay travelers of the era,
and as a result they retained communications and interactions across long distances on a level unseen among pilgrims, crusaders or diplomats, creating a unique network, community and culture forged by long-distance communication.24

Historians who focus on fourteenth-century Italian merchant culture have largely ignored the roles of distance, travel, and living abroad in the construction of identity, community, and perception, or have treated it as incidental to these issues. They have framed merchants’ experiences as primarily an issue of cross-cultural contact — how merchants viewed and interacted with peoples from other cultures, and vice versa. We have yet to address the question of how the very act of migration, living abroad and participating in a community unbound by geographic limitations changed their perceptions of the world as a whole, of their communities, and of themselves.25 In this vein, John E. Dotson found that trecento merchant manuals reflected a general sense of tolerance of cultural differences so long as there was financial incentive to do so, but authors of the manuals depicted Italian city-state rivalries in harsher terms than Christian-Muslim tension.26 But this perspective limits the debate to a dichotomy of tolerance and intolerance, integration and isolation, and inevitably frames merchants' identities in terms of Christian and Muslim boundaries even


when others have shown this dichotomy does not quite appreciate the complexity and fluidity of their identities.

Even where historians have approached the question of the construction of merchant identity, mentality, and community outside of a cross-cultural context, they treat location and physical space itself as largely irrelevant. Christian Bec, looking at the overlap and interaction between Florentine merchants and humanists, analyzes how trade as a profession influenced merchants' identities and perceptions, to create a cohesive image of a uniquely “merchant” mentality of the late Middle Ages in Florence. Bec argues that Florentine merchants developed unique mentalities because of their professions and explores how they perceived and understood particular terms such fortuna, ragione, and prudenza.27 He casts merchants as men of business who were fundamentally rational and practical, as well as cautious, but still acknowledges that merchants were often driven by a variety of motives including status, family and religion. But while he offers brief notice of how merchants traveled and lived abroad, he paints them as, above all, Florentine and essentially unshaped and uninfluenced by their time away from home — they were unique as businessmen, but not migrants or travelers.28 Others have similarly focused on merchant culture in an exclusively domestic context, as primarily shaped by their participation in trade and business in a purely capitalistic sense, with little consideration of their experiences as members of a community unbounded by geographic limitations. This approach, in turn, fails to account for the way time spent abroad can shape worldviews, mental maps and mentalities and how that time


28 Ibid., 330, 445-446.
was intrinsically connected to their merchant identity. Ultimately, while others have debated the development of trade, or methods of acquiring information and news among merchants during the course of their journeys, none have explored the impacts those developments and methods had on merchant mentalities.

A few scholars have addressed the question of how merchants constructed their identities while living abroad. In his article, "Migrations familiales et stratégies commerciales vénitiennes aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles," David Jacoby observes that Venetians who lived in Byzantium before the fall of Acre in 1291 frequently referenced the specific Venetian parish in which they or their ancestors had lived, and always treated their time abroad as temporary. He claims this practice reflected a "psychological need" to establish solidarity among Venetians living abroad, implying that the process of migration cemented a cultural identity rooted in connections to the merchants' native city — that merchants used rhetoric to anchor themselves to their origins, reinforcing their identity as solely Venetian. In doing so, they emphasized the temporary nature of their time abroad and minimized its importance in the formation of their identity. Through this rhetoric, these merchants demonstrated the importance of physical space and distance in their sense of their identity: they tied

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32 Ibid., 373.
themselves not to their city's people but to its places, the parishes rather than the parishioners. Celine Dauverd, likewise, mentions that Genoese and Catalan merchants "established colonies whose sense of solidarity was reinforced by a clanic or family-based system of operation," suggesting that merchants living abroad tied themselves closely to the local communities and associations within the findugs and city quarters as a product of living as a minority abroad.33

None of these scholars approach the questions of the influence of travel, distance and migration as an independent phenomenon or with any significant attention to the mentalities and mental maps they produced. Rather, in each case discussed above, they focus on a separate question entirely, with these questions all secondary considerations at best: Jacoby's primary interest lies in the establishment of new judicial and commercial infrastructures in the Crusader States, so his attention to merchants' psychological need for constructing communities only extends to Levantine regions even though merchants would eventually spread out throughout the entire Mediterranean and Europe.34 Dauverd only briefly mentions the solidarity of merchants within a trade diaspora before she moves onto her main analysis of the role of Catalan and Genoese merchants in Sicilian domestic policy.35 Essentially, all three recognize the role that migration and distance played in shaping merchant identities, perceptions and communities in the later Middle Ages, but none fully develops an analysis or argument that focuses on these factors, because they are tangential to


34 David Jacoby, "Migrations familiales."

their primary interests. There is, then, a gap in the scholarship in terms of recognizing the full breadth of the influence of migration and settlement abroad in shaping merchant culture. We cannot understand the medieval merchant identity without asking how the physical space between them and their home shaped them, in addition to their physical proximity to a community other than their own.

By treating migration and living abroad as distinct phenomena that directly shaped merchant communities and identities, we can begin to see how merchants grew into a subsection of society that lived within and yet also apart from their native communities even after they returned home. The transformative experience of travel created a new and separate mercantile community that was increasingly impactful on the main community as a whole and made merchants a driving force of cultural change across the later Middle Ages and into the Early Modern Era.36

On Venice:

If we treat merchants as a group separate from other travelers and migrants of the late Middle Ages, we must also consider whether and how to further limit our approach: how were Venetian merchants distinct from other Italian merchants, or merchants as a whole? Venice’s geographical position, situated on a lagoon, protected the Venetians from foreign threats and encouraged a sea-based economy, leaving them poised to take advantage of the economic changes of the late medieval Mediterranean. But it also gave them a unique relationship to the sea and to travel, even before the revival of long-distance trade and

36 The development of a distinct merchant class is also analyzed by Quentin Van Doosselaere within his Commercial Agreements and Social Dynamics in Medieval Genoa, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
s edentary systems of exchange — most famously in their “Marriage to the Sea” ceremony beginning around the turn of the millennium. This relationship demands that we give Venetians an analysis independent from other merchants of Italy who shifted to sea-based travel from conventionally relying predominantly upon land-based travel; focusing on Venetian perspectives allows us to better isolate, or at least reduce, the additional influences on mercantile and medieval migrant mentalities.

History and its origins gave *la Serenissima* subtle advantages over neighboring Italian states and the rest of the Mediterranean that placed Venetian merchants in a uniquely favorable position to take advantage of the changing economic world of the high and late Middle Ages. The city was born in the vague mists of the fragmentation and institutional chaos of the Western Roman Empire of late antiquity. In the wake of Rome, itinerant fishermen called “Veneti” made the lagoon their home, which then became a site to which Roman elites fled the encroaching Ostrogoths. Emperor Justinian I, in turn, became its first conqueror in the sixth century, before any substantial city or settlement had formed. He wrested it from Lombard control and placed the region under an exarchate helmed by Ravenna — which was in turn captured by the Lombard King Aistulf in 751.37 Aistulf failed, however, to capture the lagoon’s settlement, thanks to the protections of the still-hobbling Byzantine fleet. The empire continued to hold the fledgling city under its protection for several centuries as it grew economically and politically, in the face of various attempts at conquest, including by Charlemagne’s son Pepin in 810. Over the subsequent centuries, however, Byzantium’s control over the city slowly lapsed, distracted as they were by Muslim

and Arab victories in the East and reconquest of former territories in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{38} They had little time for their more distant holdings, especially with Venice so separate from other outposts.

Meanwhile, Venice's trade-based economy was already flourishing, and the city's government increasingly took political privileges for themselves even as they claimed obedience and allegiance to the empire. By the eleventh century, Venice was \textit{de facto}, if not \textit{de jure}, independent. Still, Venetians retained a number of privileges with respect to the vast empire. Once taxed on imports at lower rates than foreigners thanks to their exempt status as “citizens of the empire,” it was easy for Venetian doges to renegotiate renewals or enhancements of those same privileges on behalf of merchants who journeyed to the foremost entrepot of the Mediterranean. In due time Venice herself would rival Constantinople’s primacy, their upward trajectory transforming them from the “poor cousins of the empire” into “nouveaux riches.”\textsuperscript{39}

This special — if somewhat complicated — relationship with Byzantium gave Venetians unique advantages as “foreigners” who had slowly slipped from their empire’s grasp while they retained both favored trading status and relative economic independence. The city’s Byzantine heritage granted Venice, in the words of Matteo Casini, a “geo-cultural dilemma” — a conflict between eastern and western character that would lead the city to grapple with its Eastern interests and Westward turn with the Renaissance. But in its earliest

\textsuperscript{38} Thomas F. Madden, \textit{Venice: A New History} (New York: Viking Press, 2012), 64-65. Madden blames Venetians’ gauche flaunting of their wealth in Constantinople for the gradual cooling of affections between the two states, stating that, “these festering resentments would drive a wedge between the two peoples, fueling centuries of rancor,” 65.

\textsuperscript{39} Lane, \textit{Venice: A Maritime Republic}, 5.
years, its ties to Byzantium were a boon. Its unique origins favored la Serenissima in her first moments, where Byzantium protected the city from invading neighbors while it was too weak to protect itself, yet physical distance from the empire gave it room to grow in independence.

The lagoon and geographical fortune, meanwhile, granted Venice further advantages that helped not only to maintain its political independence but also fostered its distinct preference and even favoritism towards trade over farming and agriculture. Even as early as 829, Doge Justinian Partecipazio himself had over a thousand pounds invested in commercial ventures abroad. In time, Venice’s government pursued a hands-off mercantile sea empire rather than land-based conquest and expansion in the peninsula. Protected by their lagoon, Venetians faced far less threat from invading armies that could never properly blockade sea routes. As a result, Venice survived Pepin’s siege in 810: the rest of Northern Italy fell to the Carolingian onslaught while Venice lasted long enough for naval support from Byzantium to arrive. When Venice successfully defended Durazzo and their Dalmatian territories from Robert Guiscard and the Normans in 1074, with no help from Byzantium, it marked the point where “control of that sea had passed from Byzantium to Venice.”

Venice’s convenient geographical situation in the Adriatic enabled the city to focus its strength on naval power, allowing the city to specialize where other Adriatic and Mediterranean powers had to divide their attention between land and sea, and made the

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41 R.S. Lopez, The Commercial Revolution, 63.

42 Madden, Venice: A New History, 60.
lagoon unconquerable by land-based powers. It also allowed the city unique political stability against outside threats and the turmoil caused by changes of power through conquest, eventually garnering her the name “la Serenissima,” — the most serene city.

This geographic situation did have drawbacks — perhaps better called “distinctions” — that demanded Venetians adapt to their position on the lagoon. Their coastal position protected them from outside threats, but it also limited their expansion into the peninsula, and so limited their ability to engage in agriculture and provide the food necessary for their survival. This limitation had dramatic economic ramifications that rippled into the creation of a socially and culturally distinct city. Without a large amount of land to grow crops and sustain their people, Venetians sought other means of attaining the goods they needed: fishing, first, helped bolster their shipbuilding industry and, eventually, trade undertaken with those same ships. The social ramifications were dramatic: with minimal land to control, and the greatest source of profit to be found in trade, Venice never developed an exclusively land-based gentry that drew its power from territorial holdings; nor did it engage in much of the feudal system that distributed land in exchange for fealty. Instead, Venetian patricians made most of their wealth through trade — including the first “outstanding merchant” whose finances we know in any great detail — Sebastian Ziani, elected Doge in 1172. That Ziani was both merchant and Doge, the highest position in Venetian government, reveals the way merchants were deeply integrated into politics; merchant patrician families held

43 Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 7-9.

44 Ibid., 7-9.

extensive positions within the Great Council.46 As a result, government often worked in tandem with the interests of the wealthiest merchants, offering naval galleys as protection to smaller merchant ships and granting merchants political positions abroad where they could conduct trade at the same time (even if, nominally, they were supposed to serve only the state’s interests). 47

Venetians stood at the helm of the rise of the merchant class in the later Middle Ages. Trade became not a byproduct of other journeys or a secondary source of income for those who made their living by other means, but instead its own profession and class within society. Even as the merchant class rose to wealth and status elsewhere in Europe, nowhere else did they hold such political and social prominence as in Venice. With both significant political and social power, medieval Venetian merchants had the enviable position of living in a society with both elevated social mobility (for a time) and a government that was particularly receptive to their wants and needs. 48 Venetian merchants were uniquely positioned to take advantage of the late medieval Mediterranean’s changing political and economic worlds. And take advantage they did: the Crusades, especially, launched the

46 However, membership to that Council was simultaneously enlarged and locked in 1297, an act known as the Serrata. The Serrata marked a transition away from the direct connections between absolute wealth and nobility — newly wealthy merchants could no longer participate in government and this limited their abilities to rise into the ruling class as proper patriciate families. The effect of this made nobility hereditary where it had not been before and, Frederic C. Lane notes, “cushioned the impact of factional rivalries” between wealthy families because it became impossible to pack the Council with allies when it numbered nearly 200 nobles, but also ensured that no noble family could be excluded — nor was there incentive for newly wealthy families to instigate attempts to join the Council and thereby gain political influence. Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 114.


stratospheric rise of the merchant republic into a maritime empire that directly controlled some of the most important ports and entrepots of the sea that connected East and West, North and South. With the First Crusade, Venetians gained trading privileges with Jaffa and Haifa, as well as a rivalry with Hungary over the control of Dalmatia. That rivalry would see Venetian crusaders temporarily excommunicated for their siege of Zara in 1202, but they would regain the city — and a series of naval bases across the Mediterranean, including Crete, Modon and Coron.\(^49\) With the Fourth Crusade and their infamous (and eternally debated) turn on the Byzantine Empire, Venice became an unrivaled power in the Mediterranean.\(^50\)

What they did not control directly, they influenced through their economic power and their naval “policing” of the Adriatic and beyond. As a merchant empire, Venice was particularly invested in stability — not only within the city, but beyond its walls and coasts; Venice eagerly took up the role of controlling and limiting piracy within the Mediterranean. Its naval power made it the natural launching point for anyone who sought safe conduct abroad, whether as pilgrim, merchant or crusader.\(^51\)

\(^{49}\) Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 32.

\(^{50}\) Even where they did not directly control a territory, they wielded the power to exclude their rivals and enemies, for “no citizen of a state which was at war with Venice was to be received into the territory of the Empire,” allowing Venice to effectively cut off Constantinople and Levant trade to anyone they disliked — such as their perennial rivals the Genoese, with whom they clashed constantly throughout the later Middle Ages. The Fourth Crusade also saw one Marco Sanudo, nephew to Enrico Dandolo and distant relative to Marino Sanudo Torsello, take control of the central islands of the Aegean and the Duchy of Naxos independent of Venice (instead subject to the Latin Empire). Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 42-43.

Just as Venice stood apart from other medieval European powers, so too were its merchants distinct from their peers elsewhere in Christendom. Venetian merchants not only played an uncommonly powerful role in the political system of their state; compared to their closest Italian counterparts, the merchants of Tuscany, they also formed fundamentally different communities. As Frederic Lane notes, Venetian merchants developed compagnie much as Florentines, such as Francesco di Marco Datini and the Bardi and Peruzzi had done. But Venetians stopped short of creating the massive and dispersed companies that moved Datini to hoard hundreds upon thousands of letters and employ dozens and scores of employees at any time. Instead, Venetian merchants favored smaller, more intimate business ties between family and close friends, or short-term and severable relationships with agents hired for a single trip or a few years rather than semi-permanent employment. These less permanent and ornate arrangements meant that Venetian merchants found different ways to form, sustain and strengthen the social ties that formed the base networks of their communities — their writings had different audiences, they sought to communicate different information and as a result saw their communities — and themselves — in different ways. They seem to have held a fundamentally different vision of the world as a whole.

On Periodization:

This dissertation traces the evolution of merchant mentalities among Venetians between 1204 and 1453. I cover, broadly, the “later Middle Ages,” but any approach to the era is fraught, to at least some degree, by the question of periodization. This is especially true

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52 Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 137-140.
for any approach that discusses Italy, the “birthplace of the Renaissance.” If I seek to treat late medieval merchants, I must answer who qualifies as a late medieval merchant, as opposed to a high medieval merchant, or an early modern merchant. I have defined “late medieval” as the period stretching from the beginning of thirteenth century into the early decades of the fifteenth, in other words, 1204 to 1453. The sources themselves have partially shaped these boundaries: relatively little material by merchants themselves survives from before the mid-thirteenth century, when that burst of literacy meant that merchants began to produce enough sources, in enough volume, that some could finally survive and make it into the hands of modern historians.

I have chosen 1204 as my opening date because the Venetian conquest of Constantinople opened dozens of ports to Venetian traders and produced a new level of “symbiosis” between Venetians and Greeks, not only in the Mediterranean proper, but in the Black Sea as well. The decisive Venetian capture of Crete from the Genoese in 1217 further expanded the republic’s mercantile reach. Even so, the revival of trade was far from immediate, and its impact upon the rise of the merchant class and their transition into sedentary trade was gradual. As William McNeill notes, while cities began to grow in Italy well before 1200, new mercantile practices only came in the 1260s. The Fourth Crusade was not the only catalyst; other events — the introduction of the compass to Europe, spread of paper mills in Spain and Italy, the collapse of Seljuk Turkish rule in Anatolia after the

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54 McNeill, Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 50; R.S. Lopez, The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 86.
Mongol invasion of 1243 all contributed to a gradual expansion of Christian — and especially Venetian — merchants across the Mediterranean.55

I use 1453 to mark the end of the international community of Venetian merchants I study here. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire was a moment of dramatic change; Constantinople’s role as the entrepot for Christian traders who sought access to the East was forever changed; but it took place within the larger context of Ottoman conquest across the Aegean in the decades before. The city’s economic significance had already declined thanks to the shifting winds of trade into the eastern Mediterranean and beyond.56 If anything, the closing off of Constantinople impacted Christian trade to a far smaller degree than the opening of the Fourth Crusade — but its impact upon Venice itself was far greater, for the republic’s eastward position in the Adriatic sea disadvantaged it for the westward turn of trade. As Constantinople and the Aegean ports reduced their trade with Venice, Venetian merchants failed to adapt and gradually lost their place as an economic powerhouse of the world.57

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Debates and Frameworks:

The questions I ask in this dissertation — about distance and migration and how they affected merchant mentalities in the duecento, trecento and quattrocento — fit within larger historical debates about the later Middle Ages to which I hope my work will contribute.

Perhaps the most dominating framework I engage with is the question of “mentalities”: what it means to have a “merchant’s mentality,” a merchant’s viewpoint that fit into a broader “merchant’s culture.” The study of “mentalités” as a field of historical research began originally as a project of the Annales school. That school’s desire to achieve something approaching a “complete” or comprehensive perspective of history led its scholars to explore not only the larger “realities” of history – the “economic processes, social structures and environmental influences,” as named by Patrick H. Hutton -- but the impact of those realities upon people’s psychologies and psyches.58 Their shift into “mentalities” also reflected an attempt to avoid the intermingling of “culture” as a term for broader social attitudes among common or non-elite members of society and the “culture” that referred to separate values and ideas of the social elites, rather than the hoi-polloi, maligned as passive recipients of culture. Lucien Febvre and March Bloch sought out insight into the “collective mentalities” of all strata of society. Febvre looked at “Faith and Unfaith” to explore the conceptions of “atheism” and how faithlessness as Rabelais understood it differed radically from our own understanding of the term because our own definition was unimaginable to a

man even as unconventional as he.\textsuperscript{59} Bloch, in turn, delved into the question of collective illusions and credulity to argue that the medieval world understood “marvels” and the supernatural as part of their repertoire of reasonable explanations for the unexplainable, an attitude lost to the modern mind.\textsuperscript{60} In their footsteps, Philippe Ariès followed. He connected shifting attitudes towards childhood and life cycles to broader collective mentalities about time (“archaic” and “linear”) to argue that the end of the Middle Ages saw a new belief in the universality of “progress” across many elements of life.\textsuperscript{61} Others, like Foucault and Norbert Elias explored the relationships between enforced social conformity (via segregation and civilization, respectively) and the control of people’s thought processes.\textsuperscript{62}

The \textit{Annales} schools’ focus on total history and the \textit{longue durée} have faded in popularity over the decades, but the core appeal of some of their interest in mentalities still lingers: that hope that exploring not simply what happened, but the way people thought, felt and experienced things might allow us to “shed some of our modern worldviews and enter into the alien mental world of ordinary persons who lived two centuries before us.”\textsuperscript{63} Robert Darnton contextualized the history of mentalities not only in the \textit{Annales} school’s ambitions of grand narratives, but also in the broader tools of anthropology. He notes that by the

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\item \textsuperscript{63} Robert Darnton, \textit{The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History} (New York: Basic Books, 1984), xix.
\end{itemize}
1990s, “even the French abandoned their trademark notion of the history of mentalities and took up *anthropological* history” by focusing on the premise that we can treat historical societies as remote and alien cultures, as “the Other,” in the same vein that at anthropologist might study a community in the recesses of the Amazon.\(^{64}\)

Peter Burke attempts to survey the strengths and weakness of “The History of Mentalities” as an independent field. He defines it roughly by three characteristics: first, a “stress on collective attitudes rather than individual ones. Secondly, an emphasis on unspoken or unconscious assumptions, on perception, on the workings of ‘practical reason’, or ‘everyday thought’ as well as on conscious thoughts or elaborated theories. And finally, a concern with the structure of beliefs as well as their content, with categories, with metaphors and symbols, with how people think as well as what they think. In other words, to assert the existence of a difference in mentalities between two groups is to make a much stronger statement than merely asserting a difference in attitudes.”\(^{65}\) He, like Darnton, likens it to anthropology: he distinguishes it from the history of ideas by calling it a “historical anthropology of ideas.”\(^{66}\)

Burke outlines the flaws and benefits of pursuing mentalities as an independent question – I will respond to the flaws as they touch on my own research. In benefits, he argues that “mentality” as a concept helps historians avoid dismissing the people of the past as irrational or naive, instead showing how their behavior simply functioned within different

\(^{64}\) *Ibid.*, xvi.


belief systems. Being aware of mentalities also allows us to avoid contorting explanations of how their actions follow our own thoughts and modern logic.\textsuperscript{67}

Burke then notes, and attempts to rebut, criticisms levied against the History of Mentalities: first, that its historians treat mentalities as “impersonal forces,” dehumanizing them and removing them from the individuals who actually \textit{thought} their beliefs; Burke argues, however, that “the beliefs are ‘collective’ only in the sense of being shared by individuals, not in the sense of standing outside them.”\textsuperscript{68} He also suggests that looking for broad trends or patterns in mentalities can lead us to treat alien beliefs as uniform, homogeneous across medieval societies. While I do try to pinpoint common beliefs shared between the individuals, I still leave room for them to view their worlds differently from one another and do not remove their mentalities from their individuality. I speak of “medieval Venetian merchants” where they shared patterns of thought, but also recognize and analyze the exceptions, nuances and variations even within these merchants as a group.

Burke also points to the challenge of identifying the reasons for changes in mentalities and belief systems and fall into a pattern of seeing “traditional” and “modern” mentalities as inescapable modes of thought that members of a community are bound to. He objects that we can look at the development of small-scale or short term mentalities (such as the “numerate mentality” of 13\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} century Italy, or the mid-sixteenth century Scientific Revolution) and identify mentalities that changed over time, sometimes slowly and sometimes rapidly. We can see that there existed simultaneous and competing theories of

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid}, 442.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid}, 442.
thought in societies. By narrowing my interest to the connection between changing trends in migration, travel and changing mentalities, I make it clear that the mentalities I discuss and analyze were not fixed, nor do they stand in direct contrast to “modern” or “traditional” mentalities. Instead the implicit comparison is with “non-migrant” mentalities of the time.

A third “objection” (or perhaps difference) he observes is that historians of mentalities, unlike historians of ideologies, see mentalities as effectively autonomous, independent of society itself, while historians of ideologies see “thought as shaped (if not determined) by social forces, and they emphasize the cunning (conscious or unconscious) by which a particular view of the world is presented as natural.”70 I follow the historians of ideology more than mentality here: I make no effort to treat mentality as independent from social forces, and indeed argue that the need to maintain social connections, as a byproduct of migration and distance, drove much of the changes in merchants’ mentalities about things otherwise indirectly connected to social forces, such as concepts of past, present and future.

Burke’s final objection is that the history of mentalities is built on the teleological approach of evolutionism and the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who first launched the term mentalité into popular parlance in the 1920s. In this approach, past mentalities moved slowly and inexorably towards a more “modern” mentality that we would recognize as our own today. I have no pretensions, however, to claiming that late medieval Venetian merchants contributed to a more “modern” mindset than the merchants of elsewhere in Europe, or the

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small-scale traders that came before them, only that their mentalities were deeply shaped by the relatively new phenomenon of sedentary trade and that they, in turn, introduced these mentalities to the broader European community.

Aside from this history of mentalities, I also build on and engages with other fields of debate. First, it touches on the sporadic and ongoing debates about the interconnectedness or disparateness of the Mediterranean world — and the extent to which people around the Mediterranean interacted — not only in cooperative, constructive cohesion, but also in antagonism and conflict. The debate, defined, synthesized and revolutionized by works like Fernand Braudel’s *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, Horden and Purcell’s *The Corrupting Sea*, David Abulafia’s *The Great Sea*, and Janet Abu-Lughod’s *Before European Hegemony*, centers on the question of the “Mediterranean World” — whether, indeed, such a world existed as a geographical or social unit that we can talk about in the way we talk about “Europe” as a cohesive region today.\(^71\)

Historians have treated the Mediterranean as a fundamentally connecting entity, one that linked together distant ports on a level unavailable anywhere else in the medieval western world.\(^72\) With its currents flowed people, ideas, and merchandise from one end of the sea to the other.

The debate is often framed as a dichotomy: was the Mediterranean more unified by its common connections, by trade and cross-cultural and inter-community cooperation, or

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was it divided, fragmented pockets of isolated cultures that rarely communicated with one another except in conflict and warfare? Answers usually, as with most dichotomic, settle somewhere in the middle. Braudel was one of the first to attempt to wrestle with the Mediterranean as a singular unit, one with “a common destiny. . . with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences,” and with “Mediterranean life” as subjected to universal and slow-moving or recurrent influences. 73 He proposed a substrate of peasantry, fishing and agriculture, where geography defined the slow movement of change upon which specific historical events danced. In Braudel’s wake, the idea of a “universal” Mediterranean declined. With The Corrupting Sea, Horden and Purcell once more approached the Mediterranean as a geographical unit with common — if not necessarily universal — elements of environment, agriculture, trade and interactions across its space. Theirs is a hybrid compromise between connection and distinction, attempting to reconcile the various unique elements of life within the Mediterranean with a recognition of the sea as a force that brought with it frequently repeated experiences to its people. They point to routine and frequent experiences of flooding, as well as “structural absenteeism,” where the sea allowed agricultural producers and laborers to be physically separated from the ones who made decisions controlling that agricultural production, so that “labour may be deployable over great distances,” and in turn promoted the development of niche specializations of goods. 74 Abulafia warned against the tantalizing hope of finding a “fundamental unity” of human experience in the Mediterranean and urged instead for a focus on diversity. Instead, he


Although I am concerned with questions of communication, connection, and isolation across the Mediterranean and beyond, my research does not point to either a connected or fragmented Mediterranean. While there is no shortage of connections among my merchants, which could arguably reflect an increase in connectivity, merchants were not and cannot be representative of the Mediterranean world. Mine is a Mediterranean of simultaneous separation and connection, where the sea parted people across isolating distance as much as it brought them together on uniting currents. That same sedentary trade, which inhibited frequent communication and lost merchants the experience of oral, in-person contact, was also the primary motivator to increase communication and contact in order to facilitate trade and profit, to construct and sustain their communities in spite of the problems created by distance.

A corollary to this question of the “Connected Mediterranean” is the issue of medieval communication. Communication allowed and enabled a connected “Mediterranean World” to flourish. But one must also ask what forms that communication took, and whether they helped or hindered developing and sustaining new ties across long distances. I speak, of course, of literacy — that critical means of communication that has shaped and
continues to shape human cultures and communities across the ages. The question of literacy in the later Middle Ages is a much-debated question. Was the culture still primarily oral? When did the balance shift to literate communication? How, and for how long, did the two cultures coexist? Even with these debates, medieval literacy has often been treated as a sparse and primarily elite phenomenon, reserved to only the wealthiest and most educated until the invention of the printing press or beyond. In recent decades, some scholars have pushed back against the idea that medieval culture favored, trusted and valued oral communication over the written, and argued that we should revise our conception of “literacy” to include more rudimentary engagement with the written word. Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy* looms over these discussions, arguing that the growth of literacy and reliance upon text for the preservation of information changed the very shape of people’s thoughts, demanding that people communicate their thoughts in a structured manner. And historians such as M.T. Clanchy have increasingly developed the argument that, despite low literacy rates well into the fifteenth century, parts of Europe during the high and later Middle Ages were nevertheless increasingly reliant upon literacy and upon literate *mentality* even among the illiterate.

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I also engage with questions of medieval communication and, particularly, the causes and impacts of increasing literacy and written communication in the late medieval world. Clanchy highlights the different ways that medieval people interacted with and relied on the written word, even when most were not necessarily “literate” in the modern sense of the word. He likewise discusses how people’s relationships with textuality and orality changed across the Middle Ages during the gradual transition from oral to literate culture: they began to trust and rely upon information communicated textually over orally. Well before the invention of the printing press, merchants — especially Italian merchants — constituted an increasingly and highly literate subcommunity spread across Europe and engaged with and relied upon writing for the preservation and transmission of knowledge. Venetian merchants were in many ways a microcosm of this late-medieval shift into literate culture. While much has been written about merchants’ information networks across the later Middle Ages, studies have largely been limited to the economic impacts of such networks. Few historians considered how the means of communication changed mercantile culture itself. Merchants created a long-distance community founded on shared information, shared identities and shared mentalities, as part of the transition from a primarily oral to primarily literate culture. Within this transition, merchants intermingled oral and written word to create a unique style of information dissemination that held advantages over exclusively written and exclusively oral communication. Late medieval Venetian merchant culture was not just a part of the larger transition into primarily writing-reliant cultures across the high and later Middle Ages; it was a primary instigator and driver of that larger transition.

The final framework in which I intend to place this work is the relationship between migration, information and authority. The distinct nature of auctoritas and its relationship with trust has been subject to no shortage of discussion among scholars — what made a
source of information trustworthy, and how did people gain authority to provide information? The medieval tendency to favor information provided by classical authors led to countless pseudo-works attributed to other sources as a means of gaining authority through someone else’s name and reputation. But Shayne Aaron Legassie argues in his *The Medieval Invention of Travel* that the “dearth of reliable information about Asia and Africa imparted by ancient and patristic *auctores* prompted some scholars to accord surprising weight to relatively recent works of travel writing;” that trust in recent travel accounts, in turn, granted merchants a new method of obtaining authority and trustworthy reputation through personal experiences.80 Legassie built his work upon anthropologist Mary W. Helms’ seminal *Ulysses’ Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance*, which argues that members of communities deemed “long-distance specialists” gained social prestige from having special access to knowledge of spaces on the outermost fringes of a community.81 Helms couches that prestige in spiritual terms, emphasizing that exotic information had an ethereal mysticism or “magical power,” which Legassie illuminates in the spiritual journeys of medieval pilgrimage – and the literate labor of recounting them – as a parallel journey where the traveler’s soul journeyed closer to Christ as the pilgrim came closer to their destination that in turn garnered them religious authority.82

For our merchants, however, there is little evidence that their journeys and time in far-off lands endowed them with any spiritual or religious authority — but trustworthiness


82 Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 7-14, 162-163.
and reputation for honesty served critical roles within merchant communities. Travel, I will argue, became a key tool for merchants to gain information that they could then barter into authority and prestige among merchants and others. Merchants had no consistent means of verifying news and knowledge provided to them about markets abroad without going there themselves. They relied upon their trading partners to remain honest while acting as their avatar in deals abroad (even as those agents sometimes acted on behalf of several other partners at the same time), and favored sustaining a “network of personal relationships among people they could trust,” even when those relationships lost them short-term profit.\(^{83}\) Richard Goldthwaite points to the development of accounting, rooted in the written record as a preservation of memory and evidence of actions, and to the bill of exchange to circulate money, borne from the “collective agreement for the fixing of exchange rates” between regions as the two primary instruments of the merchant social system that allowed them to trust, if not each other, then their shared system of social and technological mores.\(^{84}\) The significance of trust in merchant networks grew in tandem with the authority merchants gained from their knowledge about foreign lands.

Merchants relied on information gained through their communication networks, and as a result they attributed a new degree of authority to knowledge gained through the experience of travel itself. Merchants used travel as a tool to accumulate news as messengers experienced new lands and encountered strangers. They and their long-distance communities


contributed to the growing trend within medieval society to value knowledge gained through personal experience rather than the knowledge or experience of another, historical authority, born from their experience as migrants. They made information into a commodity like any other and shifted how medieval European culture saw it as a result.

**Content and Structure:**

In this dissertation, I explore four structural questions about how travel, distance and migration impacted Venetian merchants’ mentalities as they spread out from home during the later Middle Ages. How did these phenomena change merchants’ mentalities of: 1) geography, 2) their communities, Christendom, and their place in it 3) time and 4) information, reputation and authority?

The first chapter presents a brief overview of the primary sources — merchant manuals, *zibaldoni* and letters — explaining their content, historiography, and provenance, and how they fit into the larger framework of analysis throughout the dissertation. This chapter introduces to sources that are in many ways both rote and repetitive in their commonalities, yet inconsistent and chaotic in their differences. I also address how historians have conventionally used these sources to underscore how my approach will depart from and react to those analyses.

The second chapter shifts to analysis of the sources themselves: merchant manuals recreated the unique mental maps of their compilers, but also for their readers. They created a shared understanding of the world and merchants’ place within it. These manuals reveal that merchants were deeply shaped by their experiences abroad, and their visions of the world around them transformed accordingly. Their mental maps exhibit certain shared phenomena: the position of Venice in the Mediterranean and in Italy, and where the world
— or at least their economic interest in it — ended. The economic and cultural impacts of events in the trading world — the growing importance of the western half of the Mediterranean and northern Europe as these regions came into their own economically, the East’s relative decline into disarray through the loss of Crusader territories and piracy, and especially the Fall of Acre as an economic and cultural center of the East — further transformed merchants’ mentalities.

Merchant compilers were all directly influenced by their time and ties abroad in different parts of the Mediterranean. With different experiences abroad, each had unique imaginary worlds — but through their efforts to compile and share information, they communicated these imaginary geographies to their readers. They helped to build a common understanding of the world from a Venetian mercantile perspective, where even as the details of these imaginary geographies differed thanks to the individual experiences of their compilers, they nevertheless reveal a distinctly “mercantile” mindset intrinsic to their scattered, long-distance communities.

The third chapter explores the crusade propaganda letters of Marino Sanudo Torsello; I explore the ways distance and migration informed how Sanudo saw his world in terms of geography and space, as well as how he perceived community and identity as products of his participation in a long-distance, mercantile community. Sanudo, I argue, idealized a Christendom that was expressly and ambitiously universal in character, and saw trade and travel as linchpins to build the connections in order to achieve that ideal. That is, he sought to exhort his correspondents to rebuild a lost “catholic” community that was fragmented by the loss of the Holy Land and the rise of political strife and conflict in Christian-controlled territories, and trade played a critical role in his plan for forging both a Christian community and a Christian identity.
Sanudo’s endorsement and idealization of universal communities and shared identities across Christendom was a product of his own mercantile background, and he saw communal unity and disunity in economic, migrant and trading frameworks. I explore how Sanudo envisioned Christendom, and different parts of Christendom, in terms of fracture, division and connection, and how he looked at different liminal members of the Christian community — those who were simultaneously Christian and “not Christian.” Sanudo’s participation in sedentary trade and his life abroad shaped his understanding of the world, influenced his efforts to invest in the past to recreate it in the present and defined his understanding of universal and fragmented communities and identities.

The fourth chapter focuses on the concept of time, examining how distance and migration informed mercantile identities. Late medieval Venetian merchants were particularly interested in the phenomenon and study of time. They used their pasts to understand what it meant to be a Venetian in the present. They invested in the study of the future through astrology as a counterbalance to the communication lags produced by travel and distance in sparse, migrant communities. Their ongoing use of manuals even beyond the current relevancy of the information was part of a culture that centered around accumulating as much information — both about trade and beyond it — as possible as part of a larger intellectual identity.

The last chapters return to Marino Sanudo Torsello, to explore the impact of his merchant background and mentality on his attitudes toward trust, authority, reputation and information. Focusing on the role of messengers in the control and distribution of Sanudo’s information, I argue that Sanudo sought to position himself as a font for exotic but reliable news about the world abroad. Sanudo commodified news, trading it for authority and trust from his readers and parleying into connections for himself. Those connections, in turn,
served as a further foundation for the construction of a universal Christendom. He traded information like merchandise, and, having already established trade as the primary mechanism by which he hoped to unify Christians, he implicitly saw his letters as tools to strengthen his community.

In total, I seek to explore those changes and paint a portrait of the migrant merchant’s mind in the late Middle Ages. Thanks to the rich sources they have left behind of their communications both with others in their own networks and to others beyond it, they are ripe for granting us unique insight into the new phenomenon of sedentary trade. We can look at them as coalmine canaries to larger thought patterns among migrants in the medieval world and preliminary examples of the ways migration and living abroad can shape the deepest levels of thought, culture and identity — the impacts that migration, living abroad and distance had on merchants’ mentalities, from how they viewed the world around them and their place in it, to their sense of community, building bonds and connecting to others, to their perceptions of time itself.
CHAPTER 2:
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SOURCES

The exploding literacy of medieval merchants, together with the spread of paper mills across Europe (a phenomenon that both fostered merchant literacy and benefited from the growing demands of this newly literate class) have left us with a bounty of mercantile sources from trecento Italy. In many ways we are spoiled for choice, with merchants like Francesco di Marco Datini leaving behind more than 150,000 letters between his agents and employees in the Datini compagna, meticulously preserved in the Datini archives of Prato. Venice lacked such a standout preservatore within its mercantile ranks, perhaps due to the relatively modest size of its companies in comparison to those in Tuscany. And yet what Venetian merchants lacked in quantity, they often compensated in quality (by the modern scholar’s eye): the sheer mass of Datinian letters belies an often impersonal character that reveals little of the personalities, thoughts and feelings of the authors behind the masses of paper. Venetian sources, while comparatively sparse, tend to be more personal — again, testifying to their companies’ familial structure and smaller scale.

85 That’s not to say there is nothing to be found within these papers — naturally there are no doubt countless insights into the mercantile mind to be found within the Datinian archives, but their greatest value, I would argue, are in the realm of mass-analysis and “big data” that make it difficult to pull apart the singular thoughts and ideas of any particular merchant within them, and the ambition to do so is one I will leave to other historians or at the least, to a later time and project.
Despite this wealth of sources, there is a limit to their value for a study of mercantile communities and culture: the perennial issue of public and private sources, the blurred line between the two, and the question of whether we can use private sources to parse the nuances of medieval mercantile identities and communities. These questions will drive any approach to mercantile culture and identity, because they invite us to ask whether identity is something entirely or primarily private, conceived within our own minds and only secondarily formed by social influences, or if society shapes identity.

In the case of this work, however, the internal elements of identity are of secondary interest to the ways that medieval merchants built and communicated their identities to others as they constructed long-distance mercantile community in the late Middle Ages. I seek to explore the “public” nature and expression of identity as something that merchants sought to teach others. To that end, I have excluded one of the most vivid sources for understanding the personal or private identities of medieval merchants: diaries that saw no audience beyond their authors. Diaries and other exclusively private works help to reveal the more intimate and secret thoughts of their authors and are fruitful sources for understanding the effects of community upon the identity of their authors. But because their private nature, private works cannot reveal the ways merchants constructed their community or the ways they sought to instill new identities, ideas and worldviews in others to create social bonds and connections.

And so, I have limited this study to what are, to some degree or another, what I define as “public” works — although the degree of “publicness” was highly variable. My definition of “public” is quite modest: any work that was ostensibly or plausibly intended (as much as we can possibly discern) to have at least one reader other than the author himself. This definition is, admittedly, both modest and generous to my sources, given the fraught
nature of the term “public” in the medieval world. But it is also, I argue, necessary, because it allows me to highlight that the mentalities I reveal and analyze were not only limited to their sole author, but also shared and (given evidence of recopying across multiple sources) adopted, absorbed or at least witnessed by their sometimes-limited readership. Similarly, I use the term “community” to refer to many levels and ranges of social bonds. Merchants were, as are all humans, simultaneously members to many communities: Christendom, their native cities, mercantile networks, their families, their compagnie (which were both mercantile and familial but not necessarily the same as their broader merchant communities or kinship networks), etc. In the same way that I have defined public as “at least one reader distinct from the author or compiler,” the term “community” refers to any social bond between at least two individuals, often, but not always, within a larger social network.

In this broadly “public” category, I focus on texts whose authors sought to disseminate information in order to create a shared foundation of knowledge and texts that reveal how migration, communication, and trade influenced merchants’ mentalities. In particular, I examine two forms of merchant writings: first, educational or reference texts called merchant manuals, which were read and used by other merchants; second, letters written by one individual merchant, Marino Sanudo Torsello, to non-merchant members of the other communities in which he participated. The former reveal how distance, travel, migration, culture and communication were all fundamentally intertwined in what we conventionally call the “merchant culture” or “merchant mentality” of the late Middle Ages; the latter reveal how one merchant of Venice then brought elements of this mentality — his concepts of Christian identity, ideals, trust and authority — to people outside of the merchant networks that initially shaped them.
Merchant Manuals:

Scholars have long treated merchant manuals and writings as valuable resources for understanding mercantile information and knowledge, as well as broader merchant culture. These manuals are both tediously and blessedly formulaic, and most borrow material from their predecessors with little elaboration or addition. Their content consists primarily of comparing weights, measures, exchange rates and common goods sold between regions, organized geographically and generally focused on one primary city with various secondary cities (such as, for example, Alexandria and Venice, then Alexandria and Cyprus, then Alexandria and Constantinople). Then the compiler adds any additional information deemed potentially useful for a merchant’s life, such as navigational itineraries, descriptions of spices and advice on how to pay or (rather notoriously, in the Zibaldone da Canal) evade import taxes.

Within the genre of merchant manuals, we can further distinguish two distinct types: independent manuals, whose contents are entirely dedicated to what we might call “mercantile” material or with only a small amount of space dedicated to other topics, and zibaldoni, whose content includes both “mercantile” material and “non-mercantile.” For the most part, where I use the phrase “mercantile” material, I refer to information that directly addresses trade. This includes exchange and taxation rates, weights and measures of merchandise, information about currencies or descriptions of goods and markets;

information, in short, that a merchant would need and use in his business abroad. For the most part, this material is repetitive and formulaic; it is consistent in structure and style across all manuals, even where the precise details differ. “Non-mercantile” materials, by contrast, include anything that appears inconsistently across the different manuals and seems to be only tangentially connected, at best, to a merchant’s profession. They collated material on astronomy and astrology, philosophical advice on being a good man as well as a good merchant, instructions for calculating the dates of religious holidays, excerpts of poems and chivalric literature, and itineraries of different sailing routes. Some of these, of course, compilers saw as useful information for trade, or drew from their experiences on journeys. We cannot know with absolute certainty what our merchants considered information directly related to their profession, and what information they included out of non-professional curiosity or interest. And so, to some extent, the distinction between mercantile and non-mercantile is a modern categorization. Still, the lack of consistency of these other topics and materials across all manuals, unlike the more conventional “mercantile” material, suggests that only some compilers saw it as useful or necessary. Non-mercantile material was the exception, rather than the rule, but we will see that even here there were patterns of what merchants cared about most outside of their office walls.

Historians have tended to focus on the mercantile material in both “pure” manuals and zibaldoni, neglecting the non-mercantile material by comparison. Dotson mined their pages for knowledge on how much merchants knew of practical metrology — whether they could or would reliably calculate weights and measures, concluding that, despite the efforts put into collecting information on weights and measures from regions across the Mediterranean, the compilers treated conversion as a mixture of art and science, accepting imperfect conversions compared to what we know of how different units weighed in.
Dotson also explored how merchants approached commercial law to illustrate a merchant culture that focused intently upon legal institutions, a “very modern business culture,” that advised merchants to be “widely knowledgeable, prudent, and to use forethought.” In doing so, he came close to an approach that tried to understand the medieval merchant mentality, but stopped shy of granting the topic any great depth. Overall, scholarship has focused on the aspects of business life and culture that these manuals can illuminate, and only tentatively approached broader questions of merchant identities, cultures or mentalities.

One reason for this hesitation to approach the more “human” side of these manuals comes from how dangerous it can be to refer to the merchants who collected these texts as the “authors,” or to ascribe too much of the composition of their content to them, as opposed to the overall structure and organization of that content, its inclusion and the compiler’s role as deliberate editor. It is often difficult, even impossible, to discern whether a given merchant composed his text or simply copied it from other manuals that do not survive into the modern day. They usually lack any explicit form of authorial voice, experiences or personal opinions, hewing to a strict formula of “In [X Region], [Y Good] is weighed at [Z measurement], which is equal to [Q] in the Venetian equivalent.” That

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87 John E. Dotson, “Practical Metrology in Medieval Italian Merchant Manuals,” in Vom rechten Maß der Dinge: Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift für Harald Witthöft zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Rainer S. Elkar, Sachüberlieferung and Geschichte: Siegener Abhandlungen zur Entwicklungen der materiellen Kultur 17 (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 1996), 116-126. Markus Denzel looked for similar flexibility in the fifteenth-century Florentine manual attributed to Giovanni da Uzzano, comparing price ranges between Alexandria and Damascus in order to understand how merchants approached negotiation and accuracy in terms of the conversions of money, rather than weights of measure. Between the two, we can surmise that Mediterranean trade demanded some degree of flexibility of its merchants, simply because of the imperfections of conversions, scales and measurement.

formulaic nature can sometimes allow us to identify when an author drew upon a known earlier manual as its source; the Tarifa zoè noticia, for example, draws heavily from a Florentine predecessor, the Pratica della Mercatura by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, and lifts entire sections almost wholesale. Where later manuals deviated from their predecessors, we cannot say with any real certainty whether new material was an original composition by the merchant compiler. As a result, parsing out the opinions of any individual merchant can prove a challenge given how many hands touched the words themselves before they came to a rest on the surviving page. What we can discern, however, is the views of the final merchant who compiled the work: while he may not have written the material himself, he valued it and chose it for inclusion because he presumably believed it offered some utility or interest to the manual’s audience. But for many of these manuals, their authorship is, at best, a hazarded hypothesis rather than anything approaching certainty. However, I will often refer to the final compiler as the “author” of a manual, both for simplicity’s sake and to credit the ultimate authoritative control he exercised over the content. While he may not have written the original texts, their formulaic nature gives greater weight to the significance of editing, culling, adding and organizing that content.

Merchant manuals also invite a question about that same “public character” mentioned earlier: were these manuals intended exclusively or primarily for the consumption of others, or more for personal ad hoc reference during daily business by the compiler alone? General consensus falls on the side of public consumption, but Venetian manuals were certainly not as widely disseminated as their Tuscan counterparts, which were, at least

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89 Vittorio Orlandini and R. Cessi, Introduction to Tarifa zoè noticia dy peci e mexure di luogi e tere che s’adovera marcadantia per el mondo (Venice: C. Ferrari, 1925), 6.
in the case of Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura, explicitly titled as compiled for use within Pegolotti’s massive parent company, the Bardi, or kept within business and account records, as was the case for the Pratica di Mercatura Datiniana. Even so, most historians agree that such guides to trade were probably intended as didactic tools for merchants early in their career, exempla to demonstrate how to cohesively collate information about regions abroad that could then be periodically updated as the information itself trickled in from correspondence abroad. As didactic tools, we can safely assume that these manuals had at least some audience, even if, as in the case of Venetian merchants, their education was primarily conducted within the family and audiences did not stretch to the comparatively massive compagne of Florence.

We can see evidence for the didactic character of these manuals in the way their authors persistently use language that instructs or commands their readers — they remind their readers to “note that,” [nota che. . . ] and exhort their readers that, “you ought to know/ you should know. . .” something. We see this in Marc. It., XI, 32, with the case of selling copper, which “debolla se uende in constantinopoli a Cento sotil lo qual e in uenixia

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90 “This book was compiled by Francis Balducci Pegolotti of Florence, who was with the Company of the Bardi of Florence, and during the time that he was in the service of said Company, for the good and honour and prosperity of the said Company, and for his own, and for that of whosoever shall read or transcribe the said book,” in Francesco Balducci Pegolotti and Henry Yule, ed. and trans., Cathay and the Way Thither, Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913-1916), 143. “Questo libro ordinò Francesco Balducci Pegolotti di Firenze, che sta colla compagnia de’ Bardi di Firenze, e dimorando elli al servigio di detta compagnia a bene e a onore e stato della detta compagnia e di lui e di chi leggierà o assemperrà il detto libro; e questo assempro è levato dal libro d’Agnolo di Lotto dall’Antella, e ’l quale libro era levato dall’ assempro del libro del detto Francesco Balducci,” in Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, Prancesco Balducci Pegolotti, La Pratica della Mercatura, ed. Allan Evans (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, no. 24, 1936), 3.

91 Georg Christ, Trading Conflicts: Venetian Merchants and Mamluk Officials in Late Medieval Alexandria, Medieval Mediterranean vol. 93 (Leiden; Boston: Brill Publishers), 13, fn. 52. With that said, Venetian manuals, particularly those contained in zibaldoni, served many purposes beyond literal reference material. I explore their other uses in Chapter 3, “Past, Present and Future,” looking at how the author’s inclusions of non-mercantile material reveal unique mentalities about time, space and travel.
Lira 104” — “copper ought to be sold in Constantinople at 100 sotil, which is [equal to] 104 pounds in Venice.”\(^92\) Silver, “ought, in any condition/quality, be sold in Famagusta by the mark, and a mark is 8 ounces and the ounce is 20 sterling 8 pounds.”\(^93\) In Florence, Pegolotti similarly exhorted his readers in his Pratica della Mercatura, where he explained that he included the calculations for the date of Easter on the grounds that, “it is sometimes necessary for merchants to know on which day and in which month the Resurrection is coming.”\(^94\) The emphasis here is on the sense of needing to know things — that is, that Pegolotti shared information that merchants not only benefitted from, but needed as part of their role as merchants. Likewise, the Zibaldone da Canal’s advice that a merchant visiting Antalya in Syria should “remember to pay the least [amount of taxes] that you can.”\(^95\) No seasoned merchant would need reminding that they should endeavor to pay as little in expenses as possible, so why include the line except to be didactic?

If manuals were instructional, and not simply for personal reference; what does this mean for exploring medieval mentalities or merchant culture? With the rise of sedentary trade in the later Middle Ages, merchants could no longer expect to gather this information independently through personal journeys and experiences, but instead needed to rely on others to collate this information and then share it with the larger merchant community. At the same time, this information now needed to be written down to communicate and

\(^92\) Biblioteca Marciana, It. XI, 32 (=6672), f. 196r.

\(^93\) Ibid., f. 196r, 198v.


disseminate it over long distances, because merchants could not rely on in-person, oral communication while they remained abroad for years or even decades, much in the same way that we see an explosion of letter-writing at the same time. As a result, the fourteenth century saw the invention and rise in popularity of a new genre of textbook about the basics of mercantile information and culture for young — or simply uneducated — merchants. Merchant manuals were a new genre, and a new form of communication, created in response to new pressures of long-distance trade and the problems of living abroad, and as such, are particularly revealing of the changes and concerns experienced by merchants as a product of their migrations.

While serving this didactic function, these manuals also inadvertently shared the compiler’s mental map, his sense of the world as a whole. As a reader joined this community, defined by its foundational knowledge, he acquired or was exposed to this new mental map. Merchant manuals disseminated geographical perspectives among their readers, based upon the original compiler’s experiences and perspective of the world. Manuals shaped not only the knowledge new merchants would learn, but what mindsets and mentalities they would hold as part of the merchant community.

One text often looked at as a merchant manual will, however, be conspicuously absent: Marco Polo’s Le devisement dou monde. Literary scholars and historians alike have extensively debated the famous work’s genre: Franco Borlandi argued that the text, though rendered in literary language thanks to Rustichello da Pisa’s courtly influence, was born from Polo’s familiarity with the merchant manual genre, and should be considered a member of
that textual family.\textsuperscript{96} Elsewhere, however, John Larner distinguished Polo from the “armchair explorer” authors of merchant manuals who copied portions of their texts from others rather than limiting themselves to only their own experiences, and Gang Zhou suggested that Polo was also influenced by the “small talk” genre of courtly gossip in the Chinese narrative tradition that he acquired in his time abroad.\textsuperscript{97} Whatever we call Le devisement’s final genre, Polo was clearly influenced by his knowledge of the merchant manual genre, and the text’s organization follows the itinerary of his journey eastward in a similar parallel to the way merchant manuals reveal the mental maps of their compilers.

Ultimately, however, I decided not to include the behemoth, rich and vivid as it is, for two key reasons: first, that same vividness, the exceptional nature of his journey and the text’s towering influence on travel literature and modern scholarship alike. Integrating Le devisement would risk drowning out the comparatively dry and underused merchant manuals, who have suffered neglect to their individualities, the nuances and insights they can offer. The second reason, however, is that Polo was author to Le devisement, but not the editor; that privileged role belongs to Rustichello, a courtly poet whom Polo met while they were both in prison in Genoa. Rustichello reshaped the text, made it more palatable to a general and non-mercantile audience. We cannot know how much he interpolated, trimmed or manipulated Polo’s original words. Throughout this dissertation, I focus heavily on the editorial process of merchant manuals: looking at their choices of what they included, how


they organized different sections and chapters, what they left out compared to other manuals, all as a reflection of their merchants’ culture and mentalities. Because of Rustichello’s role in editing Le devisement for a general audience, we cannot know which choices to attribute to Marco Polo, and which to Rustichello. That is not to say that it would be impossible to set about analyzing Le devisement as a reflection of merchants’ mentalities, only that doing so would require looking at the text as a different beast than conventional manuals and would need to be a separate undertaking from this thesis that focuses on texts written by merchants alone, with no outside intervention.

The following is a brief outline and overview of the manuals that will I use throughout this work — their contents, rough dates and what we know about their authorship and provenance, as well as the current available scholarship that directly addresses or discusses the source.98

Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353):

This manuscript, in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, is cataloged under the title “Tariffa di Pesi e Misure in Alessandria, imperfecta” and forms part of a larger miscellany containing a portolan chart of Alexandria, a history by Eutropius translated by Giovanni Francesco Corniani, letters from Giovita Raficio to Aluise Sagondino, dispatches from a

Venetian bailo to Constantinople in 1539, the accounts of conclaves of Pope Julius II, Paul IV, Pius IV and Pius V, the mariegola (constitutions) of the Scuola dello Spirito Santo in Caorle from 1586, orations of Luigi Grotto to Doge Sebastiano Venier and funeral orations for Doge Dominico Contareni. The miscellany as a whole dates roughly to the fifteenth and sixteenth century according to the catalog, but the opening folios of the Tarifa, written on vellum and in a clear thirteenth-century hand, stands out from the later, paper-based contents and looping, late-cursive hands. The manual itself is untitled and opens without preamble, and covers a scant seven folios, and has remained in relative obscurity over the years. In his article, “A Venetian Manual of Commercial Practice from Crusader Acre,”

David Jacoby dates the manual to roughly the first half of the thirteenth century. As such, it is the oldest known example of the genre, which predates the previous earliest known example of a Pisan manual fragment held in the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena. Dating from before the fall of Acre, the manual gives us the strongest sense of a Venetian merchant’s mental map at the earliest moments of sedentary trade when such merchants began to develop new techniques and genres to transmit mercantile and cultural information over long distances.

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100 Ibid.

The early compiler had yet to develop the organizational cohesion of later examples of the genre, particularly in structure, where he does not use the eventual standard of titled sections dedicated to particular regions and more regularized types of information across regions. The manual contains information on Alexandria, Montpellier, Genoa, Apulia, Constantinople, Negroponte, Euboea, Messina, Venice and Aleppo, with a smattering of lines dedicated to other regions throughout, as well as a list of commodities and their units of weight or size, likely used for the calculation of freight charges and taxation. Jacoby theorizes that a final section on the description of the route from Acre to Venice reflects the author’s primary place of residence during the time of compilation, which he argues makes the manual “the only known western manual originating in the Latin Levant.”

As an unpublished text both fragmentary and dry in content, this manual has featured in little modern scholarship, although the brief excerpt on the trade route from Acre to Venice was printed in Gauthier Dalché’s Carte Marine and garnered mention in Evelyn Edson’s The World Map, 1300-1492: The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation as an example of a “partial portolan” from which the later 1296 Compasso de Navegare, the oldest known complete portolan, might have drawn its data on the many routes of the Mediterranean. Konrad Kretschmer made passing referent to it as evidence for sailing routes from Acre to Venice in his Die italienischen Portolane des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Katographie und Nautik, and Cortelazzo did the same in “La

103 Ibid., 405.
cultura mercantile e marinaresca,” but neither gives any analysis of substance beyond recognizing its existence.¹⁰⁵ As an early example of the merchants’ manual genre, and a product of the transitional period into sedentary trade, Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353) offers the potential for rich insight into how its author organized and anchored his view of the world after being uprooted from his home.

The Zibaldone da Canal:

The Zibaldone da Canal is perhaps the best-known surviving example of a Venetian merchant’s manual, a collection of texts dated roughly to the first few decades of the fourteenth century that was subsequently recompiled professionally by a notary sometime in the last years of the same century. Its recompilation, together with further additions in a fifteenth century hand, suggest continued use well after its initial compilation.¹⁰⁶ Alfredo Stussi published a critical edition of the manuscript, now held at the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University as MS 327, in 1967 under the title Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, along with several introductory chapters by Stussi,


¹⁰⁶ Fol. 26v contains the date August 26th, 1311, but its inclusion only provides a terminus post quem, since this material could easily have been copied from a much-earlier source, and Frederick C. Lane argued in his introduction to the Italian edition that the material could not have been compiled after 1331 on the grounds that the information on the gold content of Tunisian money would have no longer applied after changes to Tunisian currency. This technically does not preclude a later compilation, since merchants were not always aware that their knowledge was outdated or erroneous (see also: David Jacoby, “Travelers, merchants and settlers in the eastern Mediterranean, 11th-14th centuries: Marino Sanudo Torsello on trade routes, commodities, and taxation,” in Travelers, Merchants and Settlers in the Eastern Mediterranean, 11th-14th Centuries, ed. David Jacoby. Variorum Collected Studies Series; 1045, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014) 185-197. But Lane also notes that the all other material matches this date or earlier, and so we can give a rough date of compilation between 1311 and 1335. Frederick C. Lane, “Manuali di mercatura di informazioni pratiche,” in Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV (Venice: Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia, 1967), xlvi-lxvii.
Frederick C. Lane, Oystein Ore and T.E. Marston, the manuscript’s owner prior to its donation. John E. Dotson later translated it under the title Merchant Culture in Fourteenth-Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal. Dotson’s title gives away the zibaldone’s unique appeal compared to its drier brethren: as a zibaldone, or so-called “hodgepodge” book, the Zibaldone da Canal contains much more than purely mercantile information, and grants the manual’s reader a unique opportunity to peer into the broader interests of its compiler. It allows modern readers, in the words of David Herlihy, “not only to see the medieval merchant at work in his shop, weighing and calculating . . .[but] to discern the whole man, reading, thinking, musing, praying, and watching the seasons and the stars in the fourteenth century.” We know more about the manual’s provenance — and potential hints at authorship — than that of its peers thanks to an autograph in the final folios ascribing ownership to one Niccolò da Canal in a fifteenth-century hand. Oystein Ore theorized that a member of the da Canal family began the manual in the early 1310s to 1330s as notes to his classes in a public abbaco school, and Dotson suggests it was subsequently passed down and added to over the decades of the mid-fourteenth century before a final recopying, and later kept within the family line for continued use and reference. Even the hint of an authorial


identity sets the Zibaldone da Canal apart from other manuals whose authors remain wholly shrouded in anonymity.

A student’s notebook that evolved into a manual that was then passed down to future generations within a single family, the manual’s contents range from mathematical problems to astrological divination of weather based upon the position and color of the moon in the sky, to the myriad medicinal uses of rosemary, to the Teachings of Solomon. Still, scholars have focused on the economic information the manual provides, to the neglect of its non-mercantile material, with the exception of Dotson’s article on its author’s attitudes towards the East and John Kenneth Hyde’s reference to it as an early form of ethnography.

Gunnar Dahl summarizes the text with, “this manual very much reflects Venetian interests and ambitions by focusing on the Arabic world, in other words, North Africa, the Levant, the Black Sea, and Anatolia. . . to those merchants, money and profit were more important” than religious differences. In short, he reduces the complex relationship between profit and religiosity — particularly evident in Marino Sanudo Torsello, as we shall see — into a simple preference for one over the other. Unlike the earlier Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353) and the later Tarifa zoé noticia dy pexi y mesuri, the Zibaldone da Canal’s inclusion of non-mercantile material make it ripe for the study of mercantile culture and identity beyond the boundaries of accounting.


The following is a breakdown of the overall varied contents contained in the manual:

### TABLE 1.1:

**ZIBALDONE DA CANAL TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOLIO:</th>
<th>CONTENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1r-7v(^{113})</td>
<td>Mathematical Material: notes, rules, instructions and examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7v-8r</td>
<td>Conversions of gold carats, weights and quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8r-8v</td>
<td>Mercantile Material (Venice with Apulia).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8v-9v</td>
<td>Mathematical Material, cont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9v-11v</td>
<td>Mercantile Material (Apulia with Venice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11v-23v</td>
<td>Mathematical Material, cont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23v-26r</td>
<td>List of measurements of drapes and clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26v-43v</td>
<td>Mercantile Material.(^{114})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44r-45r</td>
<td>Excerpt of a romance about Meliodas, Tristan and the Lady of the Water of the Spine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45v-46v</td>
<td>Mercantile Material, cont. (A description of spices).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46v-52v</td>
<td>Astrological/Astronomical Material (“Division of the Parts of the Natural Day;”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52v</td>
<td>Advice on stanching blood/injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53r-55r</td>
<td>Excerpt from the <em>Liber de proprietatibus</em> by Bartholomew of England on the use of vultures and coral in medicine and charms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55r</td>
<td>List of the Ten Commandments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55r-55v</td>
<td>Description of the four annual seasons and yearly callends for predicting weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55v-57r</td>
<td>Descriptions of the medical properties and uses of rosemary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57r-59r</td>
<td>Chronicle of Venice up to August 8(^{th}), 1303.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63r-63r</td>
<td>Mercantile Material, cont. (Venice with Ayas).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64v</td>
<td>Precepts and proverbs on daily life [Questi sì è belli vocabolli da compredere].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65r-66v</td>
<td>A second poem, titled “The God of Love” [Ell Dio d’Amore].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{113}\) Note that the first folios are missing, so we cannot say with any certainty how much the author wrote about math.

\(^{114}\) For a full breakdown of mercantile content, see Table 2.2 in “The Many Worlds of Merchant Manuals.”
TABLE 1.1 (CONT.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOLIO:</th>
<th>CONTENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67r-69v</td>
<td>Various fragments in three different 15th century hands, including a list of rooms in the Doge’s palace; prayers and paternosters; a note of ownership by Niccolò da Canal [from which the manual earns its common name]; a couplet and several sonnets; and charms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_The Tarifa zoé noticia dy pexi y mesuri:_

This manual is found in the Venetian Archivio di Stato in an envelope from the _Procuratori di S. Marco_ B. 145, fasc. 3, and dates to no later than 1345 in the estimation of Vittorio Orlandini and R. Cessi, who published a critical edition of the manual in 1925.115 Like its predecessor, Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353), it has attracted little attention from modern historians — and, unsurprisingly, what has been said has been primarily economic in character.116 The author hews more closely to the mercantile focus of Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353) — pertaining only to trade and the text gives few hints as to the author’s identity or personality beyond his mercantile interests. The manual does provide evidence for the overlap of information and communication between manuals: _La Pratica della Mercatura_ by Florentine merchant Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, shares several entries almost word for word. The overlap is most evident in the sections on Alexandria’s trade with Ancona:

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115 Vittorio Orlandini and R. Cessi, _Introduction to Tarifa zoé noticia dy pexi e mesuri di luogi e tere che s’adovra marchantia per el mondo_ (Venice: C. Ferrari, 1925), 4.

TABLE 1.2:
COMPARISON OF PEGOLOTTI AND THE TARIFA ZOÈ NOTICIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEGOLOTTI, P. 74:</th>
<th>TARIFA, P. 39:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantaro 1 forfori d’Allessandria fae in Ancona libbre 120 in 122.</td>
<td>Chanter 1 forforin torna in Ancona livre 120 in 122.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantaro 1 leuedi torna in Ancona libbre 165 in 166.</td>
<td>Kanter 1 leitin torna in Ancona livre 164 in 122.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantaro 1 gerui torna libbre 255 in 260.</td>
<td>Kanter 1 zeroin torna in Ancona livre 264 in 265.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marchio 1 d’argento d’Ancona fae in Allessandria pesi 77 di migliaresi.</td>
<td>Marca 1 de Ancona è pexi 77 in Alexandria.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alan Evans, editor of the Pratica, argues that the Tarifa did not necessarily draw directly from its Florentine predecessor, but suggests they might have shared some earlier common ancestor or thread of sources; the two frequently diverge even when directly discussing the same regions and provide more or less information according to each compiler’s taste. Still, Evans reduces the Tarifa to little more than an “effective supplement” to Pegolotti’s unquestionably more detailed and thorough compilation — Pegolotti’s manual survives in a 1472 edition of 312 chapters (and 383 printed pages), compared to the Tarifa’s scant 52 chapters (and 75 printed pages).118 Gunnar Dahl describes the Tarifa as simply one in a series of manuals offering a “picture of a geographically fragmented international market” across the later Middle Ages, and John Dotson notes that the text is “a plainspoken compendium of information, revealing little of the personality of its compiler,” before


118 Evans, Introduction to La Pratia della Mercatura, xlix.
turning to the *Zibaldone da Canal* for richer insights.\(^{119}\) Even its own editors describe the manual as “a document that is more than a decade more recent, yet much less full and less important than Pegolotti’s *Pratica*.\(^{120}\)

This is not to say that nothing can be pulled from its pages, however, about the mind of the medieval merchant responsible for whisking the works of others into a single collection — even where content was not original, editorial reshaping is an act of transforming the text to reflect the editor’s interests and needs. Where this editor saw Pegolotti’s information — or the information from whatever source he shared with Pegolotti — he trimmed what was unnecessary and preserved what he thought still useful. So scholars like Dahl and Evans have seen the *Tarifa* as little more than a shallow repetition of its predecessors, unable to offer new information; when we consider the composition of the work as the result of decisions to cull and share information depending upon the needs and interests of the compiler and his audience, I argue that the work can nevertheless provide us with insights into the merchants’ mind.

*Marc. It., XI, 32 (=6672):*

The last known Venetian manual from before the fall of Constantinople to survive, this manual is tucked within a *zibaldone* within a miscellany and remains unpublished and almost wholly undiscussed by modern historians within the field of merchant culture and


\(^{120}\) “Un documento che è di qualche decennio più recente ed assai meno ampio ed importante della *Pratica* del Pegolotti,” Vittorio Orlandini and R. Cessi, *Introduction to Tarifa zve noticia dy pesci e mezure di luog e tere che s’adorra mercadantia per el mondo*, 18.
economic history of the later Middle Ages. From the years listed in the section advising on the calculations of the date of Easter, the material likely dates to the first decades of the fifteenth century, and perhaps to the year 1406, just as Venice began to expand her territories northward and across the Dalmatian coast.\textsuperscript{121} Though not identified as a single work within the Marciana’s catalogs, we can identify it as such by the common scribal hand shared across its contents, which makes it the second example of a merchant who collected and collated bits and pieces of his world beyond the office walls.

The author begins his hodgepodge not with the mathematical notes of a young student, but a first-hand account of the trial and sentencing of Marin Falier, doge of Venice, and his coconspirators after their failed attempt at a coup in April of 1355 — an event largely untouched by historians since Vittorio Lazzarini’s \textit{Marino Faliero: La Congiura} in 1897. He drew the account from the chronicle of Nicolò Trevisan, a member of the Council of Ten, who through his firsthand account of the event offered insights into the Council’s actions, thoughts and motivations behind the curtains of legal procedure.\textsuperscript{122}

From there, however, the contents diverge and, like its earlier \textit{zibaldone} companion, cover a wide breadth of material well beyond the purely mercantile content of the \textit{Tarifa} and Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353). The sections are broadly as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{121}] The dates 1406 appears in illustrations of using one’s hand to calculate Easter on ff. 150v, f. 151v and in a \textit{tabula salomonis} on f. 152v, while 1425 appears in an illustration on f. 153r.
\item[\textsuperscript{122}] Vittorio Lazzarini, \textit{Marino Faliero. Avanti il dogado, la congiura}. Nuovo Archivio Veneto, tm. 13 (Venice: Venezia coi Tipi dei Fratelli Visentini, 1897), 293. We can say with reasonable confidence, however, that our author was not Trevisan himself, since later sections includes calculating dates of Easter particularly in the early fifteenth century, but Trevisan died in 1369. William Scott, \textit{A Glance at the Historical Documents Relating to the Church of Saint Mark in Venice} (Venice: F. Ongania, 1887), 15.
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOLIO</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150r-154v</td>
<td>The Trial of Marin Falier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154v-157r</td>
<td>Various short lists pertaining to a wide variety of topics such as the twelve months and their astrological signs, the Ten Commandments, medicinal advice on what to drink and eat during each month, and the Four Elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157v-160r</td>
<td>An excerpt of pseudo-Aristotle’s <em>Physiognomonica</em>, part of his alleged letters to Alexander the Great.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160r-170v</td>
<td>A collection of material on Judicial Astrological forecasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173v-188r</td>
<td>A <em>sortes sanctorum</em>, also in Latin, that instructs the reader to find their fate through answering thirty-six questions and rolls of dice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189v-191v</td>
<td>A collection of Psalms for a game of <em>sortes apostolorum</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191v-193r</td>
<td>A <em>sortes apostolorum</em> that instructs the reader to repeat the preceding psalms while thinking of a desire and then cast three dice, where the ultimate fates correlate to the dice rolls to determine whether God will fulfill their desire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193r-195r</td>
<td>A list of interpretations and meanings of dreams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195r-206r</td>
<td>The merchant manual, beginning with <em>Qui seguitando diremo de merchandantie et de pessi de molte parte com ueniexia</em>, including also a “Description of Spices” on ff. 202v-204, and ending with <em>Carte se uende a risma e la risima e quaderna 20. Ello quaderno essugo 25.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206-209v</td>
<td>Two itineraries describing the pilgrimage path of Rome and the voyage from Venice to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

123 Note that several sections here repeat themselves in broad subject, suggesting the author drew from multiple astrological sources). None, however, are perfect repetitions and instead contain new information.


125 Rossi describes the latter game in *Le lettere di messer Andrea Calmo*, as “The second game of this codex (cc. 191v-193r) is more simple, as it consists of fifty-six answers collocated side by side with the fifty-six combinations of fifty-six possible dice casts;” (orig: “Semplicissimo è il secondo giuoco da questo codice (cc. 191v-193r), poiché consistesolo in cinquantasei risposte rispettivamente collocate a fianco alle cinquantasei combinazioni di punti possibili nel getto di tre dadi,”), 493.
The categories can broadly be divided into four: historical material, prognostic material, mercantile material and religious material, and reveal an individual in many ways defined by his expression of religion and business in the present even as he looked toward the past and the future in his personal intellectual life.

Scholars have yet to analyze this *zibaldone* as a compilation of works, instead focusing piecemeal on only one or two parts of the whole at a time. In 1887, Vittorio Lazzarini identified its opening folios as the earliest known fragment of the chronicle of Niccolò Trevisan, a member of the Council of Ten and governor of Candia during its rebellion. He mined the fragment for evidence about the trial of Marino Falier, the treasonous doge who sought to assassinate the Council and usurp their power, but largely dismissed it as focusing entirely on the legal procedures of the trial itself — for which it was undeniably a rich source — but lacking in insight on the larger contexts, causes and consequences of the doge’s treason.126 Since then, Marin Şerban mentioned the manuscript’s chronicle in his discussion of the authorship of *Marc. It. VII*, 519 (=8438). He argues that this later manuscript of the Trevisan chronicle revealed that later editions had had material added to the chronicle by a second author. The two dice games, meanwhile, have been little more than footnotes in the studies of other authors and manuscripts. The second game garnered mention in William E. Klingshirn’s “Defining the *Sortes Sanctorum*: Gibbon, du Cange, and Early Christian Lot Divination,” as an example of a *Sortes Sanctorum*, which he demonstrates were in fact not a

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genre but rather a particular text later applied by du Cange and Gibbon to any practice of using the bible to divine the future. Overall, critics have had very little at all to say about the material within the manuscript, despite the rarity of some of its contents and the fact that, like the Zibaldone da Canal, it offers that same tantalizing promise of revealing the merchant as a complex intellectual figure rather than a series of numbers on a page.

The Letters of Marino Sanudo Torsello:

The second genre of source that I will examine is the more familiar and more obviously “public” genre of letters — in this case, one merchant — Marino Sanudo, “called Torsello,” the Elder (a mouthful of a name, but necessary to distinguish him from Renaissance historian and author of i Diarii, Marino Sanudo the Younger). Sanudo was born to a wealthy merchant patrician family, and later became an author of the crusading propaganda, the Liber secretorum fidelium crucis — The Book of Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross. There, he described the geography of the Holy Land in extensive detail and included the now-famous portolans of Pietro Vesconte that were part of the popularization of nautical charts within non-mariner culture. The text also laid out plans to retake the Holy Land predominantly through a strangling naval blockade. His work, and later, his letters, sought to exhort Christendom’s leaders to follow these plans and reclaim Acre and Jerusalem for Christendom as a whole.


Born in Venice in the 1270s, Sanudo was a member of the Sanudo clan, who had gained power in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Over the centuries, they participated in Venice’s politics as members of the Senate and Great Council; they claimed heritage back to the Candiani family, though there is no concrete tie between the two.\textsuperscript{129} In the course of assisting with his family’s mercantile dealings across the Eastern Mediterranean during his younger years, he spent significant time in ports including Cyprus, Rhodes, Alexandria and Armenia. He worked (briefly) with the Venetian bailo, his brother Marco Michiel, in Negroponte, following his family’s tradition of political involvement.\textsuperscript{130} He began the \textit{Liber secretorum} in 1306 with the subchapter \textit{Conditiones Terrae Sanctae} and, after several revisions, presented it to Pope John XXII as a full text in September of 1321. The \textit{Conditiones} survives as an independent work in two manuscripts which date to 1308 and 1317 respectively.\textsuperscript{131} From there, Sanudo adapted the \textit{Conditiones} into his larger \textit{Secreta} that Peter Lock estimates as complete by roughly 1313. This version survives in six manuscripts.\textsuperscript{132} In the following years he continued to amend the \textit{Secreta}, producing a final version that integrated various marginal notes of the original and then added further marginalia, six synoptic tables and a genealogical table — this version survives in four manuscripts, and in 1611 Jacques Bongars brought it to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{129}{Peter Lock, Introduction to \textit{The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 12.}


\footnote{131}{The Biblioteca Marciana’s Cod. Zanetti Lat.547 and the Staatsbibliothek of Munich’s Cod. Lat. 14621.}

\footnote{132}{Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Cod. D 203; Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, Cod. V.F. 35; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vatican Lat. 2972; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vatican Lat. 2003; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vatican Lat. 7315; and Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. Zanetti 410.}

\end{footnotes}
print in his collection of crusading accounts, *Gesta dei per frances*. Sanudo produced a third and final version at some point after 1321 (though perhaps he intended to continue to add onto it indefinitely); seven manuscripts remain of this version. In total, we currently know of nineteen manuscripts and a further four fragments of the *Secreta* and *Conditiones* in various forms.

But Sanudo’s propaganda text is not the focus of this dissertation; rather, I am interested in the communications that Sanudo wrote in parallel with his *magnum opus*. Throughout his process of writing and revision, Sanudo continuously wrote letters to various political and religious figures across Europe and the Mediterranean. He often wrote letters as an introduction included with a copy of his book, but also as part of his general efforts to keep his correspondents abreast of the latest developments in the Mediterranean that would either help, hinder or urge on the possibility of a new crusade (largely involving the continuous conflict with Muslims, but also internal Italian wars, the state of piracy, and the conflict between the Holy Roman Empire’s Louis IV and the Pope). He urged his correspondents to act on the — as he described it — increasingly dire state of the Mediterranean. His correspondents included elites such as the Bishop of Caffa, the Byzantine emperor Paleologus, and the Pope’s nephew.

The letters themselves are scattered across four manuscripts of his primary work, the *Liber Secretorum*: the Biblioteca Laurenziana’s Codex Plut. XXI, 23 in Florence, the British

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133 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana’s Cod. Vatican Lat. 2971, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana’s Cod. Regiae Cristiae 548, Biblioteca Laurenziana’s Cod. Plut. XXI, 23, and Biblioteca Riccardiana’s Cod. 237.

Library’s Codex Add. Ms. 27376 and the Bibliothèque royale of Brussel’s Codex 9347 and Codex 9404.\textsuperscript{135} They have also been published in print: Jacques Bongar’s *Gesta Dei per Francos*, printed in 1611, which Joshua Prawer made into a facsimile in 1972. This edition contains the bulk of the surviving letters, pulled from the Laurenziana Cod. Plut. XXI, 23 — and the shorter articles of Friedrich Kunstmann’s “Studien über Marino Sanudo den Aelteren mit einem Anhange seiner ungedruckten Briefe,” Aldo Cerlini’s “Nuove lettere di Marino Sanudo il Vecchio,” and Leon Dorez and Charles de la Roncière’s “Lettres inédites et mémoires de Marino Sanudo l’ancien (1334-1337).”\textsuperscript{136}

Scholars have favored Sanudo’s *Secreta* and largely ignored his letters, but they have had no shortage of words for the man himself. Discussions dance around Sanudo: whether he was an archaic and outdated anomaly of crusades that had been abandoned as a failure by most of the powers in Europe by the fourteenth century, or else a reflection of a continued crusading spirit into the late Middle Ages; they explore how his inclusion of portolan charts in his work popularized and integrated accurate maps into the broader intellectual milieu of Europe, and how much he actually knew about accurate information of trade and geography of the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{137} David Jacoby frames Sanudo in terms of his merchant identity,

\textsuperscript{135} Sherman Roddy, *The Correspondence of Marino Sanudo Torsello*, 62.


asking whether Sanudo’s background in trade granted him exceptional accuracy about the state of trade in the Levant. Jacoby establishes that Sanudo’s knowledge of the state of trade abroad was at times flawed and inaccurate, a fact he considered “surprising considering his continuous life in a commercial milieu both in Venice and abroad.” But perhaps we should not consider Sanudo’s imperfect knowledge too surprising. Instead, I would argue it reflected the challenges that confronted even a merchant as well-traveled and well-integrated into networks as Sanudo. Indeed, Sanudo’s letters reveal a man deeply concerned about the transmission of accurate and fresh news about the wider world, as we shall see.

Christopher Tyerman, meanwhile, posed Sanudo as a crusade propagandist and compared him to the broader trends not of merchant culture, but religious lobbyists across the late Middle Ages: he claims Sanudo was not a relic of the dying desires for crusades but instead part of a tradition of propaganda that continued on even into the fifteenth century. In doing so, Tyerman paints Sanudo’s mentalities as unexceptional, perhaps inadvertently so. Sanudo’s crusade rhetoric largely falls in line with the crusade propaganda, particularly in how he frames Christendom as imperfect without control of the Holy Land. Even so, I argue that his emphasis on Sanudo’s identity as a propagandist, with no consideration for his merchant background, diminishes the impact that trade and migration had on Sanudo’s mentality, his vision of Christendom and the fundamental impetus for his propaganda.


140 Ibid., 72.
Sanudo’s letters, while not written to other merchants, reveal how Venetian merchants participated in communities beyond the merchant networks — as statesmen, politickers, Christians and more. He brought ideas, goals and worldviews — his conceptions of the world not only in terms of geographical space, but as the embodiment of social values and ideals — that were all shaped by his experiences as a merchant and as a member of a long-distance community, transforming “merchant culture” into popular culture. Sanudo serves as an example of how a merchant, distanced from his native city during his time abroad, returned to Venice committed to sustaining long-distance networks and geographically-unbound communities, and brought his merchant mentality to others outside of his mercantile networks as part of his efforts to revive crusades and construct a Christian world. Scholars like Stefan Schröder, David Jacoby and Angeliki Laiou have explored the intertwining ways that Sanudo’s merchant background influenced his crusade lobbying. As a merchant, he envisioned a crusade centered around economy and trade rather than warfare, integrated mariners portolan charts into his work on an unprecedented level, and, in the words of Laiou, brought an experienced approach to Levantine affairs that led him to advocate for a European Christian alliance with Byzantium against the growing threat of the Turks in the 1320s a decade in advance of the Anti-Turkish League of 1332.141 These approaches take into account Sanudo’s intertwining roles and activities — they ask how his merchant identity

influenced his conceptualization of crusade and how he helped to integrate merchant culture
into the larger community of Christendom and Europe. But, as with the studies about
merchant culture already discussed in the introduction to this work, they do not address the
question of how Sanudo’s experiences as a merchant were also experiences of participating
in a long-distance community as a migrant. These experiences influenced his perception of
and participation in an even larger, geographically unbound community — Christendom
itself — during a period of heightened fragmentation, namely, the breakdown of the
Crusading States.

These sources — merchants manuals and Sanudo’s letters — reveal the two sides of
Venetian merchant mentalities in the late Middle Ages: how distance, migration, time and
travel impacted their sense of self and the world as a whole; and then how they shared these
ideas with their broader, non-mercantile communities in letters cast from Venice to
communicants in Europe and beyond. Migration, long-distance communication, and the
very experience of living abroad, reshaped how merchants thought, and how at least one
merchant in turn spread his mentality to the greater Christian European and Mediterranean
communities.
CHAPTER 3:
THE MANY WORLDS OF MERCHANT MANUALS

As historians, when we talk about medieval trade and merchants, we often do so using the language of physical space — markets “open” like they were doors into new worlds of profit, and merchants “expand” into new regions for trade. We imagine trade grows, shrinks and shifts from place to place to place. This is to some extent a reflection of the way that, until very recently thanks to the advent of digital communication, any exchange of goods and money had to take place in the physical world and had to involve at least some degree of movement into different places. When we talk about trade expanding, we often simultaneously imagine the “expansion of a merchant’s world” — how a merchant might only think of the world as a small bubble around him that slowly grew as he traded with more and more cities and towns around his home.142 The “commercial revolution” — or at least the commercial intensification of the later Middle Ages — led to sedentary trade and living abroad, creating long-distance merchant communities, reshaping the way our merchants experienced the world.143 His psychological world, his sense of his place within

142 See, in particular, John Larner’s Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World, which argues that Marco Polo’s travels as a merchant shifted his work’s genre into geography, anthropology and especially chorography because of his encounters with Chinese works of the same. John Larner, Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 77-85.

143 Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 137-143, and Horden and Purcell, The Corrupting Sea, 367.
the world, paralleled his physical occupation of space through trade — as trade expanded, so
did his understanding and knowledge of the world around him.

**Historiography:**

Scholars have dedicated extensive study to the overlaps between the “occupation,”
“production” and “imagination” of space in medieval and early modern societies.
Conventionally, historians have framed this discussion around visual representations of
space — maps and images. Evelyn Edson’s *The World Map 1300-1492: The Persistence of
Tradition and Transformation* focused on the transitions between ‘medieval’ traditions of
mapmaking, which relied heavily upon metaphorical and symbolic representations of the
world that existed across time. She argues that through these traditions, medieval mapmakers
integrated history, theology and literature into the geography of the world itself, centering
the world around Jerusalem, exaggerating the space occupied by important places and
highlighting historical events tied to specific locations. But these traditions were gradually
replaced by an increased emphasis on realism and spatial accuracy, alongside the rise of the
*portolan* nautical charts initially developed for navigation and then adopted by the wider
public after the fourteenth century.144 J.B. Harley, meanwhile, argued that the rise of
mathematical cartography coincided with its adoption by political states as a tool to establish
control over physical spaces.145 In *Mentalités médiévales, XIe — XVe siècle*, Hervé Martin argued
that time and space are inseparable concepts in discussing medieval perceptions of both, but

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focused on medieval perceptions of the natural world, particularly the mentalities of rural and rustic peasants, clerics and knights, rather than distinguishing between geography and nature. Martin nevertheless tried to parse the distinct “feudal” perception of space, that thought of the world as a “field of redoubtable forces: wind, lightning, impetuous rivers and especially the sea, whose unpredictability terrified them.”

He also argued that, as the medieval world transitioned into the Renaissance, “humanity progressed towards a more precise representation of land and space,” which he attributes primarily to the rediscovery of Ptolemy and the rise of cartography and ethnography.

By contrast, scholars of travel literature have often focused on encounters with “the Other,” orientalism and exoticism, and in how medieval travelers were changed by their contact with new people and new cultures. Relatively few have asked how written texts and narratives depict space and the world through a written, rather than visual medium, or explored how these depictions reflected the way travel itself transformed the way a medieval people saw not only “the Other” but their world as a whole.

Travel helped expand the imaginary worlds of medieval Europeans. Historians have often accepted the premise that that expanding trade facilitated the expansion of the world,


147 Ibid., 152-153. Orig: “L’humanité progressa vers une représentation plus exte de la terre et de l’espace.”

or have framed travel primarily as encounters with The Other, how they saw those who lived on the ‘fringes’ of their societies.\(^{149}\) Peter Burke in particular has argued that heightened levels of movement in the Renaissance helped to disseminate knowledge of the world more than ever before. But he focused primarily on intellectual discourse and traveling humanists — the “mobile artists, scholars and writers” that flowed from city to city in Europe, carrying their ideas with them, rather than the ideas of the world that flowed with merchants whose movements had begun some centuries before and had, by the fifteenth century, become much more settled.\(^{150}\) Other scholars have discussed how travel narratives like the *Embajada a Tamerlán* reflected ideological worldviews, as in the case of Karen Daly, who argued that the ambassador’s depiction of a connected, compact journey with little attention to the vast physical distances covered between cities during the journey emulated Tamerlane’s ideological rhetoric of connection and control of his empire.\(^{151}\) And scholars have also investigated how travel itself continued to change the traveler well after the journey was complete, as Mark R. F. Williams claims that “travel and its effects were given new meanings in accordance with the passage of time and the subjective role which it played within their wider lives: travel became self-realization, rebellion, trial, and even trauma as much as a straightforward way of life.”\(^{152}\) But where it has been discussed, historians have usually

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assumed that trade and travel went hand in hand — expansion of trade enabled further flow and movement. In fact, the rise of sedentary trade made movement happen in fits and starts among merchants — messengers, rather than merchants themselves, were on the move more than ever before, while merchants spent more time abroad, but in one place.

But the parallel between merchants’ physical occupation of space and their imaginative space may not necessarily be as inherent, or as automatic as we assume. In the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries, merchants from northern and central Italian cities took up a system of traveling with their wares that was, in the words of David Jacoby, “a cyclical, circular seasonal migration” that involved going to multiple ports and cities without remaining in one location for long. Merchants were errant, never settled in a particular location, and this allowed them to familiarize themselves with every market they visited. Their psychological world, in this sense, matched their movements: all the mercantile information they had for each region matched a place where they had engaged in trade or visited for business.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, and throughout the fourteenth, long-distance trade only grew in both scale and scope. Merchants developed new tactics to handle the challenge: they adopted the use of compagnie to recruit friends, family and partners to help handle the volume of trade; merchant literacy and numeracy skyrocketed in parallel with the growth of abaco schools to help build communication networks through letters and double-


154 Ibid.
entry bookkeeping. They developed a system in which the merchant himself remained posted in a single town or port while he hired or collaborated with agents posted at other cities where they engaged in trade on behalf of their trading partners or employers. Merchants lost their itinerant ways in favor of primarily sedentary trade that allowed them to engage in long-term business with cities across Europe and the Mediterranean without needing to constantly be on the move from port to port. 

Within this increasingly intricate and interconnected system of trade, information and its dissemination in individual merchant networks and social systems was paramount — merchants needed the most up-to-date and current information available to respond to market changes. At the same time, their access to this information continuously shrank thanks to their shift to sedentary trade. Remaining sedentary allowed them to learn a single market more deeply than ever before, to respond immediately to its needs and changes, but it also meant that they no longer had personal, direct knowledge of the long-distance trading posts they dealt with abroad. With that change they lost the easiest method for learning even fundamental information about the various ports and towns they dealt with in their business.

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156 Frederic Lane, Andrea Barbarigo, Merchant of Venice, 1418-1449 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1944), 93-99.


Effectively they traded breadth of knowledge for depth, even as they dealt with a growing number of different regions in the daily trade.¹⁵⁹

Merchants used guides to trade and merchant manuals as a tool to compensate for this loss of personal experience and broader knowledge of regional trade. These manuals all shared a basic foundation of content that focused on instructing the reader on how to convert the differing weights and measures for goods between differing regions, on the various tariffs and taxes they might expect to pay, and on what sort of currencies they might expect to encounter while trading abroad. Manuals allowed merchants to teach their broader communities basic knowledge of different places around the world and expand their knowledge of the world around them to compensate for the loss of personal knowledge. They also, I argue, created a foundation of information to be shared among them to facilitate trade.¹⁶⁰ This foundational information, in turn, tied them together as a community.

Through these didactic tools, merchants also more inadvertently shared their worldviews and their sense of geography and the greater world. Merchant manuals disseminated geographical perspectives alongside sheer data, allowing their authors to build a shared perspective among their readers based upon the original compiler’s individual experiences from their trade, travels and migrations. But the manuals also reflect patterns of a larger mercantile cultural worldview common to all the compilers. While merchants’

¹⁵⁹ Jacoby, “Migration of Merchants and Craftsmen: A Mediterranean Perspective,” 531-560; Lane, History of Venice, 137-143.

individual worldviews were particularly shaped by their own experiences, there were nevertheless common views that seem to have developed as a product of not only their time overseas, but also their participation within the growing merchant class of the late Middle Ages. This chapter explores those common elements: how the authors perceived different regional networks and trade entrepots, as well as Acre before and after its fall, the Italian peninsula and, of course, Venice herself. I will discuss these topics as they appear individually in each manual, before parsing the common trends of worldviews in the late medieval merchant mentality. Specifically, I argue that merchants granted persistent cultural significance to Acre, both before and after its fall to the Mamluks in 1291; they consistently perceived the Italian peninsula as a distinct region in which they had a vested cultural interest even when they lacked any apparent economic interest; and universally treated Venice as a “connector” between otherwise independent regions. Merchants made Venice into a city that hovered on the fringes of the independent “Eastern Mediterranean,” “Southern Mediterranean” and Northern Europe, all of which remained largely isolated from other regions except through Venice’s intermediary position. They held a distinctly “Veneto-centric” world view that echoes the notion that “all roads lead to Rome,” — Venice supplanted its predecessor in a world where Venice acted as the hinge between an otherwise divided and isolated world.

This chapter examines the individual worldviews of the different Venetian compilers over the course of the centuries of Venice’s progression as an economic powerhouse, in order to understand how their individual experiences, their migrations and personal engagement with different regions, as well as the broader economic shifts and realities of the later Middle Ages all shaped the ways these merchants perceived the world they engaged in daily. In a world where merchants were physically isolated from one another for long
stretches of time for their business abroad, developing and spreading mercantile information also predicated spreading a cohesive vision of the very space that they occupied. This is not a question of how connected the Mediterranean was — that question of whether North met South and whether we can talk of “the Mediterranean World” as a singular, cohesive unit as debated by the likes of Braudel, Horden and Purcell, Abulafia and others. Instead, I seek to answer how the merchants themselves saw the Mediterranean and the world and their place in it, as a critical element of unique merchant culture and merchant mentalities. What we find, however, is not far from the conclusions of Abulafia, Horden and Purcell: that medieval Venetian merchants saw a Mediterranean, and the stretches of land beyond it, in terms of microregions and microecologies, an image put forth famously by Horden and Purcell.\textsuperscript{161} They saw, too, the “hundred frontiers” of Braudel, implicit in the spaces where they show ports and places that remained at a distance and unconnected to one another (except, of course, through Venice).\textsuperscript{162} There is no doubt, however, that these manuals’ authors depict a Mediterranean defined primarily by its connections and links built by trade. They echo Constable’s description of trade institutions of \textit{funduqs, fondaci} and \textit{pandocheions}, that “exemplified and facilitated the existence of a coherent Mediterranean world” defined by its “shared culture of trade and travel” in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{163} Even then, our Venetian merchants divided the sea and land by their entrepots, peninsulas, islands and shores. Nevertheless, these historians have worked to see the Mediterranean as it \textit{was} in the Middle

\textsuperscript{161} Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, \textit{The Boundless Sea: Writing Mediterranean History} (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2, 77-80, 548-549.


Ages — a chaotic ebb and flow of people, goods, ideas and culture, and have debated the extent of the connections and divisions, uniqueness and homogeneity, across the Sea. I seek to recreate merchants’ mental maps, to find out how the regions surrounding the Mediterranean were seen, remembered, organized and above all thought about by some of the merchants who spent time upon the sea itself.

_The World of Marc. It., XI, 87 (=6672), The Oldest Venetian Manual_164

The author of Marc. It., XI, 87 helped originate what will become several familiar patterns that appear in other manuals: a Venetian-centered perspective and an eastward, particularly Alexandrian focus; but the manual is far from generic or unremarkable.165 Rather, as the sole surviving Venetian manual to predate the fall of Acre, Marc. It., XI, 87 stands apart as a reflection of the merchant’s view of the world before Acre was lost from the Crusader States, revealing the differing shifts and continuities in the way merchants viewed the world during the later Middle Ages, including the changes in Acre’s role within Mediterranean trade and connectivity as well as the way that the compiler imagined Venice and the Italian peninsula’s interactions with other ports and cities across the Christian world. The following table outlines line counts of the content of different cities mentioned or named by the author throughout the manual:

164 Though the manuscript’s full identification shelf mark is Marc. It., XI, 87 (=6672), for brevity I will use the shortened shelf mark, Marc. It., XI, 87. Likewise, I will abbreviate Marc. It., XI, 32 (=7353) as Marc. It., XI, 32. I also use, as noted in previous chapters, “author” and “compiler” interchangeably, to credit the compilers with their control of the inclusion and exclusion of materials.

165 Though of course we cannot say with any real certainty whether he truly originated them or drew from an even earlier, unknown source — but for our purposes, “originated” suffices.
### TABLE 2.1: MARC. IT., XI, 87 LINE COUNTS OF ALL MERCANTILE MATERIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>SECONDARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>FOLIO/S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Venice/Alone</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1r-2v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Various Cities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2v-3r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugia</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisa</td>
<td>Sicily</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montpellier</td>
<td>Acre, Venice</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3v-4r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicily</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardinia</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barletta</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manfredonia</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Cyprus, Acre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Negroponte</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negroponte</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negroponte</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5r-5v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>Sicily, Tunis, Acre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5v-6r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>Venice, Itself</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

166 The distinction between “Alexandria and Acre” and “Acre and Alexandria” is primarily to mark both which city is listed first, and which currency or weight the author uses as the “baseline” that the author is comparing against. It also suggests the author perhaps expected to both import to and export from each city.

167 Acre, Messina, Armenia, Marseilles, Apulia, Tunis, Romania, and “All Foria [Salerno].”

168 This number is somewhat inflated by a table on indigo sold in Montpellier.
The author of Marc. It., XI, 87 begins his journey in Alexandria (where the Tarifa and Marc. It., XI, 32 would, in turn begin their journeys as well), and focuses much of his attention there. He dedicates the first two folios of its total eight almost entirely to Alexandria’s merchandise, weights and measures. His Venetian focus is likewise par-for-the-course with other Venetian manuals, where his interest lay primarily in the correlations between foreign cities and Venice herself, beginning even in the fourth line of the manuscript with “and that canter is equal to two-hundred gross pounds in Venetian pounds.” Even from the earliest moments of the genre, then, Venetian merchants demonstrated their close ties to their native city, and its centrality to their lives and view of the world in the nascent moments of sedentary trade and merchant migration.

But the compiler turns to his “second world,” so to speak, quite early compared to his later compatriots: he introduces, albeit without fanfare, Acre as a secondary city on the very first folio: “2½ Canters of sugar in Alexandria makes 2 canters in Acre and returns a little more.” Having broken his concentration on Alexandria and Venice, he then quickly turned his attention elsewhere; by the end of the second folio, he lists trade routes between different ports, and their related weight conversions: “These are the rations/weights in which merchandise is placed in ships in Alexandria to carry in Acre to Messina, in Armenia to Marseilles, in Apulia to Tunis, in Byzantium and throughout all fora,” reflecting the puddle-jumping style of trade that carried goods from port to port as merchants followed

169 “Et sie quello cantero lib CC a gros a lib de venec,” Marc. It. XI, 87, f.1r.

170 “Cantera II ½ de çucharo de Alexandria fase Cantero .II. ad acre e uolne un pocho plue.” Marc. It., XI, 87, f. 2v.
with their hired ships before sedentary trade would replace it in the late thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{171} This compiler, more than any of his later peers, had his vision of the Mediterranean fragmented by his puddle-jumping ways; even as he focused on Venice as his anchor, he frequently found himself interested in a number of distant ports independent of their relationships with Venice herself: Aleppo, Acre and Montpellier stand out as cities to which the compiler seems to have found himself drawn regardless of their connections to Venice.

Though the author fell in line with his later Venetian peers by favoring Venice as his primary “anchoring city,” he had a comparatively diverse range of secondary cities. While Venice dominates the total line count thanks to the chapters on Alexandria with Venice, his interest in the city later dwindled somewhat in favor of looking at the conversions between other Mediterranean cities. In total, Venice appears in relation to other cities twelve times, but the manuscript includes conversions between two non-Venetian cities seventeen times.\textsuperscript{172}

He had a clear focal point outside of Venice with the city of Acre, but he strayed elsewhere frequently; he lacked the singular focus on particularly connected regions of the Mediterranean the way that, as we will see, the Zibaldone da Canal’s compiler looked exclusively at Tunis and Sicily, or the author of Marc. It., XI, 32 concentrated on the major entrepots of the eastern Mediterranean. Instead, in Marc. It., XI, 87, most cities only appear once or twice in a secondary role: he only linked Tunis as a secondary city to Bugia alone, and then never mentions it again. He mentions Sicily and Cyprus, likewise, as secondary

\textsuperscript{171} “In qual modo le mercè se mete in naue in alexandria ad portare in acre a mesina. In armenia a marsega. In puga a toniso. In Romania e per tua fora.” Marc. It., XI, 87, f. 2r.

\textsuperscript{172} Chapters between Venice: Alexandria, Tunis, Montpellier, Genoa, Sardinia, Constantinople, Messina, Damascus, Aleppo; chapters between non-Venetian cities: Alexandria and Acre, Bugia and Tunis, Pisa and Sicily, Montpellier and Acre, Genoa and Sicily, Barletta and Acre, Manfredonia and Cyprus, Puga and Acre, Constantinople and Acre, Constantinople and Cyprus, Constantinople and Negroponte, Negroponte and Acre, Crete and Acre, Messina and Acre, Savastia and Aleppo, Aleppo and Acre.
cities twice (Sicily with Genoa and Pisa, Cyprus with Manfredonia and Constantinople), yet never compares them to Venice. He had no consistent pattern of a favoring any particular entrepot or port as a secondary city beyond Venice and Acre; Acre was twin to his Venice, and he was a merchant of the early days of migration who found himself tied to a new city nearly as much to his birthplace.

Overall, the author dedicated nearly a quarter of the manual exclusively to Alexandria, a heftier weight than any other compiler paid to the entrepot – though others hardly ignored it, either. While Alexandria may have garnered the bulk of his interest in terms of its relations with Venice and Acre, it was Acre where he seems to have rooted himself in terms of looking for trade with other Mediterranean cities. Alexandria never appears as a secondary city correlated with cities outside Venice and Acre; the compiler may have conducted most of his business there, but he shows little interest in how the Egyptian city connected to other Mediterranean cities. Instead, it is Acre that appears again and again as the secondary city to various points and ports across the Mediterranean. Even after Alexandria and Acre, he also compiled information on Montpellier and Acre, then Puglia and Acre, then Acre’s conversions with Barletta, Puglia, Constantinople, Negroponte, Crete, Messina, and Aleppo.¹⁷³

Acre stands as the second city to Venice; the city served as an anchor to the Eastern Mediterranean and tied to nearly as many different cities as Venice herself. Its prominence is somewhat unique given the city’s relative insignificance in other manuals. Acre’s role as an eastern focal point for connections to the rest of the Mediterranean is a product of the

¹⁷³ Marc. It., XI, 87, ff. 3v, 4v, 5r, 5v, 6r.
author’s world where Acre, even more so than Constantinople, served as the connecting hinge between various parts of the world. Alexandria may be where Marc. It, XI 87’s compiler and the others began all their journeys, but Acre was the place to which he found himself constantly return.\textsuperscript{174} Later merchants, as we will see, would come to include references to Acre even well after its fall. In those inclusions we can see way the city lingered in the minds of not only this particular compiler, whose ties were likely born out of his time spent there during his life overseas, but to Venetian merchants of the later Middle Ages as a whole.

Marc. It. XI., 87 and Mediterranean Entrepots:

Beyond Acre’s privileged place as a connector, the author links Venice to twelve other cities in total: Alexandria, Tunis, Montpellier, Sardinia, Genoa, Acre, Constantinople, Negroponte, Messina, Damascus and Aleppo. Acre, meanwhile, is tied to Alexandria, Montpellier, Apulia, Barletta, Puglia, Venice, Constantinople, Negroponte, Crete, Messina, Savastia and Aleppo — eleven cities, though the material on cities corresponding with Acre is generally briefer than that on cities with Venice. The overlapping cities (Alexandria, Montpellier, Constantinople, Negroponte, Messina and Aleppo) largely consist of the same major entrepots we see focused on in other Venetian manuals, along with Messina as the conventional Sicilian link between East and West, and Montpellier as the singular western port.

\textsuperscript{174} In fact, the manual returns more literally to Acre in its final folios, with an itinerary that connects first Venice to Acre and then Acre to Alexandria, a direct tie between the three cities that define the earliest known merchant manual, creating an imaginary voyage that recreates the commercial bonds reflected in the mercantile information within the text; Marc. It, XI, 87, ff. 7r-9v.
The cities shared between Venice and Acre, except perhaps Aleppo, reflect what we might consider the “essentials” of most manuals: the four primary entrepots, Sicily’s Messina as the middle-Mediterranean favored port, and a token western port to represent the quintessential “Venetian Mediterranean,” so to speak. Where they differ from one another, we can see another layer of the compiler’s interests: his particular interest in Aleppo, for example, which appears in connection to Venice, Acre and “with itself,” independent of any correlation with another city. In total, he dedicates fifteen lines to Aleppo, more than any other city other than Alexandria (ninety-six lines), Montpellier (thirty-four lines), and Messina (twenty-three lines). Aleppo’s prominence may speak to a unique interest from the compiler, a glimpse into his personal history as a merchant of the Mediterranean but also of Acre and the Far East. The entrepot’s frequent appearance likewise reflects the manual’s mid-thirteenth century compilation date: Aleppo’s near-destruction at the hands of the Mongols in 1260 left the city in an economic backslide for decades, and it is nearly invisible in later manuals.\textsuperscript{175} David Jacoby, however, attributes the date of Marc. It., XI, 87 to the 1270s based on numismatic references within the text, and claims the sections on Aleppo were likely outdated information.\textsuperscript{176} Even if we suppose that the author simply copied his information from an earlier manual or reference material produced during Aleppo’s time as a Crusader State, we can argue that its place among other information from a decade later reflects the compiler’s decision to knowingly include material that was not, at least, relevant for immediate reference. This, then, would suggest a certain nostalgia — or hope for future


\textsuperscript{176}
relevance of no-longer relevant information — though arguably this compiler had fair reason to believe in or hope for the recovery of Aleppo thanks to its relatively recent loss.

*The Italian Peninsula within Marc. It., XI, 87 (=7353):*

The Italian peninsula is rather invisible within the earliest exemplar of merchant manuals. Perhaps we can attribute its absence to the comparative disorganization of pre-1300 manuals compared to their later, more regularized and formatted peers. Or perhaps the manual’s comparative brevity may explain why its author pays such little attention to non-Venetian Italian cities at all; nineteen lines out of the 309 total lines of the manual include any information about Italian cities. Where he does look at the peninsula, however, it is with a gaze to the south — or, specifically, to Sicily — as it tied to the rest of the Mediterranean: Messina alone merits twenty-five lines dedicated to its ties to Venice and Acre, which suggests a particular interest on the compiler’s part. It follows sections on Negroponte and Crete and precedes the final section on Venice. Meanwhile, the author placed other Italian cities early in the manual by comparison, shortly after the initial section on Alexandria, and together with the fifteen lines on Montpellier.

The distinction is clear: Messina and Sicily are separated from Europe and the northern half of the Mediterranean and are instead categorized by their Levantine and eastern Mediterranean ties. The author situated the port with the other eastern islands of Crete and Negroponte; likewise, tied to both Acre and Venice, the island played as the connector or hinge between the eastern and western halves of the Mediterranean. The

177 Line count is as follows: 2 lines for Pisa with Sicily, ff. 3r; 7 lines for Genoa with Venice, Sicily and Sardinia on ff. 4r; 3 lines for Apulia with Acre, 6 lines for Barletta with Acre, and one line for Manfredonia with Cyprus on ff. 4v.
island’s position as part of the eastern Mediterranean separates it from the earlier
“European” sections of the manual, where peninsular cities like Genoa, Pisa, Barletta, Apulia
and Manfredonia appear earlier in the manual shortly after the extensive section on
Montpellier.178 Sicily does garner mention in the few lines dedicated to Genoa, however,
making it one of the few cities other than Acre that appear as a secondary city.179 So while
Messina is part of the Levant, and not placed within the “Europe” of this early manual, we
can still see how it held a transitional position within the geography of these manuals. Other
Italian cities, including those in southern Apulia, though scantly represented within the text,
connect to Montpellier and the north rather than to the rest of the Mediterranean. That
contrast speaks to a perceived divide between Sicily and the peninsula. By the 1400s and the
compilation of Marc. It., XI, 32, however, this divide will disappear, and Sicily joins the
Italian peninsula, arguably gaining a greater “Italianness” or “Europeanness” within Venetian
merchants’ organization and perception of their worlds.

The Zibaldone da Canal and a Mediterranean Split in Unusual Ways:
As our sole example of a Venetian manual from before the Fall of Acre, Marc. It.,
XI, 87 reveals the author’s world, rooted primarily in Venice and Acre and focused on trade
with Alexandria and the major Eastern Mediterranean entrepots. The Zibaldone da Canal is,
then, our first post-Fall of Acre manual, and where it departs from its predecessor, we can
see how it reflects both its author’s experiences as a migrant as well as the larger changes in

178 Marc. It., XI, 87, ff. 3v-5v.

179 “Kantera .j. de cecilia fače ka[nta]r .ij. me[n] terça a çenoa;” “One canter in Sicily is equal to two
and two-thirds a canter in Genoa.” Ibid., f. 5r.
merchants’ imaginary worlds wrought by Acre’s loss. Each Venetian manual depicts its compiler’s unique relationship with Mediterranean space and geography based upon their own migrations and mercantile experiences. One of the most distinctive mental maps among those manuals belongs to the compiler of the Zibaldone da Canal, a fourteenth-century Venetian zibaldone attributed to an anonymous member of the noble merchant Da Canal family, which saw continued use and additions even into the fifteenth century. The manual’s author seems to have written his text with a distinct focus on a Mediterranean divided in an unconventional sense — north to south, rather than the more conventional east-west divide, seen already in Marc. It., XI, 87 — that reflected personal economic interest born from his own experiences. The Zibaldone’s readers then absorbed those experiences during its ongoing use, culminating in a worldview constructed by the original compiler but then adopted or integrated by his readers into their own worldviews as a foundation for their shared merchant mentality. The spread of mercantile information thus fed into a shared worldview and shared culture. The following table outlines the line counts dedicated to different regions, and the cities with which they were paired:
TABLE 2.2:
ZIBALDONE DA CANAL LINE COUNTS OF ALL MERCANTILE MATERIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>SECONDARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>FOL. CIT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>27r-28v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bona</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28v-29r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29r-29v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djidjelli</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29v-30r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugia</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sousse, Africa, Sfax, and Gabes</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripoli</td>
<td>Barbary</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30v-31r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>Trapani</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapani</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31r-31v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31v-32r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32r-32v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Cities(^{180})</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giara/Zara</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33r-33v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glarentza and Venice</td>
<td>Negropont</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limassol and Famagusta</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33v-34r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barletta(^{181})</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34r-34v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{180}\) Includes Messina, Bari, Gareta, and Fermo.

\(^{181}\) Also includes comparisons between Famagusta and Limmisol, Famagusta and Venice, Cyprus and Famagusta, Limmisol and Cyprus, Limmisol and Venice, and Acre and Limmisol, making this a particularly “hodgepodge” section that blurs the significance of the author’s sense of organization and our ability to distinguish how much content is dedicated to particular regions — it is in an imperfect science unfortunately, but these exceptions are generally rare enough to make line count comparisons still valuable. It also suggests the author took this section from perhaps a different source than the other, more geographically focused chapters (one that was also likely outdated, given its reference to Acre, but more on that later.)
### TABLE 2.2 (CONT.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>SECONDARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>FOL. CIT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus, etc.(^{184})</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34v-35r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancona</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35r-35v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glarentza, Coron and Modon</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35v-36r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negropont</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candia</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36v-37r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montpellier and Nimes</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia(^{185})</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>37r-39r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laiaca</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria:</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39v-40r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40r-40v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo and Acre</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (Pt. 2)</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40v-41r</td>
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<td>Venice</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41r-41v</td>
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<td>Thessalonica and Sudak</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>41v</td>
</tr>
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<td>Venice</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldaia [Sudak]</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42r-43r</td>
</tr>
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<td>Milan</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremona</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice (Alone)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43r</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{184}\) Like the section above, this section intermingles several correlating regions — Cyprus with Venice, Zara and Messina, Famagusta and Venice, Apulia and Famagusta, Venice and Laiaca, Alexandria and Cyprus, and Constantinople and Cyprus, making it something of a *zibaldone* in a *zibaldone*.

\(^{185}\) Includes Laiaca, Tripoli, Acre as well as descriptions of “Armenia” in general.
The Zibaldone da Canal’s author looks southward, rather than to the East, and reveals his unique perspective even in the earliest pages of his mercantile material. Where Marc. It., XI, 87 begins in Alexandria (and later manuals would follow suit in starting with the East), the author begins his mercantile material with northern Africa, introducing the manual sections with the title, “Memorandum of how the weights and measures of Venice are equivalent with weights and with measures of many countries, and of the payment of those countries, and how their money exchanges by direct exchange with the money of Venice,” and promptly turns his eyes to Tunis on the Barbary coast. Other merchant compilers, Venetian and non-alike, all start in the East — Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura famously opens with China, the Biblioteca Marciana’s Marc. It. XI 32 in Constantinople, and the Tarifa zoë noticia and Marc. It. XI 87 both in Alexandria. This somewhat anomalous starting point is also reinforced by the fact that Barbary dominates the bulk of the author’s material — North Africa takes up a full quarter of the manual’s contents — and only Italian cities outstrip it in volume (even then only because the compiler dedicated half of that material to Apulia, Venice’s bread basket. The rest of Italy comprises a scant fifth of the manual).

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186 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 83; “Rechordança de quello che torna li pexi e le mesure de Venexia cum pexi e cum mesure de pluxor parte e de li pagamenti de quelle parte e li canbi che á quelle monede a dreto cambio cum le monede de Venexia,” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscrito mercantile del sec. XIV, 42. I have in the chapter, “A Brief Overview of Sources” distinguished between “mercantile” and “non-mercantile” material, but to reiterate: “Non-mercantile material” describes everything in these manuals that does not follow the extremely formulaic structure of information that described the trade and exchange, and particularly the different conversions of weights, measures and exchange rates between different parts of the world. While I call it “non-mercantile,” and that is in fact how other historians have generally approached the zibaldoni, the authors of merchant manuals nevertheless often considered things like astronomy and divination part of their professional knowledge much in the same vein as weights and measures and were thus in some sense “mercantile material” themselves.

Moreover, Tunis appears repeatedly as the only city other than Venice to feature as a secondary city in chapter divisions. The author compares cities almost exclusively to Venice, but at times he suddenly shifts to discussing how a number of ports correspond with Tunis rather than Venice — he compares Tunis with Trapani, with Apulia, with Messina, Sicily, Naples, Cyprus. In this perspective, central Mediterranean cities like Trapani and Messina functioned primarily as connection points to the Barbary Coast, rather than as independent points of trade with Venice, acting as a place to connect the northern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean.

The chapters on North African cities are also the only ones where the manual diverges into providing not only quantitative information, but also qualitative: the compiler points out that Colo (a port in modern-day Algeria) is “One of the good places in Barbary, the best except for Tunis and Bugia, and it is a place where everyone wants to go,” while Djidjelli (Jijel, also in Algeria) is “a good place for merchandise;” Bugia is “a very beautiful city and the best in Barbary, save Tunis, but there are better men in Bugia than in Tunis.” Meanwhile he also gives a tip for trade in his chapter for Susa, Cape Africa, Sfax and Gabes that, the cantar [weight] in the four cities is “completely identical with that of Tunis. . . but at all times in these places they are much happier to take old miaresi [a currency] than new.” The author gives cities in Barbary personal anecdotes and opinions — and constantly compares them to his apparent true love, Tunis. Only one other location, Antalya in Turkey,

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189 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 91, 92, 94; “Si è J de li boni luogi de Barbaria e lo miore salvo Tonisto e Buçia e si è tera che ogn’omo che nde vuolle andar;” “Debiè saver che Ciçari si è una bona tera de marchandantia e norn è gabella;” “Mo’ ve faço asaver che Buçia si è molto bella tera e la mior de Barbaria, salvo Tonisto, ma si è mior homeni in Buçia ch’a in Tonisto.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV 47, 48, 49.
merited similar narrative exposition in terms of offering distinct advice for readers on the state of the city’s markets or their merchants.

So why the Barbary and North African focus? The most likely answer is that the compiler migrated to one of these ports in Northern Africa himself. This conclusion would explain first and foremost why these chapters appear at the very beginning of the manual: the compiler collected in the first chapters what he himself knew best, the areas that he was most familiar with and where he could provide the most reliable (and more importantly, the most detailed and thorough) information possible; his attention to later chapters was more cursory. Essentially, the author started with Northern Africa because he considered the information most relevant to his own experiences and interest. He then added later chapters subsequently for completeness in collating information, but these chapters never quite supplanted the primarily Barbary-centric interests of its compiler. Moreover, we can infer from the sections on correspondent cities with Tunis that the compiler either added them from his own knowledge rather than copied from an earlier source, or possibly had access to a manual dedicated exclusively to Tunisian trade from which he drew; he wrote from a Tunisian, and not only Venetian, perspective.

Furthermore, by including subjective commentary, the author provided not just the basic beginnings of mercantile knowledge, but also the sort of detailed perspective that he would have gained through personal experience with those specific markets. It speaks to a potential individual motive for the manual’s conception: not only as a textbook for collating a broad variety of material, as with all manuals, but also an opportunity for this particular merchant-compiler to gather the information he personally knew best and could vouch for with the greatest level of reliability and trustworthiness.
The Zibaldone da Canal’s author centered his world around North Africa because he knew it personally and knew it best, a reflection of his personal investment or interests in the region. And his focus in turn tied into how these manuals were built around compensating for the growing sedentary nature of trade: the compiler sought to collect the information he had found most useful in his personal experiences while engaging in trade into an instructional text that would then benefit other members of his merchant community who would never see the African shores that they did business with. In this way, the Zibaldone da Canal served as a tool for sharing the benefits of one merchant’s personal experiences or unique familiarities with his larger intellectual community.

The prominence of North Africa in the Zibaldone da Canal was almost certainly a reflection of the compiler’s economic reality — the places and regions where he did most of his business and interacted with other merchants. But there is something to be said for the way that the Zibaldone da Canal also reflected the author’s larger cultural milieu and his imaginary map of the world. He not only reveals his economic reality but also his psychological one, and he did not exclusively choose his material based on current economic conditions. This decision is evident in the compiler’s decision to repeatedly include information pertaining to trade with Acre, even though the manual’s earliest point of possible compilation dates to several decades after Acre’s fall in 1290. Manuals often contained information that was outdated by the time of compilation, as with Marc. It., XI, 87’s discussion of Aleppo, but in the case of this particular material on Acre and its neighboring city of Tortosa, the Zibaldone da Canal’s compiler apparently was aware that his information was past its expiration date. He directly refers to the fall of Acre before describing the trade that went on there: “Now I would have you know that, at the time Acre was standing, for the merchants who wanted to go outside of Acre to buy cotton, and through the plain of
Acre, that is, through the villages around the country as far as Tiberias, there is a weight which is greater than that of Acre by \( \frac{1}{4} \). In his description of Tortosa he refers to the city in the past tense, stating that it “was a city of the Templars” where the cantar weight “was 3 rotoli less than that of Acre” and the Tortosan bezant coins “were sold” like those in Tripoli — that is, trade only went on there in the past, but presumably was no longer a part of his contemporary economic world. So if the compiler did not expect his reader to participate in trade in Tortosa and Acre, why did he decide to include chapters on their trade, despite their apparent economic irrelevance?

Despite their apparent insignificance in the economic world of merchants after the fall of the Crusader States, these states remained significant in the greater imaginative worlds of Venetian merchants like the Zibaldone da Canal’s compiler. In attempting to educate his readers about the greater world of trade, he included places and regions that were still a part of a larger memory of the past and not simply ongoing, contemporary trade, to demonstrate an economic world, since lost, that still retained its economic and financial significance in the memories of merchants. By including these places in guides to trade, they communicated the larger cultural significance of these places despite their apparent economic insignificance and, in doing so, they taught younger or more inexperienced merchants how the world

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190 Dotson, *Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal*, 113; “Mo’ ve faço asaver ch’elo, all te(n)po ch’Acre iera in pie, li marchadanti /che volleva andar for a d’Acre a cu(n)pr banbaxio e per lo plan // d’Acre, ciò si è per li chaxalli de e intorno la tera infina Tabaria, si è / un pexo lo qual si è maior de quello d’Acre lo \( \frac{1}{4} \) che rotolli 100 / de Tabaria si torna in Acre rotolli 125.” Stussi, *Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV*, 63.

extended beyond the boundaries of trade, even as those trade concerns shaped and defined the bulk of a merchant’s view of the world around them.

The Zibaldone da Canal thus reveals the two-fold aspects of merchant’s manuals of the fourteenth century: first, it reflects its compiler’s imaginative world that was a product of his experience as a migrant and businessman, one centered around the northern shores of Africa and around Sicily’s ties that joined the northern and southern halves of the Mediterranean in the same way that Venice joined East and West; but it also helped shape that same mental map in the later readers and merchants who drew upon the manual in the decades that followed, creating a reinforcing, shared vision of the world within the merchant community constructed within these manuals.

*The World of the Tarifa zò e noticia dy pece e misuri:*

Like the author of the Zibaldone da Canal, this fourteenth-century manual’s author provides a strongly Venetian perspective, and indeed, the two include parallel and sometimes even identical phrasing, suggesting a potential shared source somewhere in their roots. The devil is, at times, in the details in terms of understanding the distinctions between the two manuals, but their perspectives nevertheless differ: Dotson notes in his introduction to his translation of the Zibaldone da Canal that the Tarifa includes “much more information for both the eastern and western extremes of the Mediterranean world.” ¹⁹² He attributes the Tarifa’s greater range to changes in the economic environments in the approximately twenty-

five year span between the two manuals. The Zibaldone’s compilation began sometime before 1320, but the Tarifa was likely compiled sometime closer to 1345.\textsuperscript{193}

Despite fundamental similarities and a broadly shared “Venetian” perspective, the Tarifa nevertheless reflects the individual perspective of its compiler, as well as his own unique interests and mercantile perspectives, one far more heavily focused on central economic ports in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also interested in far-flung locales into Black Sea and northern Europe. The author is also striking in his comparative lack of interest in those ports closest to home on the Italian peninsula: despite their similarities, the nuances between the two texts reveal a farsighted vision of Mediterranean, interested in far-flung cities and uninterested the world nearest to Venice.

Like most Venetian manuals — Marc. It., XI, 87 and the Zibaldone da Canal, of course, but also its later peer, Marc. It., XI, 32 — the Tarifa’s author had a heavy focus on eastern Mediterranean ports and trades. Among the mercantile material, only 8\% of the content discusses western Mediterranean cities as the primary or secondary position, and of that 8\%, slightly more than half of it discusses the island of Majorca.\textsuperscript{194} The remaining cities — Flanders, Nimes, Montpellier, Paris and the “French fairs” (referring to the trade fairs held in Champagne and Brie) comprise a meager 3.85\% of the text.\textsuperscript{195} Italian cities outside Venice — Genoa, Sicily, Ancona and Naples — are similarly brief, less than 5\% of the

\textsuperscript{193} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{194} “Western Mediterranean” here refers to any city or region west of the Italian peninsula, not including Sicilian ports such as Messina.

\textsuperscript{195} Tarifa, 36-39: “Flandres con Veniexia,” (twenty-four lines) “Niemes e Monpolier con Veniexia;” (eleven lines); “Veniexia con la fiera de Franza” (three lines) and “Pexo de Veniexia con quelo de Paris” (six lines).
In the entire mercantile guide, western Mediterranean cities take up less than 13% of the entire manual, and the remaining 87% focuses exclusively on the eastern Mediterranean cities and their relationships with Venice and one another. The northern shores of Africa only stretch to Alexandria in Egypt, and its compiler held no interest in Tunis and the Barbary coast, which garner no mention whatsoever.

In effect, the author of the *Tarifa zóø Noticia* may share his common Eastern focus with the *Zibaldone da Canal*, but the two merchants maintained striking differences in their geographical approaches and mindsets. Gone are the African interests, and with them, so too the “barrier” or transitional position of Sicily and Messina as a midway point between the African coasts and Italy. In the world of the *Tarifa*’s compiler, the African coast was effectively a non-entity. They were not merely insignificant — the fairs of Champagne and Brie, which merit a scant few lines, are arguably a mere “insignificant” — but entirely economically irrelevant to him. In the *Tarifa*, the Mediterranean was almost exclusively a region divided into Northern and Eastern parts, and the Barbary coast, while still home to Venetian merchants and markets, played no part in the compiler’s imaginative world.

From this contrast between Tunis and North Africa’s prominence in the *Zibaldone da Canal* and its complete absence in the *Tarifa* we can see how neither manual reflects any

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196 *Tarifa*, 33: “Pexi de Napoli de Puja con Veniexia e con Famagosta,” (four lines) “Pexi e le mexure de Zizilia como responde a Veniexia,” (two lines) and “Pexi de Veniexia con Misina” (thirteen lines); 34: “Raxon de Ancona con Veniexia” (fourteen lines); 39: “Alexandria con Ancona” (six lines), Alexandria con Missina (five lines); 66: “Zenua con Veniexia” (twelve lines). Worth noting is that Messina/Sicily retains some hints of their interregional position: it appears as a primary city twice; in the first instance it appears in what could be called a “peninsular context,” wherein it is both preceded and followed by peninsular cities of Naples and Ancona, suggesting that Sicily and Messina are treated as regionally connected to or included in the peninsula; the second time it appears (*Tarifa*, 39-40), as a secondary city, it follows Ancona but precedes Famagusta in Cyprus and Glarentza in the Peloponnesse peninsula, which could be construed as connecting it to the eastern Mediterranean; however, precise order is inconsistent enough within the manual to make such a conclusion imperfect at best.
“pure” broader economic reality alone. Tunisian markets did not disappear in the span of twenty years. Instead their absence is the product of an individual reality focused on the compiler’s personal financial and cultural interests. Dotson argued that the differences between the two manuals largely reflected the economic realities of the Mediterranean shifting over time, but in fact the distinctions are more a product of each compiler’s individual situations as much as the broader economic environment — the Zibaldone’s author’s interest in the Barbary coast was disproportionate to its economic significance, and likewise, the Tarifa’s complete disregard for the coast does not reflect its relative insignificance.

Outside of the absence of certain regions, the Tarifa’s author also focused on a limited selection of four major entrepots of Venetian trade within the Eastern Mediterranean. The geographical breadth, so to speak, of the manual is in some senses wider than its earlier Venetian peer, the Zibaldone da Canal — as Dotson notes, the Tarifa “provides far more information for both the eastern and western extremes of the Mediterranean world,” while the Zibaldone’s author favored ports closer to home, even when looking to the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet the majority of the Tarifa’s contents are actually far narrower than the earlier manual in that it dedicates a greater proportion of its text to fewer cities in total.

197 Tripoli and the Barbary coast still appear in the fifteenth-century Marc. It XI, 32 (f. 202v) within the chapter “Qui diremo come responde el sal de alcuni luogi com ueniexia”, so we can safely say that their absence is not purely a product of economic changes between the early and late fourteenth centuries. Barbary (together with Spanish ports) was still a frequent Mediterranean trade destination even in the last decades of the 1400s alongside routes to Tana, Beirut and Alexandria in the East, England, Aigues Mortes, and Flanders to the West. Christine E. Meek and Clotilde Soave-Bowe, “A Boyage to Barbary in the Fifteenth Century,” Hermathena: A Dublin University Review: (later Hermathena: A Trinity College Dublin Review) 124 (1978), 27.


Twenty-seven cities appear in the *Tarifa* compared to the *Zibaldone’s* forty-two, and over 60% of the manual focuses on four major cities: Constantinople, Tana, Alexandria and Famagusta. After a brief chapter on Venice alone, the author starts with a chapter on Constantinople entitled “Pexi de Constantinopoli con Veniexia e altre parte,” and dedicates a robust thirty-nine lines to the capital’s connection to Venice, and a further three lines to its ties to Alexandria, before returning to the city again later for yet more attention — fifty-two more lines on its ties to Venice, seven on its ties with Tana, and five on its ties to Sorgati.\(^{200}\)

The following table breaks down the four cities and their various appearances as primary and secondary/corresponding cities within the manuals contents as well as their various line counts according to the 1925 printed edition of the manual:

**TABLE 2.3:**

*TARIFA ZOÈ NOTICIA* LINE COUNTS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, TANA, ALEXANDRIA AND FAMAGUSTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>SECONDARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>PAGE CIT.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>39</td>
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<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Tana</td>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Venice</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Famagusta</td>
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<td>Alexandria</td>
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<td>27-28</td>
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\(^{200}\) Tarifa, 41.
TABLE 2.3 (CONT.)

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<td>Tana</td>
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<td>Damascus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In total line count, Famagusta leads the pack with over two-hundred lines dedicated to its trade, weights and measures, but Alexandria is the only city to garner several chapters dedicated to its trade independent of its relation to another city or Venice. As a secondary city, Damascus triumphs with thirty-eight lines, primarily thanks to a hefty chapter on its relationship with the reigning champion Famagusta; Alexandria ranks a close second. After I hypothesized that the author of the Zibaldone da Canal’s focus on the Barbary coast belied his time spent in that particular corner of the world, we might hazard a similar, albeit more tentative, hypothesis here: that the compiler’s interest in these four cities reflect his personal experiences, his migration and travels to these select few eastern Mediterranean ports and, especially, Damascus. The comparatively few regions, given weightier favor, depict a world that was actually narrower compared to the earlier Zibaldone da Canal, where the compiler focused on fewer cities even as the *physical* distance represented only grew.

At the same time, in giving his attention to these four cities, the compiler also departed from Venetian manual tradition by dedicating more space to the interactions and trade between them rather than primarily limiting the manual’s focus to trade between foreign cities and Venice alone. Venetian merchants generally seem to have preferred to collate information that directly pertained to trade with Venice, only occasionally including information between two cities outside Venice. In the Zibaldone da Canal, as noted before, the only cities to appear as “secondary cities” other than Venice herself are those along the Barbary Coast, particularly Tunis; the author’s decision to include Barbary cities as secondary cities reflected his Afro-centric trade interests and probable life experiences. Others, such as the author of Marc. It., XI, 87, similarly discuss trade outside Venice only rarely. The author of the *Tarifa zòè noticia*, however, opted to include extensive information on trade not only between Venice and the four major entrepots, but also material on trade between the four
amongst themselves. In the first chapter he addresses only Venetian weights, measures and merchandise, but quickly follows with a chapter on trade between Constantinople, Venice, “and other parts [regions].” In total, fifteen of the manual’s fifty chapters pertain to trade between cities outside of Venice, and these chapters comprise 12% of the total manuscript. Most of these chapters are about trade between the four major cities, with rare information about trade with neighboring cities or other Italian ports interspersed.

If the Zibaldone da Canal’s frequent inclusion of Tunis as a secondary city reflects a “split vision” of the Mediterranean world, with twin centers of trade at the northern and southern peaks, then the Tarifa’s world is even more divided: Venice, at the heart of the manual’s focus, stands at the heart of the Mediterranean world, and acts as the key link between the distant ports of the Black Sea and the far-off, inland reaches of Paris and Flanders — wholly separated halves and never the twain shall meet; in this vision, the cities of the Mediterranean are only relevant insofar as they interact with Venice, and the compiler seems to have seen no reason to include additional information about their interactions with one another.

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201 “e altre parte,” Tarifa, 15. These “other parts” refer to two lines towards the end of the chapter that provide conversion rates between Constantinople and Genoa, Pisa and Florence: “Chori de buo se vende a Constantinopoli a canter zenoexe, e pexase al pexo grosso de la terra/ E lo miero grosso geta a Zenova kanter XI. E livre C a gross exe in Pixia livre 144 et in Fiorenza livre 147.” Trans: “Oxskins are sold in Constantinople by the Genoese canter, and are weighed in region’s heavy pounds/weight/ And the large mier [measure?] weighs 11 canter in Genoa. And 100 pounds by gross is 144 Pisan pounds and 147 pounds in Florence.” Ibid.

202 “Non-Venetian” chapters are, in order and with line count: Constantinople with Alexandria, p. 17 (3 Lines); Trebisond with Toresi, p. 18 (2 lines); Tana and Constantinople, p. 19 (7 lines); Damascus and Famagusta, p. 27 (6 lines); Naples and Famagusta, p. 33 (4 lines); Alexandria and Ancona, p. 39 (6 lines); Alexandria and Messina, p. 39 (5 lines); Alexandria with Famagusta, p. 40 (5 lines); Constantinople with Sorgati, p. 44 (5 lines); Constantinople with Tana, p. 44 (7 lines); Constantinople with Famagusta, p. 48 (9 lines); Constantinople with Alexandria, p. 48 (6 lines), Famagusta with Candia, p. 56 (3 lines); Famagusta with Damascus, p. 56 (38 lines); Famagusta with Alexandria, p. 58 (27 lines).
But the author’s focus on trade between the greater eastern Mediterranean cities reveals a coexisting and separate “world” of trade within the eastern Mediterranean, one that primarily kept to itself and remained largely isolated and independent from the western half of the Mediterranean save its strong ties to Venice. There are essentially two Mediterraneans at work, and the compiler’s decision to include this ‘second world’ outside of Venice may reflect his own participation in those two worlds. He saw fit to include the material that was not immediately relevant to Venetian trade because he himself needed, or thought his reader would need, material about trade between these cities; either they would frequently import and export between these cities without returning to Venice, or they would do business often enough that these exchange rates would be relevant to their own business practices. His decision to include information that pertained to a second trading system independent from Venetian trade thus likely reflects his own participation in this system, where he himself had a foot in the “Venetian Mediterranean,” but also in this separate sphere of trade that existed independent from Venetian merchant networks.

This echoes the *Zibaldone da Canal*, where the compiler depicted two worlds running simultaneously within the Mediterranean: that of Venice and the whole Mediterranean, and then too of an independent set of cities trading amongst one another without contact or interaction with Venice. We can begin to see the ways that Italian merchants effectively viewed the Mediterranean as multiple worlds and realms that overlapped and touched upon one another without necessarily acting as a singular, unified “Mediterranean.” That is, the compiler crafted not a whole “Mediterranean world,” nor a fragmented, disparate Mediterranean filled with isolated regions and little interaction between regions; instead, he has depicted a Mediterranean world where many ports and cities formed regional “Mediterraneans” within the larger sea, interacting primarily in those particular circuits and
spheres. In this system, any port or city, and its merchants by default, would participate in several of these smaller Mediterraneans to varying degrees of involvement and investment, living in two or more Mediterraneans at once. In *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, David Abulafia argues for an image of the medieval Mediterranean world after 1350 where “local contacts came to the fore,” and most merchants acted primarily within their small, regional trading pools with cautious but stable profits, while long-distance trade was in fact primarily connected by chains and links between smaller routes.\(^{203}\) It is an image mirrored in the micro-regions of Horden and Purcell and the short distance but interlocking trade of McCormick’s *Origins of the European Economy*.\(^{204}\) This image of the Mediterranean complements the worlds depicted in these manuals: they show that long-distance merchants like the compilers of the *Zibaldone da Canal* and the *Tarifa zoë Noticia* interacted with the regional trades of multiple different economic spheres within the Mediterranean, and created constant overlapping worlds that they traversed between and connected through their trade.

*The Tarifa and the Italian Peninsula:*

Another critical difference between the *Zibaldone da Canal* and the *Tarifa* lies in how the author of the *Tarifa* treats neighboring Italian cities: in their differences, we see hints of two distinct perspectives on the Italian peninsula and the place of Venice as a part of the whole peninsula. In the *Zibaldone da Canal*, Italian cities outstrip even northern Africa in volume and comprise nearly a third of the total mercantile material, thanks in no small part


to Venice’s use of Apulia as its main source for grain. The compiler must have been deeply involved not only in Mediterranean trade and the Mediterranean world, but in specifically Italian trade — this was a merchant who engaged in both long-distance and more proximate trade, leaving the world portrayed within his manual balanced between the two, so that he provided a full image of Venetian interaction with other peninsular cities as well as distant African ports. In the Tarifa, by contrast, Italian cities (even when including Messina and Sicily as part of the peninsula), make up a scant five percent of the text. The Tarifa’s compiler had little interest in the cities closest to Venice; he was exceptionally Veneto-centric without being Italo-centric. Italy is nearly as invisible as the Northern shores of Africa. In the end, his immersion in distant Eastern Mediterranean trade left him with little interest in the world closer to home. Having argued that the Zibaldone da Canal’s focus on the Barbary coast and Apulia reflect the compiler’s migration and time abroad in these regions, I would similarly suggest that the Tarifa’s compiler likely focused his own business ventures on the eastern market, and that he spent significant time anchored within those cities. His interest not only in the Eastern Mediterranean’s relation to Venice, but their relations to one another, was a product of time spent conducting trade between those cities. He held a strong interest in regional trade, but exclusively Eastern Mediterranean regional trade: while Venice largely remains in the forefront of the text, where Italy falls to the wayside we can see a

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206 Of course, whether Messina “counted” as part of Italy for the compiler, so to speak, is an issue in itself, and there is no clear organizational pattern among compilers that indicates they considered it a part of the peninsula. But there is some reason to think that at least this author did associate Messina with the Italian peninsula: chapters on Sicily and Messina are sandwiched between chapters on “Naples of Puglia with Venice and with Famagusta” and “Acona with Venice.” Later, in a series of chapters of conversions for Alexandria, Messina follows Ancona — but is, in turn, followed by Alexandria with Famagusta, perhaps echoing a “transitional” place as expressed in the Zibaldone da Canal.
merchant who conducted the bulk of his trade away from the Italian peninsula — and in doing so, his mental map of the Mediterranean evolved to become more like someone who lived in that region.

His time abroad, then, shaped his vision of the world in the same way that the Zibaldone da Canal’s compiler was shaped by his time in the Barbary Coast. With experiences and time abroad spent predominantly in the Eastern Mediterranean, he created a manual focused away from the Central Mediterranean and Italian peninsula, despite his Venetian origins tying him to the region. His attitude towards the peninsula serves as a strong reminder of the independence and regionality of medieval Italian identities: where I argued that the Tarifa hints at the perception of the Italian peninsula as a unit, he clearly distinguished Venice from this regional unit, and saw himself strongly tied to one but not the other. His entrenchment in the Eastern Mediterranean may well have led him to view the Italian peninsula as a singular entity. Much like how details blur together in our sight the further we stand from them, the compiler’s distance from Italy seems to have caused him to blend its cities and ports together. To la Serenissima he would never be a foreigner — we can see this in his deep familiarity and interest in his city’s trade and exchange — yet his perspective on Italy as a region is almost that of someone who never lived there — someone largely unfamiliar, or at least uninterested, in its details. The manual reveals a worldview focused away from the Italian peninsula and recentered on the eastern Mediterranean with Venice as a geographic “outlier” of sorts, an exception to an otherwise dedicated focus on the East.

The Tarifa and the Zibaldone da Canal were likely written within a few decades of one another: Dotson dated the Zibaldone da Canal to the 1320s at the earliest (with a subsequent professional rewrite in the late 1300s to explain its notarial script), while the Tarifa was likely
compiled sometime during the second half of the fourteenth century. Yet the two depict distinctly different worlds due to their authors varying interests and investments across the Mediterranean: the Zibaldone da Canal, with its focus on the Italian peninsula and the ties of Sicily and the Barbary Coast, and Tunis above all, create a vertical image of the Mediterranean that had relatively little to offer about the further stretches of the Levant and Northern Europe; the Tarifa’s compiler, by contrast, included material well beyond the shores of Italy, and had little interest in his closest neighbors. But both authors shared a common perspective of two parallel worlds: the world of Venice that linked to the rest of the Mediterranean, but also of other parts of the Mediterranean interacting among themselves, independent of their home city. In these “second worlds” we can see where each compiler himself may well have participated in overlapping mercantile communities: the Zibaldone da Canal’s compiler in the community of the Barbary coast and Sicily, and the Tarifa’s in the major entrepots of the Levant, and both using their manuals to recreate that world to help integrate new merchants into those overlapping worlds.

*The World of Marc. It., XI, 32 (=6672), Fifteenth-Century Zibaldone:*

Like his predecessors, authors to Marc. It., XI 87 and the Tarifa zoè Noticia, the compiler of Marc. It., XI 32 held to the fundamental tenets of Venetian manuals: a strongly Veneto-centric focus without attention to trade between other regions, and an eastward outlook with only secondary interests in northern Europe and the western Mediterranean and Barbary coasts. At first glance one might consider his work largely derivative: it shares

207 Stussi, Introduction to Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, xiii; and Vittorio Orlandini and R. Cessi, Introduction to Tarifa zoè noticia dy pesci e mezure di luogi e terre che s’advera mercadantia per el mondo, 5.
much of the broad structure of the *Tarifa* in terms of its geographical focus on four cities, and even shares parts of its wording with the earlier manual, at times almost identically so: in the chapter on Majorca, Spain, Marc. It., XI, 32 begins, “In Majorca, pepper, brazil-wood, ginger, cinnamon, lac [a red dye or varnish produced from *kerriidae* insects from India and Indo-China], sugar, gotom, cassia [“bastard cinnamon”] are sold by the load / *carga*, that *carga* is counted at 3 *canter* in Majorca, and the said *carga* should be 312 in the foresaid place that is equal to 416 pounds per *sotil* in Venice.”

In the *Tarifa*, the same chapter begins, “In Majorca, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, and all lac, brazil-wood with the skin, sugars, powdered [sugar], sap, cassia are sold by the load / *carga*, that *carga* is counted at 3 *canter* in Majorca, and 312 pounds in the aforesaid place: and this *carga* is 416 pounds per *sotil* in Venice.” This phrase also appears in Pegolotti’s *Pratica della Mercatura*, suggesting either an inter-reliance upon one another or some shared source or sources.

The interconnections between all three manuals reveals the communication of information between Venetian and Florentine sources: while we already knew that the *Tarifa* and Pegolotti shared information, the fact that a third manuscript repeats the same information reveals more pattern than pure coincidence. We can infer a regular flow of known information between the two cities, or perhaps at least

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208 “*In maiolica se uende piper, uerzi, zenzero, chanella, lacha, zucharo, gotom, chanafistola / a charga la qual charga se conta canter .3. da maiolicha e la dita carga sie 312 del ditto luogo che sono a ueniexia L 416 a sotil.*” Marc. It., XI, 87.

209 “*In Majolicha se uende piper, zenzevero, chanela e tuta lacha, verzi con el scherzo, zucary, polvere, raxi, chanofistola a karga, la qual charga se conta kantera 3 de Maiolicha e de livre 312 de lo ditto luogo: e questa charga e a Veniexia livre 416 a sotil.*” *Tarifa*, 65.

a single, now-lost source from which Northern Italian merchants were able to draw their information about conditions abroad. Despite their Venetian focuses, the *Tarifa* and Marc. It., XI, 32’s content reveals that their information was carried to and from Florentine merchants but recrafted to their Venetian interests.

Despite the common foundations and content with both the *Tarifa* and Pegolotti’s *Pratica della Mercatura*, the fifteenth-century manuscript’s author nevertheless managed to instill his own imaginary map and mental skyline into the shape and content of the manual in several striking ways: more than any other manual, he showed a narrow view of the world focused only on a handful cities to the exclusion of all others, a world where Venice existed alone at the center of trade, with all other cities tied only to her. In the map of this compiler’s mind, all roads and sailing routes lead back to Venice — with the road between Venice and Alexandria as the road most traveled. The following table offers line counts for each of the different cities and regions listed in Marc. It., XI, 32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>FOL. CIT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>195r-196r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tana</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>196r-197r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trebizond</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>197r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negroponte</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>197r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modom and Coron</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>197r-197v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glarentza</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>197v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famagusta</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>197v-198v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candia</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>198v-199r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2.4:
MARC. IT., XI, 32 LINE COUNTS OF ALL MERCANTILE MATERIAL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CITY</th>
<th>LINE COUNT</th>
<th>FOL. CIT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (Part 1)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>199r-199v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (Part 2)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>199v-200r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (Part 3)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>200r-200v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (Total)</td>
<td>250(^{217})</td>
<td>199r-200v, 202r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>200v-201r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria(^{218})</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>201v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>201r-201v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majorca</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>201v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>202r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice(^{219})</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>202r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some Places”(^{220})</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>202r-202v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Descriptions of Spices</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>202v-204r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>204v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancona</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>204v-204v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders/Bruges</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>204v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimes and Montpellier</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>204v-205r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscany and Lombardy(^{221})</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>205r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice(^{222})</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>205v-206r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{217}\) Includes 4 lines from the “Alguni Luoghi section in addition to Parts 1-3.

\(^{218}\) Syria is called “alguni insali de soria” (“some Islands of Syria”) and includes Aleppo [2 lines], Tartus/Tortosa [2], Amam [Likely Taybat al-Imam or Hama, 2 Lines], Liza [2 Lines], Tripoli [2] and Acre [2].

\(^{219}\) Specifically, “I pexi de frute in Veniexia,” (“weights of Fruit in Venice”).

\(^{220}\) “Alguni Luoghi,” which includes Alexandria [4 Lines], Cyprus [9], Glarentza [4], Stime [4], Genoa [3], Apulia [5] Lasbaba and Barbary [4], Ibiza [4] and Tripoli [4].

\(^{221}\) Titled, “Qui diremo del pexo da ueniexia cum tute le cita de Toscana et de lonbardia,” (Here we discuss the weights of Venice with all the cities of Tuscany and Lombardy) but ultimately also includes regions outside of Lombardy or Tuscany. The full list of cities is as follows: Friuli, Istia d’Ombrone, Treviso, Padua, Verona, Vicenza, Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Modena, Reggio Calabria, Parona, Piacenza, Cremona, Brescia, Bergamo, Milan, Como, Pavia, Genoa, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Perugia, Rome, Ravenna, Ariano, Ancona, Friuli, Ortona, Manfredonia, Barletta, Trani, Naples, Apulia, Les Baux-de-Provence, Spoletto, Zara, Avignon, Montpellier, Paris, Bruges, Seranon, Nursia, [Camaron] and Santorini.

\(^{222}\) Titled, “Hora diremo di pexi da ueniexia,” (“Now we will talk about weights of Venice.”)
The authors of both the *Tarifa* and Marc. It., XI, 32 dedicated the bulk of their content to four primary cities: Alexandria, Tana, Famagusta, and Constantinople. In the *Tarifa*, Famagusta only just outstrips the second closest city, Alexandria, by a few lines, while Constantinople and Tana trail behind, and Damascus figures in as a close fifth city. But in Marc. It., XI, 32, Alexandria holds nearly double the material of the next closest city, a whopping two-hundred and fifty lines out of roughly twelve-hundred, comprising nearly a fifth of the full mercantile material, in part thanks to the fact that the manuscript includes not one but three distinct chapters on Alexandria. In comparison, the author dedicated only one-hundred and twenty-seven lines to the next biggest city, Tana. The first of the Alexandria chapters looks familiar by this point: “Here we discuss Alexandria with Venice,” and follows the same basic structure of other chapters by providing detailed information about various goods and merchandise and their weights and measures conversions between each region.\(^\text{223}\) The second chapter is similarly titled, “Here we discuss how one weight corresponds with another in Alexandria,” but addresses weights and measures conversions internal to Alexandria, rather than how they correspond with Venetian weights (e.g. a cantar *geroi* is equal to 16 cantar *forfor*), as well as the various tariffs and taxes Venetians were obligated to pay when importing and exporting goods.\(^\text{224}\) The third chapter, meanwhile, titled simply “Weights of Alexandria,”\(^\text{225}\) is simply a list of goods sold at a weight of one-

\(^{223}\) “Qui diremo de allexandria cum veniexia.” Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 199r.

\(^{224}\) “Qui diremo come fa un pexo com laltro in Alexandria.” Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 199v.

\(^{225}\) “Pexi de allexandria.” Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 200r.
hundred and forty-four pounds per cantar forfori, and goods sold at the cantar geroi, or three-
hundred and twelve Venetian light pounds.\textsuperscript{226}

Of course, line count can overemphasize the quantity of content over its quality and
misrepresent the general significance of certain chapters and cities. In the case of
Alexandria’s chapters, if we look at the quality, and not merely quantity of material, we see
that the compiler gradually shifted to presenting different types of information based upon
the reader’s presumed level of familiarity with the material. The inclusion of the second list
of goods exaggerates the volume of content about Alexandria when we consider only the
line count of total chapters — the author provides little detail for these conversions,
particularly compared to the standard chapters, and he drifted away from the more
explanatory rhetorical style of the other chapters. Compare the previous chapters line about
rough/unprocessed sugar: “Rough sugar is sold in Alexandria at a cantar that is called
zeroi/geroi, which is equal to 200 heavy pounds or 312 light pounds, but because the sugar
often declines/falls [possibly referring to sugar changing weight during shipment to make
the measurements shift over time] it makes the ration equal to 296 pounds for 300 light
pounds in Venice.”\textsuperscript{227} A single folio later, the list provided instead states: “The geroi cantar [is
used for] caset sugar, babilonio, muscate wine, rough sugar, powdered/granular sugar.”\textsuperscript{228} With
his second list, he assumes a certain level of base familiarity with the merchandise and the

\textsuperscript{226} A cantar forfori is a unit of weight used specifically for spices and expensive goods in Alexandria; the
list effectively specifies which goods qualified as spices and “expensive” so that they would be sold at this cantar,
and the cantar geroi was used for heavier goods such as copoper and tin.

\textsuperscript{227} “Zucaro rotame se uende in Alexandria a uno canter lo qual se chiama zeroi, lo qual responde in
ueniex L 200 a grosso che L 312 a sotil / ma perche li zucari chala molto fa raxiom chelo responda a ueniexia L 296 in L 300 a sotil.” Marc, It., XI 32, f. 199r.

\textsuperscript{228} “Canter zeroi che in ueniexia L 312 a sotil a grosso L 210/ zucharo
caseti/babilonio/muschato/rotame/poluere.” Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 200r.
terms used, and saw no need to explain the additional nuances of terminology, e.g. that the weight “is called” *geroi*, and elaborates on the way that sugar holds unique properties that make the weight vary during transportation. In his first chapter, he was much more explanatory and didactic, but his second chapter functions more as a tool for quick reference or substitution for memorization that requires no extensive elaboration.\textsuperscript{220} The compiler may have expected his reader to need more reference material specific to Alexandria — that they would need to know not only the basic foundation of information about the region, but also a greater range of details and references for a wider variety of goods compared to other trade cities. Indeed, the list includes an impressive array of goods — one hundred and twelve types in total, while the runner-up chapter of Tana lists only nineteen different goods sold there.\textsuperscript{230}

His attention to detail echoes the *Zibaldone da Canal*’s author’s interest in the Barbary coast and suggests that he had more than a passing interest in Alexandria’s trade. The significance and detail he dedicated to the city go beyond its economic significance in the mercantile world. Instead, the compiler considered Alexandria an economic center that surpassed its entrepot peers to serve as something of a secondary “center” alongside Venice herself. This was a merchant who, first and foremost, focused on a single city as his trading partner, rather than a large variety or breadth of cities. The manual contains a diverse range of cities in terms of geography, from Tana in the Black Sea to Flanders in the North. Even so, the compiler’s gaze is far narrower than his fellow compilers: he focuses primarily on

\textsuperscript{220} Even if we assume that the author simply copied two separate texts with different didactic styles and rhetoric, he saw no need to elaborate or interpolate further information, and nevertheless included the more elaborative text first.

\textsuperscript{230} Marc. It., XI, 32, ff. 196r-197r.
trade with a single city that dominates the text’s content and interests, leaving only crumbs for that the other cities that comprise its geographical breadth. Given the late date of the manuscript compared to other manuals, one explanation may be that the compiler was even more sedentary compared to his earlier merchant peers — that his interests rarely deviated from Alexandrian trade because he conducted most of his business there or with the city, and as a result his interests in other cities are entirely secondary and much more theoretical than his need for information pertaining to Alexandria.

Alexandria’s prominence is not the only example of Marc. It., XI, 32’s narrowed view of the world — the compiler focused only on the relationship of other cities to Venice as the secondary city to the exclusion of any other port entirely. While other Venetian merchants favored Venice as the focus of their chapters, they still included at least some chapters about trade and conversions between other, secondary cities — the Zibaldone da Canal, as mentioned, includes chapters that discussed trade between Tunis and Cyprus, Trapani, Messina, Naples and Apulia, as well as chapters on Barletta and Cyprus. Likewise, Marc. It., XI, 87’s compiler collated conversions between secondary cities outside of Venice including Montpellier with Acre, as well as Sicily and Genoa. Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler, by contrast, opted to include absolutely no material whatsoever on exchange between cities other than Venice, and is the only mercantile manual to not do so.

The author’s absolute concentration on Venice’s trade with the Mediterranean reveals a dramatically narrow mental map wherein the cities beyond Venice were only


232 “La marcha de m[on]poslero est maior de quela dacre sterlina x. e se menore de quella de Venec[ia] ka[nta]r .vj.;” “kantera j. de cecillia façe ka[nta]r i j me[nor] terça a çenoa.” Marc. It, XI, 87, f. 3v, 4r.
relevant in so far as they dealt with Venice herself. The compiler’s lack of interest in any secondary cities speaks to a comparative *inexperience* in migrating abroad — that he may well have needed to know about trade with these various regions, but he never expanded his business or agents beyond his primary port and anchor of his hometown for any significant length of time or depth of investment. His was a world with a clear, singular center, more so than any other merchant-compiler’s, and was likely a product of the compiler’s own physically-circumscribed experiences: where he had no need to expand his business ventures beyond trade with Venice, he also never needed to learn about trade and exchange beyond the ports tied directly to Venice. Merchant’s mental maps were intimately tied to their experiences in migrating and doing business with other parts of the world, but we cannot extrapolate this into the belief that all Italian merchants had a strong curiosity about the world around them; for this compiler, at least, his interest in geography and the Mediterranean was limited only to information which served an immediate and clear purpose.

Beyond his focus on the “Big Four” — Constantinople, Tana, Famagusta and Alexandria — he turned his gaze, like most of his peers, eastward and away from Northern Europe and the Western Mediterranean. But in some sense this Eastern-focus reveals a lagging economic perspective, given the relatively late date of composition compared to the other Venetian manuals that were primarily compiled in the thirteenth and fourteenth

233 Or was it? The manual is contained within a larger *zibaldone* (which in turn was later recompiled as part of a miscellany of material crossing several centuries) that contains no shortage of material that seems to have been collected purely for curiosity’s sake: an account of the trial of the treasonous doge Marino Falier in 1355, a collected list of interpretations of dreams, chapters on astrology and two *sortem tuxili* games of predicting fate through charts and *rotae*. This compiler was, without a doubt, curious in the world around him, but that this curiosity extended beyond the realms of trade and the geographical world, where instead he was narrowly focused on Venice herself. I discuss this further in “Past, Present and Future.”
centuries. By the late fourteenth century, Mediterranean trade was shifting increasingly westward thanks to the loss of the Crusader States and the Latin empire of Byzantium; the Turks gradually replaced the Genoese as Venice’s great maritime rivals in trade. Marc. It., XI, 32, in turn, includes these newly or increasingly significant regions — Flanders, Nimes, Montpellier, Genoa, Majorca all merit their own chapters. Despite the westward shift of the economic reality of Mediterranean trade, Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler seems to have been resistant to shifting his manual’s structure, which retains the same patterns of its earlier predecessors. He starts in the eastern Mediterranean and lingers there the longest; but once he left the East, he began to meander more and more: after Damascus on fol. 200v, he loses much of his focus and instead flits between regions and topics in a less ordered organization. On fol. 201r, he turns to the Italian peninsula with Apulia and Naples. He then sweeps to the west with the island of Majorca on fol. 201v, and then back to center-West with Genoa. Then follows a chapter on “weights of fruit,” a miscellany collection of salt weights of various regions as they correlated with Venice, and a chapter on the characteristics of spices (another common element of these manuals that also appears in the Zibaldone da Canal and the Tarifa). Finally, he adds Messina and Sicily, then Flanders, Nimes, Montpellier, and a

234 Dates of Compilation: Zibaldone da Canal, 1320s; Tarifa and Noticia, second half of the 14th century; Marc. It. XI 87, pre-1291, likely closer to the 1250s.


236 Marc. It., XI, 32, ff. 201v-205v.

237 Stussi, 75-78, Tarifa, 70-75, Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 202r (Qui diremo come responde el sal de alcuni luogi cum venexia,) and ff. 202v-204r (“Qui diremo del cogniosimento delle spezie”). Marc. It., XI, 32’s list on salt is even more scattered and hodge-podge than these later chapters, and seems to be a “manual in miniature,” focused purely on salt. It begins with Alexandria and tallies the following cities: Cyprus, Glarentza, Stime, Genoa, Puglia, “Lasbaba and Barbary,” Ibiza, and Tripoli. Interestingly, this mention of Barbary and Tripoli is the first mention of North Africa outside of the Zibaldone da Canal, revealing the region’s continued economic significance despite its apparently relatively diminished relevance in other Venetian manuals.
list of “all the cities of Tuscany and Lombardy with Venice,” before a concluding chapter on Venice itself.238

The compiler seems to have lost his sense of collection, dropping connections between the regions, even as he followed more rigorous organization for his Eastern Mediterranean material. He gave the greatest attention to the areas he cared the most about: the Levant and the East. He clearly perceives them as a unit together even as he has little interest in their interactions and interconnections with one another, but has less of a cohesive, coherent view or sense of regionalization of the world outside the Levant, or at least less of an interest in forming such an image of them within the manual. His initial compilation was focused and deliberate, but once he completed the most necessary and useful material — that of the Levant — his methodology and construction became somewhat more haphazard and casual, collecting material as it came to him or as he saw its use. In the end, although the compiler paid much more attention to the western Mediterranean and the up-and-coming cities of the North compared to its predecessors, this late manual reveals that even in the 1400s, Venetian merchants still clung to a clear image of the Eastern Mediterranean as a “world” of its own, but they lacked a similarly cohesive or “collected” image of the rest of Europe, Atlantic coast and the Mediterranean.

Marc. It., XI, 32 and the Italian Peninsula:

Marc. It., XI, 32 shares another common perspective with the Tarifa zoè Noticia: namely, their mutual relative lack of interest in the Italian peninsula. Less than 5% of the

238 Marc. It., XI, 32, ff. 201v-208r.
Tarifà’s content touches upon Italian cities, and I argued this was a reflection of the manual’s concern about Venice as a separate entity from the rest of the Italian peninsula that he found himself relatively “removed” from it despite its physical proximity to his home city. Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler paid the Italian peninsula somewhat more attention than the Tarifà: Italian cities comprise one-hundred and fifty-four lines out of the manual’s nearly twelve-hundred total lines, approximately 13% of the content. The bulk of this content, however, provides a clearer image of how the compiler perceived the peninsula as a whole — the entirety of peninsular content is collated under a single list, titled “Here we will discuss the weight of Venice with all the cities in Tuscany and Lombardy.”239 The information is remarkably superficial compared to the chapters on other Mediterranean cities — a single weight conversion for each city and no details as to the different types of weights, currencies or measurements, nor any information on what goods or merchandise were regularly traded in each city.240

The full list of regions and cities is as follows: Friuli, Istria, Treviso, Padua, Verona, Vicenza, Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Parma, Piacenza, Cremona, Brescia, Bergamo, Milan, Como, Pavia, Genoa, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Perugia, Rome, Ravenna, Rimano, Ancona, Forli, Ortona, Manfredonia, Barletta, Tranc, Naples, and “All of Pisa.” At this point, although the author titled his list as limited only to Tuscany and Lombardy, he drifts outside the peninsula: it names “Bauxe” (Baux-de-Provence in France), Spalato (Split,

239 “Qui diremo del pexo da Venixia cum tute li cita de toscana et de lombardia.” Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 205v.

240 Still, several Italian cities merited their own chapters: first, Apulia, echoing its similar significance in the Zibaldone da Canal, and likewise reflects the city’s ongoing significance as Venice’s breadbasket. Indeed, the compiler dedicated a full sixty-six lines to Apulia, longer than the entire chapter on the rest of the peninsula. Genoa, too, earns a chapter thirty-six lines long, a testament to the city’s place as an economic powerhouse alongside Venice herself.
Croatia), Zara, Avignon, Montpelier, Paris, Bruges, Sirmione, L’Aquila, Trento, Norcia, Camerino, and Santorini. The list seems to be little more than an afterthought, or at least added at a later point, compared to the earlier city-based chapters: it repeats cities that appear earlier in the manual — Montpelier, Bruges, and Genoa each have their own chapters, and comes at the very end of the mercantile content, followed only by a chapter that covers Venice alone.

The author’s gradual deviation from specifically peninsular cities to a broader category of other continental European cities perhaps suggests that the author copied from a larger list and then, towards the end, decided to include cities that he deemed economically relevant despite the fact that his initial intentions were limited to Tuscan and Lombardian cities. In effect, he seems to have started the list as a collection of information exclusively about northern and central Italy, but wandered around more as he progressed, spreading out to include southern Italian cities (Trane, Barletta, Naples and Apulia) and cities beyond the Alps. The compiler’s initial limitation to Tuscany and Lombardy reflects an interesting insight into his perception of the Italian peninsula: namely, that he considered northern and central Italian cities as effectively a unit, while southern Italy remained a separate entity without any connections to the North — a smaller economic region that functioned together despite the lack of concrete/explicit political or cultural ties. Here we see Horden and Purcell’s microecologies and microeconomies, and moreover an awareness of such

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241 Ibid.

242 Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 204v, (Bruges, though titled as “Qui diremo de Fiandra zoe Bruza cum uenixia” — “Flanders, that is, Bruges”) f. 204v-r, (Montpelier), f. 202r (Genoa). Note: while the cities appear separately, it is unclear whether the content is repeated or updated — the chapter on Tuscan and Lombardian cities only claims that “the weight of Genoa is 4 percent larger than that of Venice,” but it does not specify which weight is being correlated, and no weight in the Genoa chapter is described as 4 percent larger than the Venetian equivalent.
microeconomies within the merchant’s mental maps.\textsuperscript{243} But the extension of the list, despite its initial premises, to cities clearly well beyond Lombardy and Tuscany, speaks to the expansion of long-distance trade that stretched the conception of a regional economy to include these outer limits, showing the integration of southern Italy into the Italian economy despite its nominal exclusion. Meanwhile, the text similarly reveals a new position of Sicily within the “European” world: while earlier manuals like the \textit{Zibaldone da Canal} and the \textit{Tarifa} placed Messina within material about Northern Africa and the Levant, respectively, Marc. It., XI, 32’s chapter on Messina is nestled between a chapter on the characteristics of spices and Flanders. The compiler did not clearly associate Sicily with the Levant and had no interest in the Barbary Coast. For the author of the \textit{Zibaldone da Canal}, it was the anchor tying Italy to the southern coast of the Mediterranean; for the author of Marc. It., XI, 32, Sicily was unmoored and cast adrift from its ties to both Europe, Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The list of cities demonstrates a certain self-contradiction: the compiler held enough interest in Italian peninsular trade to include a full list of both major and minor cities that seem to have been economically irrelevant to the compilers of every other surviving manual, and yet he lacked enough interest to provide more thorough or detailed information even about those cities that, to other compilers, were far more economically significant. In the end, he conveys a more removed image of Italian trade outside of Venice itself—a theoretical interest with no direct involvement or investment. It is unlikely that he engaged in much trade with the cities listed, given that he foregoes any substantial level of detail, but

he considered these small cities and trading hubs part of the broader world around him despite their economic irrelevance. That is, he included them because of his own interest in the Italian peninsula as part of the world with which he was geographically familiar, the cities and towns that he knew from local merchants, pilgrims and travelers passing through Venice as part of their own regional trade or travels.

The list effectively “wraps up” the mercantile material; after it, the author wrote only one more chapter, on Venice herself. It is possible he included it merely as an afterthought, but this theory is contradicted with that final chapter on Venice, which follows the same pattern of the Tarifa zoè Noticia and the Zibaldone da Canal in Venice to the end of the compilation as something of a “conclusion” to the work as a whole. Compilers’ repeated practice of leaving Venice until last speaks to the planning and order that went into the organization of these manuals, that even its last pages were not merely afterthoughts. With this, I would argue that while the list of Tuscan and Lombardian cities both lacks the details contained in other manuals and is also quite late within the manual’s total composition, we cannot take it as a thrown-away, “last minute” scrap inclusion, any more than Venice’s independent chapters within other Venetian manuals were little more than afterthoughts. Rather, the late place of the list speaks to its place as something of a “concluding” chapter, added for completeness and rounding out the Mediterranean world outside of Venice.

**General Analysis of the Venetian Manuals:**

**The Major Cities:**

Venetian merchants almost uniformly favored a select handful of cities that loomed over their mental map of the Mediterranean. Alexandria stood out as the singular focus of
almost every Venetian manual, where all but the author of the Zibaldone da Canal began their journeys with the eastern entrepot. On the one hand, the prominence of Alexandria is doubtless a sign of the city’s status as an economic powerhouse of the late Middle Ages, one that managed to outshine even Constantinople, Acre, Damascus and Famagusta in the imaginations and memories of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Venetian merchants. This somewhat obvious explanation, however, ignores the significance of the fact that these manuals, almost without exception, not only pay it the most attention, but also start with this city: across over almost one-hundred and fifty years of compiling manuals, from the earliest Marc. It., XI, 87 to the latest Marc. It., XI, 32, despite differing source material from which each compiler drew, all Venetian compilers started in Alexandria. And despite the city’s apparent significance to the Mediterranean economy, Tuscan compilers did not hew to the same pattern: Pegolotti, source to the Tarifa, starts with advice for a journey to Cathay, and even after that begins with Tana in the Black Sea, and Alexandria is only brought into the fray well into the manual’s primary contents.244 Yet the Tarifa, drawing off its Tuscan predecessor, deliberately altered the order of the contents, in order to place Alexandria first.

Despite the uniformity of the pattern, it cannot be merely a product of copying one another, and was instead a deliberate decision made by Venetian compilers. Alexandria is not only the city that garnered the most interest and attention from these Venetian merchants, but it was also the city where they effectively “started” their mental voyages of trade and exchange. The primacy of Alexandria above all the other major ports of the Mediterranean speaks to its

244 Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, La Pratica della Mercatura, 21, 23, and 69-76.
economic dominance within the Venetian merchants’ world, uniquely so compared to the worlds of Tuscan merchants.

We see this similarly in how often Venetian compilers conclude their manuals with chapters on Venice: they started their written voyages and their image of the Mediterranean World in Alexandria, then explored the eastern half of the Sea before eventually “returning” home at the end of their manuals, gradually circling inward onto their home city. In the Zibaldone da Canal, only a single chapter on the Ayas (in Ankara, Turkey) follows Venice, and is mingled with a mixture of other, non-mercantile material, which suggests that this belated chapter was added late in the compilation process, after the bulk of the mercantile material was compiled.245 In the Tarifa zōe noticia, the Venetian chapter finishes all geographic-based material, but it is followed shortly by a chapter on the identification of spices for purchase.246 And the author of Marc. It., XI, 32 similarly ends his geographic material with Venice, and then follows with a Latin list of indulgences to saints in the city of Rome and a travel itinerary to a pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela. Meanwhile, Marc. It., XI, 87’s Venetian conclusion is quite literal — a list of itineraries including the directions for sailing from Acre back to Venice.247 As Venetian merchants unambiguously framed their manuals around their native city, they left its familiar shores, and more-familiar material, for last. Did

245 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 161-163; Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 108-110. “Lo corsso de Laiaça.” The author also appears to have drawn from a pre-Fall of Acre source for this chapter, because he references comparing weights between Ayas, Venice and Acre at several points in the chapter: “1 metechal is 1 soggio of Venice, and 100 metechal weigh 105 bezants in Acre;” “All drapery is sold at Ayas as in Acre.” “1 metechal si è J saçio da Venexia, e pexi C de metechal si sè in Acre sè pexi CV de bexanti;” “tute draparie se vende a Laiaça como in Acre.”

246 Tarifa, 70-75.

they include Venice only as an afterthought, an assumption that any reader would likely know Venice’s weights and measures, or was it a deliberate “conclusion” to the text to return its reader to the material they likely knew best, after visiting Damascus and the Black Sea, Cathay and London? At the very least, Venice’s inclusion within the manual speaks to a presumed audience of someone who might not live in Venice whenever they read the manual — a migrant who might not have information about even his home city immediately at hand. There was a metaphorical or mental distance between their interest in their native city and their familiarity with it; the author thought the reader might need to reference this guide book for information in the same way they might reference it for a city in which they had never stepped foot.

But if we take the structure of these manuals as itineraries, you can see in them where each compiler spent his time: the author of Marc. It, XI 87 hopped from place to place to place, with little attention or dedication to a single location save Acre, the constant balance to Venice; the author of the Zibaldone da Canal embarked out from the southern shores of the Mediterranean, meeting the Italian peninsula in the transitory Sicily; the author of the Tarifa dwelled in the major entrepots and cities of the Levant, the big powerhouses of the Mediterranean; and for Marc. It. XI 32, it was Venice herself. But nearly all finish their journey in the same place: home.

248 In other words, were Venetian merchants the type that, as children eating their lunch, ate their favorites first, or saved the best for last?
Before and After the Fall of Acre:

The critical difference between Marc. It., XI, 87 and the other, post-1291 manuals is not simply in the presence of Acre, but in its frequent centrality. Granted, we cannot take it as a representative of all pre-Fall perspectives, since the diversity of views held in the post-Fall manuals reveals that they were highly individual, despite their patterns. The centrality of Acre to Marc. It., XI 87 would not necessarily mean that Acre was equally important to all merchants. However, Acre’s similar prominence in the other pre-Fall manual, the Pisan Memoriae, as well as the lingering presence of Acre and the Crusader states in later manuals like Marc. It., XI, 32 and the Zibaldone da Canal suggests that the city was a uniquely important powerhouse within the merchant world, and that importance extended not only to their religious world but to their economic world as well. David Abulafia similarly argued persuasively for Acre’s place as an entrepot that opened the door to the interior of the Muslim world and the market-rich Nile Delta in particular, so that merchants could safely sail first to Acre and then fan out, with Acre equal to the eastern-dominant Alexandria.249

The intertwining of economic and religious significance likely played no small part in why Venetian merchants like Marino Sanudo Torsello were so adamant in driving support for a Crusade to retake the Holy Land in the fourteenth century. This is not to suggest that Sanudo’s religious motives were insincere — rather that they were bolstered by Acre’s multifaceted role within merchant culture, that merchants had lost not only the religious

symbol of Christianity but also a cultural touchstone and the center of their imaginary world in more ways than one.

Acre’s prominence in these early manuals reveals its primarily economic significance before 1291, but its continued presence in merchant manuals after its Fall also speaks to the way that merchants’ mental maps lagged behind economic realities — namely, that the worlds revealed in merchant manuals were not reflections of pure economic reality, but rather of a broader merchant culture that was strongly shaped and influenced by economic reality, yet not solely determined by it — these manuals contradicted reality by continuing to preserve economic information that their audience could not necessarily use. And merchants included these outdated contents knowingly: the Zibaldone da Canal and Pegolotti’s Pratica still included information on Acre, but they did so conscious of the fact that the information was outdated and no longer immediately useful. The Zibaldone da Canal uses the past tense to refer to the Crusader city, and Pegolotti titles his Acre chapter, “Acri di Soria per se medesimo quando era a mano di cristiani” — “Acre of Syria with itself when it was in Christian hands.” The continuing presence of Acre even after its Fall to the Mamluks reveals how merchant culture and mental maps did not immediately reflect their economic realities. The parallel inclusion of Aleppo after its decline in Marc. It., XI, 87, and information about Acre in manuals after its fall reveal a consistent inclusion of outdated material that could arguably reflect a certain optimism — or perhaps simply realism at the constant flux of political reality in the Mediterranean, that a territory held by the Mongols or

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250 Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, La Pratica della Mercatura, 63.
conquered by the Mamluks might change hands at any point, and so information not immediately relevant to the compiler might still be useful in the years to come.\footnote{More on the “future- and past-sightedness” of merchants appears, and the inclusion of outdated information, is discussed in the chapter, “Past, Present and Future.”}

Instead, merchants were slow to give up their old cities and anchors, even within ostensibly, or at least primarily, pragmatic didactic and reference texts. The information they considered useful and important was as much about a possible hope or expectation that it might be relevant again one day as it was about teaching the readers of the worlds that came before today: to show children the world that was as much as the world that is. In this sense, merchant compilers continued to include Acre in their manuals to teach their readers about merchant culture prior to Acre’s fall, to recognize its continuing psychological significance in shaping their contemporary world, and to acknowledge its previous cultural significance despite its lack of continued economic significance. By including Acre (and Aleppo, for Marc. It., XI, 87), these manuals reveal the merchant individuals and culture behind the data — that is, their mental maps and mercantile writings were not purely products of economic reality, but of the cultural reality of the mercantile world as well, of their larger minds, interests, thoughts and communities.

The Italian Peninsula:

The Italian peninsula’s position within Venetian manuals reveals the relationship each compiler saw that Venice’s trade, and Venetian merchants as a whole held with the greater Italian peninsula — and that relationship is, unfortunately, rather tentative at best. Only the Zibaldone da Canal provides any substantial volume of information on cities within
the peninsula, and much of that bulk is dedicated to Sicily and Messina as a joinder to the Northern Mediterranean and to Venice’s breadbasket, Apulia. Other manuals include peninsular material but devote only minimal detail or depth — their vision of the peninsula, at least in an economic and imaginary sense of their world, is shallow and superficial. While they were fundamentally Venetian merchants to their core, they positioned Venice distantly from the rest of the peninsula. Still, they clearly viewed other Italian cities — and especially Tuscany together with Lombardy — as cohesive economic or geographic units of space to be addressed or discussed together and in their relationships with one another; Venice was simply not a participant in this Italy. Her merchants had their eyes set on the broader Mediterranean, and especially the distant parts of the world, while Italy faded into the background; even within the most Veneto-centric manual, the late-dated Marc. It., XI, 32, written during the early fifteenth-century’s rising interest in land over sea amongst the Venetian nobility, to peninsular conquest over maritime empire, merchants were conservative with their interest in the terra cognita of cities close to home, though Venice’s maritime empire would not reach its true apex until the first decades of the sixteenth century.\(^{252}\) As with their lingering cultural interest in Acre, Venetian merchants, shaped by their travels and migrations to distant lands as part of that rising long-distance trade of the commercial revolution, were slow to adopt a major interest in the Italian peninsula and regions closest to home.

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Conclusion:

Through these manuals, Venetian merchants consciously sought to instruct their readers about mercantile information; they used these texts to compensate for the increasing shift to sedentary trade throughout the later Middle Ages that inhibited the more independent information gathering previously facilitated through more frequent travel. Merchants could create a foundation of shared information across their readerships, effectively strengthening community ties by attempting to ensure all merchants within the community started from the same basic level of knowledge when doing business together. But in this conscious attempt to spread information, these manuals also often recreated the mental maps and geographic perspectives, the ideas and interests of their compilers, so that they instructed their readers not only in the foundations of knowledge to be a part of the merchant world, but also implicitly shaped those readers own perceptions of the physical world as a whole, and of their relation to it. These manuals not only taught their readers about trade but about the world, and in doing so they created a merchant’s community and even a merchant’s world.
CHAPTER 4:
SANUDO AND HIS UNIVERSE

Merchant manuals were not the only tool at hand for merchants to help distribute mercantile information and mercantile culture as part of constructing their communities, networks and social bonds. They also had extensive communication networks across much of Europe and the Mediterranean facilitated through letters that flitted and flowed from hand to hand in constant efforts to share as much news and knowledge amongst those they held within their communities. While the compiler of the *Zibaldone da Canal* was busy gathering up his decades of information stretching back into the age of Crusading Acre and his heirs were recompiling it even a century after the city’s fall, Marino Sanudo Torsello, merchant and crusading propagandist, was hunched over his desk, scribbling away notes of the latest news and developments in the Mediterranean to political figures in distant lands in increasingly desperate attempts to persuade them to retake the lost crown of Christendom, the Crusading States — and then entrusting those letters into the hands of friends, acquaintances and employees to ensure the messages reached their destinations. Letters, with the most up-to-date news and information they contained, were the constant and rushed companion to slower and more methodical merchant manuals, but both served as critical parts of a merchant culture that depended upon the exchange of information for its survival, and a merchants’ mentality that emphasized knowledge as a precious commodity.
Scholars have extensively studied the news networks of Italian merchants as they strove to respond to the constant need for up-to-date information about market conditions abroad. What sort of information did they share and why, and with whom they shared it, and how did this same network drove a greater push for literacy among the merchant class? Letters were a natural product of the need for communication within long-distance merchant communities.

Sanudo was a member of the larger growing merchant networks of the era — when he left Venice during his youth first in 1281 (likely in his teens) and again in 1286 for Acre. He spent time in both Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, in Acre, Negroponte and the Italian peninsula, he was one of the increasing number of merchants who spent much of their lives separated from their homes, reliant upon distant networks and communications to provide mercantile information as part of daily business. In his later years, settled back in Venice and done, for the most part, with his time overseas, he was also a part of other, non-merchant networks. Sanudo was certainly remarkable in his deep fervor for the return of the Holy Land into Christian hands. But he was little different from other wealthy Venetian merchants who, unique among their class elsewhere, occupied the highest positions of power within Venetian society that allowed them to engage with international politics — the integration of merchants into the Most Serene Republic’s political class meant that Venetian politicians and patricians held perspectives, conceptions of community and broader interests.

colored by their experiences as merchants, which they then brought to bear upon their communications with non-merchants during their activities as political actors. Sanudo’s religious and political correspondence reveals how merchants like him could participate in multiple such long-distance communities that were all framed by their need of information, while the information itself varied somewhat depending upon the specific needs of each community.

Just as the merchants of our manuals simultaneously shared information and conveyed to their readers their perspectives deeply shaped by their experiences with migration and trade, so too did Marino Sanudo Torsello, throughout his letters written to build enthusiasm for a crusade, create a “world” for his correspondents to share. That world was likewise shaped by his experiences in life as both a merchant and a Christian — and a member of the long-distance merchants’ communities and of a Christendom fragmented by distance and, especially, political strife and warfare. He sought to recreate this world on a more literal level through his lobbying for a new crusade to retake Jerusalem and the Holy Land, to reunite them with the larger Christian community after their gradual loss to the Turks over the previous two centuries.  

Sanudo envisioned a community that was above all united and universal, a true “catholic” Christendom bound together by economic, political and cultural interests; and this unity centered on the recoup of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, whose loss embodied the growing dispersion of Christendom. Sanudo argued that European powers could accomplish that recovery via blockades and economic embargos to

254 Technically most Crusader states were lost roughly during the thirteenth century, but the first state, the County of Edessa, fell to Zengi in 1144.

strangle the Sultan of Egypt’s access to materials for war (wood, iron, pitch) and eliminate Egypt’s ability to funnel goods into Palestine. No small part of his motivation for pushing for a new Crusade — in addition to Christian zeal — was his time spent in Acre, which led him to see the city and its surrounding regions as a central part of a complete Christendom.  

This chapter explores the worldview, centered on Christian community and identity, that Sanudo sought to convey to his correspondents — one of connections and divisions — and how his sense of those twin concepts in turn reflected his merchant mentality that developed from his time abroad and his participation in a long-distance merchant community. As a Christian, he observed a Christendom that had lost its unity from the halcyon days of Christian control of the Holy Land. As a Venetian, he saw the world tied together, its fractures healed, by Venice. The city drew together not only merchants, but pilgrims, nobles and diplomats from across Christendom. It facilitated oral and in-person communication to build new social bonds, integrate new people who were otherwise too remote, and help sustain old ties and new. As a merchant, above all, he saw these resolved: that trade healed fractions and Venice, as a hub of trade and travelers, was the linchpin in connecting people to each other. His world was rooted in interdependence, first and foremost through trade — where economic bonds forged pragmatic alliances, creating common interests that served as the firm foundation for mutual support and strength when shared beliefs offered thin incentive to action. His place in the fundamentally fragmented

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256 Ibid., 59-62.
merchant world shaped his drive for Crusade, for the rebirth and reforging of Christendom into a whole and complete — a catholic and universal — community.

A World Divided: Sanudo’s Vision of a Fractured World

In its most fundamental form, Sanudo’s world was beset by divisions, and had been throughout history. He saw in the past the ramifications and fallout of his own world’s divisions. Like a hammer sees nails, he saw divisions everywhere, and trade was the hammer to forge connections and pound those nails down.

Sanudo repeats his concerns over fragmentation and division, and the healing thereof, over and over as his primary concern for the state of Christianity, and names crusades to the Holy Land as a tool for healing those divisions. In his letter to Jacques Duèze, Pope John XXII in Avignon, he addressed the pope with the plea that, “had your most high grace been preoccupied with the good and peaceful condition of cismarine Christians, I firmly hope that your greatest charity, which unites divisions, brings together the scattered, consolidates the broken, sets in order the confused, perfects the imperfect, would have favorably commended for execution the business of the Holy Land.”

Sanudo defines a successful pope as one who “unites divisions, brings together the scattered, consolidates the broken... [and] perfects the imperfect” — all the same imagery: a divided

257 Roddy, 110 (note: Roddy translates “Christianorum cismarinorum” — the cismarine Christians or “Christians on this side of the sea,” as “European,” but I believe it is important to distinguish that Sanudo here defines geography according to its relation to the Mediterranean, rather than by the concept of “Europe”; he also does not translate the term ‘vestra altissima caritas’ but I have added it); “et spero firmiter, quod vestra altissima caritas, divisa uniens, dispersa congregans, contracta consolidans, confusa ordinans, & imperfecta consumans, Terrae Sanctae eadem vestra Sanctitas negotia executioni prospere demandasset, nisi circa bonum statum & pacificum Christianorum cismarinorum partium fuisset tam sedulem occupata.” Bongars, Gesta Dei 289-290. Translations are from Roddy’s The Correspondence of Marino Sanudo Torsello, except where noted.
world, healed and reunited through the pope, returning first and foremost a presumed whole community to its former, complete state. Sanudo sees a formerly complete Christendom lost to intra-Christian conflict and the ever-growing loss of inherently Christian lands to Muslim enemies.

By defining the pope’s role in the unification of a fractured world, Sanudo presumed a shared vision of Christendom — if, indeed, John XXII was a unifier of divisions and consolidator of the broken, one who already committed such actions and was committed to continuing them, then those actions must reflect a shared understanding of the current state of the world. Sanudo foisted on his correspondent a shared concern over the current state of fracture and fragmentation within Christendom — though of course we cannot know if John XXII felt the same anxiety over the loss of the Holy Land (it is somewhat difficult to imagine many others were as concerned as the man who made it a personal vendetta until his ultimate financial dissolution).²⁵⁸

Sanudo equated divisions in Christianity with a deeper, more insidious evil that plagued Christendom. He connected division and evil repeatedly, as in one letter addressed to a generic recipient in 1328.²⁵⁹ In this form letter, he repeatedly emphasizes the duality of evil and division as a product of the Holy Roman Emperor, Louis IV of Bavaria (whom he

²⁵⁸ Of course, the two may not be immediately connected, but Sanudo expresses concern over his financial state in several of his later letters preventing his further participation in communications and travel during his later years. Sanudo wrote to Philip of France that, “I desire to come to the feet of your illustrious eminence [to further discuss the possibility of a crusade]. But my poverty prevents the execution of my wish. My coming requires that aid be graciously given by the rich.” (Roddy, 292). Roddy suggests, in turn, that Sanudo’s state of poverty reflected that he had “exhausted his father’s estate and his personal income by his many trips and activities on behalf of his project.” (Roddy, “Introductive Notes,” 53.)

²⁵⁹ Roddy, 192-204; Bongars, Gesta Dei, 304-307; the letter is addressed “Venerabili in Christo patri et domino, vel magnifici et excellenti domino etc.” Sanudo wrote three “form letters” or circular letters to be sent out to generic recipients, and likely intended to accompany different editions of the Secreta. This copy was his last (surviving) such letter, written in 1328.
refers to consistently as “the Bavarian”) and his trip to Rome, where he crowned himself emperor and, three months later, published a decree denouncing Pope John XXII a heretic and installed Pietro Rainalducci as Roman Pope Nicholas V, the last imperial antipope. The rising conflict between Holy Roman Emperor and Avignon Pope apparently distressed Sanudo greatly, and he feared a second Great Schism:

Your very great and prudent wisdom must be vexed since these evils and divisions taking place are not stopped but are continually happening among Catholics. If God in his mercy, and your reverend paternity, does not intervene, possibly as great division and injury would come about as the Greeks experienced upon separating from the Latins. However, in Lombardy are more subtle and wicked men who care not about possible division.260

He repeatedly echoes the connection between mala et divisione: the tam magna divisio et damnum of the Greeks after they separated from the Latins, the subtiles et malitios homines who do not care about divisione, and the hope of evading further mala. Sanudo pairs division with the imagery of active wickedness, damage and inherent evil, beyond any simple recognition of the fallout of internal conflict.

Sanudo saw a Christian world not only divided, but small and surrounded by a massive enemy threatening to swallow it whole. In a 1327 Sanudo wrote for the first time to Bertrand du Pouget, bishop of Ostia and Velletri and a papal legate, though apparently they had met previously in 1324 in Piacenza, where Sanudo delivered letters patent from Robert of Naples (whom he styles as the King of Sicily and Jerusalem, though he had been rejected

260 Roddy, 198; “sapientia vestra & summa prudentia habet necesse quod fatigetur, quod non accident tot mala & divisiones quae concurrunt, & sunt continuè in concursu Catholicis. Quod si Deus, sua pietate, & vestra patenitas Reverenda non praeponit manus suas, posset esse tam magna divisio & damnum ut fuit de Graecis, qui seceserunt a Latinis: quod absit; quia isti Theutonici sunt fortissimae gentes, quas melius me cognoscitis; & Lombardi etiam: sed in Lombardia sunt magis subtiles, & malitiosi homines, qui non curarent de divisione quae incurret.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 306.
by the Sicilian barons in favor of Frederick III, and Jerusalem had, of course, been lost some half a century earlier), an ordinance of safe conduct from the cardinals, and further news from the Angevin court to the bishop. He went on to write Bertrand three further times, but on this first occasion, he offered news of an attack on Negroponte by the Ottomans, news of Louis of Bavaria in Italy and ongoing chaos in Italian states, both past and present – citing the transient control that Frederick Barbarossa, and his worry over the ongoing excommunication of Christians as a byproduct of the conflict between Louis of Bavaria and John XXII. Sanudo laments the state of the world where, “it must be realized that the Christian faithful hold only about a tenth part of this world’s territory. The greater part of the rest, indeed, is held by the Saracen pagans and the other part by schismatics. Therefore it must not be doubted a little whether, since Christianity exists divided as it is, especially in Italy and Germany, the things declared above can take place.”

261 Christians, Sanudo argues, cannot afford to excommunicate and reject so many of their community when they were already so vulnerable. He casts Christians as a vulnerable minority, prey to encroaching non-Christians. 262 And he sees Christendom in a framework of geography, first and foremost: that its weakness against other religions — the pagans and schismatics — is demonstrated not in terms of the number of people who followed it, but in the amount of physical space and territory they occupied within the greater world. Christianity’s weakness was manifest in

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261 “The things declared above” were a series of historical events of the gradual success and expansion of the Turks and Tartars as well as various Christian defeats. Roddy, 259; “et est sciemendum, quod Christiani fideles non tenent nisi circa decimam partem terrae mundi hujus: residuum vero tenetur pro majori parte a Saracenis paganis, et aliqua pars a scismaticis. Quare non est modicum dubitandum, quod existente sic Christianitate divisa ut est, et maxime Italia et Alemannia, quod quae sunt superius declarata possent incurrere.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 781.

262 In this letter, Sanudo’s “schismatics” seems to refer to the Greeks — but Sanudo was conflicted, as we shall see, on whether the Greeks “counted” as Christians or not, and often referred to them as both depending upon who he wrote to.
the comparatively small amount of land Christians controlled and, implicitly, in its loss of the Holy Land. Meanwhile, the remainder of the world outside of Christendom was not controlled by similarly small but numerous competing powers. It was instead consolidated between two imminent threats — Saracen pagans and schismatics. Sanudo warns that the leader of the Tartars, Uzbeg was a *saracenus effectus* — an “efficient Saracen,” who had recently brought his army up to the very wall of Constantinople before its defeat.263

Sanudo needed to depict Christendom as such a small David against the Goliath of Saracen paganism to motivate his correspondents and demonstrate the need for a crusade. He points to Christianity’s weakness in comparison to its external threats as the necessary motivator for ending internal divisions:

> Therefore, it can be clearly seen from the preceding how Christianity endures the greatest danger in the remotest parts where Christians dwell: obviously the parts where they are neighbors with the Tartars, also in parts where they are neighbors with the Spanish Moors, and also where Christians have borders by the sea in the eastern region with the Turks, the most evil Saracens who rule almost all Asia Minor as I have related before. Thus, since they are devouring themselves, what is in the middle, that is, Italy and Germany, is not without much great distress and danger. . . Therefore it must not be doubted a little whether, since Christianity exists divided as it is, especially in Italy and Germany, the things declared above can take place.

Sanudo then offers a solution: “Wherefore, in order to abolish the [differences] and the very many evils and iniquities which have taken place thus far and as many as possible

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263 Roddy, 255; Kunstmann, “Studien,” 779-780. Full quote: “The Tartars who border the kingdom of Hungary could cross into Germany, France and also Italy and subject all to their rule. Such seems possible because the northern Tartar has under his dominion a very great multitude of warriors, also because Lord Uzbeg is an efficient Saracen;” “possent transire Tartari, qui cum regno confinant Ungariae, et in Alemanniam et Franciam ire, ac etiam in Italian, quia Tartarus ille de septentrionalibus partibus subitus dominum suum habet multitudinem maximam puggnatorum, tum etiam quia dominus ille nomine Usbecco est Saracenus effectus.” Uzbeg here refers to Ghiyas, ed-Din Mohammed Uzbeg, of the Golden Horde Mongols that neighbored Hungary — Roddy refers to the early fourteenth century as, “their golden age, and they had adopted the Moslem religion.” Roddy, 257 fn. 1.
continue to occur, I find no remedy as healing, commendable, and benign as to make peace
and to cause it to be negotiated by those close to our lord supreme pontiff.”While
Christians controlled so little of the world as a whole, their divisions only weakened them
further and enabled Turkish and Tartar victories, providing the impetus for a crusade.

A Vision of Venice and Beyond: Sanudo’s Sense of the World

In his world of divisions, Sanudo granted special attention to certain places and
regions, either because of the unique roles they played in the dynamic of division and
connection across the ‘catholic’ Catholic community, or because of their ability to serve as a
greater symbol of the state of Christianity as a whole — for each region, however, its place
in his world reflected his background as a migrant merchant and his experiences with travel.
To his native Venice he ascribed the role of connector, aggregator of distant peoples
through trade, and protector of travelers across the Mediterranean; but there was also
Negroponte, which embodied the frontier of Christendom and served as a warning of the
consequences of internal division emboldening external threats; and, of course, Acre,
Sanudo’s greatest symbol of the loss of the Holy Land and the isolation it bred in the
aftermath of losing a critical connecting city. Finally, he made Italy and its people, with their

264 Roddy, 259, 263; “igitur ex praemissis potest lucide intueri quomodo christianitas fert [sic]
periculum maximum ab extremis partibus, ubi habitant christiani, tam scilicet a partibus in quibus confinant
cum Tartaris, quam etiam a partibus in quibus confinant cum Moris Hispaniae, ac etiam ubi christiani confines
habent per mare ab orientali plaga cum Turchis, pessimis Saracenis, qui dominantur quasi universae minori
Asiae, ut praedixi. Et sic se consumendo id quod est in medio — hoc est Italia et Alemannia — non est absque
gravedine et periculo multum grandi. . . Qua de re ad exsanguenda discrimina et tam mala pessima et iniqua,
quae hactenus occurrerunt, et sunt ut plus possunt continue in concursu, nullum reperio remedium tam
salutiferum commendabile et benignum, ut pacem ponere, et ipsum tractari facere a propinquis domini nostri
summi pontificis, ut praedixi.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 781, 784. Note that Roddy translates “discrimina” as
“divisions” in his original translation, and I have substituted for this instead “differences” in order to
distinguish between “divisione” and “discrimina”.

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constant conflict and internal warfare, a mirror to the divisions within Christendom as a whole. He treated Italy as a unit (as a region, to be sure, if not as a single kingdom or country) with the potential to be unified through peace much as he longed for a unified and universal Christendom.

Like the merchants who compiled their manuals with Venice as the link between the far ends of the Mediterranean and Europe, Sanudo had a particular vision of where Venice fit into the world that was deeply shaped by his experiences in trade, migration and travel. Rather than focusing on trade relations alone to implicitly illuminate Venice’s ability to connect people through profit, Sanudo paints Venice not only as a center of trade but also as a hub of information people traded and shared alongside the spices, wines and grains in the market streets. And as a hub of information, Venice served as a “hinge of Europe,” in the words of William H. McNeill, and its people were “inveterate go-betweens,” ferrying goods and connecting peoples across the Eastern and Western halves of the Mediterranean and, more importantly, serving as primary and necessary connectors of long-distance communities and the broader Christian community.265

Writing to non-Venetians and non-merchants, Sanudo often highlighted his home’s ability to connect people and facilitate the in-person communication and interactions absent in letters, especially in its position as a jumping-off point for further journeys among those passing through the city. In their practice of providing state protection for merchant ships, Venice’s wealthiest patriarchs inadvertently created a system that garnered the city a reputation for safe sailing — a reputation that, in turn, made it into a favored spot for

departure for anyone looking to make their way across the Mediterranean. In turn, the city became a hotspot for pilgrims seeking transport to the Holy Land. Sanudo specifically cites Venice’s role in transporting pilgrims as the facilitating factor that enabled him to make particularly desirable new social ties with “many lords of the noblest German families” on their way to Jerusalem, with whom he “had great familiarity.” By attracting pilgrims, the city grew into a place to which even the noblest of German families flocked, who could then inform Sanudo on their perspectives of the conflict between the Pope and the Holy Roman Empire.

Someone living in Venice could meet and mingle with a wider variety of people than someone who lived in a less happily-situated city — and learn the freshest news as a result. Venice was, in somewhat modern terms, a cosmopolitan city. In 1328 Sanudo wrote to an untitled recipient (though the letter begins with form letter language, but he addresses specifically meeting his correspondent, and so it is unclear whether it was a direct letter or just a bog-standard letter intended to accompany his Secreta), providing news of the state of

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267 Roddy, 193: “And in this way I have learned that very many of lords of the noblest German families have landed in Venice in order to go overseas to our lord’s sepulchre. I have been on very friendly terms with them;” “& hoc modo cognovi quod quamplurimum domini ex nobilissima prosapia Alemanie applicerunt Venetiis causa transfretandi ad Sepulchrum Dominicum ultramare, cum quibus magnam habui familiaritatem,” and he goes on to elaborate: “Some of these have been from the family of the king of Bohemia, and some from the Bavarian's family, who has recently come into Lombardy. Some were knights who had dwelt with the Visconti, some in fact with Castruccio. They appear in their bearing to be very noble indeed and said, ‘We are prepared to die for the holy empire;’” “ex quibus erant aliqui de familia Regis Boemiae & aliqui de familia istius Bavariae [the Bavarian/Louis IV of the Holy Roman Empire], qui nuper in Lombardia applicuit; aliqui erant milites qui cum Vescontibus fecerant mansionem; aliqui vero cum Castrucio, qui in suis gestibus bene nobiles apparebat, qui dicebant, Nos parati sumus mori pro Sancto Imperio.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 304. The diverse peoples that Sanduo met included elites, but also people who held diverse positions in the conflict between the Holy Roman Emperor and Pope John XXII.
the world, gathered first and foremost from visitors to Venice: “I have been very much disturbed to learn, after I departed from you, the disposition of the Germans both in Germany and in the other parts where I have been: Lombardy and especially Venice. Many nations of diverse peoples mingle there.”268 This unfortunate ‘disposition’ was, it seems, their prostration “by the immeasurable tribulations of wars” that plagued Lombardy and Tuscany and the entire Italian peninsula, endangering not only Italians but all who passed through or stayed there — that is, to the Germans and others who lived in such an intermingled city as Venice. By painting an image of Venice that housed peoples of all nations, Sanudo argued for the importance of his city to the rest of Christendom. When Venice suffered from wars, all those who stayed there suffered too. A German lord ought to be invested in the peace of Italy for the Germans who stayed in Lombardy, if not for the sake of a larger “Christian”

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268 Roddy, 193 [note: Roddy uses “races“ where I have substituted “nations of diverse peoples“]; “sum quamplurimum fatigatus, postquam recessi a vestra paternitate Reverenda, scire voluntatem Alemanorum, tam in Alemania, quam in albis partibus in quibus fuerim Lombardiae, & maxime in Venetiis, ubi confluent diversarum gentium nationes.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 304. Elsewhere, however, Sanudo looks less favorably upon the “mingling of races” — he warned Philip of France that, “If it pleases your most serene majesty to arm and send a host to remote areas and a fleet appropriate for this, I believe that the affair can come to a good end, God granting. It assumes that there would not be men of extraordinary differences of race and customs and bad-mannered lords in that host. Since the devil looks maliciously upon prosperous acts and attends to such, a diversity of race and differences of manners too great can bring some ground for agitation into the army. But certainly if it seems good to send a host of different races then there must be as many armies as there are nations. The armies must be separate from one another and each army be so strong that it can defend itself from the enemy.” The advantage of Venice to provide information thanks to the passing-through of many peoples from far-off land did not extend to a favorable attitude towards all interactions; or rather, Sanudo seems keenly concerned that cultural differences were not automatically or naturally overcome by shared military goals or religion, and Venice held special privilege of enabling what seem to be more cooperative (and smaller-scale) interactions among people diverse in customs and culture. Roddy, 275; “et si serenissimae vestrae majestati placere armare et mittere gentes in diversis partibus et armatam ad hoc aperam, credo quod nihilominus in bonum finem, deo dante, posset negotium terminari, dummodo in gente illa non forent homines in quantitate notabili diversarum nationum et morum, seu etiam dominiorum se in moribus non bene portantium, quia nimia nationum diversitas morumque disparitas, procurante diabolo qui actibus felicibus invidet, possent aliquam materiam inducere in armatam. Sed si omino vidercetur gentes diversarum mittere nationum, tunc oporteret tot esse exercitus quot sunt gentes, nec non et quod exercitus sint distantes ab invicem, ac singuli exercitus sint tam fortes ut ab inimicis valeant se tueri.” Kuntsmann, “Studien,” 793-794.
identity that would have the lord seeking peace within Christendom for the sake of all Christians.

As a hub for travel, Venice facilitated in-person conversations among peoples otherwise separated by distance and the fragmenting delays of communication. Sanudo repeatedly cites Venice as a font for news in a letter to Ingramo, archbishop of Capua. In 1328 he wrote to the archbishop together with Paolino, bishop of Pozzuoli, chancellor and the counsellor, respectively, to Robert of Naples, and who both seem to have been frequent correspondents. To Ingramo, he wrote at least (among letters that survive, at least) six times, beginning in 1325 up until 1329. Eight letters, of the forty-two known, are addressed to Paolino, with his first in 1325. They seem to have remained close, since Sanudo continued to write to the bishop up until 1335, not long before his death in 1338. In this letter, he focuses on news specific to Italy, and the arrival of the “Bavarian” (Louis IV, Holy Roman Emperor and Duke of Bavaria) and his conflict with John XXII in the months after his coronation, where he deposed the pope and installed Pietro Rainalducci as Nicholas V. Sanudo recounts the conflict and claims himself as a trustworthy source on the grounds that, “reliable news at Venice reports that the Bavarian has been at Viterbo and extended his journey many days to go to Rome.” He concludes with a confident promise: “the news from all parts which can be known at Venice I have taken care carefully to reveal to you. If you do not have it quickly, do not blame me. If I had sent it by land, it could have been intercepted. So that you might get these letters more safely, I have therefore sent the news by ship.”

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269 Roddy, 204, 207; “iterum vobis significo, quod nova sunt certa Venetiis, quod Bavarus fuerat in Viterbio, & diebus pluribus dilatavit iter suum causam veniendi Romam,” and “Nova quae haberis possunt Venetiis de partibus universis, vobis significare fideliter curavi: si non ita cito habuistis, non mihi imputetis: quia si per terram misisssem, potuissent intercipi, & ideo misi eas per mare, ad hoc ut fecuris easdem litteras habeatis.” Bongars, Gesta Dii, 311-312.
cites the source for his information as being, above all, a place rather than any particular individual, granting the authority and trustworthiness for its information to the city of Venice rather than to another person.\textsuperscript{270} The advantages of doing so are multifold: first, by not attributing the information to any particular individual, Sanudo did not need his correspondent to trust the source of his knowledge, only Sanudo himself; as a corollary, he separated his source from the larger community of information he constructed through sharing his news with his correspondent, effectively keeping the relationship “closed.” At the same time, he elevated Venice’s status and position within that community, that the information was trustworthy because of the prestige of city—produced by its ability to draw in travelers—in which it was collected. In \textit{Ulysses’ Sail: an Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance}, Mary W. Helms argues that long-distance specialists—those who held expertise on places on the periphery of a community—gained prestige through their access to exotic knowledge; in Sanudo’s case, he instead transfers that prestige from the specialists to the physical space in which they gathered.\textsuperscript{271} If travelers held esteem because of their knowledge of the mysteriously foreign “beyond,” then Venice, as a gathering locus, provided special access to that knowledge. Meanwhile, by depicting Venice as a space filled with foreign people, Sanudo made his city, in a sense, foreign itself—integrating the periphery of his world into the heartland of Christendom, Venice focused people together into a single space. Sanudo made Venice simultaneously exotic and

\textsuperscript{270} He again names Venice as the source/place for news in a second letter to Bertrand, bishop and cardinal of Ostia and Velletri, wherein he notes that “very calamitous news has come to these parts” (Roddy, 210); “nova quae in istis partibus venerunt, fuerunt valde amarissima.” Bongars, \textit{Gesta Dei}, 312. I will discuss Sanudo’s merchant mentalities towards authority and information further in Chapter 6, “Trading Trust, Building Authority,” and Chapter 7, “The Messenger is the Message.”

domestic, and by engaging with outsiders he made himself into a “sedentary traveler,” with all the mystique of a long-distance specialist from the comfort of his home.

It is no wonder, then, that he loved his city for allowing him direct contact with far-flung people without having to engage in the labor of travel as he had done so often and for so long in his youth. As a travel hub, Venice enabled merchants like Sanudo to build social ties as they mixed together in wait for transport — ties that Sanudo then leveraged for his own social status (as he keenly points out, they are the *domini ex nobilissima prosapia* rather than middling-class merchants with less social heft to lend). Venice was a keystone to supporting communication between the most powerful elites who could influence the political state of the world and, perhaps, help push back the Turks and build the universal Christendom that Sanudo longed for.

Sanudo saw Venice as more than a connector of disparate peoples or a font of news and authority (though both were critical roles in Sanudo’s eyes); he also envisioned his native home as a defender of distant but vulnerable Christian cities under the looming strength of the Saracens. In a 1327 letter to Paolino bishop of Pozzuoli he writes about ongoing Mediterranean conflicts: two Venetian galleys are to be sent to Negroponte and guard the gulf with Niccolò Bellenor, due a conflict between Don Alfonso Fadrique of the Catalan company and Pietro dalle Carceri, one of the three triarchates of the island. Sanudo warns that the galleys may be insufficient for aiding in the island against their simultaneous, external threat, the Ottomans. He begs Paolino to urge Frederick III to send further aid, arguing that “you consider well how much hostility the lord doge and the commune of
Venice experience from the custody of the gulf. It brings much benefit to our lord king and his people and also benefits Negroponte. Therefore, let your reverend paternity whom I love petition our lord king on behalf of the Venetian men injured on that ship captured beyond Sicily to recompense them reasonably.”

He justifies asking for repayment to Venetian men by the King of Sicily and Jerusalem by arguing that Sicily profited from his city’s navy: that Venice patrolled the gulf of the Adriatic of its own volition, but in doing so benefitted not only itself but also other Christian kingdoms of the northern coast of the Mediterranean. These others owed a debt to the republic that they should repay through support to the Venetian mariners injured while protecting not only Venetian interests but the interests of the larger community of the Italian peninsula and its neighboring islands. In effect, their mutual gain bound them to one another, to some degree or another, as a tenuous geographical unit — a hinted common Mediterranean or Adriatic identity brought by shared political and economic interests because of their vulnerability to piracy and encroaching Muslims across the Mediterranean. Though the others never asked for this protection (and, indeed, they gave Venice so much “hostility” for it), Sanudo justified to his non-Venetian correspondents that Venice’s (apparently resented) actions and protections were valuable not only to Venice but to Christendom as a whole. In doing so, he reinvented Venice as a hero to others rather than a city acting in its own independent interests.

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272 King of Sicily and Jerusalem, Frederick III.

273 Roddy, 186; “pretera vestram reverendam paternitatem recordor quod bene videtis quantambrigam habet dominus Dux et comune Venetiarum de custodia culfi, que in tanta utilitate domini nostri Regis et sue gentis revertitur, et etiam de illa de Nigroponte. Idcirco homines Venetiarum, qui fuerunt damnutificati super illa navi que fuit capta supra Siciliam, illud quod debent habere rationabiliiter dignemini super hoc supplicare domino nostro Regi ex parte vestre paternitatis reverende et nei amore eisdem det.” Cerlini, "Nuove lettere,” 356-357.
Sanudo reiterates Venice’s role as guardian of Christendom in his form letter (addressed “to such as be lord reverend father in Christ or to such as be eminent lord father in Christ; to such as be an honorable knight, or eminent, or to an excellent lord — the classic “to whom it may concern”) he composed in 1326 shortly after his presentation of the Secreta fidelium crucis to the Pope. The letter seems to have been intended to accompany further crusade-focused open letters he had written to the Pope, and so this letter addresses much of the current state of affairs across the Mediterranean: he urges financial negotiations with the Mamluk sultan of Egypt, an-Nasir Muhammad, and describes the crumbling state of Laiazzo (the Ayas) and Negroponte in the face of continuous threats from the Ottomans. He lays out Venice’s aid in sustaining the Principality of Morea and surrounding Latin-Greek islands. He describes the principality as so besieged by that “if [these] Christian lands do not have aid, they will be lost.” But he credits their continuing survival to the Genoese Benedetto II of Zaccaria, and “especially” (maxime) his own relative, Niccolò Sanudo, duke of Naxos and Andros, as well as the Knights Hospitallers and the “commune of Venice [who] sent two galleys to the aforesaid island of Negroponte on the fourth day before the nativity of the Lord, and continually sends aid whenever it seems necessary.”

He expressed a similar sentiment in his second letter from 1330 to Bertrand du Pouget, bishop of Ostia and Velletri, and papal legate, to whom he had written earlier about the sad state of Christian dominion, he describes internal strife that had plagued Italy, Germany and other Christian

274 Roddy, 159; “si non habebunt succursum, amittentur.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 298.

275 “Et si non essent domini de Chio Zachariae Ianuenses; & maxime dominus Nicolaus Sanutus, dux Nicxiae & Andrae, & aliarum Insularum; & etiam domus Sancta Hospitalis, qui defenderunt huc usque & defendunt ad praeens quantum plus possunt, & etiam commune Venetiis quod misit duas galeas insulae Negropontis praedictae, quarto die ante Natale Domini, & continuè mittit quando videtur ei esse necesse, illae terrae & insulae non potuissent durasse.” Ibid.
kingdoms in the past and continued to do so into their own time. He sought to persuade the
bishop to work towards resolutions both in the lands directly under his purview and through
encouraging the pope towards reconciliation with the Holy Roman Empire. Turning to
contemporary Mediterranean affairs, Sanudo looks to the Aegean to demonstrate how
internal conflict weakens not only those places directly afflicted, but even the outermost
borders of Christendom, where the outermost fringes of the community tremble when the
innermost members do not support them, distracted by their own battles. He describes
Venice’s support of Morea, and connects it more broadly to their protection of the gulf and,
by the sea, Sicily and the Mediterranean:

My lord the supreme doge and the Venetian commune wrote to our
lord supreme pontiff about such wicked affronts and divisions. They
requested that he deem it fitting to make provision mercifully for the
foresaid. If it were not for my lord doge and the Venetian commune
who for a long time have sustained that country, both during the time
of his grandfather and father and in the time of his lordship after the
count of Brienne and Athens was killed, all of it would have been lost
and destroyed. It would have passed into the hands of such who
would have severely attacked that part of his kingdom and Sicily also.
Venice did not do this without great expense, labor, and shedding of
blood. So also the protection of the gulf benefits his royal majesty
[the king of Sicily] not a little.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Roddy, 255-256; “et super praedictis tam iniquis contumellis et discriminibus dominus meus dux et
commune Venetiarum scriptit domino nostro summo pontifici, quod de praedictis et circa praedita
misericorditer sua sanctitas praevidere digentur. Et si non esset dominus meus dux et commune Venetiarum,
qui longo tempore illam patriam substituit, tam tempore avi et patris ejusdem quam suae dominationis
tempore postquam interfexus fuit comes Brennae et Athenarum, illa patria tota fuisse Perdita et consumpta, et
in manus talium pervenisset, qui magis infestassent regnum suum ex illa parte quam ex parte Siciliae. Et hoc
Veneti non faciunt absque magno dispendio et labore et grandi effusione sanguinis. Et sic similiter custodia
culfi, quae non redundat in utilitatem modicam suae majestatis regalis.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 779. Sanudo
wrote several extensive letters to Bertrand du Pouget -- first in 1327, where he warned du Pouget of Italian’s
recalcitrant nature in the wake of Bertrand’s service as papal legate “negotiating” for peace by way of a
mercenary army, recouping Asti, Pavia, Piacenza, Parma and Emilia-Romagna. In the letter he begged Bertrand
to push towards peace within the peninsula, but worried that such a task would be impossible given the nature
of Italians, and would hold greater ramifications beyond the political: “for because of the excessive vices and
very wicked crimes that reign and exist in the people of Italy, it is not possible to provide spiritual leaders for
them.” [ Roddy, 164; “quoniam pro hominibus Italiae non est spirituales rectores habere, propter malitiam
superfluam, & crimina sceleratissima quae regnant & existunt in eis.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 308; note that Roddy
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Sanudo attributed to Venice alone the continued survival of Morea and beyond—and not just as a one-time defense, but rather an ongoing protection of the gulf across generations that strengthened not only Morea alone, but any regions connected or proximate to it. Protection of one part of the Christian Mediterranean was protection of the whole—and, by proxy, of Christendom. Others, however, had failed to do so because of their own internal conflicts.

Sanudo characterizes these islands as deeply fragile when isolated and independent, and suggests they can survive only thanks to the cooperative, interconnected community of Christendom as a whole. And by situating Venice (and, ever so casually, the Sanudo family) on the frontier against the looming threat of Islam, he made Venice a critical

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277 Niccolò appears again in Sanudo’s letter to an unnamed “reverend paternity” in 1329, where Sanudo describes how, “in order that everything about these events may be clearly exposed to your paternity, you should know that Lord Niccolo Sanudo, duke of Naxos and Andros, honorably went to the Greek emperor. He went with three galleys, two great ships and a smaller one, together with many soldiers, some heavily armed, and about 100 armed horsemen. He took beautiful gifts to him. I believe he did this because those who reasonably should have come to aid and assist the preservation of his dominion and the recovery of what he lost did not.” [Roddy 218; “et ut de contingentibus sint vestrae paternitati cuncta, lucia & aperta, notorietas dominum Nicolauum Sanutum ducem Nicxiae & Andreae ad Imperatorem Graecorum honorabiliter perrexisse cum tribus galeis, & duobus lignis grossis, & uno minori, & cum pluribus militibus & scutiferis: qui inter omnes, sunt circa centum homines equestres armorum; & eidem attulit pulchra dona. Credo quod hoc fecerit, quod cum non reperiat remedium & auxilium, tam in suum dominum conservando, quam in acquirendo quod amisit.” Bongars, Gesta Dei 315-16]. Marino and Niccolò were cousins through their great-great-grandfather, and Marino thought it necessary to apologize to the bishop of Caffa on Niccolo’s behalf for a military expedition against Byzantium, exhorting that, “What he has done against the empire, he did because of his youth. I intend to discuss with Lord Niccolo that he become the servant of the empire just as his
element of the ongoing survival of Christendom. This integration implicitly created an intertwined community: those Venetian sailors and soldiers who found themselves injured and captured near Sicily were injured while they served not only Venice but Sicily too. They deserved reimbursement from the Sicilian coffers that would normally be reserved for their own military — by serving in aid of Sicily, Venetian sailors became Sicilian sailors, too.

*Beyond Venice: Negroponte’s Warning Bell*

Sanudo illustrates Venice as above all a connector: a locus for travelers, a font of information and guardian of distant corners of the world, all in the service of unifying the scattered corners of Christendom, echoing the centrality of Venice as a link in the mental maps revealed in merchant manuals. But like the compilers of those guides to trade, Sanudo looked outward to the Mediterranean, and especially to major ports to the East.

Foremost in his vision was Negroponte. To him, Negroponte was not only an economic entrepôt that supported trade with Constantinople and the Crusader Kingdoms, it was a flashpoint and coal-mine canary for the stability of Christendom as a whole. Christian control of the port symbolized Christendom’s ability to withstand external threats, but Sanudo saw that possession as ever-teetering on loss — and if Negroponte was lost, it would

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predecessors were, especially his father, Lord Guglielmo, and his grandfather, Lord Marco Sanudo.” [Roddy, 119; “quod illud quod ipse iam fecit contra suum Imperium, fecit propter iuventutem: & ita intend tractare cum domino Nicolaolo praedicto, quod sit servitor sui Imperii quemadmodum sui praedecessores fuerunt, videlicet pater suus dominus Gulielmus, & avus eius dominus Marcus Sanuto.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei* 315-16]. Roddy explains “what he has done against the empire” as Niccolò’s assistance to John of Gravina in attacking the Greeks in 1325 (Roddy, 119, fn. 1) — however, Bongars dates letter itself the *Gesta Dei*, to 1324 and Roddy dates it to 1323; either Niccolò did not listen to his relative and continued in his actions against the empire, or else the letter is improperly dated.
mean the irreversible loss of a united Christendom. The island — and his fear of its loss — featured frequently in the information he shared with his correspondents.

Sanudo explains his concerns and viewpoint in another, earlier letter to Bishops Ingramo of Capua and Paolino of Pozzuoli in 1327, dedicated entirely to describing other letters and news which he had already sent or would soon send, including one in particular about Negroponte:

Among the enclosed letters is a certain letter I have written which contains the news I have about the Negroponte. Also I have explained the conditions and state of that land as best I am able and I know certainly that the city of Negroponte is a concealed burning coal which cannot be disclosed or perceived unless it fall into the hands of the Catalans. It has not yet happened, but then the fire would be exposed and would be unextinguishable. Increasing continually, it would advance. The enclosed letter makes this plain. Therefore I consider it a very great peril, greater than from any other danger I know, for it is not examined or understood as well as any other which can burden our lord king, especially as is the danger devolving from the coming of the duke of Bavaria.278

In the early decades of the fourteenth century, Negroponte teetered precariously on the edge of falling to the Ottomans— but it also wavered between Latin control and Byzantine, and between Venice and the Catalan Company of Don Alfonso Fadrique, royal vicar-general of the Duchy of Athens. The initial principality was established after the Fourth Crusade as part of Venice’s sphere of influence, though officially Verona controlled it until

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the 1260s when Byzantium regained dominion during the empire’s post-Crusade revival. In
the 1280s and 1290s, Venice helped return the island to Veronese control. By 1317,
however, Alfonso Fadrique would again remove the island from Venetian influence and
place it in the hands of the Catalan Company, a band of mercenaries originally hired by
Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II Paleologos to combat the Turks. Their subsequent
betrayal of the Emperor culminated in their seizure of the Duchy of Athens, of Thebes and
Thessaly together as the Duchy of Neopatras. They became independent vassals of the
Crown of Aragon and refused to return conquered territory to its previous Latin heirs,
despite papal demands.279

It is no great surprise that Sanudo was greatly concerned with Negroponte —
beyond its tactical significance within the trading spheres of the fourteenth century, he had
also spent considerable time there during his youth. Sanudo left Acre in 1289 and found
himself in Negroponte in service to the Venetian bailo shortly after.280 His years there in
service of his city’s government seem to have given him a special appreciation for the
nuances of politics there, and for the importance it held for Venetian interests — and thus,
for Christendom’s interests, naturally. Negroponte’s prominence within Sanudo’s letters
cannot be explained by its economic importance alone — while merchant manuals, as
discussed before, reveal no small role for the port within mercantile minds, the city generally
remained in the background compared to trade giants like Tana and Famagusta. Instead, his
focus on the city was a testament to his personal investment in the city — not unlike how

279 Kenneth M. Setto, Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388 (Cambridge: Medieval Academy
of America and Variorum Reprints, 1948), 261-301.

280 Roddy, Introduction to The Correspondence of Marino Sanudo Torsello, 28.
merchant manuals reveal the migrant experiences of their authors — and his deep fear of a
looming alliance between two common enemies to the Venetians: the Catalans and the
Turks.

Where Negroponte stood, so too held strong the remaining Aegean islands under the
Latin protective wing; but where it fell, Sanudo feared its fall would usher in the collapse of
Christian control of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. In his unaddressed form
letter in 1326, Sanudo warns that he has heard whispers from “trustworthy men” of an
imminent Turkish attack on Negroponte, and urges his recipient to push the pope to send
further galleys in support of the island on the grounds that, “If they come to the city of
Negroponte and are allied with those of the company of Catalans who hold the Duchy of
Athens, they will exist for the destruction of the city, all the island, and also other islands.”
Negroponte was the warning signal for Christian control of the Aegean, a symbol of the
ever-looming threat of the Ottoman Turks, and the domino to push forward the collapse of
Christian unity, where an alliance with the Catalan company against Venice would cause a
greater loss to all of Christendom and the Crusader States through the emboldening and
empowering of the Turks by “Christian” hands.

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281 Roddy, 159-160; “Qui si venerint ad civitatem Nigropontis, & sunt unum cum illis de compagna
Catellanorum qui tenen[t] ducatum Athenarum, ipsi sunt pro damnificando civitatem & totam Insulam, &
etiam Insulas alias.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 298.

282 Whether the Catalan company was truly “Christian,” however, Sanudo felt less certain about — as
I will discuss later in this chapter.
Past and Present: The Lost City of Acre and Lost Connections

Just as the manuals revealed a world with lingering nostalgia for Acre within the Mediterranean and Christendom as a whole, so too do Sanudo’s letters reflect his continuing emphasis on, and interest in, Acre in the decades after its fall. That importance compelled him to seek to regain the city and recreate that lost world, even outside of simply reclaiming the Holy Land. Sanudo’s vision of the world was one fundamentally entrenched in his mercantile identity, and where he sought to recreate the “lost world” of the pre-Fall Mediterranean, he often did so with a focus on the world of trade, seen through a merchant’s eye and with a merchants’ memory of profits. He references in his 1326 form letter:

A good truce should be made with them [the sultan of Babylonia, i.e. Egypt, al-Nasir al-Din Muhammad], with the provision that our lord allow Christians go and return with all the merchandise of the lands subject to the sultan except iron, arms, timber, pitch, boys and girls [slaves], and also the merchandise which was prohibited in former times. This seems to be possible and it ought to be done since it has happened thus many times when Acre and Syria were held by Christians.²⁸³

There is a certain conservativeness, perhaps even stubbornness, in his argument that treaties once possible during Christian control of Syria ought to still be possible even with its

²⁸³ Roddy, 157; “longe melius esset . . . habere cum ipsis bonam treugam: Hac conditione, quod noster dominus dimitteret, quod Christiani possess ire & redire cum omnibus mercibus in terras Soldano subietas, praeter cum ferro, armis, lignamine, pice, & pueris & puellis, ac etiam alii mercibus vetatis antiquitus. Et hoc videtur possibile posse & debere fieri: quia sic fiebat multoties quando Acon & Syria a Christianis tenebantur.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 297. Sanudo also advocated for the negotiation of the safety of pilgrims: “Moreover, our lord [the pope] could cause a nuncio to go to the sultan and negotiate that any Christian who goes to the sepulcher in Jerusalem and to the other most holy places of those parts which should be visited would be able to pass freely without the payment of duties or tolls. It is reasonable that all the aforesaid ought to be obtained from the sultan. Since merchants and merchandise would pass through freely with the good will of the church, much greater benefit would come to the sultan than does at the present time.” While Sanudo’s concern for pilgrimage was a common one in Crusade rhetoric, his framework for negotiation grew from that mercantile perspective: just as he thought the Holy Land could be won by an economic strangle, he hoped that safety for pilgrims could be negotiated by the economic carrot of profit.
loss, without the negotiating power granted by political control and physical presence. Yet Sanudo offered no real suggestion of what ought to be conceded to al-Nasir al-Din Muhammad in order to achieve these terms, except a handle of new restrictions on certain goods that provide little incentive for why al-Nasir al-Din Muhammad would accept the terms. He essentially sought to recover the trade dynamics and safety of travel that was experienced during pre-Fall of Acre times, but with none of his pragmatic predictions of mutual benefit that, elsewhere, he offers for why Christian kingdoms would cooperate.284 Sanudo looked back with an implicit nostalgia, not only for Christendom's successful control of the region, but for the economic boons that it brought.285 Where Christendom flourished, so too did trade. In seeking to regain Acre and Syria as a whole, Sanudo hoped to obtain not only the religious sites and symbols or even pieces of Christendom chipped away from the whole “unit” as it existed in a previous, pristine state; rather, his desire to retake Syria represented an effort to return the mercantile world to its previous state, and to restore the trading privileges they represented. And barring the ability to retake those ports, he

284 Perhaps Sanudo did not want to draw attention to the obvious implication: that trade, which he argues was critical for building connections, would build a bond of mutual interest between Babylonia/Egypt and Christian powers and benefit the Sultan in the same way it benefitted Christians. Instead, he focuses only on how Christians would profit.

285 That same nostalgia is visible even in the maps he collaborated on with Pietro Vesconte — Evelyn Edson notes that the maps held in the manuscript now believed to be the copy presented to Pope John (Bib. Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 2972) include a map of Acre as it stood before its fall. Edson says of the map that “of course Sanudo knew that this world had ceased to exist,” with Acre, a city made up of a medley of Christian nations, Pisans, Genoese, Venetians and Germans, representing ‘the world’ in her words. But, she suggests that “perhaps Sanudo imagined that after the recovery of the Holy Land, Acre could be restored to its former glory.” (Edson, The World Map 1300-1492, 148). Vesconte’s maps were likely informed by what Sanudo could tell him of Acre — as it stood during his stay in the 1280s; by immortalizing it in a map, Sanudo froze the city in time, visually representing a city that no longer existed in the same way that the author of the Zibaldone da Canal preserved his knowledge of Acre’s trade despite its fading relevance. Stefan Schröder, “Wissenstransfer und Kartieren von Herrschaft? Zum Verhältnis von Wissen und Macht bei al-Idrīsī und Marino Sanudo,” in Herrschaft verorten: Politische Kartographie im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit, ed. Ingrid Baumgärtner and Martina Stercken, Medienwandel - Medienwechsel - Medienwissen 19 (Zürich: Chronos, 2012), 313-334.
nevertheless sought to recraft those favorable treaties, to reforge at least part of the merchant world that he felt could be remade even in the wake of the shift in balance of power spurred by the loss of Acre.

Sanudo used Acre as a call to common history and remembrance, a tool to remind his correspondents of shared experiences, shared knowledge and shared contributions to building the city and Christendom itself. In several letters, he mentions his own experiences in the city and called upon his reader to remember it as it once stood. In doing so, he attempted to construct a shared connection and sense of Christian identity through their sense of past. He encouraged his reader to share his lingering sentiment for a whole Christendom, to reminisce in its completeness and mourn its loss. And by sharing in these memories, he could cultivate in his readers that same sense of a broken Christendom, enkindle in them the desire for a catholic Catholicism and a truly universal community. In 1326, Sanudo wrote to Guillaume Durante, bishop of Mende and count of Gevaudon, seeking to persuade the bishop of the advantages of a new crusade to the Holy Land (part of, apparently, a series of letters to curry Durante’s favor that, apparently, went unanswered). Sanudo drew on the words of Seneca, the Bible, and, notably, collective memory to in his arguments for both the need for a crusade and the profitability it could provide, to convince Durante to join his cause and argue it further in the Roman curia in Avignon. He argues against the idea that a blockade against the Holy Land would incur economic losses, and draws on his memories of Acre during its siege: “Reverend father, I bring back to your very esteemed memory and regard that the king of France kept hired soldiers and footmen at Acre to guard the city until it was lost. I saw and learned this. At that time God by his grace caused the treasury of the king of France, and also the faithful of his kingdom, to abound in
all goods and riches.” Sanudo summarizes his approach to retaking Acre, as presented in his *Liber fidelium crucis*: to retake Acre by blockade, strangling the city of food and supplies until the people cede to Christian control. And Sanudo called upon a shared memory with his correspondent to counter the argument that such an attempt would be prohibitively expensive. He assumes that they could readily apply the past to their own present: in the past, the King of France enacted such a blockade, and it only proved profitable, rather than costly. The appeal is rooted in the concept that what was once true in the past — that a blockade was profitable once before — remained true to his own time, and a blockade would yet again be a financial boon in a second attempt some thirty-five years later, much in the way he argued that the sultan of Egypt should grant the same trading privileges to Christian merchants that they once held during Acre’s Christian days.

In the same breath, Sanudo emphasized the importance of shared memory and experience in understanding the current state of things — he praised the bishop’s *praedilectam memoriam* and reminded him of events Sanudo himself “saw and learned” during his own time in Acre. The two phrases connected writer and correspondent in their shared knowledge of a lost Acre and made both Sanudo and his reader into reliable sources. They both remembered and imagined an Acre of the past upon which they could build their view of the world in the present, but they needed to trust their memories, to know that they both

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286 Roddy, 144; “si vero dubitaretur quod ista custodia, & Terrae Sanctae negotia saepius dicta forent nimium sumptuosa; Respondeo breviter & fideliter, quod non... Pater reverende, ad praedilectam vestram memoriam & reverentiam, quod vidi & intellexi, quod Rex Franciae tenebat in Acon stipendiarios milites & pedites ad custodiendam dictam civitatem, donec amissa fuit. Et tunc Deus, tun tempus, Deus, per gratiam suam, Regis Franciae aerarium, & suos etiam regni sui fideles, omnibus bonis & divitiis affluere faciebat.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 294. Note that Roddy translates “praedilectam” as “very accurate” but I have substituted “very esteemed” to reflect that Sanudo makes no clear reference to the actual reliability or exceptional accuracy of Durante’s memory, but rather *praedilectam* seems to simply be functioning as a deferential honorific.
shared the same information upon which they found their worldviews together. In referencing his memory, he also elevated his authority through experience, just as he sought to use his messengers and exclusive access to information to elevate himself. This, in turn, mirrored the rise of authority derived from experience through travel that Shayne Legassie discusses in *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, where in the late Middle Ages, the lack of information on Africa and Asia from classical sources drove people to value more recent travel literature and reports, and lend authority to travelers who could bring back rare kernels of information from abroad.288

Sanudo urged Durante, and other correspondents, to remember the past importance and profits of Acre, rooting them both in a shared view of the past that led to a common understanding of the present, and a shared goal of recreating the past in the present.289 As a result, the worldview he presented was in many ways static or resistant to deeper change. In 1329 he wrote to Pierre de la Vie, bishop of Albi, nephew to John XXII, and superintendent to the papal palace in Avignon, and offered a variety of snippets of news: the ongoing

288 Shayne Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). I will discuss Sanudo’s mentality about trust, authority and communication more extensively in the chapters on “Trading Trust, Building Authority” and “The Messenger is the Message.”

289 Other references: “Wherefore, I bring back to the memory of your sovereignty, both to father and lord, that, before that state be steadfastly continued, it would be much better to bring about negotiations with the sultan of Babylonia so that he will give up his tribute from the king of Armenia and both the land and sea fortresses of Lajazzo.” Roddy 157. “Quadere, tanquam patri & domino, ad memoriam vestrae reduco potentiae, quod antequam in statu perseveretur isto, longe melius esset facere, tractari cum Soldano Babyloniae, quod dimitteret tributum regno Armeniae, & quod reaedificari diitteret castra dei Laiaco, de mari & de terra.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 297. “Moreover, I remind your reverend paternity that you consider well how much hostility the lord doge and the commune of Venice experience from the custody of the gulf,” Roddy, 186; “preterea vestram reverendam paternitatem recordor quod bene videtis quantam brigam habet dominus Dux et comune Venetiaram de custodia culfi.” Cerlini, “Nuove lettere,” 356. “Although it may appear presumptuous for a humble servant to recall troublesome things to an exalted lord, nevertheless, sometimes it is not reprehensible for a servant to remind, nor is it judged improper for a lord to listen.” Roddy, 192. “Et licet presumptuosum appareat, seruum humilem sublimi domino ardua recordari; quandoque; tamen nee est reprehensible seruo recordari; nec domino, audire indecens iudicatur.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 304.
negotiations for papal aid against the Turks by the archbishop of Thebes, Isnard Tacconi, in 1329, the death of Doge Giovanni Soranzo and election of Francesco Dandolo, along with his hope that Guillaume, Count of Hainault would, as father-in-law to Louis of Bavaria, help reconcile the Bavarian with both the pope and the king of Sicily (though no other letters survive, Sanudo references writing him frequently in earlier letters to others, as well), and the state of Italy. In the letter, he echoes that sentiment of a static world, as he begins to write “once again” to provide news about “the very wretched state of Italy.” In discussing Italy’s trials and tribulations, he explains that, “this most destructive evil did not just begin in Italy; on the contrary, it began a long time ago. Indeed, no man can remember when it has continued as evilly as now.”290 Italy’s current drastic state was merely a continuation of problems so old that no one could even remember their origins. His vision of a slow or unchanging, almost stubborn, state of the world mirrors that same intransigent inclusion of outdated information on Acre present in merchant manuals: merchants continued to include information on crusader Acre long after its immediate usefulness had faded, speaking to a hope or expectation that the state of the world might grant it relevance again — the loss of Acre was a temporary departure from the normal state, one both Sanudo and our merchant compilers thought might be restored.

Acre also stood as a symbol of the ramifications of internal division rather than cohesion in the face of the increasing Turkish threat. In his form letter from 1328 in which he provided news of the ongoing conflicts in Italy and between John XXII and Louis of 

290 Roddy, 214; “et hoc malum pessimum de Italia, non incipit tantummodo; imo longissimum tempus est quod fuit inceptum. Verum non potest ab homine ad memoriam reduce, quod ita male steterit ut modo.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 313-314. Part of the purpose of his description of Italy was also to ask Pierre de la Vie to urge the Count of Hainault, Guillaume, also the father-in-law of Louis of Bavaria and brother-in-law to Philip IV, to intervene in the ongoing conflicts between Louis of Bavaria and the Pope.
Bavaria in connection to his crusade propaganda, Sanudo blames the loss of Acre on European conflicts, rather than on the external threat of the Turks alone: “As you know, from the Sicilian wars so many evils arose, resulting in the deaths of the most excellent king of France, Philip son of Saint Louis, Pedro of Aragon, many barons and nobles and innumerable others.\textsuperscript{291} The cost is immeasurable. It can be said that Acre and the rest of the Holy Land have been lost on account of them.”\textsuperscript{292} Without those wars, he implies, Acre would still be in their hands: a unified Christendom would be strong enough to stand against the encroaching threats of the Turks, and internal divisions alone cause external fracture, breeding weakness that allowed the Turks to prey upon Christians on the fringes of Christendom and plunge into the very heart of the Holy Land itself. Acre’s loss thus represented the inevitable culmination of strife that would lead not only to the fragmentation of the Christian world, but to the paralleled emboldening and empowering of Islam.

\textit{Italy as Christendom: Dreams of Identity and Shared Divisions}

If Negroponte was the bellwether for further risks and damage that ongoing strife could bring, and Acre’s loss stood testament to the greater consequences of internal division, then Italy embodied Christendom as a whole. Italians should have dwelling in peace by dint of their shared identity and interests, but instead they were beset by constant division, rivalry

\textsuperscript{291} Roddy explains this as a reference to the Sicilian Wars that broke out after Pope Martin IV preached a crusade against Pedro III of Aragon for his aid to the Sicilian Vespers rebellion against Charles I, “the pope granted Sicily to Charles of Valois, the younger brother of Philip III of France, 1270-1285, who led an army to capture Sicily. War ensued; Martin, Pedro, and Philip all died in 1285, as well as Charles of Anjou, though the war lasted for seventeen more years.” Roddy, 196, fn. 2.

\textsuperscript{292} Roddy, 196; “ex qua Guerra Siciliae, ut scitis, provenerunt tot mala Christianitati, propter quam mortuus excellentissimus Rex Franciae Philippus, filius Sancti Lodoyci, & Rex Petrus Aragonae, & quam plurimi Barones & Nobiles & populi infiniti; & dispendium sine mensura; & potest dici, quod Acon & residuum Terrae Sanctae propter hoc amissum est.” Bongars, \textit{Gesta Dei}, 305.
and competition. Although Sanudo saw Venice as an engine of unity, a city that brought together people from across Christendom for piety and profit alike, Italy, as a whole, was rent by divisions. Italians were plagued by political unrest, split by their independent city-states rather than connected by their religion or the common “Italianness” that, Sanudo implies, ought to bind them together, much in the way that Christianess ought to bind together Christendom against the enemies of the faith. Italy’s chaos, Sanudo claims, brought similar division to Christendom as a whole.

Sanudo treats the peninsula as a single cultural and political unit. In his 1326 letter to Guillaume Durante II, bishop of Mende and count of Gevaudon, he observes the sorry state of Italy and its impact upon the greater Christian community: “Lombardy, Tuscany, and almost all of Italy are overwhelmed by the vast tribulations of wars. Also among Christians costly spoils are damnably collected by ships on the Mediterranean Sea. The community of the faithful is perceptibly weakened from this. No wonder! The destruction of the least member of the physical body affects the whole of that body.”

293 The image of the Christian community as a physical body with Christ at its head derived from St. Augustine’s De civitate Dei, which developed the idea of an Earthly Church and then a supernatural, or unearthy Church, a “true Church, the body of Christ Himself, which subsumes and transcends all human and physical categories and phenomena in the Church Itself, divinely instituted, eternally durable, and spiritually perfect.”

294 In essence, there was a physical Church, with

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293 Roddy, 141; “Lombardia & Tuscia, & quasi tota Italia immensis guerrarum tribulationibus sunt oppressae; nec non in mari Mediterraneo bella spolia solum inter Christicolas cum navigiis damnabiliiter frequentantur: unde fidelium communitas notabiliiter infirmatur. Nec mirum: destructio minimi membri corpore naturali.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 296.

physical and geographical limitations, and then the spiritual earth that had no physical form. Both the Earthly Church and the Spiritual Church were thought of as human bodies: the pope was the head of the physical Church, controlling its direction and motion, while Christ himself was head of the Spiritual Church. Here, Sanudo treats Italy as a single limb of the body of the earthly church, one that seemed bent on destroying itself. He casts quasi tota Italia as a minus membra that hurts the corpore naturali. The alternative that Sanudo eschewed was to treat each city-state or kingdom within Italy as a limb of the body injuring a different limb; instead, the peninsula was the arm of Christendom. In this case, there is a further parallel in the pairing of a “secular” Earthly Church with the ephemeral, Spiritual Church of Augustine, and the pairing of physically-bound and geographically defined “limb” of Italy (as a geographic region) with the geographically-unbound body of Christendom made up of believers untied to any particular space.

Sanudo also spoke of Italy as a kingdom divided against itself in his 1329 letter to Pierre de la Vie: “Such is to be reasonably expected because Italy fulfills the word spoken by Jesus Christ our Lord in the gospel, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself will be abandoned, and house will fall upon house.’” Sanudo treated Italy as a “kingdom divided against itself,” though it lacked any political unity that justified talking about it as a literal kingdom. Instead, his kingdom is one of mutual obligations to one another among Italian polities, in a mirror to his larger desire to treat Christendom as a religious, unified kingdom despite its own political disunity.

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295 Roddy, 213-214 [note I have added “reasonably” for additional precision]; “& rationabilerie sic debet esse, quia in Italia impletur quod ilum quid dicturn est in Evangelio per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum: omne regnum in scriptum divariscum desolabitur, & domus supra domum cadet.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 313.
Sanudo suggests that religion forged the fundamental bonds between its followers, which then bore fruit in further cultural and economic ties. But for Italy, though he gathered together the shattered peninsula in parallel to Christendom’s unity, he did so not on the grounds of shared theology alone, but instead built a shared identity of “Italianness” founded in the land itself: in the shared experiences, behaviors and qualities of life that were inherent to all of Italy as a region. For all his concerns of divisions, of broken ties and severed alliances, his focus on Italy as a single entity is a work of melding together parts in rhetoric, if not in reality — that is, a fear of the real effects of divisions (the loss of territory, of trade, of Christian lives) led him to nurture the rhetorical ideal of shared community, extending it to other communities beyond Christendom itself.

Echoing his earlier depiction of Italy as a single kingdom, Sanudo repeats the same quotation in describing the state of Italy to Bertrand du Pouget, bishop of Ostia and Velletri, in his lengthy second 1330 letter, providing more detail, which in turn reveals the grounds on which Sanudo ties together all of Italy and Italians based on the land’s qualities that in turn fed into shared experiences among all Italians:

Throughout almost all the land of Italy one can be maltreated, and a person travels by sea at great peril. Many corsairs are on the sea: particularly the Genoese and also Sicilians. The most excellent king of Jerusalem and Sicily cannot successfully restrain his people from rushing eagerly to commit great evils against both merchants and pilgrims. Very great famine and want exists throughout almost all of Italy. The exception is the land of the aforesaid most excellent king. And thus ‘unfortunate [or accidental] deaths’ can be called natural or normal, since death happens when there is famine and want. It begins with the lower classes and the air becomes contaminated. Therefore, the rich die like the poor and the lands are thus depopulated. Fewer
strong men remain so that great danger can come about, as is said below.\textsuperscript{296}

Repeatedly, Sanudo emphasizes “all” Italy as a single unit: that one can be mistreated \textit{per totam quasi Italiam}, that great famine exists \textit{per Italiam quasi totam}. And Sanudo engages in similarly drastic imagery in his 1329 newsletter about the state of Italy to Pierre de la Vie. He informed the bishop that, “Not only are there tribulations, distresses, hunger, and famines in the land, but also on the sea.”\textsuperscript{297} In both letters, Sanudo invokes the common experiences in Italy to reveal the universal properties of the region as basis for treating it as a single entity. Those common experiences come from the elements themselves: water, earth, air. Sanudo emphasizes how “all the land” shares in the strife, hunger and warfare that defines Italy as a single region. Those who passed through Italy would be unable to escape its dangers by circumventing through safer places or routes, giving a uniformity to Italy that justified

\textsuperscript{296} Roddy, 242; “per terram male potest iri per totam quasi Italian, et etiam per mare ingreditur cam magno periculo, tot cursarii sunt in mari, et maxime Januenses interiores et exteriores, et Siculi etiam. Et excellentissimus rex Jerusalem et Siciliae non bene potest cogere gentem suam, quin irruant ad mala maxima facienda iam mercatoribus quam pellegrinis. Et est maxima fames et charistia per Italian quasi totam, praeter in terra excellentissimi supradici regis. Et sic accidentalia possunt quemadmodum appellari naturalia, quia penes famem et charistiam accidit mortalitas. Et incipit a minuto populo, et sic corrupitur aer. Quare mortuuntur divites ut pauperes, et sic terrae evacuantur gentibus, et remanent minus fortes, quod posset periculum maximum generare, ut inferius decetur.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 770. Note that Roddy translates “Et sic accidentalia possunt quemadmodum appellari naturalia, quia penes famem et charistiam accidit mortalitas,” as “what is extraordinary can be called ordinary for death occurs in the presence of famine and want,” but I have altered the translation to capture that Sanudo considers the events “innate” or natural as well as ordinary. Sanudo also emphasizes the importance of travel and pilgrims for bringing wealth to Italy; where Sicilian corsairs preyed on pilgrims who were ostensibly non-Italian, it still harmed the Italian economy because of the wealth those pilgrims brought with them: “In addition, the Italians, especially Romans, and the lands around them have a particular grievance. Pilgrims laden with gold and silver, especially from northern lands, can no longer come because so many have been killed because of the Italian wars and divisions. They were spending their riches in Italy and Italians became rich from the gold and silver they left.” Roddy, 243; “praeterea quoddam gravamen habent Italiae homines, et maxime Romani, et terrae circumstantes illis, quod pellegrini qui consueverant ire Romam in maxima quantitate, et maxime de partibus septentrionalibus, et veneient pleni auro et argento et illud offerebant et expendebant in partibus illis — et sic illud aurum et argentum in Italia remanebant, de quibus Italiae pinguescebant.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 770-771.

\textsuperscript{297} Roddy, 214; “non solum sunt tribulationes & angustiae, fames & caristiae in terra, sed etiam in mari.” Bongars, \textit{Gesta Dei}, 312.
treat ing it as a single entity defined by chaos. Moreover, the uniform condition of the land produced uniform experiences: anyone passing through is “maltreated,” with tribulations, distresses, and famines, and these were “natural” or “ordinary” — that is, what should be unique or exceptional are instead a shared, universal experiences for those within its boundaries.298

Rather than defining the limits of Italy by geographical boundaries — the Adriatic, the Alps, the Mediterranean — Sanudo considered the boundaries defined by experiences of travel. Strife on land paralleled the dangers at sea, with that same universality. A person journeyed by sea at great peril — a sea that is, unsurprisingly, peopled by Italians that prey wickedly upon “both merchants and pilgrims.”299 By specifying that merchants and pilgrims alike suffer from these predators, Sanudo establishes that the experiences shaped by water were not unique to any particular class, group or community, but instead shared by any who dipped their toes into the waters surrounding the Italian peninsula. In both letters he assimilates land and sea: there is danger everywhere — and “Italy” as a region extends, with all its divisions and strife, into its surrounding waters.

The chaos of the land was in the air itself, for Sanudo iterates that, “it [famine and want] begins with the lower classes and the air becomes contaminated. Therefore, the rich die like the poor and the lands are thus depopulated. Fewer strong men remain so that great danger can come about.”300 Suffering was a plague, an infection in the air, and all who

breathed could not escape its taint, building both the inescapability of suffering and also the
universality of it: even where culture and economies were distinct among Italian cities and
regions, they nevertheless all shared in the anguish that hung like a miasma over the entire
peninsula. Air transcends the limits of geography — and of class; much as pirates by sea
threatened merchant and pilgrim alike despite their different purposes in travel, famine and
want oppressed men rich and poor alike through the air.

Those universal experiences also accompanied a more “universal” personality or set
of characteristics amongst Italians as a people. Sanudo despaired that Italians seemed
stubbornly resistant to pacification, and historically inclined to conflict amongst themselves.
In that same letter to Bertrand du Pouget, he describes the Italian character, and warns the
bishop to take care during peace negotiations between Emilia and Flaminia: “Although all
Italians use mellifluous words and are a very wary and secretive people, more than any other
Italians, the people of Emilia and Flaminia are the most wary and use sweeter words;” he
goes on to claim that, “they have one thing in their hearts, another however on their mouths.
Indeed honey flows forth entirely from their lips; however, in their hearts they produce
venomous thoughts. They truly esteem their own good greater than the common good. I
speak with deference. Although they have given dominion to your paternity, it must not be
believed that you would long remain their lord.” 301 Though he was warning Bertrand
particularly about Emilians and Flaminians, he makes it clear in the letter that their

301 Roddy, 225; “nam quamvis Italiani omnes verbis utantur mellifluis, et sint gentes multum
cautissimae et coopertae, hii de provincia Emiliae et Flaminiae antedictis super omnibus Italiae sunt cautissimi
et verba habent alii dulciora... ac etiam moram trahere, ex eo quod unum in corde habent, aliud vero in ore:
mel enim in ipsorum labis transducitur undique, in ipsorum vero cordibus venenata cogitamina proferuntur.
Ac ipsi vere sunt qui magis diligunt bonum proprium quam commune. Et reverenter loquendo, non est
credendum, quod vestrae paternitati tradiderint dominum, ut diu eorum dominus maneritis.” Kunstmann,
“Studien,” 757-758.
characteristics were applicable to *Italiani omnes* who were wary, secretive and deceptive. He emphasizes again that his descriptions applied not only to the particular regions’ citizens, but to all Italians, saying that he “speaks thus of Italian men.”

And so Italians were uniformly deceitful, sickly sweet in persuading others of their pure intent while holding only sweet poison in truth, selfish and manipulative. While this view of Italians as a group is somewhat dim (to say the least), it is nevertheless important that he grants them, in essence, a shared set of behaviors and customs that hint at a culture common to all Italians, albeit one founded in their apparently natural inclinations to conflict, deceit and shortsightedness. Not only were the external experiences of suffering universal to all who passed through Italy, rooted in the common elements of the land, sea and air itself across the entire peninsula, unfettered by any formal boundaries, but the people themselves shared a common culture, an ill nature universal to Italians as a group.

This created further problems for the peninsula: Sanudo blames the shortsightedness, wickedness and warring nature of Italians for the region’s poor state. In his 1330 letter to Bertrand du Pouget, Sanudo describes how the very characteristics of Italians themselves shaped the conditions of Italy: “From this your reverend paternity can give discerning attention to the conditions created by Italians: how they are strained because, driven to obtain honors and dominions, they do not foresee what can happen to them afterwards.”

The imagery here contrasts Sanudo’s other sentiment that earth, sea and land made the experiences of dearth and famine universal and normal across the Italian peninsula.

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and that the regions’ problems were entrenched in the very nature of the land itself — but instead he argues for a terraforming image of the peninsula: while the elements themselves conspired against the Italians, it was only a response to the shaping force Italians had upon the land. Their problems were of their own making due to their inability to see the long term beyond their immediate desires and their wicked actions that made it impossible for the church to guide them into healing.304

Sanudo’s vision of a universal and united Christian community required that he collate politically, economically and culturally disparate regions into a single, cohesive entity. To Italy, he applied the same principles to a similarly disparate but smaller region. Sanudo’s letters predate the Italic league of 1454 or Francesco I Sforza’s rhetoric of a northern Italy undisturbed by northern European influence by well over a century but nevertheless speak to concerns over the peninsula as a cohesive unit peopled by “Italians” that began with murmurs in Dante’s De vulgari eloquentia.305 In Living on the Edge in Leonardo’s Florence, Gene Brucker points to Machiavelli as the first to imagine a greater Italian political alliance, stating that, “When, at some distant time in the future, the inhabitants of Lombardy and Sicily feel that they are brothers, that they belong to the same community, then the terminus of that

304 Sanudo’s belief that Italians, through their shortsighted nature and impulse to self-enrichment and conquest and conflict among themselves, have caused tribulations throughout the entire peninsula is a sentiment mirrored in the words of one Groundskeeper Willy from the popular television show The Simpsons: “They’re natural enemies ... just like Englishmen and Scots, Welshmen and Scots. Or Japanese and Scots. Or, Scots and Scots. Damn Scots, they ruined Scotland!” Conflict among Italians was part of their intrinsic nature as a people, and, as a consequence, Italians were ruining Italy.

long and tortuous route, first charted by Machiavelli, will have been reached.”

Interestingly, Machiavelli adopted the same language of an injured body to describe Italy as Sanudo did, arguing that, the peninsula needed to “heal her wounds and put an end to the plundering…cure her of those sores which have been festering for so long.”

Brucker concedes that the idea of a distinct Italian community originated well before Machiavelli. But he argues that it did not fully flourish until the fifteenth century, where humanists began to treat Italy as a place “set apart from and superior to the rest of Europe by virtue of its Roman inheritance and its revival of classical literature.”

Sanudo’s sense of “Italy” was not based in any notion of a common Roman heritage or classicalism. Instead, a century before humanism’s “Roman Italy,” Sanudo characterized the “Italian” identity in their shared cultural flaws, struggles and economy. Sanudo was hardly an inventor of the concept of Italian unity, but he was certainly an early adopter and, like Dante just before, and Machiavelli after him, was similarly invested in the political ramifications of disunity and internal conflict in the singular community of “Italians.”

**Merchants, Trade and Travel: Vehicles of Connections**

One of Sanudo’s greatest concerns about Italy’s disunity and warfare was his conviction that its welfare impacted the rest of Christendom — not only in a symbolic sense of “the injured limb of the body,” but in the more concrete ramifications of Italy’s role as a

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308 Brucker, “From Campanilismo to Nationhood,” 43.
center of trade and trade’s ability to build connections. When Italy was not at peace, no 
kingdom in Christendom could be considered truly at peace, and everything that harmed 
Italy harmed other kingdoms — in no small part because the ever-touching tendrils of trade 
and merchants reached into every corner of Christendom. Where one piece of Christendom 
suffered, the whole suffered. Sanudo repeatedly stresses how strife in one region hurt others 
elsewhere, even where they were not immediately or obviously affected, because of the 
interconnectivity of the Christian world from his perspective. And here, too, his mercantile 
background informed both his understanding of and desire for interconnectivity within 
Christendom: he cites, repeatedly, the importance of the safety of merchants, the protection 
of travel, and the role of trade in connecting far-off places together to create that cohesive, 
unified Christendom. In the end, Sanudo frames most of his perceived fractions, divisions 
and connections in terms of their impact on trade — Christendom was divided wherever 
dangerous travel inhibited trade, and Christians could come together and achieve a truly 
universal community by ensuring the safe transportation of people and merchandise. By 
casting trade as a vector for unity, he transformed merchants into connectors who acted in 
service of God, with their professions an act of devotion.325

Christendom, in Sanudo’s eyes, was shrinking and collapsing thanks to the external 
threat of the Turks, but he held a corollary concern for the internal threat of strife between 
Christians. A truly catholic Christian world, he repeatedly implies, could not exist so long as 
Christians divided themselves with infighting, preventing the creation of a universal 
community that could withstand external threats. This internal division inhibited those safe

325 As long as, of course, they were trading with the ‘right’ people — as we will see later, Sanudo also 
connects trade with being a “bad” Christian, or even a non-Christian, where it was constructed ties with the 
wrong people — Muslims and pirates.
journeys, especially of merchants, that facilitated the construction and interconnection of long-distance communities. In his letter to Bertrand du Pouget, bishop of Ostia and Velletri, he warns:

Wherefore, your reverend paternity is able to know the very bad state of Christianity, especially in Italy. A man cannot travel over the land except in very great danger nor by sea because the Savonese and Sicilians cause very great dangers to the merchants. Also the most excellent king of Jerusalem and Sicily cannot satisfactorily bring his people together in order to avoid bringing damage to his friends. Wherefore, not only do people of Italy suffer damage from its very bad condition, but also the kingdom of France and the rest of the Christian kingdoms. For cut off from them is the merchandise which they have been accustomed to collect and carry over diverse parts of the world to the aforesaid kingdom.

The connection between internal strife and safe travel, and subsequently safe trade and the mutual success of Christian kingdoms, is clear: Sanudo saw Italy as divided by its warfare and piracy, and the fallout of that warfare extended to beyond the Alps thanks to the impact on travel and a shared economy. The threats here, too, are fellow Christians — the Savonese and Sicilians — leading to that “very bad state of Christianity.” He feared not only for Italians, or Venetians, but the state of Christianity as a whole, and the “rest of the Christian kingdoms.”

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326 Though perhaps this feeling was not mutual, since Sanudo laments in one letter that, “although I have written two other letters to your most excellent reverend paternity, and I have received no response from them, their bearers reported that your praiseworthy lordship received them graciously.” Roddy, 223; “cum vestrae reverendissimae et excellentissimae paternitati alias duas litteras scripserim, et de praedictis responsionem aliquam minime recepissem, praeterquam a portitoribus praedictarum relatu quorum plenius intellexi, quod vestra dominatio commendabilis gratiose recepit.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 755.

327 Roddy, 167; “quare videns statum pessimum Christianitatis, & maxime Italiae, vt scire potest vestra paternitas Reuerenda, quia per terram non potest homo ire nisi cum maximo periculo, nec per mare, quia isti Saonenses & Siculi inferunt damnum maximum mercatoribus: & etiam excellentissimus Rex Ierusalem & Siciliae, non bene potest cogere gentem suam, quod non inferat damnum amicis suis: vnde, non solum Italiae homines damnum recipiunt de statu suo pessimo, sed regnum Franciae & alia regna caetera Christianorum, propter mercimonia quae consueuerunt portari & conducui ab eis per diversas partes mundi ad regna praedicta.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 309.
The safety of travelers impacted first and foremost, by this account, the merchants traversing Christendom to connect the kingdoms to one another; where merchants could not go about their business without threat from piracy, it harmed not only those merchants, but also the kingdoms with which they would conduct their trade. Sanudo claims, then, other Christian kingdoms had incentive to protect foreign merchants against their own civilians, to facilitate trade and the construction of a long-distance community. Sanudo’s chastisement of the king of Sicily and Jerusalem to Bertrand du Pouget, bishop of Ostia and Velletri— that the king “cannot satisfactorily bring his people together in order to avoid bringing damage to his friends” — is one of the few moments in which Sanudo directly expresses frustration against a fellow Christian and ruler, at precisely the moment where the king’s failure to control his own people endangered the safety of trade and merchants on the Mediterranean.

Sanudo stresses Italy’s role in facilitating trade to others regions, parallel to Venice’s ability to gather travelers: when merchants from Italy could not travel safely, other kingdoms suffered, “for cut off from them is the merchandise which they have been accustomed to collect and carry over diverse parts of the world to the aforesaid kingdom.” Like a prism, Italy gathered light — merchandise and profit — together from scattered and unreachable parts of the world to redirect it all into Christendom. Venice’s status as an entrepot for trade and launching point for Mediterranean journeys meant it gathered together goods and people alike, and the information of foreign lands that Sanudo would, as we will see in “Trading Trust, Building Authority,” try to use to construct new bonds and strengthen established acquaintances. Sanudo then identifies all of Italy with the merchants who, like Sanudo himself, gathered in the peninsula, concentrating their merchandise from the Mediterranean, and then spread out across Europe.

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Sanudo feared that piracy and internal conflict inhibited trade and the construction of a universal Christendom, but he also saw a symbiotic relationship between peace and trade: trade helped create fresh connections and gave kingdoms a motive to resolve their differences and wars — or help negotiate peace in other regions besides their own; but, in turn, peace and strengthened connections between previously separated polities helped to foster trade — which would, of course, then help further intertwine them.

Peace served everyone’s interests by encouraging the revival of trade with safe travel. It would still be in one party’s interest to accept an “unfavorable” treaty with an enemy because they would still benefit in the long term once trade flourished. Sanudo cites this connection in his 1328 letter to Ingramo, archbishop of Capua and chancellor to Robert of Naples, Sanudo offers news from Venice: the death of doge Giovanni Soranzo and election of Francesco Dandolo, and, especially, the newsworthy peace between previous combatants that had been inhibiting trade. Sanudo notes the rippling benefits of the end of the conflict: “as a result of the aforesaid peace, merchants with their merchandise move faster to Venice. Commerce was quite inactive as a result of the aforesaid war and the goods did not move.”

This newfound peace was not, unfortunately, the work of the king of Sicily and Jerusalem, who still could not control his people who preyed on Italian merchants and slowed their trade (Sanudo tactfully does not mention them to the chancellor), but instead was the resolution of conflict in Germany between Frederick the Handsome of Hapsburg, Otto of Austria, Charles Robert of Anjou and John of Luxemburg. German merchants would flourish thanks to their fresh access to Venice, locus of trade, but Capua and Sicily

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328 Roddy, 211; “et sic propter praedictam pacem, mercatores & mercimonia currunt multum Venetiis, quae multum steterant propter guerram praedictam, quod non currebant.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 313.
still suffocated under the threats of piracy. Sanudo details the exchange of fortresses, territory and military support against mutual “pagan” enemies that enabled the final peaceful resolution. The conflict occurred entirely abroad, within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire, but the fallout of the conflict affected the transport of goods and merchandise, rippling damage into Italy even though the main conflict was limited to foreign kingdoms.

Sanudo linked the communities and interdependence created by trade and travel with the concept of a universal Christendom: trade between regions allowed Christian kingdoms to develop mutual ties, strengthening the Christian community through shared profit but also through shared investment in peace among Christians. The King of Sicily may not have cared about warfare in Northern Italy, which occurred outside his own direct kingdom, but because of their dependence upon Italian trade, Sicily instead had an active interest in attaining peace in Italy — and that same peace fostered not only trade, but Christianity itself by creating a harmonized Christian community united against the threat of the Turks. He makes this concept most clear in another one of his letters to Ingramo, archbishop of Capua and chancellor to Robert of Naples, in 1325. He regales Ingramo with news of northern Italy, with its constant warfare, and of Mediterranean, with the growing alliances of the Catalans with various Greeks against the Albanians. At the same time, he tries to persuade Ingramo, for the first among many times, to bring Robert to see the need for a new crusade, not least because he holds the titular claim to Jerusalem, the growing threat of the Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean and the king’s eminent wisdom in matters related to the Holy

\[329\] Specifically, the “against the pagans who live in the Livonian areas.” Roddy, 211; “Liuoniae contra paganos, qui confinant in partibus illis.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 313.
Land. Sanudo goes further and plies to Robert’s obligations to his own people and their interests, in addition to the first three, less self-interested reasons. He elaborates extensively on his concerns:

These wars in Lombardy and in Tuscany not only ruin these lands; but also other Christian kingdoms receive great injury. The lord king of France and his kingdom, the lord king of England and his kingdom, and likewise the Germans and Lorrainers together with other kingdoms suffer not a little loss. For the trade which used to be transacted by Lombards and Tuscans is already falling off. So that these things may be more manifest to your senses, let your distinguished intelligence know that because of the aforesaid wars, and especially, because of the trouble the city of Florence has had concerning the cargo of nine Venetian galleys which have been loaded with its share of wool, the merchants in Brabant [part of Belgium] are being injured to the extent of 35,000 gold florins. . .

There is more apart from the loss received from the merchants' other general merchandise flowing to Venice from whatsoever place. This loss spreads itself more widely. The magnificent kingdom of our lord king of Jerusalem and Sicily also receives great injury to its richness. Because of the depression of the Germans and the Lombards resulting from these wars, trade in olive oil, salted meats, cheese, almonds, figs, cumin, and other products is withdrawn and they do not have their usual export.330

Sanudo goes into greater detail on the negative financial impacts the conflicts in Lombardy and Tuscany have had upon the greater Christian community: 35,000 florins lost to

330 Roddy, 133; “istae guerrae Lombardiae & Tusciae, non solum terras ipsas damnificant; imo Christianorum regna caeter inde recipient magnum damnum. Dominus Rex Franciae, & regnum suum; dominus Rex Angliae & Regnum suum; Alemanni similiter, & Lorenæ, eo quod mercationes quæ soebant per Lombardos & Tuscos fieri iam decidunt, detrimentum non modicum cum regnis alius patiuntur. Et ut sensibiliter ista melius pateant; Sciat vestra prudentia circumspecta, quia propter guerras praedictas, & specialiter propter grauamen ciuitatis Florentiae in onere IX galearum Venetarum, quæ fuerunt oneratae pro parte de lana, hoc anno in Barbantia damnificantur mercatores in XXXV millibus flororum auri, & ut experts asservent, bene ultra; absque damno recepto de alius mercurioniis generalibus mercatorum undecunque, Venetiis confluuentibus, quod multo latius se diffundit. Regnum etiam praeclarum domini nostri Regis Ierusalem & Sicilæ, recipit damnum magnum de pinguedium videlicet quæ inde extrahitur, oleo, carnibus salitis, caseo, amigdolis, ficubus, cumino, & rebus aliis, quæ propter Alemannorum & Lombardorum depressionem, pro istis guerris, solitam expeditionem non habent.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 293.
Brabant merchants due to problems between Venice and Florence, and more besides that from the same loss, and Sicily itself is hurt not only in broad terms of losing “goods” but instead Sanudo specifically lists the trades harmed by conflict in Lombardy: olive oil, salted meats, cheese, almonds, figs, and cumin, among others. Damages are specific, here, rather than just a broad notion that damages to Italy ripple out across all of Christendom; Sanudo names exports stifled by conflict and cites exact totals lost in profit. Meanwhile, the harm inflicted is both widespread and similarly detailed. Abandoning vague gestures to a community of the faithful weakened by internal conflict, Sanudo points to specific regions and specific losses incurred by Italian inner-conflicts, all because of the trade transacted by Lombards and Tuscans. From some of the northernmost reaches of Christendom in England to the southernmost tips of Christendom, conflict in Italy damaged trade everywhere.

Sanudo focuses on the economic ties and interdependence developed through Italian merchants’ role as suppliers to cismarine Christians. In doing so, he belies the deep influence his mercantile background had on his about Christendom. Sanudo frames his worldview around connections and division, unification and fracture: the desire for a universal Christian community and the fear of further isolation, separation and loss of connections within the community. This conception, not unique in itself, was nevertheless uniquely shaped by his identity as a merchant — the connections and separations he saw everywhere were both byproducts and enablers of trade, which linked networks across political, linguistic and cultural boundaries to construct long-distance communities. Trade, like Christianity itself,
created a shared community where its members all mutually benefitted from the strength of others and linked them inextricably to one another. Damage to one part was damage to the whole, and so acting to protect another was still acting to protect oneself. In this perspective, trade was symbiotic with Christianity: Sanudo leaned on mutual trade interests to persuade his correspondents that a Crusade would benefit them economically by bolstering their neighbors and beating back the Church’s enemies that did not immediately threaten them but nevertheless damaged them through the slowing of trade and travel.

And Christianity, in turn, offered a tool for growing and nurturing trade: the assurance that a religious Crusade would return safe travel and lush trade to regions wherein it was too dangerous to transport goods with any confidence. In his 1325 form letter that accompanied copies of the *Liber fidelium crucis* sent out to persuade others of his cause shortly after its presentation to the pope in 1321, Sanudo names a Crusade as a solution not only to the external threat of Islam that had lost Christendom critical entrepots like Acre, but also as a solution to internal strife and division: “‘If this business [of retaking the Holy Land] be begun, the quarrels and disputes, the plunders and murders would cease. The discords would be settled. Prosperous conditions would replace the other evils. Commerce now depressed by which both the church and the secular kingdoms were supported would return to its former condition. The hazards of wars, previously examined, would stop; these have already made the community of the faithful extraordinarily weak— both in wealth and in population.’”332 To obtain peace, he argued, one must go to war. And war, in turn, would revive the trade that allowed Christendom to thrive.

332 Roddy, 124; “per quorum negotiorum inchoationem cessarent lites & iurgia, spoliations & homicidia; torraramque; discordiae sedarentur; & in malis aliis succederet prosperitas opportuna: subtractionesque; mercationum, per quas tam ecclesia quam regna secularia fouebatur, pristinum direcent ad
Underpinning his desire to retake the Holy Land was the fundamental idea that the process of retaking the Holy Land would resolve internal conflicts, that where Christian kingdoms and rulers share a goal against an external threat or loss, their own internal conflicts will fade. His beliefs were not wholly unfounded, of course, given that the Third Crusade’s inception began with Gregory VIII’s proclamation that the loss of Jerusalem was divine punishment for Christendom’s sins, and specifically for constant intra-Christian conflict. The proclamation, in turn, (perhaps) spurred Phillip II of France and Henry II of England to finally seek peace after decades-long tension and conflict. Though, as Riley-Smith points out in *The Crusades: Idea and Reality 1095-1274*, the peace was perhaps not as peaceful, nor as directly tied to crusade preaching, as the timeline would immediately suggest: peace was negotiated between Philip II and the by-then dying and soundly-defeated Henry II only after he refused a previous peace negotiation that shifted the alliance of his son, Richard the Lionheart, to Philip II’s side after Philip suggested Richard marry his daughter Alys and be named heir to both kingdoms. Henry II, at that point suffering from a bleeding ulcer, was caught by surprise when the two attacked together, and after he fled to his castle at Chignon, he negotiated a full surrender that gave Richard the kingdom. Henry then promptly died. Richard and Philip II, however, swiftly moved to crusade afterwards.333

While the connection between Gregory VIII’s attempts to reconcile Philip II and Henry II and their *actual* reconciliation are tenuous at best, the rhetoric of crusade as an opportunity to end internal conflict in favor of combatting an external threat were seeded

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well within the repertoire of preaching crusade by the twelfth century. If Christendom was beset by divisions and strife, Islam presented itself as an opportunity to convince the limbs of the body to stop attacking themselves and turn to a mutual purpose, which would in turn allow trade and safe travel to flourish and further unify and build connections within Christendom and encourage kingdoms to cooperate for mutual economic benefit as well as the simple spiritual development offered by crusade.

*Liminal Identities: The Community of Christendom and Its Quasi-Members*

As Sanudo imagined a universal community of Christians and a world defined by the boundary between Christians and non-Christians, he wrestled with several groups and communities that had more liminal or ambiguous status. These people were “not quite us” but also “not quite them” and Sanudo intermittently acknowledges the grey space they existed in and the permeable boundaries of identity that they transgressed. Three groups in particular seem to have occupied a liminal space in Sanudo’s mind; he could not quite decide if they were part of his idealized, larger community, or if they were to be rejected and excluded as a whole: first, the Greeks, those who had once been part of a larger, unified (at least within Sanudo’s view) Christian community but whose split with Latin Christendom made them a symbol of internal division that ultimately became external; second, those who term “Faithless Christians,” members of Christendom whose actions — and, especially,
their trade — divided or weakened Christendom as a whole and thus precluded them from being full members of the Christian community; third, the Catalans, who perplexed Sanudo by their adoption of both Christian and Saracen behaviors in an era where actions expressed religious membership, and whose allegiances led them to work with and against Christians as often as they worked with and against “the Other.”

The Greeks:

Foremost among the liminal identities that troubled Sanudo were the Greeks who followed non-Latin rituals yet still ostensibly hewed to the same God and belief as those in Venice. Indeed, Venetians were keenly aware of the difficult balance between including and excluding Greek adherents, often playing a balancing act of allowing their beliefs and rites in the territories they controlled, seeking special tolerances and permissions for Greeks under Venetian dominion from the pope while nevertheless limiting their opportunities for control and authority.336 Venice often stood on the frontier of Greek-Latin interactions and often asked the pope to recognize as much, to allow Greek rites, liturgies, and even ecclesiastical hierarchies to persist in the ostensibly Latin state.337 Sanudo’s time with his brother, the Venetian bailo, in Negroponte from 1322 to 1323 must have left him keenly aware of the complex relationship between Venice and her imperial territories — territories which were often demographically dominated by Greek Christian majorities and primarily used as passing-through ports for trade. The bailo, responsible for negotiating between the three


337 Ibid., 166.
triarch powers (the dalle Carceri, the Catalans, and the Ghisi, who controlled Chalkis, Karystos and Oreos, respectively) knew the delicate balance of power between native Greeks and the Latins who held dominion over the territory. His time abroad in service of his homeland shaped the way Sanudo saw Greeks as both Christian and yet not full members of the community, and how he fully understood the challenges involved in bringing them into the fold.

Sanudo expressed — at least rhetorically — deep concern over the schism between the Roman and Greek Catholics, whose rift represented the widescale and lasting conflicts that could birth from division. In 1334 he wrote to Philip VI of France, whom John XXII had named commander to a crusade in 1333 (the crusade was to be planned together with Edward III and was cut short by the advent of the Hundred Years’ War between them). Sanudo wrote to advise the king and commander about the potential for a union between the Greek and Latin churches on the request of an unnamed, “most honorable reverend man,” as a key component to success in a new crusade (though it was not Sanudo’s first letter to the king, since he references an earlier letter sent a few months prior, with an unknown topic). Sanudo summarizes the condition of Greek Christians in various territories: though they controlled little territory, they were nevertheless a large population. Reunion would not garner Christendom much in the way of territorial control but would earn many souls. Ending the schism between the two, he argues, would serve as “the source and


foundation for weakening and completely crushing the infidels.” To accomplish this reunification, Sanudo frequently communicated with Greek correspondents, attempted to forge new ties with the Greek emperor (as discussed in the previous chapter), including several visits in person to Constantinople, and tried consistently through those communications to urge the reconciliation of the Churches and cooperation in retaking Holy Land for mutual benefit. Sanudo wanted, by all evidence, to have the Greeks as part of the broader Christian community, and as part of his community. But he worried they were not quite integrated with complete loyalty to the Roman Church, and he was prepared to cast them out if he deemed it necessary.

His attitudes towards the Greeks as liminal Christians centered around a concern that seems to have grown out of his time in Negroponte: that their conversions to Latin Catholicism were often only superficial at best, rather than sincere changes in theological beliefs, following Latin rites in public while maintaining their Greek rites in private.

Previously, Sanudo had connected Christendom’s lack of controlled territory (relative to the territory of non-Christians) with its vulnerability. In the case of the Greeks, however, he distinguishes between the two. In his extensive 1330 letter sharing news with Bertrand du Pouget, Sanudo iterates the sheer volume of their populace despite how little land they held as part of the empire: “Let not the people who follow the Greek rite seem small to anyone. Although the empire holds little territory now, having lost almost the land they had,

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nevertheless, Greeks inhabit very many eastern lands.” 341 He points out that they still inhabited much of Asia Minor in lands controlled by the Tartars, to the extent that even the Tartars refer to it as “Romania,” and still remain in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia, parts of Russia, Galatia and Armenia.342 He uses the same phrase again in his letter to Philip VI of France in 1334: “although the Greek emperor holds very little land now as compared with what he used to hold before, nevertheless, the people who follow the Greek rite does not seem small to anyone.”343 Here, he reverses his correlation of territorial control with power: in his first letter to Bertrand du Pouget in 1327, he argued that Christendom held only a small part of the world, surrounded on so many sides by looming external threats who hold dominion over the majority of land; now he distinguishes between control and the occupation of space, noting that while Greeks were often subjects of the Tartars, or the sultan or (though never actually mentioned) the Venetians, they still continued to occupy a wide swathe of physical space while holding onto their rites and practices.

This division between state control and the people’s obedience was, Sanudo keenly realized, a double-edged sword: it meant the Greeks continued to occupy a great deal of land, survive and even thrive in parts of the world where they were still subject to Muslim powers, helping sustain Christianity where otherwise it would be lost. But this, in turn belied


342 Ibid.

the stubbornness of the Greeks in giving up their rites when under Latin, rather than Muslim, control. He recognized that simply holding Byzantine territory did not make its subjects follow the Roman pope. This, in turn, made reintegration by conquest complex at best and impossible at worst.

Even where Latins held dominion over lands peopled by the Greeks, Sanudo concedes on several occasions that territorial control had little effect on the actual faithfulness of the Greeks. In 1323, he wrote to Jerome, Franciscan bishop of Caffa, confidant to the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Paleologos. He asked the bishop to convey Sanudo’s letters and words to the emperor with an offer to work for peace between the Byzantine empire with Charles of France, father of Philip VI, and the reunion of the Church. In a show of good faith, Sanudo offered to let the emperor find a wife for either Sanudo or his son, perhaps to show his “special love for your great empire” and desire for religious union on a more personal level. Sanudo concedes to Jerome (and, indirectly, to the emperor) that, “we might possess the greater part of imperial territory. However, we would not possess the people’s heart in obedience to the Roman church,” citing Cyprus, Crete, Morea and Negroponte. He acknowledges that Greeks often claimed Roman allegiance but still practiced in secret: “perhaps on certain occasions they appear to speak as if they were faithful to the church, nevertheless they are not so in heart.” And he repeats

344 Roddy, 115; “amorem specialem vestri magni imperii.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 299. Note: I have translated “amorem” as love where Roddy uses “affection.”

345 Roddy, 117; “haberemus terram Imperii pro magna parte, non tamen haberemus cor populi ad obedientiam Ecclesiae Romanae.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 299.

346 Ibid. This echoes his sentiment that Italians often “have one thing in their hearts, another however on their mouths. Indeed honey flows forth entirely from their lips; however, in their hearts they produce venomous thoughts.” (Roddy, 225).
the sentiment, less gently, about the challenges that Greek citizens presented in Latin territories in his 1334 letter to Philip VI of France about potential unions between the two halves of Christianity: “However much they [Greeks] are obedient in words, nevertheless, they obey badly in heart, since in both temporal and spiritual affairs dominion for the most part belongs to Latins. So the Greeks and those following their rite occupy much land. I believe however that many of the better ones are faithful in mind. Wherefore, the successful formation of a union would be best both for resisting the infidels and for acquiring very many souls.” Sanudo’s place in the Venetian empire almost certainly informed both these attitudes. Venice tolerated and authorized Orthodox beliefs and rituals — baptism, communion, matrimony and general liturgical practices. They exempted Orthodox priests and monks from forced labor and military conscription. However, they also attempted to limit or forbid the existence of Greek prelates and bishops in at least some regions under their control like Crete, Zara, Split and Antivari, stymying religious leadership and ensuring the Orthodox Church was subjugated to Catholicism. Where they permitted Greek Orthodox bishops, as in Cyprus, Coron and Modon, Cerigo, Malvasia and Scarpanto, they


mandated that the bishops be ordained in Venetian territories. They often tried, at least rhetorically, to convey the image and message of union: civic rituals, processions and masses and civic ceremonies were often conducted in both Latin and Greek and attempted to follow both liturgies where possible. Over the years and in different regions they lost some of their grip on control of local practices, especially after the second half of the fifteenth century and exacerbated by the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth. Sanudo’s time in Negroponte likely gave him first-hand experience with the complexities of governing a Greek territory under Venetian control. Venice’s uneasy relationship with the Orthodox subjects of their empire fed into Sanudo’s struggle to find a place for the Greeks, who were a symbol of the fallout that long-term divisions could have if left to fester for too long — he both saw them as the embodiment of internal divisions ultimately made increasingly external, with no easy solution at hand without the cooperation of the Byzantine emperors.

But Sanudo reverts to his belief that territorial and political control can determine its peoples’ religion when he proposes in several letters that they could heal the breach and solve the conflict of disobedient Greeks by persuading the Byzantine emperors and lords to convert to Roman faith. In his letter to Jerome of Caffa, he suggests that “it seems to me that the way by which the church can be united is to convince his eminence [the Byzantine emperor] together with his patriarch and also others of his house. As a result of this all his subjects . . . and those who are under the dominion of the French, the Tartars, the Turks,

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and the sultan of Babylon will become obedient to the Roman church.”[352] Sanudo granted exceptional power to the Byzantine emperors’ control the religion of all Greeks, even those who were not direct Byzantine subjects, where apparently Latin lords lacked authority.

On the same principle, Sanudo did not hesitate to recommend action against the emperors if they refused to reconcile with Catholicism (despite his promises of peace in letters to Byzantine correspondents). He warns Philip VI of France that, “if the Greek emperors do not wish to return to the unity of the Catholic faith (I do not believe this) then it is necessary to proceed against them just as against heretics and criminals.”[353] Sanudo’s nuance is critical to pinpointing where Greeks stood within his vision of the Christian community: they were on the edge of a precipice and were “expendable to the greater cause of saving Christendom from the Moslems.”[354] Currently, Sanudo implies, their division from the Catholic Church did not diverge into true heresy — but if they continued to refuse to reunite, their choice could thrust them into rebellion. In this sense, Greek citizens were granted more freedom to disobey the Roman church “in their hearts” while under Latin authority, but the emperors were to be treated as heretics and criminals. Sanudo believed — or so he claimed — that this will not happen, that Greek emperors will gladly return to the breast of the Catholics. But he conceded the possibility of the chance of revocation of their

352 Roddy, 117; “via per quam potest Ecclesia reuniri, ut mihi videtur, esse habere magnificam personam suam, una cum suo Patriarcha, & caeteros etiam de domo sua: propter quod omnes ipsius subditi. . . & alii qui sunt sub dominio Francorum, Tartarorum, Turchorum, & sub dominio Soldani Babylonici, erunt obedientes Ecclesiae Romaniae.” Bongars, Getta Dei, 299.


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Christian identity and their place within the Christian community, remained open to the possibility of treating them as heretics.

In his letter to Philip VI of France, Sanudo remarks on the influential power of the emperor to determine the faith of the Greeks. He cites the tale of Michael Paleologos, “great-grandfather” to Andronikos III Paleologos (more likely referring to Michael VIII Paleologos, grandfather to Andronikos III), who “made a solemn agreement through his ambassadors in the time of Pope Gregory of Piacenza at the council of Lyons to be obedient to the holy mother church,” and executed the monks who opposed the movement to reunify. Michael VIII’s attempts were, Sanudo claims, mostly impermanent, but not without small victory: “After his death a great many of the Greeks together with his son Andronikos returned to the schismatic perverseness. Nevertheless, some of the Greeks never wished to return to it; they persevered to the end.” Sanudo suggests that even a temporary conversion of the emperor, if he took actions to encourage (force) others to follow his conversion, could lead to more souls for the Latins in the long term. Meanwhile, Michael VIII’s failure was, it can be construed, that he did not persuade his son, Andronikos, to continue in his stead, rather than return to “schismatic perverseness.”

Sanudo hoped for a possible reunification of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, but his time in Negroponte seems to have left him alert to the challenges involved in bringing the Greeks into the fold. The Greeks were actually quite numerous, despite the

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relative lack of territory they officially controlled; and they were (both fortunately and unfortunately) resistant to conversion by the “outsiders” who controlled their lands, and often secretly hewed to their Orthodox beliefs in private, their true allegiances impossible to know. Their disobedience to those who controlled their lands made Greek subjects at once both “good Christians” for not converting to Islam, but also “bad Christians” since they resisted granting their obedience to the Roman pope over their patriarch. As such, Sanudo recognized, or feared, the difficulties they posed to a “universal” Christendom — that conversions and public practice could hide true beliefs, and that even an imperially-mandated union could be reverted in the next generation. Those challenges meant that, in turn, he was willing to jettison them from Christendom if they posed too much of a threat to his ideal of unity.

**Faithless Christians:**

While Sanudo felt conflicted over where to place the Greeks in Catholic Christendom, despite his desire for a unification of the two churches, his feelings towards “faithless” or unchristian Christians were less ambivalent. Actions, rather than beliefs, made Christians lose their fully “Christian” identity and granted them a liminal spot in Christendom — wherein their hazy allegiances and interactions with the enemies of Christ had them standing with one foot in each community. They paid lip service to the Church and allegiance with Christendom but cooperated, traded and engaged with Saracens. In his letter to John XXII in 1323, Sanudo reminds him that he sent the *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*, and essentially summarizes his proposed plan for crusade via a blockade of Egypt. He argues that such a blockade “would impede those carrying on trade with [through] Cyprus, those who feign your Holiness’ authorization to carry on similar trade with the sultan’s lands,
and the remaining disobedient and faithless [infideles] Christians, that their sailing result in loss to disobedient Christians. It would also continuously weaken the infidels’ [infidelium] power and strengthen Catholics.”

Sanudo blurs the line between “infidels,” in contrast with Catholics, and “infidel,” unfaithful Christians who conduct trade from Cyprus to Egypt in the face of a papal embargo. He likewise mentions the “disobedient” Christians who continued trade with Cyprus despite papal sanctions in his 1326 letter to Guillaume Durante II, bishop of Mende and count of Gevaudon. Finished with waxing on the chaos of Italy, Sanudo turns his eye towards the greater Mediterranean and the problematic merchants who flitted on its surfaces to illicit ports: “It [a blockade] would take care of the disobedient and infidel Christians who sail to and from Cyprus, carrying merchandise, it would continuously weaken the power of the infidel pagans.”

Here, both disobedient merchants and Muslims are infideles. He reiterates their faithlessness in his 1325 form letter, establishing the conflation as a clear pattern rather than casual coincidence: “it would hinder those disobedient and infidel Christians who still sail, carrying merchandise to and from Cyprus, and it would hinder those who feign falsely that they have papal authorization to carry similar goods to parts subject to the sultan. Their sailings injure Christians.”

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357 Roddy, 112; “reducentes mercimonia de Cypro, & alios qui fingunt se a vestra Sanctitate habere licentiam portandi consimilia mercimonia ad partes Soldano subiectas, ceteros etiam Christianos inobedientes & infideles, ne in Christianorum inobedientium naugarent dispendium impediret; & potentiam infidelium infrimaret continue, & Catholicos roboraret.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 290.

358 Roddy, 143, “& Christianos inobedientes & infideles, etiam qui naugant, portantes denique mercimonia de Cypro & reducentes, nec non alios qui fingunt se mendaciter habere licentiam a summo Pontifice portandi merces consimiles ad partes Soldano subiectas, ne in Christianorum navigarent dispendium impediret; & infrimaret continue infidelium potentiam paganorum.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 296.

359 Roddy, 125-126; “& Christianos inobedientes & infideles, etiam qui naugant, portantes denique mercimonia de Cypro & reducentes, nec non alios qui fingunt se mendaciter habere licentiam a summo Pontifice portandi merces consimiles ad partes Soldano subiectas, ne in Christianorum in vultramarinis partibus degentibus in valde magnis periculis conservaret; & infrimaret continue potentiam infidelium paganorum.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 291. Note that Cyprus here seems to play a similar role to Venice as the middleman to trade with the Levant — the island’s continuous mention marks it as the primary perpetrator of embargo-breaking.
Saracens, filtered through Cyprus, during a papal embargo made those Christian merchants who ignored the embargo not only merely “disobedientes” but “infideles” in each instance where Sanudo mentions breaking blockades, and the infideles Christians matched with the infideliorum potentiam paganorum — pagans paired with Christians through their faithlessness.

When Christians ignored a papal embargo, trade rendered the faithful faithless; their unchristian actions removed them from the community of the faithful and placed them on the metaphorical fringes of Christendom. The centrality of behavior, rather than internal beliefs, as an expression — or even determination — of faith and religious identity in medieval Christianity meant that actions alone could grant or strip you of your place in Christendom. The defiance of papal authority during an embargo could thus make any disobedient merchant “unchristian.” Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that these merchants were still, at heart, “Christian” and thus not fully removed from the Christian community — their removal was only beginning, and not complete. They were “unchristian Christians” but still held on, ever tenuously to their identity in Sanudo’s eyes.361

where Muslim Egyptian merchants traded to Christians, they did by bringing their goods to the Christian Kingdom of Cyprus.


361 At the same time, disobedience to the pope in itself was not always sufficient grounds for disqualifying someone as Christian, since Sanudo never suggests that the Holy Roman emperor, despite the latter’s conflict and even excommunication of the pope and appointment of his own anti-pope; Sanudo never references the Bavarian as “unfaithful,” or calls into question his devoutness, despite several references to fearing that the schism would grow to rival the Greek and Roman Catholic schism. In this case, the disobedience must necessarily pair with cooperation with the Saracens through trade against an embargo. This pairing echoes Febvre’s The Problem of Unbelief, in that Sanudo does not seem to suggest a Christian could be faithless or simply evicted from the Christian community without being faithful to a different religion, or adopted and integrated into another religious community via their shifting allegiances and actions through trade.
Sanudo saw trade as not just a disobedience to papal instruction, but also as a primary tool for building connections and the economic codependence that formed the foundations of a community. It follows that Christians who traded with Saracens had one foot out the door of the Christian community; they forged ties and shared interests with Christians and Muslims alike, and were perhaps prepared to throw their allegiances to the Saracens where it proved profitable. Sanudo nevertheless endorsed the notion of trade with Egypt — provided it was on “official” and papally-endorsed terms. He encouraged renegotiating with Sultan al-Nasir al-Din Muhammad for more favorable trading terms; the disobedience and faithlessness came from the moment any Christian chose to continue trade over the objections of a papal blockade. Associating with Saracens for trade alone did not remove a merchant from the Christian community or put him on “thin ice,” so to speak, rather, if they chose to build those connections and ties with and participating, even tangentially, in the Saracen community at the expense of ties with the Christian community, during a formal blockade — that choice precipitated their fall from Christendom and gave grey to the boundaries of Sanudo’s black and white world. Trade could help unify disparate parts of Christendom through mutual profit, but even Sanudo, ever eager to prove the value of merchants to Christendom, could see that it still carried the risk of fracturing loyalties.

_Catalans:_

Negroponte hovered on the edge of Christendom’s physical boundaries: it represented the shifting edges where Christendom ended and began, and its fall could mark a dramatic shift in Islam’s favor. The Catalans, who Sanudo feared might capture Negroponte (in cooperation with the Turks), held a similar position in the more metaphorical boundaries of Christendom. The Catalan Company’s men and their lords were an internal threat second
only to Saracens themselves, and seem to have straddled a place between Christendom and its outside world thanks to their shifting allegiances with the Turks and Venetians across the 1320s and 1330s. Our Venetian merchant-cum-propagandist had strong opinions about the possibility that Negroponte might fall from Veronese hands. Still, he had little but praise for Catalans themselves. In 1327, Sanudo wrote to Ingramo, archbishop of Capua and adviser to Robert of Sicily, for the fourth time, together with Paolino, bishop of Pozzuoli. He updated the two about the ongoing conflicts of Negroponte and Thessaly; both islands were caught between the Turks and Catalans in a complex web of alliances and counter-alliances, between Ottomans, Albanians, Greeks, Catalans, and Venetians. He took the opportunity to give his opinion of the Catalans as a people despite his distrust of their role in the balance of power in the Mediterranean, encapsulating the ambivalent position they lived in in relation to Christendom:

A little while ago I was with most excellent Catalan men from whom I have learned much about their deeds. They are men of strong will. They have power and a multitude of people for their land is long, vast, and wide. . . Not only do they have Christian peoples, but also Saracens when needed. They are a people apt on land and sea: cavalry, infantry, merchants who are discreet men, loyal and faithful to the lord of their country. Their deeds show that they act much like

362 They would not remain such a threat forever, however — or even for long. David Jacoby notes that the Catalans formally broke off with the Turks in 1328 (a year after Sanudo’s first letter mentioning the Catalan company) after the Turks attacked and raided the company’s duchy of Athens; whereafter the Catalan Company reconciled with Venice and in 1331 the Senate ratified a truce with the Catalans that discussed sending a fleet against the Turks in assistance to the Catalans. Jacoby points to the “neutralization” of the Catalans as a “decisive turning-point in the political evolution within Romania,” wherein Venice played a central role in the opening of the creation of the first concerted, tentative Christian coalition, Jacoby, “Catalans, Turcs et Venitiens en Romanie (1305-1332),” 261. Sanudo, meanwhile, was at least initially skeptical of any rupture between the two: in a letter to Ingramo and Paolino, bishop of Pozzuoli, he suggests that the 1328 attack was staged “in order to create the suspicion in the Negropontese [an earlier target of the Turks and Catalans together] that the Catalans and Turks are not united.” He argues this on the grounds that, when the Catalans had captured fleeing Turks from an earlier Turkish attack on Negroponte, they refused to turn the captives over to the Venetian baili of Negroponte, and instead sent them to Athens and (supposedly) onwards to Turkey. Roddy, 175; “[Credo quod illud quo cucerunterunt Eginam, que est insula, ut dixi, quam tenuer predictus Alfonsus, ipsi fecerunt causa accipiendi suspectum illis de Negroponte, ostendentes quod predicti Cathelani et Turchi non sint unum; sed ego credo quod unum sint.” Cerlini, “Nuove lettere,” 350.]
the Saracens. They know very well how to preserve friendships and alliances, especially with the Saracens and Turks. They know how to govern themselves and others.363

Sanudo praises their attributes, despite the Catalan company’s actions in opposition to Venice’s (and, implicitly, Christendom’s) interests abroad: like Venice, Catalan men are “apt on land and sea: cavalry, infantry and merchants who are discreet men” [emphasis mine]. Their merchants were apparently an asset worth mentioning, and their vast holdings allowed them to draw men from across Christendom and even beyond it, so that they had “also Saracens when needed.” Sanudo paints them as something of a hybrid community and identity, for despite holding to Christianity in theory, they nevertheless “act[ed] much like Saracens.” They adopted behaviors that allowed them to transgress the behavior that traditionally defined “being a Christian.” Performance of “Christian” actions was a centerpiece of Christian identity and membership in the community, as we saw with the discussion of disobedient Christian smugglers classed as “infidels.” By this same token, Sanudo seems to suggest that the Catalans “acted” like Saracens, and these actions give them membership in the Saracen community. These actions “othered” the Catalans in Sanudo’s eyes, placing them in a liminal position: Christian, but not; Saracen, but not, blurring the edges of Christendom.

This quasi-otherness made the risk of Negroponte’s fall into Catalan hands something more than internal conflict between Christians: a greater threat to the stability of Christendom as a whole. Their ease at keeping alliances meant victories for the Catalans were also victories for the Turks. Despite his praise of those “most excellent Catalan men” that he had met, in the same letter to Ingramo and Paolino, Sanudo describes Catalans as “like galls; wherever they place themselves, they cannot be extracted except by death,” and warns that though they had already acquired Sardinia, Sicily and the Duchy of Athens, their thirst for conquest was not slated.\footnote{Roddy, 177; “ut çeçcha, nam ubi se ponunt non pussunt extrahi nisi mortui.” Cerlini, “Nuove lettere,” 351; “et sum certus quod adhuc non contentarentur, de tali natura sunt ipsi.” Cerlini, “Nuove lettere,” 352.} Even gaining Negroponte would thus not satisfy their greed but only allow it to increase, by giving them more resources for conquest: “if the Catalans hold Negroponte, which is not yet so, they would have many Turks from Turkey, a great multitude of horsemen, infantry, and sailors, and in times past they have been accustomed to come, e.g. when the company stayed in Gallipoli, Cassandria, and Halmyros,[i.e. raid or engage in piracy].”\footnote{Roddy, 177-178; “si habebunt Negropontem, quod absit, ipsi haberent tot Turchos de Turchia, equestres et pedestres et de mari; qui essent maxima multitudo, et alias ipsi consueverant esse, simul quando compagna fecit moram in Gallipoli et Casandrea et Lalmiro.” Cerlini, “Nuove lettere,” 352.} Still, even in the midst of his catastrophizing of Catalan influence, he praised the way that Catalans were nevertheless loyal to their lords’ interests — no small part of how they were formidable opponents. Loyalty to independent alliances or communities within Christendom impressed Sanudo, even as he urged for a greater community beyond the independent or individual interests of Christian kingdoms. Sanudo never asked his correspondents to act contrary to their own people’s interests, and instead consistently sought to either persuade his reader that peace was directly in their
interest because of their place in Christendom as a larger community or because it indirectly benefited their interests because of the critical role trade played in Christendom as a whole. It is not counterintuitive that Sanudo would praise Catalans for their loyalty to their lord, while nevertheless criticizing the Catalan lord, Don Alfonso, for acting against the interests of Christendom as a whole. Catalans were liminal, and would remain so until their tactical break from the Turks in 1328, after which they signed a treaty of allegiance with the Venetians — an action that sparked the beginning whispers of a pan-Christian allegiance against the Turks that signified their full integration into the Christian community and rejection of that “Saracen-ness” that kept them on the liminal fringes of Christian identity.366

**Conclusions of Liminal Identities:**

The boundaries of Christian identity and community are revealed in Sanudo’s treatment of those who occupied the grey, uncomfortable space of contradictions between identity and actions: Christian smugglers who became infidels and faithless; Catalan mercenaries, Saracen in deed but Christian in faith and eager to take Crusader State territory for their own where opportunity arose; scattered Greeks with their superficial conversions to Latin rites, symbols of internal division writ large. These liminal identities reflected the current internal fragmentation, conflict and disloyalty in Christendom that so plagued Sanudo, and their liminality and quasi-unchristianness presented to him a problem of a “whole” Christendom in which certain members’ actions served in the interests of people outside the community rather than within it. Ultimately, however, Sanudo seems to have had

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at least some hope — if tempered by a healthy skepticism — of their further integration into the Christian community (the Greeks), of the limitation of their impact upon Christendom (the infideles smugglers) or at least of their potential as allies if they could someday be persuaded to abandon their Turkish friends (the Catalans). Sanudo would never find himself satisfied with the first two, but at least for the last he would get his desire.

Conclusions:

Sanudo’s understanding of his world was shaped by his identity as a merchant, but also by his identity as a member of a scattered community, for whom distance — and the desire to forge bonds and connections in spite of that distance — played a central role in his understanding of the world as a whole, and in the ways he divided and connected regions and peoples through common identities, languages, religions and cultures. In Sanudo we see a man who, with memories of a lost “whole” Christendom, longed for an unbroken world, who pushed others to an ideal world of connections and universal communities unbound by geographic definitions. It was the same nostalgia for worlds and times past that inspired merchants to include outdated material on Acre in manuals like the Zibaldone da Canal and Marc. It., XI, 32, and on Aleppo in Marc. It., XI, 87, with the hope that it might someday be useful or relevant again, that it might protect against the inevitable vagaries of time inflicted by long distances in trade. Merchants were a backwards-looking people, even as they pushed ahead in search for profits, and sought, as we will see, to cut into the future with predictions and the science of astrology. Trade fostered reminiscence for times, places and profits lost.

That reminiscence, in turn, framed the former world of Christendom together with Crusader States as “whole” and their following loss as “fragmentation,” and Sanudo saw everything as fractions, divisions, connections and unions. Christians and Christendom itself
were beset by external threats that chipped away at the whole and internal conflicts that
separated and isolated the greater Christian community from itself. Divisions within plagued
Christendom in Sanudo’s eyes — from practitioners of the Greek rites, to the strife between
the Holy Roman Emperor and the Avignon papacy, and to the constant bickering warfare
among Italians that embodied the Christian community as a whole (though Italians were also
simultaneously and ironically bound together by their warlike natures, hinting at a nascent
common cultural identity, if a rather ill-tempered one).

But he sustained hope from the beacons of connections: Venice, which gathered
disparate peoples with her welcoming arms; she facilitated trade, safe travel and
communication with her faithful ships and navy. And he looked to the greater community of
merchants, who fostered mutual financial benefits between regions that served as the
bedrock for a larger universal community. In this worldview, trade and travel served as
foundation for Christendom, and Sanudo heroicized merchants as one of the primary agents
of sustaining Christianity as a whole. His place within a long-distance merchant network
shaped his understanding of connections built upon trade that, in turn, he gave to his non-
merchant community.

Overall, Sanudo was most concerned with molding Christendom into a community
unbound by geographic limits and instead founded on shared interests and common religion
— a community sustained over long distances with less concern for the elements of identity
grounded in geographic origins or affiliations. That desire for an overarching community

367 That is not to say that he discounted the significance of such origins and affiliations — on the
contrary, in “Trading Trust, Building Authority” we will see how he leaned regional identities of his messengers
numerous times in order to recommend his messengers or use them to forge new bonds with his
correspondents. His warning to keep marching armies separated from one another based upon their country of
origin to avoid cultural conflict speaks to his wariness of attempting to casually throw together people of
mirrors the same community that arose among merchants throughout their migrations — scattered and unbound from geographic proximity, Sanudo and his merchant compiler peers sought ways to sustain their communities through the distribution of news and information, a technique Sanudo applied to his communications with members of the Christian community in an attempt to build a community he saw as similarly disparate. 

disparate mores. Rather, his vision of a universal Christendom idealized the notion of overcoming such differences to work towards common cause, overarching community and honest devotion to God.
CHAPTER 5:
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN MERCHANTS’ ZIBALDONI

Time and space, Hervé Martin argued, were intrinsically connected in medieval mentalities: traversing physical space inherently occupied time.\(^\text{368}\) From *mappa mundi* that intermixed past cities with present ones to pilgrimage narratives that made the trip to Jerusalem “a journey backward in time,” with the footsteps of Jesus preserved on the steps of the Mount of Olives in the *Books of John Mandeville*, medieval Europeans integrated the past into their ideas of movement and space.\(^\text{369}\) This was especially true in long-distance communities, where past, present and future often coexisted simultaneously: when Sanudo wrote to Philip IV of France, he dated his letter to April 4\(^{th}\) of 1332, opening with an acknowledgement of the troubles that time could bring: “Since the passage of time and arduous responsibility sometimes bring forgetfulness,” he laments, before reintroducing himself to the king.\(^\text{370}\) He recalled the past and yet addressed a future Philip IV. By the time the letter arrived, the Sanudo of April 4, 1332 would no longer exist, and he had no way of


knowing or guaranteeing that the world would still be as he had described it. In the same way, authors of merchant manuals wrote to future readers, or for their own future reference, even as they collected and preserved information over years or even decades. They froze their worlds in time, preserving it in amber for historians.

Merchant manuals, I have argued, reflected the cohesive mental maps of their authors. They mirrored the ways merchants saw the world, framed and founded on their experiences living abroad. As didactic texts, they helped build not only a universal foundation of knowledge but also a shared perspective of the world, its ties and connections and the Venetian merchant’s place within it. Manuals show us something more than just their images of space, however: they connect that occupation of space with time itself. They reveal the ways merchants crafted their identities in a framework of the past and craved information and knowledge about the present and future. Merchants’ lives existed both within and outside of time and they centered their mentalities around that coexistence.

The nature of trade and the impact of distance on communication posed numerous challenges to merchants as they attempted to build and maintain ties, friendships and associations: an additional source of stress was the problem of time. Distance meant that every piece of information that came to a merchant about his dealings abroad lagged behind the reality of the situation by days, weeks or months. Every step of additional distance created a further delay; every delay gave a new chance for the news communicated to change with the winds and lose its value. And every changed or lost piece of knowledge heightened the risk involved in trading “in the dark,” so to speak, without knowledge of the conditions they dealt with. Time and space were linked more intimately for merchants than other medieval Europeans: delays on timely communication hurt anyone who wished to trade over long distances. The zibaldoni of Venice, preserved in the Zibaldone da Canal and Marc. It., XI,
32 demonstrate that merchants sought other remedies to the problem of delays, and merchants enjoyed a unique relationship to “time” that fundamentally reshaped merchant culture. Past, present, and future blended together in the medieval merchant mind.

Venetian merchants tried to convey to the readers of their *zibaldoni* a sense of their shared identity strongly rooted in the pasts of their cities. Both authors included chronicles and histories in their hodgepodge collections — our *Zibaldone da Canal* author added a brief chronicle of Venetian history up to 1303, and the author of *Marc. It. XI. 32* an account of the trial of Marin Falier, doge of Venice, after his failed coup against the Council of Ten in 1355. They saw the pasts of their geographic origins as fundamental to their identities, and through the events of the past they transmitted their cultural values and ideals to their readers, to show not only what it meant to be a merchant, but to be a *Venetian* merchant, a participant in a particular civic, religious and economic community. Merchants who left their communities behind learned how living in a foreign city did not erase their own geographic pasts — that their identities remained Venetian even as *la Serenissima* disappeared from the horizon as they sailed east in ships that would not return for years. Merchant manuals conveyed the merchant’s place not only in the physical world, but in a chronological world, creating a Venetian merchant identity rooted in ties to a place — their native city — but also the time that passed and events that occurred within that city.

And yet these manuals reveal that merchants also turned to the future to understand their ongoing present: *zibaldoni* frequently included predictive material, especially in the realm of astrology and astronomy, to compensate for and lessen the inherent risk of long-distance trade and the ever-looming uncertainty instilled by communication delays. As a result, their didactic manuals helped them construct a community versed not only in mercantile material
but in the sciences and arts as part of understanding the world and their identity within that world — to be a merchant was to need to know a wide variety of subjects.

Drawing on history and astrology, medieval Venetian merchants charted their pasts and their futures, conveying to their readers a sense of place in a shared Venetian history and a shared Venetian destiny. Due to the continuous value of outdated information in a mindset that prized all information, merchants continued to hold on to their zibaldone well past the point of reliable accuracy, transforming them into reified expressions of social status and a form of conspicuous consumption. In this way, they continued to preserve zibaldoni well after their initial compilation, allowing merchants to combine the past and the future into a constant, present use.

*A Summary of the Zibaldoni:*

Before discussing the implications of the non-mercantile materials contained within these Venetian zibaldoni, I want to outline what that content comprised, to provide a more complete illustration of both manuals and help anchor disparate texts in a comprehensive review of their contents. Because the manuals are, as they are sometimes called, “hodgepodge,” it can be difficult to follow what order or what content they contain, with snippets of only a few lines interspersed among a breadth of semi-organized content. As explained in my overview of the sources, I define the term “non-mercantile material” as everything in these manuals that does not follow the extremely formulaic structure of information that described the trade and exchange, and particularly the different conversions of weights, measures and exchange rates between different parts of the world. While I call it “non-mercantile,” and that is in fact how other historians have generally approached the zibaldoni, I argue that the authors of merchant manuals nevertheless considered things like
astronomy and divination part of their professional knowledge much in the same vein as weights and measures and were thus “mercantile material,” to some extent, as well. Still, not everything in these manuals had an immediate professional application, even as they looked at everything with a distinctly mercantile eye for practicality.371

The first half of the Zibaldone da Canal focuses on mathematical and mercantile content. The compiler took a relatively focused and organized approach to collation. This organization later gives way once the mercantile material was relatively “complete” (though, of course, we cannot know with any real certainty whether it was ever truly complete; however, given the presence of later scribal hands it seems plausible that later compilers could or would have added additional mercantile material). The author brings together a wide range of material: an excerpt of Tristan (“La dona de l’Aqua de la Spina”), a chapter on the cognoscimento delle spezie (a topic frequently covered by manuals), an astronomical chapter on the divisions of the natural day, calculations of the new moon, a summary of the astrological signs and a description of the sun and moon and their influence on the weather, the heavens and the earth (including a particularly standout comment that on the New Moon, fourteen-year old Jewish boys universally “emit drops of blood from the penis at the time, and these are emitted with pain.”372) After this, the manual turns to medical advice on stanching blood, an excerpt from Bartholomeus Anglicus’ Liber de proprietatibus, the virtues of coral, the Ten Commandments, further almanac weather forecasts, the virtues of rosemary, a

371 See: “A Brief Overview of the Sources” for a more detailed explanation of “mercantile” and “non-mercantile.”

372 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 136; “lo te(n)po se candbia allò in alttro de çio ch’el iera propiamentre, li çudei mascholli lo sente dapsù qu’elli à fato de sangue per la verga et enselli cum dollore.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 83.
chronicle of Venetian history from Creation to the year 1303, the Precepts of Solomon, a chapter on trade with Ayas (in modern-day Turkey), a chapter on bloodletting, a brief collection of precepts and a poem to “The God of Love,” and a smattering of prayers in Latin and the vernacular.

The author of Marc. It., XI, 32’s zibaldone reverses the Zibaldone da Canal’s pattern, beginning with a miscellany, and ending with his mercantile material. Its compiler seems to have undertaken his work first as a collection of interesting material that then culminated in a practical guide to trade, while the author of Zibaldone da Canal began with more practical material and finished with the smattering of excerpts that caught his eye.\footnote{Indeed, its opening incipit specifies that, following its initial chapter, “other beautiful things following” — seguitando altre belle chose — emphasizing their beauty and appeal to the reader rather than pure utility. Marc. It., XI, 32, f. 150r.} He begins with a historical account: a firsthand narrative of the trial of Doge Marin Falier and several co-conspirators after their failed coup, in which they attempted to assassinate the Council of Ten in 1355; though unattributed in our manuscript, later versions of the account ascribe it to Niccolò Trevisan, a member of that same Council of Ten during Falier’s brief tenure as Doge.\footnote{The full chronicle survives in full in Bib. Marciana It. VII, 519 (=8438) (with another author or authors adding material up to 1585), and Bib. Marciana It. VII 2567 (=12459), though these manuscripts date to the sixteenth century, and in another 15th century fragment in the Archivio di Stato in Venezia’s Miscellanea eodd. 728, as well as Museo Correr Cod. 1327. Marc. It., XI, 32 (=6672) (dated to roughly 1406) is, then, the earliest surviving fragment of the chronicle.} The account’s dry tone belies the dramatic events that served as a backdrop, transforming the moment of near-radical transformation into a demonstration of stern stability. From there, the zibaldone turns to more conventional almanac material: lists of saints’ days, the five senses of the body, the seven sins, the Ten Commandments, the twelve astrological signs, the four seasons. From there, the lists become more extensive, more
detailed — a list of “el nasimento nelli segni” and the predictive significations of the signs of the moon at the beginning of the month, a “regiment of health” on eating and drinking certain foods during each month, not unlike the material included in the late fifteenth century Kalendar of Shepherds. The author then diverts into a substantial physiognomy chapter excerpted from the Secreta Secretorum, a pseudo-Aristotelian treatise claiming to be a letter from Aristotle to his student, Alexander the Great, popularized in the twelfth century, which describes the affiliations between signs of the zodiac, parts of the body and personality (reminiscent of the Homo signorum genre). Then the miscellany offers a more extensive and in-depth exploration of astrology and astronomy, the twelve signs and the phases of the moon, and the correlation of calends (the first day of each month) and that month’s weather, advice on bloodletting, the phases of the moon and even more information on the twelve astrological signs.

The author next leaves astrology behind for a detailed description of calculating the dates of Easter, together with extensive illustrations of hands to demonstrate how the reader might use them as a mnemonic, and a tabula salamonis to figure out the “Golden Number.” To conclude his divinatory content, the compiler includes two fortune-telling games — the sortes taxili, haec sortes siderum celli (“The Fates of the Dice, or Fates of the Sky’s Stars”), which offer to answer player’s questions about the future, and a Sortes Sanctorum. Overall, both zibaldoni authors covered a wide breath of information they considered interesting — either for themselves, or for their readers. By collecting it they revealed both their own identities as

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more than merchants, as men fascinated by the past and the future, even as all those interests and their identities were nevertheless shaped by their merchant backgrounds.

Venetian Zibaldoni and Identity from the Past:

The zibaldoni reflect a whole individual: not just a merchant in his larger mercantile community but an individual within his broader society. The frequent inclusion of civic and historical material shows how merchants viewed themselves as inhabitants of multiple, overlapping communities simultaneously — mercantile, Venetian, Christian and Mediterranean. Marino Sanudo Torsello was remarkable in the degree to which he participated in such overlapping communities, engaging in political and religious endeavors as well as mercantile, and how he saw them as intertwined and codependent upon one another: that he sought out ‘political’ audiences (among kings, dukes and nobles) but called upon shared religiosity and devotion as their shared community, giving them common goals for the sake of their religious community, but also cited mutual economic interest — namely that Venice and the Mediterranean are the source of merchants that supply his Northern European peers with goods from far-off places. Even within ostensibly religious goals of urging on a crusade, he listed the universal benefit of a stronger merchant community within the larger catholic, religious community. This community of ‘Christendom’ is dependent upon the mercantile community that exists within it, and Sanudo views himself as a member of both simultaneously. While Sanudo was certainly active in attempting to actively collide his communities, he was not alone in doing so. His multifaceted identity and community participation is visible in his decision to include historical texts: medieval Italian merchants were deeply interested in the history of their native cities, either in the broad sweep of the city’s history over the centuries, or in individual events that were particularly dramatic and, I
will argue, reflective of critical civic values in the merchant community and identity as a whole.

Across the *trecento*, Italians grew increasingly fascinated with their history with an “outburst of chronicle writing” that foreshadowed the civic humanist historiography of the *quattrocento*. Venetians in particular had a long tradition of city chronicles dating back as early as the eleventh century with the chronicle of Giovanni Diacono (c. 1018) and a chronicle of the patriarchs of Aquileia. Venetian chroniclers were, however, often rather removed from conventional European literary chronicle traditions and styles. They often focused not on “world chronicles” or universal chronicles but more narrowly upon events that were directly relevant to Venetian interests, as was common in the city chronicles on the rise within Italy. The conventional Venetian chronicle had a patrician author (indeed, chronicling was an “almost obligatory” pastime for the elite) and was neither “literary nor humanistic;” Venetian chroniclers oriented their histories around military, political and commercial action, “established the history of Venice as the cumulative deeds of the city’s nobles,” often seeking to justify those deeds and actions. They used the reigns of doges (rather than popes or kings, the more popular conventions in European chronicles), and


often, though not always, wrote in vernacular — Venetian or, in the case of Martino da Canal, French.

Neither of our zibaldoni diverges too strongly from these trends — both compilers were, as best we can tell, likely from noble patriciate families (the Zibaldone da Canal is named for the da Canal family, and Marc. It., XI, 32 is written with extensive Latin sections that speak to an educated author).381 Both wrote in or copied from the vernacular, although they were at least passingly familiar with Latin. Like most Venetian chroniclers, they also looked foremost at Venice itself, and each implicitly justified their home’s history — though each sought to justify different events and actions, reflecting divergent visions of Venice’s relationship with the outside world. Each merchant-compiler used the past to anchor his identity in a strong sense of “Venetianness”; events from the Venetian past provided a narrative of what it meant to be Venetian, even for a merchant cast about on the seas of a scattered community, on the fringes of a world centered on their Venetian heart.

The Past Within the Zibaldone da Canal:

The Zibaldone da Canal’s chronicle follows Venetian chronicle tropes closely: a general brevity, minimal elaboration of details, and broad chronological scope, all focused on events

381 As will be discussed more in detail in the next sections, both zibaldoni authors were also without question copying from other sources — the Zibaldone da Canal’s author likely copied from multiple sources shown by the fact that the chronicle repeats events and occasionally jumping back years or centuries; Marc. It., XI, 32’s author likewise must have copied his historical text from an earlier account since other material dates to the first decade of the fifteenth century, but the author of the historical text can be identified confidently as Niccolò Trevisan, whose death in 1369 makes it impossible for the manuscript to be an autograph. The patriciate “authorship” is likely doubly-patriciate: both zibaldoni authors were nobles, but also likely drawing from sources written by nobles (though we know for certain that that was the case for Trevisan, it is theoretically possible, if unlikely, that the Zibaldone da Canal author copied from a source written by someone outside of Venetian nobility. However, John Melville-Jones notes that all identifiable chroniclers in Venice were from patriciate families, making the likelihood that our anonymous da Canal compiler found a non-noble source quite small. Melville-Jones, “Venetian History and Patrician Chroniclers,” 201.
tied to Venice.\textsuperscript{382} Its brevity reflects an approach to the past that emphasized the long reach of time rather than the impact of a single moment, event or person. The \textit{Zibaldone da Canal}'s author took this emphasis on geographic and chronological scope to a heightened level, and in doing so brought further meaning to the trajectory of their native Venice and to the civic values and ideals communicated through the text. His chronicle highlights Mediterranean events in which Venice gave her sometimes slight touch (and sometimes decidedly less slight) in the affairs of others from the birth of the Christendom until the manual’s compilation in the 1320s. The events illuminate an image of “Venetianness” developed over the centuries that was Christian, imperial, and above all international — that to be a merchant of Venice was to hold those traits as one’s own, to be born from a city defined by its interactions with the Mediterranean as a whole in parallel to a merchant’s own constant-flowing encounters with outsiders. Where Venetian chroniclers often focused on “recording and justifying the activities of men from the patrician families of the city,” our compilers instead vindicated the role of his city (and his fellow nobles, by association) on the center-stage of a Mediterranean play of politics, warfare and religion.\textsuperscript{383}

Already part of a miscellany compiled from many previous sources, the \textit{chronicbetta} itself seems to have been drawn from multiple earlier chronicles. The clear transitions between sources reveal the different identities he attributed to his native Venice, born from the nascent moments of chronology listed in its opening lines. Our (likely) da Canal author begins with exclusively Biblical events, reaching back to the age of Adam (2,857 years before the coming of Christ), Abraham, Moses, and David, before turning to that classic figure of

\textsuperscript{382} James Grubb, “Memory and Identity: Why Venetians Didn’t Keep Ricordanze,” 377.

medieval histories, Alexander the Great, and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. After the destruction of Jerusalem, he leaps back several thousand years (reflecting a clear shift in sources): Ravenna rises some 2,914 years before the coming of Christ, and Troy less than a century later, in the same year as Rome.

The chronicler then names the fall of Troy (1969 B.C.E.) and the birth of Roman emperor Octavian (given as 15 B.C.E., though in reality he was born 63 B.C.E.), before skipping over the early years of Christian history, jumping into the construction of Constantinople (270 C.E.), the baptism of Constantine at the hands of St. Sylvester (316 B.C.E.), and, finally, the construction of Venice itself in 421 C.E. (the claimed date of the dedication of the first church, San Giacomo on the Rialto islet).

There is a paralleled focus of the two chronicles from which the compiler likely copied. He sought to reflect dual origins from dual chronicles: he implicitly situates Venice first in the origins of Christendom and second, in the origins of empires, making his city heir to both. He conveys critical moments of Biblical history with the names of those early father figures — that is, Venice’s Christian origins were born from people more so than places.

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385 “Ravena si fo Avanti l’avegnimento de Christo anni IJ*mVIIJ*cXIII; Troia si fo Avanti l’avegnimento de Christo anni IJ*mVIIJ*cXXJ; Roma si fo Avanti l’avegnimento de Christo anni IJ*mVIIJ*cXXJ.” Ibid., 98.

386 “Mo’ si da sauer che Troia regna anni VIIJ*cXLIIJ e fo destruta Avanti l’avegnimento de Christo anni MVIII*cLXVIIIJ*o; Otavian i(o)perador de Roma vene dapù che Iesus Christo naxè anni XV;” Ibid., 98; “E dapù l’avegnimento de Christo anni IJ’c miser sen Sillivestro batìca lo re Constantin; Corando anni IJ*cLXX si fo edifichado la citade de Constantinopoli; Corando anni IIIJcXXJ si fo edifichada la citade de Venexia;” Ibid., 98.
But Venice’s origins were not only theological or imperial: the chronicler touches upon cultural inheritance as well and speaks to the dual Greco-Roman births of Venetianness. After the chronicler depicts the origins of the world in the form of the Christian fathers, he moves on to the foundation of several early cities: Ravenna, Troy, Rome and Constantinople: “Ravenna was built 2914 years before the coming of Christ. Troy was 2821 years before the coming of Christ. Roma was 2821 [sic] years before the coming of Christ. And it is known that Troy reigned for nine-hundred and forty-three years and was destroyed nine-hundred and sixty-nine years before the coming of Christ. . . . And during the year 270 the city of Constantinople was built. And during the year 421 the city of Venice was built.”387 Two Eastern cities, two Western; two Mediterranean, two Italian. The cities should not surprise anyone familiar with Venice’s earliest (known) years: born as the region of Venetia of the Roman Empire, Roman control gradually dissolved elsewhere across the Peninsula, but Venetia remained under the control of Byzantium, who appointed officials in Ravenna, organized as an exarchate to control the region.388 In 568 C.E., Lombard invasions spurred a large-scale migration into the safety of Venice’s warding shores, promising safety to the fishers who would come to call it home.389 The inclusion of (erroneous) dates of origins for both Rome and Ravenna, ancient cities in their own rights, reveal the compiler’s interest in Venice’s ties to imperial Rome, giving the city roots not only in Rome itself,

388 Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 4.
389 Ibid., 4.
capital of the Empire and, later, seat of the Catholic church, but in Ravenna, even more ancient (according to our admittedly mistaken author) than noble Rome with equal implicit ties to Venice. Constantinople, then, merited mention as capital to the Byzantine heritage of Venice, from which Venice wrested its independence through fits and starts in the ninth to eleventh centuries.

Troy’s relevance to Venice’s origins seems less direct but may well be rooted in its shared ties to Rome through the tale of the *Aeneid*, rooting Rome in its Eastern predecessor — echoing, not so coincidentally, Venice’s own birth from an Eastern empire and subsequent growth into independence in its own right. Rome was a hybrid of Italian and Mediterranean powers, just as Venice was. Medieval historiography favored Trojan origins, most famously with the Frankish *Liber historiae Francorum* and chronicles of Fredegar, where in its original form it offered the tantalizing promise of “a classical pedigree to non-Latin linguistic groups by manufacturing eponymous ancestors who had come to the West,” before they gradually lost popularity in the Renaissance. Troy was not only classical, but Oriental: an exotic, “occulted” city with “not only the wisdom and archaic grandeur which were the legacies of Greece and Rome, but a mysteriousness and allure born of being permanently removed from the map” in a way that Rome itself was too familiar to have. But here the compiler found himself enmeshed in a combination of intermingled origins that reflect the complexity of medieval Venetian identity.


391 Ibid., 51.
Chroniclers of Venice, a comparatively “young” city in the Italian peninsula, struggled with finding a particular Trojan to cite as their founder — they had no Aeneas as Rome had, or Antenor for Padua, nor did most chroniclers seem willing to contort themselves to the degree that Genoese Jacobus de Voragine did when he claimed the Roman god Janus as founder of Ianua (the Latin name for Genoa) — who he also argues was the biblical Noah. What we find in the Zibaldone da Canal instead is that the author has replaced a single founder with oblique references to some of the greatest cities and empires of both East and West — the distant, mystified shores of the Mediterranean with familiar Italian coasts — to tie Venice into not one source or foundation, but several together. And by casting Rome, Troy, Constantinople and Ravenna as cities who only mattered in so much as they led up to Venice itself, our author firmly placed their powers and authorities in days long gone, with the empire of Venice both their legitimate successor and replacement. With its four origins, two Eastern and two Western, the Venetian chronicle both emphasized Venice’s hybrid ties and influences as a simultaneously Greek and Roman city, and also rooted its imperial nature in these earlier empires’ legitimacy, to doubly bolster its strength and status even from its earliest years.

After firmly establishing Venice’s Christian and imperial character through the earliest moments of its inheritance — the cities, places and peoples that would give rise to Venice itself — the chronichetta then drifts through a handful of events that reinforce those identities: Venice’s acquisition of several saints’ bodies, the defense of its mother empire

against the threat of Robert Guiscard in 1080, and its triumph against its perennial rival of the late Middle Ages, the Genoese, in 1096.

By including the acquisition of the body of St. Mark from Alexandria to his new Venetian home in 800, with a church built to house him in 1071, the compiler reiterates Venice’s Christian origins and identity. The event reveals how the city gained its patron saint, one of the most famous examples of furta sacra in the Middle Ages. Though he elaborates little, his inclusion of the event points, more than merely to a declaration of Christian allegiance, to a moment that would lend Venice a degree of autonomy against Byzantium and the Carolingians and “provide the means of establishing or maintaining economic power and a competitive position vis-à-vis other cities.”

In reality, St. Mark was carried from Alexandria in 827 in the wake of the Synod of Mantua, and conventional accounts reveal, in the words of Patrick Geary, “the very different, cosmopolitan world of ninth-century Venice.” Geary argues that the theft of St. Mark was a response to the Synod of Mantua, where the Carolingian bishops ruled in favor of the See of (Carolingian-controlled) Aquileia over the See of Grado, granting the former primacy over the region. Previously, the Patriarch Paul of Aquileia had fled to Grado during a Lombard invasion, taking the relics to Grado with him. Due to Venice’s own roots in Roman flight from Lombard invaders, Venetians were particularly invested in the debate of independence — was Grado (and thus Venice) still subject to Aquileia, or a Church in its own right? Aquileian preeminence gave them jurisdiction over Venice, “a major setback for

394 Ibid., 88-89.
the Venetians’ efforts toward autonomy.” Aquileia’s victory rested in no small part on the Church’s foundation at the hand of St. Mark the Evangelist. That founding story granted Aquileia a prestige and venerability that justified its continued domination despite the patriarch’s abandonment of his seat some two centuries prior during the Lombard invasions that Grado had argued transferred control of the region to them. Transferring St. Mark’s body to Venice formed part of a larger pattern of Italian churches’ particular interest in Apostolic relics and the superior authority they could grant — Milan and Ravenna had already acquired apostolic relics from Andrew, John the Evangelists, John the Baptist and half a dozen other apostles by the seventh century. But it was also part of a distinctly Venetian pattern: their movement away from Byzantine influence, since his growing importance resulted in the “gradual eradication of all memory of Theodore,” the Byzantine equivalent of St. George who had previously served as patron of Venice.

Andrea Dandolo, Venetian doge and chronicler (doge 1343-1354) tied Venetian origins to St. Mark, rather than to Troy or Rome, in his own chronicle, often considered an almost “official history” of Venice. His chronicle begins with St. Mark’s establishment of a bishopric at Aquileia, rather than with biblical history, Troy or Rome as our chronicler follows, and provided a “needed Christian past for Venice” to compare it to Rome’s Peter and Paul or Milan’s St. Ambrose, to “claim a religious status similar to that of other great Italian cities.” After paying so much attention to the foundations of Eastern and Western

395 Ibid., 90.
396 Ibid., 91.
cities to give origins to Venice’s imperial status, the anonymous author of the *Zibaldone da Canal* points to St. Mark as yet another justification for authority and independence — this time religious authority, rather than imperial — to codify the moment where Venice retained its ecclesiastical (and, by correlation, political) independence from Aquileia and the Franks through *furta sacra*.

But the chronicle also diverges from conventional tropes of *furta sacra* narratives by granting attention not only to St. Mark, but to St. Theodore. As noted by Patrick Geary, St. Theodore’s cult fell out of favor after Venice’s adoption of St. Mark; its decline reflected, he argues, a turn away from their Byzantine heritage. In the entry to 1096, our chronicler goes into great detail about the triumph of Venice over one of its fiercest rivals, Genoa, and another instance of saintly acquisition. Vigo Contarini, then archbishop of Venice, went:

Overseas with a great army, and took [from an unspecified location] the body of Saint Nicholas, and the other body of Saint Nicholas, and the body of Saint Theodore, and left from there and went to Jerusalem and took a castle named Haifa, and then returned to Venice, and placed the holy bodies in the site of milord Saint Nicholas of the Lido, and took many Genoese and put them in the merchant’s quarter of milord Saint Mark, and made them go entirely under the tutelage of milord Saint Mark, and took all the land that they had in Acre, and one of their towers they called Mongioia, and their street, and tore down the tower to its foundations, and came to Venice with great jubilation and put many of the Genoese in prison in Venice.

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399 Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 91.

Dotson notes in his translation that the chronicler seems to have conflated two separate events: first, Venice’s role in the First Crusade in 1100, wherein they defeated a Pisan, rather than Genoese fleet before heading to Myra, where they plundered the bodies of St. Nicholas, St. Theodore, and St. Nicholas’ uncle (that mysterious “other body of St. Nicholas”) from the saint’s own church before taking Haifa; second, the 1258 Venetian battle against the Genoese at Acre that drove the rival city’s people from the entrepot and left it open to Venetian dominance. Our chronicler also pays little mind to the previous theft of St. Nicholas by Bari merchants, who took the great majority of the saint’s bones in 1087 after hearing of Venetian plans to take them first, leaving Venice only scraps. As with the case of St. Mark’s theft, the Bari merchants were responding to a perceived crisis — this time economic rather than political. Bari found itself simultaneously conquered by the Normans and drowning in a war with the Byzantines, all while Venice took advantage of the chaos to secure trading privileges with the empire, culminating in the Crysobull of 1082 that “secured both de jure and de facto her economic supremacy.”401 Their efforts to “outdo” their rival Venetian merchants in stealing St. Nicolas’ body was an attempt “to compete in prestige and in a different sort of economic pursuit — pilgrimage” where they had failed to compete in trade, thanks to the prestige of a saintly patron that was “at least as important as Venice’s Saint Mark”.402 But Venetians were not to be outdone for long, since they went back for the saint’s remaining bones only a few years later — nor, according to our chronicler, were they outdone at all. By his account, Venetians secured the entirety of St. Nicolas, and his other body, and the body of St. Theodore; he left no doubt that Venice held

401 Geary, Furt a Sacra, 102.
402 Ibid., 102.
all of St. Nicolas and reigned supreme in the competition of owning saints’ bodies. Where Bari’s economic crisis pushed their merchants to steal the body of St. Nicolas as an expression of ongoing equal prestige to rising Venice, instead this version maintains Venetian superiority and prestige, cutting out rival Bari in his description of cutting down Genoese enemies.

The passage is, along with a later passage on the fall of Acre, one of the longest entries in the chronicle, speaking to the chronicler’s great enthusiasm for detailing Venice’s victory over the Genoese, so much so that he elides success over the Pisans (a later Venetian ally against the Genoese) into a battle against the greater enemy. It also reflects the ongoing popularity of St. Nicolas among merchants in the later Middle Ages — originally Venetian merchants sought out his body, then Bari merchants got to him first, and now another merchant preserving its story in his chronicle as a *furta sacra* with more interest and detail than that of St. Mark himself. And with the mention of St. Theodore we see a merchant who was not quite ready to leave behind that Byzantine heritage, which aligns with his interest in making Venice a ‘mixed’ city, so to speak: where Venice was heir to both Eastern and Western empires, so too did she have both Roman and Greek saints housed within her borders, granting her religious legitimacy and prestige.

Beyond the author’s pure joy in detailing the fall of the Genoese to Venetian hands, the entry also expresses Venice’s continued faithfulness to saints during warfare. The author elevates Venice’s prestige by noting the city’s possession of multiple saints’ bodies, all notably acquired through actions taken abroad during critical moments of Venetian assertions of independence from outside control. By detailing how Venetians gained the bodies of saints during ventures abroad, the compiler intermingled Venice’s prestigious possession of saints’ bodies with their successful ventures abroad throughout the
Mediterranean — their success as a Christian city depended on and was a product of their military success at sea and continued independence from others who sought to gain footholds of control of the city. Meanwhile, their triumph against the Genoese is expressed in a forced devotion to St. Mark: once they captured the Genoese, they forced their prisoners into the *insegna* (instruction, banner or coat of arms) of Venice’s patron saint. Empire enabled, or even spurred on, Venice’s Christian identity, but imperial success, such as the taking of Acre, also encouraged the *expression* of that identity.

Leaving behind saints’ bones, the chronicler next turns to an entry on empire alone in an entry on Venice’s defense of one of its imperial parents, Byzantium. The entry reinforces Venice’s imperial identity and ties the city to the East and the Byzantine Empire over connections to the West: “During the year 1080 a great army went out from Venice against Robert Guiscard to defend the Empire of Romania.” Though the description is brief, Frederick Lane argues that the event was the first moment of “really decisive Venetian intervention in the lower Adriatic” as a moment of protecting their trading interests in Constantinople against the growing threat of the Normans in southern Italy. As an act of defense of Byzantium it was largely futile — they delayed, rather than wholly prevented Norman expansion until Robert’s death in 1085; but as an embodiment of Venetian identity, it encapsulates the moment when Venice first turned her naval power outwards as a police force within the Adriatic and beyond, a nascent breath of expansion. It also emphasizes

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404 Lane, *Venise: A Maritime Republic*, 27.
Venice’s cooperation with and defense of Byzantium — a cooperation highlighted by the chronicle’s silence on the matter of the Fourth Crusade.

Indeed, our compiler almost completely ignores the most climactic moment of territorial expansion in Venetian history, the Fourth Crusade, and nearly all the twelfth century expansions and territorial acquisitions in the Adriatic that led up to that climax. Though perhaps this is not too surprising, given that early Venetian accounts of the Fourth Crusade speak of papal endorsement of Venetian actions in Constantinople, in direct contradiction to other non-Venetian depictions, but Venetian chroniclers gradually began to remove mention of papal support and largely omitted the details of Venetian excommunication for their actions. Thomas Madden notes that, “in one form or another, Villehardouin’s narrative of the Fourth Crusade had arrived in Venice by the mid-fourteenth century and was actively altering Venetian perspectives on the event.” Perhaps, having heard conflicting accounts or else uncertain about the course of history, our compiler opted to omit the story of Venetian expansion entirely, lest he accidentally paint Venice in a negative light. Together with his inclusion of Venice’s triumph over Genoa in Acre, however, he paints a picture in which Venice’s primary moments of territorial expansion came from their defeat of fellow Italian merchant empires, rather than against their Greek parent, carefully gliding over the events of the Fourth Crusade and any implication that they were enemies to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Above all, however, by including their acquisition of Genoese territory within Acre with the occlusion of their acquisition of other territories within the Mediterranean, the

compiler reveals the critical role he saw Acre play in Venetian history: where other expansions were not worthy of mention, Acre’s fate was always of interest. It echoes the frequent appearance of Acre in post-Acre mercantile material of the Zibaldone da Canal and Marc. It., XI, 32 (likewise in non-Venetian manuals of Pegolotti and the Pisan memoriae), and the city’s centrality in our only pre-Fall manual, Marc. It., XI, 87 — before its fall, Acre was a primary trade connector for Venetian merchants, and after its fall its memory lingered in the merchant mind and in their communities. To a chronicler focused on the positive justification of Venetian imperialism, Acre stood out as a symbol of the economic boons of such expansion, provided that expansion came at the expense of “safe” enemies like the Genoese, rather than their imperial parents, the Byzantines.

The author of the Zibaldone da Canal finally abandons his intense focus on Venetian shores and exploits in his entry to 1287. There, he tells of Acre’s fall, and in doing so he shifts into a depiction of Venetian history fundamentally intertwined with the Mediterranean as a whole. That history was tied to the fate of Acre, the city with which it rose at the expense of the Genoese. The chronicler recounts how, “the sultan Saladin took the Holy Sepulcher, and took Acre, and many other cities of the Christians. And in that year the body of milord St. Stephen was brought to Venice.”

Note that the compiler seems to have once more conflated two events — the fall of Jerusalem, the “Holy Sepulcher,” in 1187, some one-hundred years prior; and the fall of Acre in 1291. Acre falls twice in this compiler’s

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recollection — likely a reflection of the way the compiler drew on two separate chronicles.

He describes its second loss with some greater detail:

On the 19th of May, the city of Acre was taken by the sultan Saladin Menisaldar; the sultan came with 300,000 cavalry and 200,000 infantry and arrived around the city of Acre on the first of April and remained for 49 days. And in the end, it was taken on the aforesaid 49th day. And when he had taken it, he had everything torn down and destroyed to the foundations, and nothing was left of it, neither house, nor palace, nor church, save one bell tower, or mosque, in order to shout out his cruel laws. He killed and captured many men, women and children, and at present all of Syria remains in his laws.407

Not only did the sultan capture the city, but the capture involved extensive military efforts to do so — a massive army of allegedly nearly half a million and nearly two months — and then the absolute destruction of the city. This depiction of the fall of Acre stands out within the chronicle for the depth of its imagery and the sheer emotional weight behind the words — just as the compiler broke his neutral stance within the mercantile sections to praise the Barbary Coast and Tunis, here again he opted to describe the fall of Acre where other entries in the chronicle remained dry and disinterested. His interest and emotion reveal the emotional weight the city’s memory carried within the compiler’s mind. The memory of Acre loomed large in Venetian merchants’ visions of their contemporary mental geographies within their guides to trade, and once more we see how the city was central to Venetian mercantile memory — even beyond the memory of Jerusalem, which did not merit even a

407 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 153; “corando ani MlJeLXXX] a di XVIIIJ intrando màcio fo prexa la citade d’Acre per lo soldan Saladin Menitsaldar lo qual soldan si vene cum homini II[JeM a chavallo e cum homini III[JeM a pè e çonsse lo primo di d’avrille intorno la citade d’Acre e stete intorno la tera d’XLVIIIJ e per le fin si la prexe in lo sovrascritto dì XLVIIIJ. E quando ello l’ave prexa, ello la fesse tut a abatere e derupà de chi a le fondamena e non de lassà né chassa né maxon né glexa[œ] sallvo un chanpanil over muscheda per cridar la soa brutale ollcisse e presse homeni e femene e fontalini assè et in prexente romasse [t]uta la Suria intro le suò mane.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV’, 99.
correct year attributed to its fall and little description, let alone the extensive reminiscence granted to Acre’s “second” fall. He depicts the destruction of Acre as absolute: “everything torn down and destroyed to the foundations, and nothing was left of it, neither house, nor palace, nor church.” And yet, Dotson notes that “while it is true that Acre was thoroughly sacked, it was not destroyed. Much remains even today of the Acre of the crusaders.”

Contrary to the reality of a relatively preserved Acre, here in Venetian memory, its loss — and of the economic boons it offered that gave it such central status in the medieval merchant’s mind — was so complete that the city might as well have been utterly destroyed, and with it the pillar of Christendom, so that “neither house, nor palace, nor church remained,” — the three defining edifices of a city. In their place, Saladin remade the city into a Muslim center of communication: a single tower, a mosque, from which Saladin called out his laws to the rest of the world. Note the importance of oral communication: Saladin built a tower that allowed him to “shout out his cruel laws,” to distribute information to others and spread ideology and culture through direct contact — Acre served as a megaphone for the voice of whoever held it. Michael McCormick, in his *Origins of the European Economy*, establishes that commerce is inherently a reflection of communication — that, “commerce presupposes and stimulates a wider system of communications which allows the movement of people, goods, and information.” Acre’s loss was not only a loss of an entrepot that facilitated trade, it was a loss of communication that served as the

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408 Ibid.
409 Ibid.
410 Ibid.
lifeblood of merchant’s long-distance communities. And by the same principle, the author suggests that its loss not only strengthened the existing sultanate but also facilitated its spread to new members through oral communication of their religion and the preaching of laws. If 1096 was the year of Venice’s great joy and triumph over the Genoese, 1291 was the year of their greatest loss and grief over the fall of Acre.

The compiler used events in the Mediterranean and broader Christendom to contextualize and understand Venetian history, characterizing Venice as an “international city” so to speak. Events that took place elsewhere were nevertheless a part of Venetian history because of Venice’s identity as a city tied to the Mediterranean and to the larger world. Much of the chronicle follows the implicit creation of and subsequent loss of empire and commercial ties to foreign lands that fell into the hands of the Mamluk Turks. Ultimately, the manual creates a Venetian identity shaped by its place within the Mediterranean, as a city that grew and shrank in power with the shifting winds of the Mediterranean — where they favored Christendom, they favored Venice and her empire, and where the winds favored Islam, Venice weakened.

Beyond Venice’s imperial nature and identity, however, the compiler still places Venetians and Venetian events, even non-imperial ones, within a context of larger geographic experiences. He illustrates a city connected intimately to distant regions thanks to the economic and communicative ties its people shared with those abroad. In 1303 an earthquake struck Crete — it nearly destroyed Venetian Candia, and he gives special mention to one Guido da Canal as then-duke of Crete, possible relative of the manual’s eventual owner, Niccolò da Canal. The duke was potentially a direct source for the details that the earthquake “struck Rhodes, and it was felt in Acre, and in Alexandria, and in Venice, but, by
the mercy of God, it did not do any damage to that city.”412 Meanwhile, God’s mercy was not visible elsewhere, as in the Marches and Fano, where it apparently “did great damage.”413

That he noticed the far-reaching earthquake speaks to the way he integrated Venice and Venetians into the rest of the Mediterranean within the city-world chronicle. Venetians alone did not feel the earthquake — it was a universal experience for places and people across the Mediterranean, and those places were relevant in the construction of the Venetian identity expressed within the chronicle. The memory of the earthquake’s trembles across the Sea reveals not only Venice’s international interests, but also its compiler’s potential ties to an international community and network that gathered the news and experiences of people abroad in order to learn about the far-reaching impact of the catastrophic event.

Each entry into the chronicling material situates Venice within the Mediterranean world. The chronicler does not explicitly describe Venice’s vested interest in the loss of Acre from the Crusader States, or Tripoli’s loss, nor the crowning of the King of Hungary or an earthquake felt thousands of miles away — yet their place within an otherwise Venetian chronicle speaks to the impact these events had on the author. The events effectively became Venetian history because of their implied impact upon Venice, and merited a place

412 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 154; “et in quello di caçè Ruodoet in Acre et in Allexandria e molto alttre etin Venexia si fo sentido, ma, le mercè de Dio, ello non fesse dano allgun allatera.” Stussi, Zibaldone da CanaL Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 100.

413 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 154; “et in la Marcha fesse drano dano et in Fan se sfesse lo so pallaço nuovo.” Stussi, Zibaldone da CanaL Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 100. The author offers extensive details that, based upon the range of dates given by Dotson for compilation as between 1311 and 1330, were well within his probable lifespan. Given the personal connection and particular interest in both Venice and its Venetian connection, this particular entry was possibly added by the compiler himself from personal memory, and the list of cities may well reflect news collected from Guido da Canal’s contacts across the Mediterranean in Rhodes, Acre, Alexandria, Marche and Fano. As with the compiler’s strong interest in the Barbary Coast, the earthquake entry may well reflect its compiler’s personal experiences and the connections he gained through trade, and the news that they carried with them.
within the city’s chain of events — a history of Venice would not be complete without an account of the fall of Acre and the Crusader states, the crowning of the Hungarian king or the Mediterranean earthquake rippling across the ocean. He was not alone in his interest in Mediterranean shores; after the thirteenth century, Venetian chronicles increasingly revolved around, justified and lionized Venice’s territorial expansion into the Great Sea; the *Historia Ducum Venetorum*, Martino da Canal’s *Les estoires de Venise* and Andrea Dandolo’s *Chronica per extensum descripta* all celebrate Venice’s growing world — and their power and authority in that world.\footnote{Giorgio Cracco, “Il pensiero storico di fronte ai problemi del comune veneziano,” in *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, ed. Pertusi, Agostino (Florence: Olschki, 1970), 45-74.}

Where our chronicler stands apart, however, is in his lingering nostalgia for Acre and its fall: Venetian nobles writing chronicles tended to elide and ignore Venetian losses in favor of her victories, but here the author grants as much attention to the loss of Acre (though not directly lost as a Venetian-controlled territory, it is clearly a loss for the Venetian world) as he does to their victory over the Genoese.\footnote{“In general, the family chronicles concentrate on victories rather than defeats or natural disasters; if these are mentioned at all, they are passed over quickly.” John Melville-Jones, “Venetian History and Patrician Chroniclers,” 201.}

The author’s approach to history concentrated on elevating Venice’s position as a Christian city, as an empire, and as an international participant in Mediterranean power struggles, speaking to his pride in the triumphs his city had had in each field. He shared that pride with the compiler of the *Marc. It., XI, 32 zibaldone*, written some eighty years later. The two authors differ, however, in what elements of civic identity they valued. The later merchant’s historical narrative focuses on internal institutional stability as the driving force for his patriotic vision of Venetian identity, where that stability enabled the swift and fair
enactment of justice even in the face of crisis. The earlier compiler, however, had far less interest in the question of stability or the legal institutions of his homeland, and his image of Venice was one rooted in its religion and external power — the ability to enforce Venetian will abroad, to take land and control it, to capture and mete out justice not upon its own people, but upon their perennial enemies, the Genoese and Saracens. The “Two Venices” of these manuals even parallel the mental maps illustrated in their mercantile material: where the Zibaldone da Canal portrays an international Venice that acted on an international stage, Marc. It., XI, 32’s author has, we will see, crafted a Venice that stayed closer to home, and he seems to have had little interest in the goings-on of the Mediterranean outside of its direct involvement with Venice itself. Whether they loved their city for its international connections and power or its internal stability, both present a vision of Venice that reflected their own perceptions of Venice’s place within the broader world, and of the past’s role in defining that place.

*The Past Within Marc. It., XI, 32:*

In the next century, the international Venice of the Zibaldone da Canal was supplanted by a decidedly different perspective on the Venetian past — expressed in a different form of historical writing — in the zibaldone of Marc. It., XI, 32. The chronicetta in the Zibaldone da Canal briefly lists events in a rough chronological order, rarely providing details or elaborations. It fits firmly within the chronicle genre. Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler, however, included a detailed (and, fascinatingly, first-hand) narrative account of only a single event in time: the betrayal and trial of Marin Falier, doge of Venice in 1354. The narrative comes from Nicolò Trevisan, member of the Council of Ten during Falier’s trial, and a precious and rich source of information on the trial, given that most Venetian chronicles were
inclined to pay it little detail at best and ignore the event altogether at worst. Marc. It., XI, 32 is the oldest known manuscript to contain Trevisan’s account, which survives elsewhere in Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Misc. Cod. 728, with the trial and an account of the rebellion of Crete in 1363-1364, and Marc. It. VII, 519 (8438) as well as Marc. It. VII 2567 (12459). The latter two are full chronicles and fit comfortably within the chronicle genre’s patterns as described above, but there has been some debate as to whether Trevisan himself wrote a complete chronicle or simply separate, first-hand narratives of individual events within his life. Originally, historians treated Marc. It. VII, 519 as the “complete” version of Trevisan’s chronicle; they assumed that he wrote the entire chronicle up to his death in 1369, with a later, anonymous author adding material up to the sixteenth century. They refer to “Trevisan’s chronicle” rather than “Trevisan’s account of the Trial of Marin Falier,” — a conclusion which would suggest that our compiler lifted his own material from a fuller, earlier version that no longer survives. More recently, however, scholars have argued that Trevisan was only responsible for the material dating roughly from 1340 up to his death, or even only the accounts of Marin Falier’s trial and the Candian uprising. As the account exists in Marc. It., XI, 32, our compiler treats it as an independent historical event, rather than any part of a larger attempt to recount a “complete” history or chronicle. We might infer that his interest in the past as a reflection of Venetian identity was perhaps less holistic


as well — that is, the account gives insight into a single facet of Venetianness, rather than a complete account of what it meant to be Venetian. Future additions by later authors transformed the text into a more conventional Venetian chronicle by adding events both before and after his narrowed focus, broadening the text but losing its unique focus on only a few years. In doing so, they also diminished, at least in part, the author’s promise to provide “quite reasonable testimony,” on the grounds that he “was at the aforementioned affairs, that is, at the Council of Ten,” during the trial itself. He bases his authority on his position as eyewitness to the events, and this authority wanes when others nested his account among second-hand writings while they diluted the comparatively focused message of the passage with other themes of Venetian identity.

The *zibaldone* opens with the account of the trial, barring the possibility of lost folios. The narrative carries with it an identity that was not only mercantile but distinctly Venetian, and tied to events in the recent past that show the unique civic ideals of Venetian government. The story described in the account depicts a Venice defined by its governments’ political stability and rigid justice during an era where other republics were fraught by internal strife and rapidly changing control amid the rise of “despotic *signorie*” (or the perception of such a rise) across the Italian peninsula. As a result, the history’s place in

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419 “Quando Io fosse alle predate cose zioe del chonseglio di diecxe Io posso rendere asai raxioneuolle testemoniumzà.” F. 153r.

420 An unlikely possibility, given that the incipit is visually distinguished in capitals and size to indicate rubrication and as the first folio includes a red, yellow and blue crest at the foot of the folio; but given that the manual has since been re-collated into a miscellany, it is not impossible to rule out.

the manual establishes a cultural identity rooted in their city of origin and its past events, and in the present concepts of civic ideals that those past events reflected.

With its inclusion of a narrative history, Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler placed himself in the growing Italian tradition of histories intended to express a burgeoning civic identity during the last centuries of the late Middle Ages and the developing humanist style of historiography that saw the past as a tool for shaping ideals and rhetoric surrounding city-states, to defend themselves against the varying encroaching threats of, as Eric Cochrane puts it, “the kind of domestic tyranny with expansionist ambitions that had come to prevail in almost all the cities of northern Italy.”422 The account depicts Venice in one of its most critically unstable — and critically Republican — moments in time: a late medieval crisis in which la Serenissima was at risk of losing its serenity to unrest and tyranny. Marin Falier, doge of Venice, with help from co-conspirators Bertuzzi Issarello and Fellipo Challandario and lesser followers, planned the assassination of the Council of Ten.423 But the Council uncovered the plan, Falier’s treason cut short by his and his co-conspirators' arrest and he found himself falling from grace and power with a swiftness only matched by the axe brought to his neck on the stairs of the St. Mark’s Palazzo. All this, and particularly the trial and sentencing of both the main actor and his many co-conspirators, the zibaldone describes in dry and excruciating detail.

422 Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in Renaissance Italy*, 78.

423 In fact, Falier’s motives remain rather obscure, in no small part thanks to the absence of contemporary or near-contemporary sources other than Trevisan’s. Subsequent chronicles by Antonio Morosini and Lorenzo de Monacis claim that Falier was motivated by insults slung at his Dogaressa, Aluycia Gradengo, by a group of young nobles (and particularly Michele Steno) – legend has it that, at a state banquet, Steno became drunk, was removed from the event by Falier, and wreaked his revenge by spreading rumors that Aluycia had only married Falier for money. Though Falier was condemned to damnatio memoriae (with his portrait in the Sala del M maggior Consiglio) removed and replaced with black cloth, his story was nevertheless memorialized by Byron in the 19th century.
The chapter begins with a brief incipit, “In the year 1355, on the 15th of April, Marin Falier, doge of Venice, was beheaded. And here we will speak of how [that happened] and of his treason with his followers. And afterwards, other beautiful things.” From there, the chapter delves briefly into an account of Falier’s attempt to form a conspiracy with Bertuzzi Issarello and Filippo Chalendario. Later histories and chronicles from the sixteenth century and beyond claimed that Falier sought to conspire to overthrow the Great Council and Senate of Venice in response to a social slight against his wife, the dogaressa. Meanwhile, modern historians sometimes claim that he sought to monopolize power and authority in part of the larger peninsular pattern towards consolidating absolute power in the hands of a single individual. In Marc. It., XI, 32, however, the author, Nicolò Trevisan — a perhaps biased but nevertheless firsthand observer — claims that Falier’s only goal was to “return the city to ruin and a terrible state.”

Similarly, Trevisan takes little interest in how the conspiracy took place, nor how it was ultimately revealed to its intended victims, the Council of Ten, who took steps to arrest the conspirators before any coup could take place. He dedicates a mere column of text to the conspiracy, the attempted coup, and its failure (the latter he credits to Nicolò Lioni who warned the Council after having a “great fear” of what might follow).

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424 “IHS MCCC LV [sic] a di XV de auril fu tacata la testa a miser marin falier doxe da veniexia. Et qui diremo del modo e tradamento chom I suo seguazi. E seguitando altre belle chosse.” F. 150v. There is a certain humor in that turn of phrase, of “other beautiful things,” that implies that the failed treason and subsequent beheading was a “beautifull thing” as well.


426 “Voando tuti i prediti [Marin Falier and his coconspirators] redir ueniexia a ruina e pessimo stato.” F. 150v.

427 Ibid.
lies in the immediate aftermath of the event: the trial and subsequent punishment of Falier and his co-conspirators and the “proper/right remedy [that] was proceeded with great Justice against the traitors who were there.” This part of the text is methodical and systematic in its description of the trial — an attitude that Trevisan implicitly ties to the Council of Ten’s own approach to political justice. As the trial progresses, he describes the proceedings for each individual: what the accused was found guilty of (for none were found innocent), their punishments, any conditions set out to meet those punishments, and the consequences if they attempted to evade justice. Those tried and sentenced included not only the direct participants themselves, but any who knew of the conspiracy and failed to warn the Council, and those who took up arms but then abandoned their treason before the chance to put it into action.

One such conspirator was Nicolò Zuchuol: “Next was the process against Sir Nicolò Zuchuol because he knew of the treason and did not reveal it to the signoria. In this decree, they decided that he must “go to the city of Candia [in Crete] and finish his life there, never venturing more than five miles outside the city. And he must remain in prison until he can take a ship to depart to Candia. Moreover, neither he, nor his son nor any descendants could own part of any ship, neither armed nor unarmed nor can he [achavi] any of the aforementioned ships. And if he ever breaks these rules/requirements, all his mobile goods will go to the commune.” There is a certain completeness to the trials described; for

428 “Oportuno remedio fu prozesso chom gran Justizia contra i diti traditori che fu prezi.” *Ibíd.*

429 “Item fo proçesso contra sier nicollo çuchuol perche el sape de l trata e non lo reuella alla segnioria. In quest forma che el debia andar e star in la çita de cha[n]dia ella fenir sua vita non posassande la [illegible] dalla terra pur de cinque megia. E non possa insir de prexion se nom quand el montera in nauilio p[er] andar in chandia. A preso che nel’ui ne suo fioli ni suo desendenti no[n] possa auer parte in nisimo nauilio armado ne dexarmado ne achavi d’algun deli diti nauilli. E sel ronpesse el ditto chonfin tutti I suo beni si mobelli chomo stabelli sie ueginir in chomunii.” F. 192v.
everyone involved in the attempted coup, no matter how remote their connection, the author provided (relatively) equal and thorough detail, which the compiler, in turn, did not erase or edit out — or if Trevisan did provide greater detail to certain members of the coup, our compiler has chosen to trim the fat and provide equal attention to all. What does survive has little sensationalism for Zuchuol’s sentence, or for any others.\footnote{Of course, whether even lesser players were, in fact, edited out of our account, is unknown.} Instead, no one actor is given significantly more weight or attention to his sentence; rather, justice is applied equally to all. Of Falier’s particular fate, for example, the account offers: “On the vespers of Thursday, the 16th of April [the day after his attempted coup] lord Marin Falier was sentenced by the Council of Ten to have his head cut off on the steps of the [piera] in which the doge made the first sacrament, namely the Palazzo.”\footnote{“De uenere da uesporo a di dixesete auril MCCCLV fu sentezziato miser marin falier in nel chonsiglier di diece a truuarli la testa sulpato della schalla de piera la chel doxie fa el primo sagramento siando in palazo.” F. 152r.} The Council meted out swift justice — less than a day passed between the failure of the coup and the sentencing, and execution followed the next day — but at least within Trevisan’s account of the events, Falier’s crime was little worse than that of his co-betrayers, or rather, the crime was of less significance than the justice, and justice gave equal weight to all levels of treason.

Trevisan emphasizes not the betrayal and treason of Falier, but the meting of justice and punishment. Even up to his closing lines he details the punishment of one conspirator found guilty of first and second counts of treason, noting that it “seemed to the council that he was worthy not of grace/compassion, but of shame and punishment,” and mandated him to exile in Ragusa, Sicily, which the author notes as a “bon merchato” — a good deal.\footnote{“Al chonseglio parsse ch’el non fusse degnio daleahunne grazia ma de vergognia e de pena . . . e avene bon merchato.” F. 154v.} The
guilt and shame of treason contrast the uprightness and unbending will of the Council’s judgments, emphasizing once more the justice of the proceedings.

The thoroughness and completeness of the account are matched by the thoroughness of the Council of Ten: their punishments account not only for the penalty of exile, but for many potential contingencies of the punishment itself — Nicolò’s exile included not only his physical limitation to the city of Candia, but also the possibility of his owning a ship that would leave the boundaries of Crete on his behalf: he must remain on the island for the rest of his life, with clear consequences if he attempted to stretch his reach back to Venice. And the judgement limited his sons and descendants, too — though it is unclear whether this is a punishment of the son for sins of the father, if the Council hoped to ensure that Zuchuol would not have access to transport that belonged to his relatives, or that they feared the descendants might seek vengeance on their patriarch’s behalf. However, it is critical to note that the enforced punishments all had a clear product (if not a clear intention) of removing all risk to the Republic of Venice of future treason or attempted insurrection — that is, the penalties all created impediments towards future political interference: Zuchuol was still within easy reach of Venice’s political influence so that they could, in theory, enforce their additional rules and boundaries, yet far enough to keep him neutralized as a threat to the state. All the provisions limited his ability to possibly become a threat to the republic. The author paints an image of Venetian power embodied by their ability to impose justice on its enemies in swift fairness. Moreover, this justice was total and inescapable: just as the account is thorough and detailed, so too was the Republic’s justice itself, while enemies of the state were powerless to further their plots against the city and its Council.
The account is distinct from the historical content of other manuals in its focus on a single event and in the level of detail it provides. In his attentive treatment of the trial, rather than the failed coup, on the state rather than the individual, the author characterizes Venetian government as strong in the face of a treasonous challenge to its very existence, and yet just, though unyielding, to the same enemies that would have the Republic destroyed. Thanks to its authorship at the hands of Nicolò Trevisan, who was also a member of the Council of Ten during the trial, the account also tantalizingly offers, as Vittorio Lazzarrini puts it, the “oculta fide” of Venetian government — the subtle insights and personal views of the Council of Ten that would otherwise have remained obscure.433 Shortly before turning to the individual sentences dealt to the conspirators, the narrator observes:

“It struck me to make a record/memory of these things that according to my description seemed to me most useful if another similar event should occur, God forbid. Since I was at the aforementioned affairs, that is, at the Council of Ten, I could render quite reasonable testimony, since it seemed to me that the [tera] carried some defect. And not only I gave such an opinion, but it was also felt by the greater part of the Council of Ten and by the Junta. And those of the lower [Council] had my opinion. And so I record for perpetual memory how I understood it occurred.”434

He emphasizes both the preservation of the memory of the events, and too, his hope that the account will help prevent “simel chose ochoresse,” — other, similar things that might happen. He offers both a testimony to the strength of the Venetian Republic, but also

433 Vittorio Lazzarini, Marino Faliero. Avanti il dogado, la congiura, 292.

434 “Par a mi de far memoria de do chose che secondo la mia descriziom me pareraue utellisime chose ogni siata che simel chaxo ochoresse che dio no uoglia / Quando Io fosse alle predete cosse zioe del chonseglio di diece Io posso rendere asai raxioneuolle testemoniumza / perche el me parse veder la tera portar alchuno difeto / E non solamente Io hai tal opinion ma piuxor del ditto chonseglio di diece e della zonta Et eziandio de queli de zoxo aueua la mia opinion. E perso arechordero a perpetuelle memoria chomo se chontien apreso.” F. 153r.
a set of conduct that others could reproduce if ever another power threatened Venice’s serenity. The text was, in that sense, didactic, demonstrating civic ideals and providing a resource for reference in case of future need – just as merchant manuals could provide a roadmap and reference source for a student of trade early in his career. Where merchant manuals provided the foundations of a common base of mercantile knowledge to connect the merchants’ community, and in turn helped share the authors’ mentalities and mental maps with their readers, here we can see how the zibaldone’s compiler might also have thought of this historical account as a didactic tool for Venetian civic behavior in which he expected to take part.

As a piece of a zibaldone that reflected both the compiler’s own identity and his attempt to instill it within his reader, the account of the trial of Marin Falier and his coconspirators reveals a unique mercantile identity that was tied not only to “Venetianness” as a broad concept, but to Venetian government in particular. Other manuals, and not only Venetian ones, include chronicles of their compiler’s native city, reflecting a strong interest in the roots of their town, and thus in their own roots within that city. By contrast, Marc. It, XI, 32’s compiler was not interested in a broad sense of Venetian history, but in the specific ideals expressed within the narrative of Marin Falier’s trial. To be a Venetian merchant was not only to know the roots and history of one’s city, but to understand the ways that the city itself was defined by its government, its Senate, its Council, and their justice, stability and power, even and especially when threatened by treason and tyranny.

We might reasonably expect merchants’ participation in civic government, given their relative prominence in Venetian politics compared to elsewhere in Italy. Merchants in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Venice had the unique advantage of strong integration into Venice’s political system and the Patrician class; senators, council members and even
doges often had their hands in the jars of trade themselves. Marino Sanudo was among those who overlapped as politician and merchant: his family were the elite Sanudi, who were regular members of the senate and the Great Council. After the serrata, of 1296, there was arguably a sharper divide between merchant and politician, yet we can see in Sanudo, and in these merchant manuals and zibaldoni, that Venetian merchants held their interest in the political milieu close to their Venetian identity.

Brendan Cassidy argues that Italian city-states idealized the state but not its statesmen, a concept clearly embraced in Marc. It., XI, 32: although he names the members of the special council convened to judge the traitors, the author pays little attention to them as individuals.435 He describes them as “the best and the soundest and the most artful” but provided few other details about their identities or status within the city.436 They are “nobles” and “gentlemen,” but never mentions whether they were statesmen, senators, military officials or otherwise. The account instead focuses on the procedures of the state itself, following Cassidy’s analysis of the relative unimportance of politicians compared to the grander, permanent political systems of city-states. Moreover, the presence of this ideal, and the absence of individuals, within a merchant’s text reveals that this concept extended beyond literary representations of civic ideals and into historical narratives.


436 “E fu prexo de chiamar una zonta de vinti nobelli de uenixia di miglior et di piu sanii et di piu aritxi azio che in tanto fato douesse chonsegliar et chonseglio de diexe nonpero possando meter.” And they called upon a group/junta of the best, soundest and most artful twenty noblemen of Venice, so that they should provide advice to the Council of Ten if they were unable to render judgement on such a deed.” F. 151r.
Conclusions on the Past Within Zibaldoni:

The histories included in each Venetian zibaldone reveal the unique vision each compiler had of the past and of the present. Marc. It., XI, 32’s narrative of the trial and sentencing of Marin Falier emphasized the critical role of justice, stability and the triumph of republicanism over attempted tyranny in Venice’s government — a government that maintained power through the strength of its unbending adherence to order. The Venetian identity constructed in the past is one fundamentally defined by its “Most Serene Republic” core, upheld in the form of swift but well-ordered justice against enemies that would see it undone, in an era featuring the rise of seigneurial regimes, often painted as a tyrannical or despotic mirror to the fall of communes, a product of interfactional conflict and strife that plagued them.437

The vision of Venice in the Zibaldone da Canal’s chronicle is, by contrast, imperial: a city rooted in empires founded by empires, a hybrid born from the strength of Greece and Rome — Mediterranean more than Italian — to legitimize its own imperial expansion and conquest across the Mediterranean in the centuries that followed. This chronicle depicts Venice as above all an international city, one involved in events beyond its own borders and influenced by events across the sea even indirectly, defined by its interactions with the world beyond their walls, rather than internal events.

437 This diametric opposition between “democratic” communalism and tyrannical signorie was a centerpiece and cornerstone of the Baron thesis and has, unsurprisingly, been modified, challenged and complicated over the years, with scholars like Phillip Jones arguing first that, “between communes and despotisms the resemblances seem at least as great as the differences,” P.J. Jones, “Communes and Despots: The City State in Late-Medieval Italy,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th series, no. XV (1965), 73. Further reading: D. Waley, The Italian City-Republics (London: Routledge, 1969); L. Martines, Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); O. Capitani, R. Manselli, G. Cherubini, A.I. Pini and G. Chittolini, Comuni e signorie: istituzioni, società e lotte per l’egemonia, vol. 1 (Torino: UTET, 1986).
Though the two zibaldoni present distinct images of their medieval cities — one untouched by the external chaos afflicting other Italian republics and communes, and one influencing and influenced by the Mediterranean world — they each rely upon past events to construct their understanding and image of their native city.

The Future in Venetian Merchant Manuals: Prognostication to Know the Present

While merchants looked to the past to understand their Venetian identity in the present, they also looked intently to the future — and, especially, to the stars. Travel and the stars have been intertwined since well before the Middle Ages. Physical space and outer space were connected as the heavens served as navigational anchors for sailors and travelers. Merchants of the Middle Ages had a unique relationship with time and space, distance and travel. Among the moving masses of an increasingly mobile late Middle Ages, they were particularly burdened and transformed by their journeys due to the duration of their time abroad as part of their livelihood and the growing profitability of long-distance trade.

Distance meant that every piece of information that came to a merchant about his dealings abroad lagged behind the reality of the situation by days, weeks or months. Every step of additional distance created a further delay and every delay gave a new chance for the news to change with the winds and lose its value. And every change or lost piece of knowledge heightened the risk involved in trading “in the dark,” without knowledge of the conditions they dealt with.

The connections between the stars and navigation, between navigation and travel, and travel and time formed a symbiotic relationship in Venetian merchant culture. They studied the stars to guide themselves on the seas of the Mediterranean, and eventually turned to those same stars to study the future and guide their daily actions. In doing so, they could
understand their own present as they lived in a dispersed community defined in large part by
time-lagged and out-of-date information. Venetian zibaldoni reveal the connection merchants
had with the study of the stars, which offered tantalizing promises of trust, stability and
predictability within a community often defined by the dangers of travel, the challenges of
migration and the lagging of time. Astrology allowed merchants to better understand the
present world around them, to be able to predict and control their environment as a means
of counterbalancing the risks and dangers of travel in the late Middle Ages. So too, here, the
tendrils of the growth of a long-distance community wrapped around mercantile identity,
shaping every nook and cranny of the Venetian merchants’ mind. Distance and migration
not only influenced the broad shape of the merchant communities that comprised it, they
also fundamentally transformed the interests and identities of their members in aspects
distantly removed from trade itself.

A Question of Genre: Zibaldoni, Almanac or Volkskalender?

Traditionally, merchant manuals and zibaldoni have been treated as a separate genre,
except where they are described as “commonplace books” — miscellanies casually
accumulated over the years based on an individuals’ curiosities. I, however, argue that
merchant manuals, and especially our two Venetian zibaldoni, more closely align with the
later-developing genre of the “almanac” or “Volkskalender,” and were not simply personal
collections, but instead professional, functional texts, even outside of the so-called
“mercantile material” — and so we must consider how the material itself is a product of the
professional lives, needs and mentality of merchants.

Scholars have had surprisingly little to say about almanacs as a genre in Italy, instead
dedicating most of their attention to the genre’s advent in Belgium, France and England, and
usually attribute the genre’s beginning to the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{438} In fact, there is, to my knowledge, no scholarship of the almanac genre in Italy, though there is no shortage of studies about Italian astrology and of Italian miscellanies — which invites us to ask, was the genre non-existent, or has it simply not been recognized as such? I argue that the \textit{zibaldone} of Marc. It., XI, 32 and the \textit{Zibaldone da Canal} are both early examples of a genre that is otherwise often relegated to later centuries after print and to northern Europe.

For the question of genre, Martha W. Driver asks the critical question of what makes an almanac an almanac, and not a miscellany. She concludes that the earliest almanacs were “didactic and salvational,” originally intended to “teach readers the way to heaven” as the defining features of the genre to distinguish them from regular miscellanies.\textsuperscript{439} Driver suggests that almanacs went on to lose much of their primarily salvational character, retaining it in bits and pieces of religious information, such as lists of holidays, saints’ days, and rankings of angels. Instead, they transformed into didactic reference texts.

Francis B. Brévart, meanwhile, speaks of “Gebrauchsliteratur,” and “Volkskalenders” as a distinctly Germanic genre of almanac that he defines by its contents of “useful material to be consulted frequently for advice about a wide variety of everyday concerns,” born in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{440} Its contents will seem


\textsuperscript{439} Martha W. Driver, "When Is a Miscellany Not Miscellaneous? Making Sense of the 'Kalender of Shepherds'," \textit{The Yearbook of English Studies} 33 (2003), 211.

familiar at this point: a *kalendarium* with “computational data for each of the twelve months: the golden numbers, the dominical letters, and the twenty-seven lunar letters,” alongside lists of saints’ days and feast days, and a zodiac guide to actions; other components could include a “*monatsregeln*,” or “labors of the months” that offered medical and astrological instructions for each month of the years, content about the Signs of the Zodiac, including the *bomo signorum* — figures in which zodiacal signs are affixed to the anatomical area they were thought to dominate, as well as medical information on phlebotomy. Brévant states that, based on the common co-binding of “*Volkskalenders*” with medical texts, they were a genre traditionally associated with and used by physicians as a professional text of reference, and eventually other professional and educated classes came to adopt the genre.

In her article on “Astrological Medicine and the Medieval English Folded Almanac,” H. M. Carey describes the intricate bonds between astrology and medicine as scientific fields that were of increasing interest to the general public as well as what we might consider the “professional group” of medical practitioners. We can see that affiliation in our two *zibaldoni* in the juxtaposition of medical advice and astronomical tables and *rota*: the author of the *Zibaldone da Canal* follows his the astrology chapters shortly with advice on bloodletting, an extract of the *Liber de proprietatibus* and a list of twenty-three medicinal uses for rosemary. The association between medicine and astrology, founded primarily in the

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441 Ibid., 318.

442 Ibid., 338.


444 Though the astronomy section within the *Zibaldone da Canal* contains little medical information itself, the association was clearly already there.
twelfth century with the translation movement of Greek and Arabic astrological works, led
the public to expect their doctors to understand astrological principles as they influenced the
body, in sickness and in health.\footnote{Brévart, “The German Volkskalender of the Fifteenth Century,” 337-338.} And yet here we see that the study of astrology flowed into
other professions as well, with the power of the stars touching upon many aspects of life.
That astrology appealed to professional classes as a popular tool for understanding more
earthly matters speaks to the field’s popularization across Europe as a whole.

Despite the growing importance of “popular astronomy,” however, almanacs did not
gain serious traction until the seventeenth century, marking the almanac-style content of
merchant manuals as particularly early examples. The almanacs of the fifteenth century
primarily focused upon the phases of the moon and the dates of movable feasts, only
developing their prognostic themes with the sixteenth century in English versions.\footnote{Lawrence-Mathers, “Domesticating the Calendar: The Hours and the Almanac in Tudor England,” 33-35.} B.S.
Capp attributed the rising popularity of prognostication and astrology in almanacs of the
sixteenth century to “supplying a need apparently ignored by the English Church after the
Reformation: the harnessing of supernatural powers to help men avert danger and overcome
obstacles in their daily lives.”\footnote{B.S. Capp, English Almanacs, 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), 20.} But as Lawrence-Mathers notes, almanacs were popular well
before the sixteenth century, and their inclusion, albeit in not-yet-standardized form, in
merchant manuals speaks to their appeal in the pre-Reformation world, and to the fact that
Venetian merchants sought them out for their similar promises of averting danger and overcoming obstacles even while the Catholic Church dominated still.⁴⁴⁸

All this is to say that, while Venetian authors of zibaldoni did not follow standardized structures of the English, Belgian or German almanacs, “Volkskalenders” or kalendarium, they still paralleled these genres’ content closely. We must recognize that merchants’ zibaldoni were often more than simply “commonplace” books or random miscellanies, but instead an early part of a pan-European didactic genre used for professional classes such as physicians and, now, merchants, built around material that was not merely “interesting” but also first and foremost functional. Merchants specifically adapted astrological and astronomical material to their unique interests and needs. In this sense, while medical practitioners relied upon astrology as part of their common base of knowledge, so too did merchants rely upon it as part of their profession, and were hardly late adopters of the almanac genre as both Brévart and Lawrence-Mathers suggest.⁴⁴⁹

Merchants adopted astrology and adapted it to their needs as travelers and migrants removed from their greater community. While doctors needed to understand the ability of

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⁴⁴⁹ Florentine merchant Pegolotti even noted the professional application of astrology and the prediction of movable feasts to his merchant audience in the Pratica della Mercatura, where he notes that, “E di nicistade alcuna volta sapere il corrente della luna a mercatanti, cioè la patta della luna di ciascheduno anno per sè, e trovasi per questo modo” [It is sometimes necessary for merchants to know the path of the moon, that is, the path that the moon follows each year, and it is found in this way;-- trans. mine]. He mentions the usefulness of astrology again in a table of astrological signs corresponding to different days in each month, labeling the table as, “Tavola che ti mostra a che segnale è la luna ciascuno giorno della luna, però che alcuna volta è di nicistade a mercatanti di saperlo, e specialmente a navicanti, e comincia al mese di marzo,” [A Table that shows you the signal/sign the moon is in for every day of the moon, since sometimes it is necessary for merchants to know, and especially navigators, and it begins in the month of March]. Pegolotti, writing to a merchant audience, saw little need to explain why or how such information would be useful to his readers, suggesting that he saw its utility as self-evident as the value of knowing conversion rates, weights and measurements for the different ports and markets across Europe and the Mediterranean.
the stars to reign over the body and bodily health, merchants like the compilers of the
Zibaldone da Canal and Marc. It., XI, 32 seem to have been primarily drawn to the predictive
powers of astrology within the larger world and its ability to predict elements to which
merchants, as members of long-distance communities, were especially vulnerable — the
whims of markets, weather and human nature itself.450

Astrology and Time

The zibaldoni authors collated extensive material on astrology and astronomy —
though, of course, these disciplines were not distinguished from one another as they are
today, and both merchants drew heavily from the metrological and chronological elements
of what we now call astronomy as well as the more ephemeral and predictive elements of
astrology. The two sides clearly appealed to our medieval merchants and reveal the
intertwining of time and the need for prediction in the merchant world, so much intertwined
that it drove their interest in the physical world into the heavens.

That merchants were interested in the practical applications of astrology is certainly
no great surprise — merchants played no small part in helping grow the markets for portolan
charts and astrolabes, and star-based navigation was a foundation of sailing.451 The division
of time and distance, derivable from the positions of the stars, moon and sun, held a natural

450 Note that Venetian merchants were not alone in their fascination with astrology — Tuscan
merchants also frequently included astrological material in their manuals. Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura, and
the thirteenth-century Pisan manual contained in Bib. Communale di Siena, Cod. C., VI, 8 both also include
sections on astrology and astrological divination. However, they are outside of the purview of this dissertation.

appeal to travelers who might find themselves temporally or geographically unmoored.

While the more complex calculations might have been beyond the scope or skill of a non-scholar’s learning and education, Venetian merchants received a range of schooling in subjects beyond the merely functional and rudimentary mercantile mathematics.452

Merchants’ powerful position in Venice meant that many received a richer and broader education in the Seven Arts. We can see such an education in Marino Sanudo Torsello’s proficient Latin, which enabled him to communicate with nobles across Europe and the Mediterranean. We see it, too, in his frequent historical and biblical references, as he often called back to historical divisions to contextualize divisions in the present. While we do not know the details of his education, Frank Frankfort theorized that his education was primarily private and conducted by tutors, rather than taking place within the growing *Abaco* schools of Northern Italy that played a large part in the growing literacy of the merchant class within the North.453 The compiler of Marc. It, XI, 32, likewise, likely had a private education given his extensive inclusion of Latin texts to calculate the dates of Easter, as well as Latin fortune-telling “games,” a collection of Psalms, and a table of the divination of dreams. Both Sanudo and this anonymous author were clearly near-fluent, if not outrightly so, in Latin and thus likely beneficiaries of an extensive education in which they encountered a learned approach to astronomy as a science of divination. By contrast, the author of the *Zibaldone da Canal*, likely a member of the wealthy da Canal family, seems to

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have received an *Abhaco* school education. Oystein Ore hypothesized that the manual’s opening pages were born out of class notes to a math lecture: the author later references a lecturer when he admits that he leaves the complex astrological calculations to the more learned experts rather than advise his reader on how to calculate them himself; moreover, the didactic instructions to “*nota che*,” a constant refrain in the mercantile material, persists in the astrological content as well.\(^{454}\) The text’s inclusion within a manual originating in a school experience suggests that these texts, too, may have been ones he saw during his schooling years.\(^{455}\) Italian merchants had a natural introduction into the science and art of astronomy as a discipline that initially may, to the modern eye, seem only distantly related to medieval trade.

We can see the chrono- and geometric uses of astronomy to medieval merchants in both Venetian *zibaldoni*. The *Zibaldone da Canal*’s compiler even titles his chapter on astronomy as “Division of the Parts of the Natural Day.” He explains that the day is divided into 24 hours, then each hour into four “points” (fifteen minutes) and then each point into 10 “moments” and the moment into 12 *oncia*, with each *oncia* divided into 47 “atoms” that are then indivisible and tied back into astronomy as a whole: an atom is the particle that flies between the rays of the sun, similarly indivisible.\(^{456}\) The relation of the “atoms” that fly between sun rays and the “atoms” of time show how intrinsically time and astronomy are tied to one another within the medieval merchant’s interest in the latter — that the first

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\(^{455}\) Oystein Ore, “I problemi di matematica nello Zibaldone da Canal,” lxxii.

introduction of astronomy comes with helping the reader better understand the passage of time.

The *Zibaldone da Canal*’s next paragraphs are shared (in character, if not in precise or literal wording) with Marc. It., XI, 32, and show another central element of astronomy that appealed to Venetian merchants: the calculations of lunar holidays, with particular attention to the “Golden Year,” and the calculation of the date of Easter, much in the vein of the almanac genre. Their emphasis on the lunar calendar and its theological origins, the phases of the moon and the calculation of the dates of Easter speak to an expected centrality of religion in medieval merchant communities — they participated not only in communities defined by their search for profits and commercial exchange, but also in ones bounded by shared theology and structured participation within common rituals of Christianity. He expected his reader would need to know, or at least find value in, the inclusion of religious material. Merchants were often physically separated from their normal religious communities who would keep them abreast and informed about upcoming festivals while also involving them in the crucial and regular performance of religion — regular attendance of church, observance of holidays and recitation of prayers. The manuals’ religious materials frequently focused on the ability to follow practices without relying upon the assistance of their peers — not to help merchants to remove themselves from their community, but to continue to

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457 Dotson, *Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal*, 131-132; Marc. It., XI, 32, ff. 170v-173v. In the *Zibaldone da Canal*, the compiler delves into the distinctions between the differing ways that the Church and astronomers calculated the New Moon with the warning that God created the moon and the stars on the third day, and mankind on the sixth, so that the first moon Adam saw was actually three days old and so for lunar holidays, the “New Moon” occurs three days after Astronomy’s calculations of the same. The author of Marc. It, XI, 32, meanwhile, wrote (or, of course, copied) an in-depth explanation — ff. 170v-173v, with accompanying illustrations and tables — for calculating the date of Easter and the Golden Number on any given year.
share in those behaviors, to remain integrated through shared actions even in the case of their necessary physical absence during trade. The importance of actions here parallels the Sanudo’s focus on the behavior of merchants who continued to trade with Saracens during the papal embargoes, where their actions precluded them from the Christian community and made them “faithless” Christians, whose religious identities were undermined and made liminal through trade.

With the practical application of astronomy, merchants like the compiler of the *Zibaldone da Canal* were able to continue their participation in their religious communities even while they were physically removed from their local churches, in a “catholic” Christendom that was not defined by geographic boundaries. These *zibaldoni* reveal the central actions and rituals that merchants attempted to maintain and continue as a reflection of their continued participation in their expression of religion, their Christian identity and their membership in the Christian community when they were physically removed from it. Merchants like Marino Sanudo and the compilers of these manuals were not only Christians, essentially, but Christians particularly invested in Christendom as a concept of a large-scale, long-distance community bound together by religion (and other connections), in no small part because of their experiences with the fundamentally-fragmenting nature of migration and living abroad.

But the *Zibaldone da Canal*’s compiler’s interest in astrology extended beyond its purely chronometric uses, and reached into more the predictive powers it held: astrology’s influence on weather patterns, seasons and more, tying together the stars and the skies. After drifting away from the calculations of Easter and the phases of the moon, he turns to the ways those phases could influence daily life, especially for a merchant subject to the tides and winds of the sea. He warns, for example, that, “it is known that in a waxing moon it is
not good to cut wood that must last a long time [such as, perhaps, wood for a ship?] because it may get wood worms.”

He advises when to harvest crops and — particularly interesting — when to set sail to guarantee favorable winds and calm skies. Astrology promised to its student the ability to predict the weather, not only days or weeks but months in advance. With it, a merchant could plan his shipments for optimal weather, minimize the risk of shipwreck, prevent delays and ensure swift travels with tailwinds. Much of the discussion of weather is framed around storms, rain and wind. The manual advises that, if the new moon appears “thin, [with] well-defined horns,” then the weather should be “neither cloudy nor rainy, and if it rains that rain will not last long” — or if it does not rain heavily, it is not the moon’s fault but rather the influence of some other star; and if the new moon “has horns that are thick at the points, and its color is pallid. . . It means that in its first quarter there will be a great deal of rain, continually day and night. . . And if it does not rain, the weather will be gloomy, or cloudy, or foggy, or squally.”

Meanwhile, certain signs of the stars were also tied to bad weather — Cancer, Taurus, Scorpio and Pisces while Gemini, Libra and Taurus were tied to “wind, which is at times big and strong and at time weak and small.”


459 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 138; “se la Luna lo primo / dì averà le suò corne sotil per tuto e ben prende e lo so stillo serà sotil et ella serà blancha in so chollor e non parerà esser magllada, in quella fiaba ella significha che ‘l te[n]po de la soa prima etade de’ essere mondo e neto, ciò si è ch’el noo demostra nuvoloso l’ero ni de’ plover. E s’ello plover, ella è de pocho durar quella ploba,” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 85; “ancora sapiè che se la Luna quando ella sè fata novella s’ella à le suò corne grosse in la ponta et in lo so chollor ella serà smorta o molto ro/segna o ella apare essere magllada, ella de significha che in la soa prima /etade de’ molto plover e continuamente di e note o la majcor parte / del te[n]po so increxente. E s’ello no pllove, lo te[n]po starà torbado o per nevolle o per challivo furtunal si co’ de vento.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 85.

His interest in the influence of astrology on the weather continues with his observation that, “there are no people who know this [how the Moon and stars influence the weather] better than the mariners who go sailing at sea.” This line, perhaps above all others, reveals why a merchant might be so focused on astronomy: his frequent focus on the impact that the star and moon play on the weather are, I would argue, a product of the exceptional vulnerability that merchants felt to the impact that weather played in the danger of travel and trade. Storm wrecked ships could at best destroy a merchant’s income but temporarily, or ruin him utterly, so predictions of the weather could have served as a valuable resource for mitigating the uncontrollable dangers of weather. Merchants knew best how little they actually controlled the weather. Through studying the stars, they could, if not control it, then at least try to limit the devastation bad weather could wield.

Indeed, the author emphasizes the capriciousness of the weather, going on to say that, “this is why in one day and in one night, it makes so much changeability in the weather, so that now it is serene and now it is cloudy, and now it is windy, and now it rains, and so forth. And this [the interference of the stars in the weather] never fails.” Here we get to the crux of why a merchant might find himself enamored with the stars — not only for their value in navigation, but for their impact on the experience of travel itself: the whims and haphazard malleability of the weather disproportionately impacted the daily lives of merchants who relied upon ships and the sea to safely transport their livelihood.

461 Dotson, Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal, 138, 140; “anchora si è da saver che in Luna crexente nonn è bon / talliar legne che debia dura longo te[n]po perqu’elle fasse charolla,” Stussi, 87; ”Et in questo s’ello ave la Luna non d’a colipa e nonn è ciente che meio lo senta cho’ fa li mariner che va per pellego na/vegando.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 85.

462 Dotson, 141; “e questa si è la chaxion per che in un dì et // in una note se fasse tante mudançe del te[n]po che mo’ è seren e mo’ è no[n]bo e mo’ è vento e mo’ è ploba et e[tera]. E questo no falla mè.” Stussi, Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV, 88.
C. Lane noted as much in his analysis of the letters of Andrea Barbarigo of Venice, and so too did Eleanor Congdon when looking at the communication network of Francesco Datini di Prato — merchants often mentioned the risks of inclement weather in the safety of shipping goods, and of their own travels. With at least a smattering of astrology, merchants could theoretically judge the best times to travel or send their merchandise with an agent, when to avoid sailing and transport well before the risk had been incurred. Merchants could gain a sense of control over the uncontrollable, a form of risk management to control the unpredictability of trade. Likewise, understanding the seasons would help a merchant abroad still know the general conditions of weather at home even in his absence, or possibly allow him to apply the rules of seasons as a “universal” phenomenon determined by the moon and stars. He could effectively predict the “present” rather than the future, without relying on delayed communications.

The compiler of Marc. It., XI, 32 sought multiple solutions against the dangers of travel and sailing, trying to control the uncontrollable — after his sojourn into astrology, he turned to more ephemeral powers of charms and prayers for daily life, with a particularly interesting prayer for seafaring. Some of his charms promised protections against weakness and infirmity, against “quotidian [everyday/common] fever,” and from “enemies” — universal experiences and fears. But the author also advises that, “when you want to go on board a ship, recommend yourself to Saint Uriel and Tobias.”

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464 Dotson, 142; “Si vis quod innimichum tuum tibi nocere non poterit scribe iste figure in carta virginea et portat tehum et non ochuret tibi aliquo mallo Deum adiuvantem;” “Ad febrem cotidianam scribe hce breve in carta virginea et suspende ad collum pacientis cum fillo virgine;” “Quando tu vos montar in nave
apocryphal archangel, saw some revival in popularity within ritual magic in the later Middle Ages and into the Early Modern Era, beginning first with his reference in the *Ars Notoria* and growth of theurgical magic in Italy in the early thirteenth century. In the *Liber Sacratvs* (British Library, Royal 17, A, XLII), he is named the Prince of the Southern Winds, with three other archangels listed for the winds of the cardinal directions — winds that blow southward would, for a Venetian sailor, make for an easier escape out of the Adriatic. He was also often associated with the discovery of treasure, as in manuscripts of the British Library, Sloane 3853 and 3885, where readers addressed prayers to Uriel in hopes of finding treasure or rediscovering something stolen from them. On the other hand, the author seems to have conflated Uriel with St. Raphael given his pairing with St. Tobias — the two appear together in the *Liber Tobiae* when Raphael guides Tobias to Media to collect a debt. Ernst Gombrich describes the tale as “the story of a business journey,” for the way Tobias’ initially embarked on his journey for the sake of financial profit, and suggests that the story would “strike a chord in the hearts of the Florentine merchants who frequently had to send their sons to distant lands on similar errands.” Raphael was frequently seen as the embodiment of a “guardian angel,” and the patron saint of safe travel, a more natural pairing

rechomandate a santo Uriellem et Tobiellem.” Stussi, *Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV*, 89. Note that Dotson translates Uriellem as Orielle, but does not explain the translation or add any commentary.


for a merchant about to set sail on a business trip.\(^{469}\) The invocation is hardly out of place in our compiler’s notebook, and speaks to the uniquely mercantile concern for safety during journeys in the *zibaldone*’s prayer. Such a charm was, naturally, another means for the author to protect himself against inclement weather in case those astrological predictions failed thanks to, as the prior chapter warns, “some star, or several together, ascending or descending or being sometimes in the Middle,” interfering with the moon’s guidance of the weather.

On the other hand, though the author offers promises of applying “universal” rules of seasons and astronomy to the weather, some of his information was location specific. For at least one of his descriptions of the moon’s influence on weather, he pulled his astrological material specifically from a Venetian source. In the rather picturesque section, he states that:

> If the Sun in the morning will be between clouds, as if it were in a valley, and the clouds are raised up, that is, part of them to the South and part of them in the North, and the Sun shines strongly under the clouds like shining gold, and those clouds at its sides are black and heavy like mountains, and are well to the East, it means that day there will be a storm with much rain, and with great squalls of wind. Again, know that when the Sun goes to the mountains, that is, in the evening, if it is an evening of black clouds in the west and the sun appears pallid and lifeless, it means that there will be a great squall in the night, or the next morning.\(^{470}\)


\(^{470}\) Dotson, *Merchant Culture in Fourteenth Century Venice: The Zibaldone da Canal*, 135; “se ’l Sol da doman per te(n)po sarà intro le nevolle si com’el fosse intro una valle et ello abia le nevolle levade, ciò si è parte d’esse a ostro e parte inver tramontana, e llo Solle luxe forte soto da le nevolle como oro luxente e quelle nevolle che’l à da lladi sia molto negri e grossi como monti e sia ben in ver levante, ello significha cha in quel di chaçera tempesta cum mollla ploiba e cum gran fortunale de vento. Anchora sapié che quando lo Sol va a monte, ciò si è da sera, dello è de sera nevolle negre in ponente e lo Sol apar esser pallido e smort, ello nde[ci] significha ch’ello die vegnir gran fortunale in quella note o in quello di da doman.” Stussi, *Zibaldone da Canal. Manoscritto mercantile del sec. XIV*, 82.
As Dotson notes in his translation, this description is only true for Venice, where the Mountains stand to the Northwest and the Adriatic Sea spans to the East, and so a setting sun would be framed by the Alps in its nightly descent. Clearly a Venetian author wrote the passage, and a Venetian compiler selected it. But would the material have been useful exclusively from a Venetian vantage point, and useless to any Venetian abroad? Would the compiler have looked out from his funduq in Bari and seen a pallid setting sun with black clouds looming to the west and thought to himself, “looks to rain tonight, best not ship my cloth for the next few days,” or was this astrology too rooted and chained to Venice itself to be useful elsewhere? The author did not render the rest of his information useless just by including this information, but it does reveal that in those passages he wrote from a quite-literally Venetian view of the world. In the end, to the compiler of the Zibaldone da Canal, the stars, skies and weather were inextricably linked with one another, and the study of one allowed the understanding of the other.

The Future Within Marc. It., XI, 32: A Turn to Divination

The compiler of Marc. It., XI, 32 shared with his predecessor that same pragmatic focus on the importance of astrology that allowed merchants to calculate religious holidays during their time abroad as migrants, removed from the Christian community. Like the author of the Zibaldone da Canal, he mixed his chapters on astronomy and astrology among that quintessential hodgepodge of useful and interesting material in some of the most chaotic and unorganized sections overall. He comingled his chapters on astronomy with explanations of the divinatory powers of physiognomy (attributed to Alexander the Great, no less, an excerpt from the Secretum Secretorum), a section that correlates January’s calends (the first day of the first month) with the year’s upcoming weather, advice on eating and
drinking certain foods at certain times of the year, an explanation of the seasons of the year, and rote lists of holidays, seven sins and virtues, and more.\footnote{Refer to “A Brief Overview of the Sources” for full lists of the contents of each manual.}

But he also delved more deeply into what we might consider the “softer” side of medieval astronomy, into the ephemeral predictive abilities it offered to its students. He gives a wide array of information and advice, not only in the mathematical calculation of dates, the phases of the moon and the Golden Year, but also in the best ways to conduct daily life, to understand human behavior, to seek out life’s rich veins of opportunity or to avoid its danger.

The compiler’s earliest astrological material is more list than an independent chapter — brief lists of months and their corresponding signs. But he quickly turns to what we might call “popular” astrology: the correlation between astrology and personality, with a section entitled “Here let us speak of Birth in Signs.” He warns that someone born under the sign of Aquarius will often “lose his property and will be negligent,” while a Capricorn “will be strong or else amorous.”\footnote{“Qui diremo de el nasimento nelli segni/ del segnio dallaquario chi nasierà in quell dì perderà la cossa soa e serà negligiente. . . del segnio del capricorno chi nasierà in qual dì auera forteça e sera amato.” F. 156r.} Pisces are naturally good at everything, but Scorpions are apparently doomed to a life of tribulation.\footnote{“Del segnio de pises chi nasiera in quel di sera buono in ogni sia chossa. . . /del segnio di scorpione chi nasera in quello per molte tribulazione.” F. 156r.} When he turns to astrology again after an interlude in the Secretum Secretorum’s physiognomy, he does so with an eye to predicting appearance — and thus, by correlation, temperament according to his pseudo-Aristotle. With the promise that, “Here we will discuss each of the twelve signs and what aspects to look for and that rule in the human body,” the reader could then correlate their own, or anyone
else’s, astrological sign with the predictive power of physiognomy in order to judge their personality. Those born under Aries are ruled by their heads, eyes and vision, for example, while Tauruses are ruled by their neck and throat. Astrological birth signs determined which body parts reigned over personality, while the nuances of that anatomy then determined the specifics of each personality. The text provides a more indirect (and, arguably, nuanced, if we can call it that) means of divining personality than our own modern astrology, but its basic format would certainly be familiar to any Gemini (since, as we all know, Gemini are “curious, adaptable, and quick to learn”) who has ever googled their zodiac sign to understand their own inner state. While popular astrology has abandoned any connection to physiognomy in more recent years, the core ideas remain the same: that you can predict both your own personality and the personalities of those you interact with based upon the stars under which they were born. The two predictive “sci
tences” of physiognomy and astrology intertwined to allow the reader to judge the future twice over, in order to calculate not only their own personal attributes, but the personalities of those they dealt with on a day-to-day basis. It is not difficult to see the appeal this might have to a medieval merchant, for whom trust was paramount in both their daily dealings and their general livelihood. The ability to circumvent trusting personal interactions and promises, to be able to judge a stranger or a

474 “Qui diremo de ziachuno delli dodexe segni e qual aspe tal rigardo e segnioria neli chorpi umani.” F. 160r.


friend without relying upon their words and instead trust in the judgment of the stars to

guide you, would surely have a tantalizing appeal to merchants.

Even beyond astrology’s judgment of personalities, Marc. It., XI, 32’s compiler

seems to have appreciated its potential in advising all elements of daily life — social, medical

or economical alike. After his diversion into physiognomy’s influence on astrology, he then
delves into advice on conducting daily actions depending upon the astrological signs of the

moon. He recommends that during the sign of Aries, “it is good to vomit” and use “hot

unctions” for the ill, among other medical treatments, and it is a particularly good time to go

on pilgrimages either by land or sea, as well as go to battle by horseback.477 He gears these

monthly advisories towards merchants’ interests and needs — throughout the entirety of

these chapters on the reigning influence of astrological signs upon daily life, we can see

frequent references to mercantile concerns about when to depart for a journey and when to

return home, when to buy certain goods and when to sell, as well as when to make

“compagna” — a key point of translation that could be interpreted as “friendships,” but also

as “partnerships” or “companies” that appears repeatedly throughout these chapters on

astrology.478

His concerns from month to month are, overall, quite rote and repetitive, with the

same themes or advice reappearing from sign to sign: times to plant seeds, move houses,

build or make clothing make frequent appearances. He repeats these topics frequently, but

477 “Quando la luna e insgeno de aries, e bono uomitare conetere chrestiero alonsermo. Ho ad altra
persona chene auesse bixongnio fare onxione chalde e signiare zioe aprer lauena taiare maltie chon fero
chomezare a tore medezine per amallati / Andare in pelliginarii per tera e per mare / mandare in sazi leuarie
insegnie per chaulchare e andare in bataglia /de siata I puti comprare bestiame de quatro pretatrare de martizi a
fare suo arte e uestrimente taiare e que…. E ritornare a suo paexi.” F. 160r.

478 Ff. 160r-162v.
not for each month. On the other hand, each month he addresses three distinctly mercantile worries without fail: timing for travel — particularly for pilgrimage and for “returning to one’s country;” when to purchase certain types of goods — predominantly slaves/servants, but also beasts, cloth or fowl, or when to make compromises and deals; and when to send messages. With guidance from the stars, the reader could avoid falling victim to the whims of the market, the changing winds of the sea, or letters gone astray. The advice of “making compagnie” could have been useful to anyone looking to make friendships, but the ambiguity of the word also suggests a distinctly mercantile utility in the context of other advice recommending when to fare merchato: advising good times to bind oneself in a legal contract, not just social contract, as part of a merchants’ venture. This interpretation would also explain why making compagnie might be a “life decision” on-par with marriage, important enough to need propitious timing, and something to be avoided during unfavorable moments. Non-merchants might have found trivial the advice on good signs under which to send messages, but it was a critical moment to daily business, where letters served as the flowing lifeblood of the merchant’s information networks. Communication was, like

479 Other advice given often included “big decisions” of daily life — certain signs are listed as poor times to move houses, keep possessions, plant seeds, build buildings, and “achonplare maritazo charnalmente” [conduct a marriage/wedding carnally?], or to cut and sew clothes.


Gemini: andare in pellegrinazio per mare/ mandar mesazio/ achatar serui/ uendere e chonprare tute cosse/ far chonpagnia/ retornar a suo paexe. Avoid: andare in pellegrinazio/ achatare possesione/ achatar bestie di quatro pie/ fare fraternitade e amizizia [amicitia].” Ibid.

Cancer: andar in pellegrinazio per tera/ mandar mesazi/ drizar insegnie per chaualchare/ andare in bataia/ uendere e chonprare chosse/ far chonpagnia e amistade/ andar in pellegrininzaio per mar e per tera/ mandar mesazio/ drizar in segnie per chaualchare/ andare in bataia/ uendere e chonprare tute cosse/ retornar a su paexe [sic]. Avoid: achatare oro e possesioni/ chonprare p[something] o conprare bestie/ fare compagnia o amistade[de].” Ff. 166v-167r.
marriage and trade, something that could fail or go dramatically awry, and merchants sought to protect themselves against the dangers of miscommunication — Sanudo through his careful attention to messengers, and our merchant-compiler through his interest in astrology.

Indeed, the primary common element of the advice within the astrological material is its connection to events or actions that introduced some degree of risk — crop failure tied to when to plant seeds, marital conflict tied to when one became married, times of financial loss or success, a trip’s departure delayed or fraught by storms and piracy, letters — the flowing blood of the merchant community — lost into the ether of travel. The vast majority of these astrological revelations relate to averting dangerous events by tying every moment in time to certain advisable and unadvisable actions that rippled out into either fortune or disaster in the future. Through astrology, merchants could control the future through their actions in the present, minimizing — at least to some degree — the risks inherent in a time-lagged, time-dependent community.

And with this focus on not only the calculations of astrology but on its more advisory or “worldly” potential, so to speak, we can see how medieval merchants like the compiler of the Marc. It., XI, 32 were eager to know the future as a tool to help them live the best way possible in their present. Merchants were entrenched in a community where past, present and future constantly overlapped in their daily lives, and they used astrology as a critical tool to meld all three states of time together.

*The Future Beyond the Stars: Physiognomy and Fortune Telling*

The stars were not the only way Marc. It., XI, 32’s author sought to predict and guarantee the future in the face of daily uncertainties of medieval merchant life. He also found a fascination in the future that extended into two more fantastical fields of
prognostication: namely, the divinatory power of physiognomy and the more playful predictions of sortes taxili — “the fates of the die,” games of chance derived from biblical passages and imagery that used dice to answer the reader’s questions about the future.

I have already mentioned the section on physiognomy in its apparent connection to astrology, but it merits still more interest as a reflection of the compiler’s intellectual curiosity and of the appeal it held to a merchants’ need to control what was perhaps the most chaotic, dangerous and unpredictable element of trade: other people. Physiognomy, like juridical astrology, promises to reveal people’s true natures with scientific accuracy, removing personal interpretation and replacing it with objective analysis.

The “letter” on physiognomy, an excerpt from a pseudo-Aristotelian treatise known as the Secretum Secretorum addressed to Alexander the Great, opens with a philosophical discussion of the nature of man: that God made him perfect but gave him the freedom of choice in order to advance to heaven, and so any man can change his nature from “angelic” to “diabolic.”\footnote{\“Idio glorioxo et eterno inpero che dio feze l’uomo bono et perfecto perche dio glorioxo li de chossi grande grazia chomo e quando li dono la liberta perche el dovesse avanzare e guadagnare el paradixo. . . Alora chanbio la gente onobelle anima angelicha in diabolica e ziaschadun homo pote trassformare la sua angelicha natura in natura diabolicha per la liberta che ebe el primo homo.\" F. 157r.} The author swears that “wise men say that there is nothing worse in the world than the man who gives the impression that he seems to have a good temperament;” he suggests that duplicitous men hide their diabolic natures through their actions, but cannot hide the truth written on their very faces, in their brows, nose and eyes. The initial premise seems to be about divining one’s own nature, since the author suggests that, “man, through his knowledge, can transform his malfeasance and falsity in many natures and properties.”\footnote{\“E pero e dicho quello che dicono i sanii che’l none alcuna cossa in questo mondo peziore che l’uomo el quale crio et ingegnassi de parere buono,” and “In quante nature e proprieta l’omo per sua sienzia se puo trassformare per sua malzia e falsita.” F. 157r.}
But by the end of the excerpt, it is clear that the text also applies to interpreting the appearances of others, warning the reader to take caution in reading too strongly into only one or two signs of temperament, and to always take the larger number of signs or the “worse” sign when two seem to conflict.482

After 1300, the study of physiognomy and practical literature was on the rise as part of “an information age”; people increasingly valued bookish knowledge “chiefly for what it could provide in the way of guidance in practical matters” outside universities, in the words of Julie Orlemanski and Peter Murray Jones.483 Though they both address English trends in their description of the role of rising fascination with practical sciences, the same appears to have been true for our Venetian compilers. Our anonymous merchants favored the functionality of physiognomy, just as Marino Sanudo valued information as a practical social currency with which he could construct and strengthen his status and social ties. In the world of merchants, information was above all a useful and necessary tool to enhance their daily life. Whether they used it to calculate risks and judge their peers’ trustworthiness as part of their communities or exchanged it through letters like goods packed onto a ship, knowledge formed the backbone of merchant community and culture.

Perhaps less pragmatic, however, is the presence of those somewhat enigmatic sortes taxili or the “fates of the die,” and the sortes sanctorum apostolorum, or “fates of the holy apostles,” written from ff. 173v to 193r. Vittorio Rossi explains that the two texts were

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482 “De auere chautella (caution) in uidichiare delli homeni per tutile segni. E veramente non dic judichare lo lo tuo judizio ne sermare la tua sentenzia per uno ni per due dela sopra diti segni. e quando tu troui nelli huomeni deuersi segni et dischordanti allora la dei vedere e rechordare azio che de fenisch e termini per la magior parta e [unclear] chon le pegior.” F. 159v.

games of chance intended to be played with dice to determine the future in store for the reader or his companions. In his appendix to the letters of Andrea Calmo, Rossi describes the rather involved game, which begins with a series of prayers to be recited before the game, and then instructs the reader to choose one of thirty-six questions, divided into six groups of six questions, to which he seeks an answer. Then, the game guides the reader through a series of tabulae, titled by names of mages and augurs, and rotae, titled by names of holy rivers according to their choice and roles of the dice, before finally landing on one of twelve astrological signs with three facies [fates] per sign and six answers for each facie that correspond to the original six groups of questions.484

It begins with, “For the sortem taxili, that is, the fates of the sky’s stars,” and offers a list of fortunes and futures the reader might hope for in a list of thirty-six options. Choices range widely: “if [their] life should be long,” “if [their] exile might be reversed,” “if [they] might learn of their enemies,” “if a sale will be useful,” or a “plan should be fulfilled.”485

484 Rossi, Le lettere di messer Andrea Calmo, 493; “The first game, entirely in Latin, is opened with an instruction, indeed already unclear, on the method of playing it, which begins: ‘Per sortem taxili hec sortes siderum celli vice tria’; and finishes, ‘splendida numerum ut supra dixi usque ad plenum. Prius deendo hos versus orationesque cantando.’ Then follow the prayers to be recited before doing the game and immediately next are the questions [to which the reader wishes to know the answer about the future], thirty-six in number, distributed in six sections, each with six questions. From cc. 175r-176r are the tabulae, denominated by an augur or mage, six in number, each referring to six different questions, precisely to those, that hold the same place in the six section of the questions; so that the first tabula is about questions 1, 7, 13 19, 25 and 31, the second [is about] questions 2, 8, 14, 20, 26, and 32 and so on. After the tabulae come the rotae, two per folio face on cc. 176v-185r, which are thirty-six in number, denominated by six rivers and countersigned by progressive numbers, 1-6, to distinguish the rotae from the same rivers. Those that bear the same number, regard the questions that occupy the same space in their various sections: thus every question reappears in the rotae six times. The signs (cc. 185v-188r) then follow, twelve in number, two per folio face: these contain the answers, which are distributed in three series of six in each sign, called facies [fates]. The signs are then regrouped two by two and each group contains the answer to those questions that occupied the same place in their various sections, so that Aries and Taurus respond to questions 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31, Gemini and Cancer to questions 2, 8, 14, 20, 26, 32, and so on, so that for each question there corresponds six facies and then six answers.” (trans. mine).

There echoes, again, that guidance of the stars: the author initially names the game “the fates of the die,” but then clarifies it as the sortes siderum celli, — the fates of stars in the sky, promising that astrological appeal in an otherwise more down-to-earth divinatory game of chance. He makes none of those scientific promises of the scienza di finoxemia. Instead his fortune telling’s reliability is rooted in faith and religiosity, for the game also instructs its reader to repeat a series of prayers to God before rolling the die to determine their fate. The rotae are then named after the six rivers, including the rivers that branch out of the Garden of Eden: the Tigris, Euphrates, Gihon, Pishon, as well as the Muris and Jordan rivers. From there, the biblical imagery gives way to astrology once more, as the final fates listed under astrological signs: the first, second and third fates of each sign. Rather than any divine power, it is the stars, fate and fortune that reveal the future.

The second game, in turn, is somewhat simpler (though it is unclear if it is possible to be more convoluted than the first). The author begins, “in virtue and in the name of the Holy Trinity, these are the sortes sanctorum apostolorum [fates of the apostle saints] through which Mathias was chosen by the fate of the apostle. These are fates that never fail so long as they are said with reverence. Therefore, ask God and you will have what you desire. And in this way, you must first begin by saying the following psalms and also litanies and orations up until the end.” The reader then throws three dice after repeating the psalms; next, they

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486 Instructing prayers: “Quando iactas taxilium aut accipis filium rote dic hunc versum signando taxilium siue rotam. In nomine patris.” F. 174r.

487 “Sors tua te docet ut in bona fortuna facias iter,” (your fate tells that the journey will be made in good fortune), “Ad propria uenient furata ut sidera docent,” (stolen goods will be returned to you), “tuum sidus monstrat qui fil[illegible]sponte furta reportat.” Ff. 185v-188r.

488 “In virtute et in nomine sante[sic] trinitatis hec sunt sortes sanctorum appostolorum per quas Mathias ab appostolis sorte electus est. Iste sunt sortes que nimquam[sic] falunt si cum reverentia dicte fuerint.
go to one of fifty-six different fortunes depending on the different combinations of dice numbers. Rolling two sixes and a three, for example, promises the reader that, “what you pray for will surely come to you with great rejoicing as long as you pray faithfully to God and do not worry;” while those who roll two fours and a three are warned, “the things you ask for are good, but nothing that you seek will come, nor will be given to you.” Unlike the first game, we can identify a known origin for this source: the compiler has included an excerpt of the *Sortes Sanctorum*. The *Sortes Sanctorum* may have existed as early as the Council of Vannes in 468, where the bishops there established a prohibition against the use of *sanctorum sortes* by clergy, but the earliest surviving copy, Paris, B.N., MS. Lat. 2796, dates to roughly the early ninth century, and was likely modeled on Greek dice oracles. Divination through dice, and the *Sortes Sanctorum* in particular, saw, according to William E. Klingshirn, widespread and not-infrequent condemnation across the Middle Ages, first at the Council of Vannes, and then the Council of Agde, the Council of Orléans, of Auxerre, as well as various penitentials. Our compiler seems to have found himself dancing on the edge of blasphemy with his inclusion of these dice-based divinations, but he was hardly alone in doing so. His continued inclusion of the *Sortes Sanctorum* after the turn of fourteenth century supports Klingshirn’s conclusion that, “enlightened times brought no end... to the divinatory

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489 “Quod postulas veniet tibi cum gaudio magno secures estō[esco/escio?] deum roga fideliter et nolle timere.” F. 191v. “Bona sunt que petis sed nichil est quod queris invenire quod non sunt tibi data.” F. 192v.


consultation of the Bible,” and games of lots existed well into the early modern era with printed editions of, for example, the *Dodechedron of Fortune* in the early seventeenth century.\(^492\)

We cannot clearly say whether our author of Marc. It., XI, 32 thought these dice games were in any way a practical tool or text for predicting the future, or that they served as little more than entertainment to pass the time. The author of the *Zibaldone da Canal* included a game instructing how to predict a hidden ring on the finger of one of five players using mathematical calculations, so the notion of these “games” being little more than just that — games — rather than a pragmatic guide to learn or control the future, is not out of the question. Vittorio Rossi refers to them as games as well, though he offers no explanations for calling them so. The repeated injunctions suggest theologians, at least, took these “games” seriously, but Rhiannon Purdie argues that most lot diviners avoided censure by “not attempting to gain anything from [dice games] beyond hints as to future trends or the most general advice, and in many cases even this is clearly only meant to be light-hearted.”\(^493\)

On the other hand, the author of the *Sortes Sanctorum* itself *does* seem to have promised his audience a guaranteed future. Even the first divined lot (for rolling three sixes) claims that, “after the sun, the stars rise and the sun is returned to light, so too in short time will your mind be returned to clarity from when it seemed to be in doubt. And you will obtain what

\(^492\) Ibid., 130; Jean De Meun (pseudo-), *Le dodechedron de fortune, livre non moins plaisant & recreatif, que subtil & ingenieux entre tous les jeux & passetemps de fortune* (Paris: Chez Gilles Robinot, 1615).

\(^493\) Rhiannon Purdie, “Dice-games and the Blasphemy of Prediction,” in *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.A. Burrow and Ian P. Wei (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000), 183. She distinguishes this from gamblers, who, are “not only employing a specialized form of lot, but [are] trying to alter his or her own future by staking money or other material goods on its outcome... blasphemy only becomes an issue when [something is at stake] and when divine aid is invoked in combination with chance (itself ultimately under God’s control) in order to gain the desired end.” (Ibid.)
you desire as long as you speak these sortes with faith.” 

The author of the Sortes Sanctorum, then, made promises, invoking divine aid alongside chance of the dice — and in doing so he could offer a kind of security against the risky and unpredictable world of trade if, at least, the reader sincerely believed in them.

The desired futures listed in both games reveal the daily anxieties and wishes of medieval merchant, their hopes and fears, an intermingling of universal human desires and uniquely mercantile concerns: whether “delight” might be found between two people — love? Or perhaps a mutual trade agreement? — or if a marriage would be good, a rumor true, and on and on. But there are also echoes of mercantile concerns that appeared in the other prognostic materials within the manual: whether a journey would be safe, if a deal would go through, if a friendship would be “useful,” or a contract made, a theft discovered, while the fates decided in the final chapters promise futures including, “you will gain profit from that which you purchase,” as granted by the stars. Whether our author included these texts with the sincere hope of predicting the future — or guaranteeing it — or as little more than parlor tricks to entertain himself and his readers, their inclusion shows us the centrality of divination and the future to medieval merchants.

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494 “Post solem surgunt stele et sol iam ad lucem revertitur et sic tuus animus unde dubius esse videtur in previ tempore claritatem precipies. Et ideo obtinebis quod sit amen has sortes cum fide tanges.” F. 191v.

495 “An merchatura perficeat” — if a trade might be accomplished. F. 185v.

496 “Lucraberis lucrum ex eo quo emis.” F. 185v.
The Future: Conclusions

For all that we might assume merchants would naturally be drawn to astrology for its role in navigation, there is little evidence in these manuals that merchants directly engaged in any study of astronomy for that reason. Merchants were similarly uninvolved in the academic use of astrolabes for the study of geography, which saw little use by common travelers.\footnote{497} There was, as put by Richard W. Unger, a “split between practical and theoretical knowledge of navigation that was not broached in the Middle Ages,” and “still an impassable gulf [in 1300] between the navigator finding his way at sea and the geographer or astronomer or cosmographer concentrating on theories of the universe or of the location of land masses and seas,” a gulf that would not be bridged until the mid-fifteenth century.\footnote{498} Merchants were no scientists of navigation, nor of physiognomy or astrology.\footnote{499}

And yet they so clearly were fascinated by the art of astronomy; both Venetian and non-Venetian merchants alike included it repeatedly in their guides to trade — the Zibaldone da Canal, Marc. It., XI, 32, Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura, the Pisan memoriae and Una Pratica di mercatura in formazione of the Datini compagnia.\footnote{500} For the sake of the present study, I


\footnote{499} On the other hand, Edson describes how Sanudo himself played a starring role in introducing portolan sea charts, originally used almost exclusively for practical navigation, into higher spheres of dialogue thanks to his commission of Pietro Vesconte for maps to present to the pope with his Secreta. In this case, merchants were responsible for ‘elevating,’ so to speak, a more common or practical form of navigation into an art, even as they remained distant and disinterested in the sciences of navigation.

\footnote{500} The Pisan memoria is the earliest non-Venetian merchants’ manual, dating to roughly the 1270s by the estimation of Allan Evans. It is located at the Biblioteca Communale di Siena C, VI, 8. Bruno Dini, Una pratica di mercatura in formazione (1394-1395), ed. Ambrogio de Rocchi (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1980).
have limited myself to Venetian manuals, but the presence of astrology across regions speaks to its persistent value within larger mercantile communities. Although Venetian merchants were not involved in the academic study of geography through astrology, they still voraciously consumed its practical applications for their profession, integrating it into the broader medieval European culture in the same way Sanudo did for Vesconte’s *portolan* maps by including them in his *Secreta*. And they valued astronomy for the learning it could provide about time rather than space. While other professionals, as with medical doctors, integrated astrology into their standard bodies of knowledge, Venetian merchants went a step further and saw “predictive literature” — astrology and astronomy, but also physiognomy and fortune-telling — as a genre ripe for personal and professional use. Merchants made a study of the future itself into a consistent part of their culture.

*The Present: The Long-Term Value of Manuals*

Merchants, I have argued, adopted manuals in order to sustain a common body of knowledge over long distances, and drew upon their manuals to acquire and disseminate rare and useful information among their networks. But, as noted by others and discussed in my chapter on merchants’ mental maps, these manuals often consciously included material that was outdated or inaccurate. Manual authors repeatedly included information on Acre even after its fall, a product of the way merchants shared not only pragmatic knowledge but their broader imaginary worlds in which the city continued to play a significant role in their vision of the post-Crusades life. However, Acre’s frequent reappearance is more than just a

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reflection of its place as a cultural touchstone; it is a revelation of how merchants viewed
information as simultaneously time-sensitive and timeless. Medieval merchants had a unique
relationship with the very concept of “outdated” information.

Thanks to their place in long-distance communities, they reckoned with a world in
which all information was by its very nature out of date or delayed, where all “news” was
inherently old — by the days, weeks or even months it took letters to reach their audience or
for manuals to be distributed or passed down. Merchants passed down their zibaldoni and
manuals for decades to come; the unknown owner of the Zibaldone da Canal had it recopied
by a notary in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and then continued to scribble in its
pages well into the fifteenth. Each time they read a letter or manual they were reading about
a past world with no way of knowing if it still existed. The stars in the night sky are the
hundred-year old light of an object trillions of miles away, and when we look at it we see it as
it existed in years past, not as it exists in the very moment that we gaze upwards. In the same
way, the “world” that merchants saw through letters and manuals was a world that existed
only when the information itself was collected. Merchants had no way of guaranteeing those
letters still reflected the current state of the world by the time they reached their recipients.

Merchants who collected, collated and wrote down all their information could only
hope that their texts still reflected the reality behind them once they arrived, that the
information was not misleading or just flat out untrue by the time it reached its destined
audiences. Their efforts to collect reliable information across long distance were, in some
sense, futile yet necessary. Transmitting some information, whether inaccurate or outdated,
was still preferable to no information at all. And so we can see how a merchant might
knowingly include ostensibly “useless” information about a Crusader State that no longer
existed, not only to show his audience the world that once existed, but also to render the
reader information that might, by chance, someday or somehow be useful once more, if Christians ever regained access to Crusader ports through negotiations with new Mamluk leaders or by new Crusades to retake the Holy Land — such as, perhaps, the Crusades pushed by Marino Sanudo Torsello, so desperate to piece together his old view of the Christian Mediterranean world that he had once known.

It may well have seemed completely natural to actively collect information that was already outdated at the time of the manual’s compilation, since the compiler would know that such material would always be outdated by the time it reached any intended audience. Many manuals seem to have served at least in part as personal reference for the compiler himself, and only afterwards would have been used by additional readers, as with the Zibaldone da Canal’s earliest material that Oystein Ore argues began as the author’s school notes. The compiler may have known his information was outdated but still referenced it as the “best of a bad situation” where the limits of distance and migration still made it the most reliable information readily available. So too would this rationale explain the continued preservation and recopying of more “public” manuals like Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura, the Tarifa, and the Datini company’s Pratica della mercatura in formazione, which were kept well beyond their initial compilation dates. Marc. It., XI, 32, written in the first decades of the 1400s has significant overlaps in wording and content with the Tarifa zve Noticia, written in the second half of the fourteenth century and thus outdated by as much as fifty years. Likewise, Pegolotti’s Pratica della Mercatura survives in a copy from 1472, which was itself taken from a copy of the original, long after the information might have been reliably

accurate. And as Evans pointed out in his modern edition of Pegolotti’s work, the collection and collation of the information could take years or even decades; the material was already outdated before the compiler could even hope to finish his work.

Merchants were, by the very nature of travel, setting about at an impossible task. By the time their material reached any audience, it was already out of date. If a merchant always communicated over long distances knowing that his information would reflect the world as it existed in the moment of its composition, all news was old, and only held relative degrees of “newness.” Merchants’ ongoing use — their copying, adding and adapting — of manuals, their inclusion of outdated information, reflect the importance of information — all information — in merchant culture and communities rooted in the transmission of knowledge in spite of, and because of, distance, travel and migration.

A Present Function Beyond the Literal:

When merchants compiled their zibaldoni and guides to trade, they conveyed more ideas and identities than the words on the page alone expressed. Venetian zibaldoni, especially, reflected the interests and identity of the individual compiler. But as merchants continued to recopy these manuals, they imbued them with additional identities as well. In the visual form of the very pages themselves, merchants conveyed their identities as more than “merely” merchants — they also expressed social status, wealth and education, their belonging to multiple communities beyond just their merchant networks, providing an ever-present use long after their initial “pragmatic” function as reference material faded. Owners

503 Evans, Introduction, xi.
504 Evans, Introduction, xiv.
adapted these texts into tools of conspicuous consumption, artfully decorated and meticulously copied with legible, artful scripts.

John E. Dotson argued persuasively that the Zibaldone da Canal's owner (either the author or possibly a later relative) paid to have the zibaldone copied by a notary. He based this on the neat, legible notarial text, colored initials and the inclusion of multiple illustrations decorating the mathematical sections of the codex. The aesthetics demonstrate that the owner invested money into visual, and not merely functional, elements of the text. The author of Marc. It., XI, 32, similarly, added illustrations (or else commissioned someone to add them for him) at several points in the text. In the opening folio, the illustrator drew a shield tierced per pale with red, yellow and blue, framed by a diamond outline of the same colors, superficially mimicking the coat of arms that a noble might draw in his books to mark ownership. In the sections on calculating the dates of Easter they drew hand mnemonics — pictures of hands that would help the reader visualize counting the numbers of the days of April on their own hand in order to calculate the date. The same section also includes a table labeled Tabula Salamonis, a visual demonstration of how to calculate the day of the week for a particular date in any given year, with letters initialed in red. And in the earliest pages, the scribe consistently combined form with function by using red ink for first initials or titles of sections to help distinguish paragraph breaks and on the titles of the tabulae. Merchant’s zibaldoni were not purely practical in function — they demonstrated the

505 F. 150r.
506 Ff. 170v, 171v, as well as the illustration of the “table of Salamon” as a castle.
507 On the other hand, the scribes of both the Zibaldone da Canal and Marc. It., XI, 32 gradually drifted away from their formality and interest in aesthetics they worked through their manuscripts: the Zibaldone da Canal contains illustrations only in the first section on mathematical instruction, and its final folios are half-scribbled by a later, 15th-century owner. Marc. It., XI, 32 (=6672)'s red ink effectively vanishes after f. 176r, while its script becomes increasingly loose and informal. I would argue that the increasingly casual hand suggest
author's wealth and ability to pay for their texts to be compiled professionally, or their education and ability to produce an aesthetic text in their own right, echoing the growing trend of merchants’ interest in patronizing the arts beginning in the later Middle Ages. Merchants’ interest in the arts extended beyond their mere patronage of the arts into their creation of aesthetic works themselves.

With their eye for appearances, the authors combined a level of pragmatism and utility with social aspiration and conspicuous display of wealth and affluence. The contents, too, reflect an educated mind and a diverse range of interests. In their efforts to find solutions to practical problems, merchants often turned to a wide variety of subjects that we would not normally think of as “pragmatic,” integrating science and history into their professions and culture. At the same time, their interest in such sciences reveals their place as wealthy and educated members of the Venetian merchant class — versed in Latin, history, math and astronomy alike. And the value of the compilation as not only a source of information, but a physical object, in turn, compounds on that interaction of pragmatism, affluence and education: the compilers used their zibaldone as an expression of their wealth, education and ability to afford an object of aesthetic as well as practical value.

These zibaldoni represent the merchants’ aspiring transformation of the study of trade into a field on par with the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. Both the Zibaldone da Canal and

that the author was working within a relatively short period of time, rather than adding to it over the years, given the consistency of change over the course of the pages. The scribe was likely recopying from an earlier manuscript, much as the surviving Zibaldone da Canal is the product of a later scribe. Both scribes began their codices as relatively formal endeavors with an eye for beauty, but as their authors and owners continued to use and add to them, their interest in formality or visual focus declined.

Marc. It., XI, 32 include material more commonly associated with the *quadrivium* and *trivium*: in the *Zibaldone da Canal*, the compiler includes chapters on mathematics, history, poetry, astrology and medicine, demonstrating his familiarity with a range of academic subjects from a noble education, and he includes these together with extensive mercantile material. The author of Marc. It., XI, 32, likewise, collected historical, astronomical and physiognomic texts juxtaposed with mercantile material. With their inclusion of both mercantile and pragmatically academic material within a reified expression of wealth, they granted equal status to the study of trade as an expression of learning and status. They treated it as an equal partner in their identity as a member of an educated elite. To be a member of Venetian nobility was to own expensive, beautiful books, to have an education in arts and sciences like history, poetry, and astronomy, and to have a wide breadth of mercantile knowledge about the world as a whole.

Marino Sanudo Torsello similarly integrated his mercantile background into his work with the detailed and geographically-faithful portolan maps, commissioned from Genoese cartographer Pietro Vesconte, in his later editions of the *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*. Previously these maps were used predominantly for navigation within the Mediterranean and merchants knew them best as practical tools of travel. But most medieval maps focused on the symbolic values and imagery, rather than geographic accuracy, of the more common *mappa mundi*, until the fourteenth century. By including geographically-focused portolans, Sanudo introduced them into an intellectual milieu that was accustomed to maps that

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represented the philosophical, theological and historical conceptions of the world. His decision to do so reflects his mercantile education and background reframed within his political and religious Crusading goals.\textsuperscript{510} By including them with his Latin-language, educated and religious work on retaking the Holy Land, he presented the practical, mercantile portolans as an equal to the more conventional world representations of \textit{mappa mundi}. Both Sanudo and the anonymous compilers took practical, mercantile learning and integrated it into their intellectual world, their social status and their cultural identity as a whole.

With such careful attention to the appearance, not merely the function, of their works, merchants demonstrated that they valued \textit{zibaldoni} not only as pragmatic tools, but also as cultural and literary texts that continued to hold cultural relevance even after their mercantile content’s usefulness faded into irrelevance. As a form of conspicuous consumption, these manuals could also serve as a form of social ambition or participation. By not only owning books, but owning books specifically designed for their physical beauty, they claimed membership to a social class for whom literacy was not merely pragmatic necessity but a marker of education and status. If merchant manuals were the workhorses of literacy ― there to do the work that needed doing without looking too pretty ― then merchants’ \textit{zibaldoni} were carriage horses, beasts with a job to do that still displayed their owner’s opulence. That is, the inclusion of merchant manuals within \textit{zibaldoni} that contained additional, non-pragmatic works testifies to the interplay of genres at work within the

\textsuperscript{510} \textit{Ibid.}, 61-64.
manual, and the interrelation of pragmatic use, intellectual interest and the expression of status.

Merchant’s manuals were, then, frequently not only pragmatic reference works, but also cultural and social expressions — and, too, cultural instructions. I have spoken before on the manuals as tools for teaching younger merchants about a base of information that would serve as a universal foundation within the mercantile community, strengthening bonds and social ties by helping ensure that readers held the same knowledge and values as the compiler himself. Previously I discussed this in terms of pragmatic information — that manuals arose in response to the demand for information on trade with places merchants could no longer gather themselves. But if merchant manuals held cultural relevance even once their useful information became inaccurate or irrelevant, this would suggest that their initial function (in helping disseminate information in order to strengthen community bonds) was eventually transformed into a different function, that they were no longer didactic or at the very least were teaching different information than what they were initially purposed for. Even after their immediate, practical use faded, they still taught merchants what it meant to be a merchant: their understanding of the world around them, their concepts of time, of space, of practicality and profit — a merchants’ mentality.

Conclusions: Merchant Mentalities Toward the Past, Present and Future

All of this discussion of the past, present and future, of conspicuous consumption, astrology, prediction and historical remembrance as parts of medieval Venetian mercantile responses to the fragmenting and scattering of their communities hinges on the presence of these materials in the writings of these merchants themselves. And yet, these zibaldoni were only a subgenre, or an overlapping genre, of the larger merchants’ manual type. Meanwhile
authors of other manuals like Marc. It., XI, 87 and the Tarifa zoè noticia dy peci e misuri hewed more closely to their business and financial concerns, with little to none of the humanization and personalization that historians have found so fascinating about the Zibaldone da Canal and now Marc. It., XI, 32. Why, then, did some compilers remain silent about their personal interests while others have offered such fruitful insight?

This is a question that to some extent demands pure speculation, because the motives for writing these materials are obscured and primarily derived from what little we know of the authors’ own identities and communities. Grendler hypothesized that manuals were primarily used in the education of young merchants in their early years of business as exemplars rather than reference tools, and likewise the Zibaldone da Canal’s earliest pages consist of notes taken from an abacco school lecture on mathematics. It is worth considering that such zibaldone were not purely for the author’s own interest, but instead part of a schoolbook genre where excerpts might be used to teach students a breadth of topics; and the merchant’s manual reflects a purely or at least predominantly mercantile education while their diversified zibaldoni companions reflect a more holistic view of late medieval merchants’ education. Within these hodgepodge, scatterbrained miscellanies we can see how merchants sought to shape their sons and build them into not only merchants, but citizens and psychics, into members of a community for whom distance, travel and time were an intrinsic part of their sense of self as Venetian merchants.

We have seen how distance, migration, travel and time deeply impacted the educational interests and needs of Venetian merchants in the form of a repeated fascination with the past and the future through history and astrology, and a unique dynamic between past information and present utility and the continuous social functions of manuals long beyond their initial compilation: that there was an “eternally-present now” within merchant
communication that demanded merchants both know the future and hold onto the past thanks to the inherent time-delay of communication produced by distance.

Thus past, present and future intertwined; merchants collected information about the past to shape their identities in the present. In the case of the Zibaldone da Canal, that identity was a Venetianness rooted in the city’s saintly Christian and imperial origins as justification for their continued imperial and international actions into the present. Their relationship with the outside world and the Mediterranean fundamentally defined the Serenissima throughout the course of time. A century later, the compiler of Marc. It., XI, 32 crafted a more interior Venice nevertheless defined implicitly in comparison to the outside world: a Venetianness made of the institutional stability and inescapable justice of a Republic that even in its most chaotic moment of upheaval stood strong against a threat of treason and insurrection in an age where other communes and republics had given way to tyranny in their desperate search for stability.

And the presence of the past lingered too in their clinging to old or outdated information: these were, just as in their persistent inclusion of and nostalgia for Acre, a conservative or conservatore people, for whom all information from far-off lands was made outdated by the intervention of distance and time. There was value in holding onto as much information as possible in hopes of its subsequent return to relevance; merchants became hoarders of information, as in the case of Datini who saved thousands upon thousands of letters for their later rediscovery as a trove of material for future historians. In a community where information could provide social currency and strengthen community ties, where merchants traded knowledge alongside their goods, they also hoarded it like a dragon sitting upon his pile of gold.
And just as they clung to the past as *conservatores*, they looked to the future as diviners, hoping to bring the future into the present in order to counterbalance that ever-present time-lag of information and to minimize the risks of trade and travel, integrating astronomy and astrology into their professional identity. After looking to the stars for navigational guidance, they looked to them for personal guidance. Within the *Zibaldone da Canal*, that guidance was predominantly horological and meteorological in character — the text taught how its readers to follow the skies for predicting the passage of time, the seasons, weather and the calculation of holy days as part of reducing the risks brought by inclement weather and allowed them to continue to participate in their religious communities through rituals despite physical removal from that community itself. And within Marc. It., XI, 32, the compiler continued that instruction on participation within Catholicism but added to it the temptingly elusive prediction of daily actions, especially those tied to trade, travel and life within long-distance networks. Merchants thus integrated the science of the stars into their identities as merchants, viewing the prediction it could offer as integral to the education of their sons and businessmen, taking a conventionally-learned field of education and transforming it for pragmatic use within their community long before almanacs would adopt the science as a popular topic.
Sanudo’s vision of a divided and fractured Christendom was the driving force for his desire to recreate a more universal community. His primary cause for Crusade was to regain the territory lost — and with it, the symbolism of unity. It motivated him, too, to urge those within Christendom to end their internal conflicts, or to help those divided to seek peace. Sanudo needed to convince his correspondents not only that these goals were worthy but that he was, in turn, knowledgeable, informed and a reliable source of information, to gain their attention long enough to persuade them to take up the crusade. Even there, Sanudo fell back on his merchants’ mentality centered on connection and communication, of building networks through the control and distribution of information, centerpieces of mercantile culture established in the *zibaldoni* and merchant manuals, as a tool of status and reputation. He used his access to information, and the control of information itself, to gain authority and grant it to others in his attempts to craft new ties and sustain old ones. In doing so, he positioned himself — or, at the very least, sought to position himself — as the centerfold of a universal Christendom built on the sharing of knowledge and information.

Sanudo attempted to forge a network founded on access to information that mirrored the distribution of information within merchant networks. He shored up his
reputation and status through that information to place himself in a unique and enviable
position of authority through his knowledgeability, all to convince his correspondents to take
up his causes of crusade and unity. Through his crusading propaganda, he introduced
elements of his merchant mentality in the broader Christian milieu: an emphasis on
knowledge gained through travel, the importance of distribution of news and information
through letters and communication, and the construction of new ties and sustenance of old
ones through written networks. This chapter explores these mentalities, and Sanudo’s
relationship with information, trust and authority as a product of his migrant identity, as
exemplified in his relationship with messengers, who emerge from his letters as guardians
and gatherers of knowledge.

The Context of Messengers:

People tend to think of letter-writing as a two-person process, involving only a writer
and a recipient. In many ways, modern technology has removed third parties from written
communication. The U.S. Postal Service can well attest to how email and texting has nearly
eliminated the direct, human messenger from our written communications. We have fewer
opportunities to notice the way third parties can influence or take part in written
communication. Historians, and medievalists especially, have worked to expand our concept
of the letter-writing world, to pay attention to how technology (and the lack thereof) created
a letter-writing culture where more than the writer alone participated in communication
through letters.\textsuperscript{511} Historians like Martina Hacker and Michael Jucker expanded the approach

\textsuperscript{511} Martina Hacker, “Silence in Late Medieval English Letters: Communication Failures, Delayed
Responses and Omissions,” \textit{Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English} 31
(Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2010), 395-405; Michael Jucker, “Trust and Mistrust in Letters: Late Medieval
Diplomacy and Its Communication Practices,” in \textit{Strategies of Writing: Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages},
to writing to include the role of clerks in letter composition in transcribing their employers’ dictations; letter recipients often read their letters publicly to a larger audience; translators reshape the contents of a letter for its recipients, especially for Latin letters written to non-Latin literates. Despite these efforts, our picture of the fundamental dynamic remains essentially a “two-party” one: those involved in the letter’s composition, and those in its reception. We have ignored another important third party: those involved in a letter’s transportation. Historians treat them as little more than passive vehicles for the letter and its contents, moving it from Point A to Point B. I propose what I would call a “three-party theory,” in which messengers acted as central participants in letter-based communication. They brought additional functions and tools to long-distance interactions and conveyed information outside of the letters’ more “literal” contents. Messengers served as links, integrating oral and written communication to strengthen and form bonds new and old, and presented solutions (albeit at times imperfect) to the ever-present problems presented by distance and time: lagging, outdated information, uncertain control of information or unreliable communication. In turn, they allowed Sanudo to build his reputation as a forger of connections and a font of information. Through them, he levied his letters into a broader network of news and communication and transformed both travel and communication into Christian acts, a practical application of his ambition to a universal, catholic community.

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Sanudo relied on messengers as a critical element of his efforts to build support for a Crusade to retake the Holy Land after Acre’s fall in 1291. In his letters, Sanudo took particular care towards the roles and actions of his messengers, putting forethought into how they could convey additional information outside what he himself had written. Messengers helped convey the importance of the information, the common social ties between Sanudo and his correspondent, and complementary knowledge of the letters’ contents born from the messenger’s travels and long-distance specialization. Often, those tasks were specific to each messenger. As C.J. Tyerman explained:

Durand [a fellow crusade propagandist] was to communicate Sanudo’s advice to his colleagues. Sanudo expected the bishop of Pozzuoli, who had been one of the papal scrutineers of the Secreta in 1321, to relay information to the king of Naples and the duke of Calabria. Cardinal du Poyet was to persuade John XXII to work for peace. In 1327, Sanudo even tried to recruit Charles IV’s confessor. Their object was to convince the recipient and to be used by the recipient to convince others.513

Sanudo assigned particular tasks to individual messengers, but the common core of their purposes was to aid Sanudo in persuading his correspondents, and to facilitate communication, using information as a primary tool for constructing connections.

Sanudo’s messengers, and Sanudo as a messenger himself, acted outside of the letters themselves. He refined the use of the transmission of information (and not just information itself) to build social status and authority, to portray himself as a man of connections, with links to the most elite and wealthy of Christendom, and as an actor in service of the “universal Christendom” he sought to build in the face of internal divisions and external

threats. Through the control and dissemination of information via messengers and letters, Sanudo worked to position himself as a centerpiece of the ideal Christian community founded on connections he envisioned.

*Messengers, Distance, Trust:*

One of the most significant challenges of long-distance trade was the question of trust: whether one should, or even could, “rely upon the co-operation of partners, agents or clients whose behavior cannot be directly monitored.” In trade, as in politics, trusting another party to keep true to their word was risky business. Communication was doubly dangerous: reliable, fresh information was a precious commodity, rarer than ever with the advent of sedentary trade and Sanudo’s own anchorage in Venice while hawking his news to foreign elites. Protecting that information demanded trust in a third party: you had the “seller” (Sanudo), his “buyer” (his correspondent) and a third agent, the messenger, whom both buyer and seller entrusted to carry the news between its starting and ending points, without skimming any off the top for his own profits, or selling to a higher bidder — or a messenger letting slip to anyone but its intended recipient. Messengers were, theoretically, a weak link in the chains of long-distance networks, but through his attention to the issue of trust, Sanudo transformed them into a tool to grant himself an authority for privileged and exclusive information, to make his news a crux for his correspondents’ knowledge of the

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larger world and foreign events, much as Marco Polo had earned special status as an authority for his experience in the elusive Far East.\(^515\)

Shayne Legassie argued that late medieval Europeans “invented” travel as an experience connected to both exceptionally accurate and exotic information. Even before him, however, Mary W. Helms argued that, “that which lies without, in whatever direction, being different and therefore dangerous, has long contained power, and those with greater knowledge of these realms and regions have long been recognized for this distinction.”\(^516\)

Knowledge of distant realms held inherent political value to rulers, by Helm’s analysis, because dealing with the “Other” is particular to the realm of “proper, chiefly behavior,” a measure of power and an expression of privileged access to strangers.\(^517\) In his letters, Sanudo casts himself as one with such privileged access to strangers — as with his depiction of Venice as an international hub to foreigners. To establish the exclusiveness of his knowledge and emphasize its political importance, Sanudo took deliberate notice of his messengers to convey the secrecy of his letters. He communicated not only the information itself but also his social status as one with prestige produced by access to exclusive knowledge, and his own trustworthiness — intertwining the prestige of travel with access to exclusive information from foreigners, with trust and authority. Sanudo emphasized the uncertainty and risk inherent in transmitting that knowledge over long distances, both

\(^{515}\) Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 42-49, 55-56


\(^{517}\) Ibid., 150-152.
reinforcing his authority and addressing the problems of trust in long-distance communication through his attention to messengers.

Sanudo frequently drew attention to his meticulous, almost painstaking, care in choosing whom he sent with his letters. He feared news and information might fall into traitorous hands or leak outside a limited social circle. In his attention, he also created a social boundary between those included in the letter-writing process, and those excluded. He then designated his messengers as the guardians of this boundary and elevated his own position as someone who controlled the social boundaries formed by access to information. That information, ostensibly about *quibus magnis et occultis* — things great and secret, as he warns the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Paleologos, in one letter — brought with it *non parvum periculum* — not a little danger, to which both Sanudo and his messenger were apparently privy.\(^{518}\) It mimicked, in some sense, a rhetorical appeal to authority. Claiming information or material derived from more prestigious authors gave that information greater weight, borrowing it from the claimed authorial origins.\(^{519}\) Here, Sanudo used his concerns to hold the reader’s attention, first in the moment of reading the letter, but also in the long-term: he exhorts the reader to carefully ensure that the letter remain private to the same measure of his own care.

In that letter from 1326, Sanudo wrote to Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II Paleologos with the sole focus of discussing his control of secret information:

\(^{518}\) Roddy, 152; Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 302-303.

I have composed other letters which your eminence knows I have kept at my house for quite a long time. I have either lacked an adequate messenger or I have hoped to come and speak to your excellency of these important secret matters. These bring with them not a little danger to existing affairs—both to your excellent empire and to others. As a result, up to now the business of the excellent empire has not been advanced more than it has been. Nevertheless, although misfortunes have befallen me so that I have not been able to come with the present galleys to see your illustrious majesty and your empire, with God as my witness I would gladly have come to see and to speak to you. But since Maius Marioni, your faithful and devoted servant comes thither, I will speak to him and will tell him some things which he will speak of and set forth in the presence of your majesty. Your supreme providence will look after these matters and act as divine grace may grant. Wherever I may be, I am your faithful servant and the devoted servant of your empire. Writing to the supreme lord pontiff and his cardinals, to kings and princes of this world, and to the barons of the Christian people, I believe results in the praise of God. It brings also not a little honor, favor, prosperity, and growth to your empire. God knows that there is nothing in the world I desire as much as the increase and prosperity of your empire; command me, your faithful servant, now and always. If it pleases your excellency, I am ready to come to you.\[520\]

This was the second letter Sanudo wrote to the emperor, of three in total that attempted to recruit the ruler’s support for a crusade, with overtures towards reuniting the Greek and Latin churches. His first letter brought news about Sanudo’s time at the French

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\[520\] Roddy, 152; “factis aliis litteris quas nostrae magnificentiae me apud meipsum per bonum temporis spatium tenuisse, tum propter defectum nuntii sufficientis, tum propter sper adveniendi & loquenti vestrae Excellentiae, de quibus magnis & occultis: quae sic stantibus negotiis non parvum periculum secum trahunt, & vestro Imperio & alia: non plus promotis negotiis unde excellentis Imperii, quam hactenus actum est: tamen quia mihi occurrerunt casus per quos non potui venire cum presentibus galeis, ad videndum vestrum Imperium & vestram inclitam Maiestatem, cum, Deo teste, libenter venissem ad vos videndum & vobiscum colloquendum: sed quia illuc venit Maius Marioni vester fidelis & deus vester servit, ego exprimam & dicam aliqua quae dicat & explicat coram vestrae Excellentiae Maiestate. Et super his, vestra summa prouidentia per videbit & faciet sicut divina gratia largietur. Ubicumque, , sim, sum vester fidelis et devotus servitor vestri Imperii. Scribens domino summo Pontifici & suis Cardinalibus, Regibus, & Principibus mundi, & Baronibus populi Christiani qui, credo, cedere in laudem Dei, & honorem non modicum & bonum & salutem & augmentum vestri Imperii, mihi potest praeceper coram eis & semper, sicut fidelis servitor. Et novit Deus quod nihil est in mundo quod tantum optim, sicut cemenium vestri Imperii, & salutem. Et si vestrae excellantiae placet, praesto essem ad vos venire.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 302-303.
court and Avignon curia, and promised that he had spent much of his time at that court advocating for “much which affects the honor and security of your empire.”\textsuperscript{521} He offered himself as a negotiator for church unification out of “special affection for your great empire.”\textsuperscript{522} After this initial gesture of (at least, claimed) loyalty to Byzantium, Sanudo focused his second letter to Andronikos II Paleologos on communication and the status and links it could bring — to Sanudo, but also to the populi christiani and to the Byzantine Empire specifically. He casts himself as protector and provisioner of that guarded, precious information. He had not only privileged access to information about foreign affairs but was also as a player at the center of a network of the most elite lay and clerical members of the populi christiani — the barons, princes, and kings alongside cardinals and even the pope himself, all linked through Sanudo. His authority was not only in having access to knowledge about foreign affairs, nor primarily about his control of that information, but also as someone that connected many of the elite together in their common knowledge, all derived from Sanudo himself. In this context, information functioned as a connector of distant members of Christendom, and Sanudo made himself spider to a web of the powerful through his careful curation of trustworthy messengers like Maius Marioni.

That control of information came in both noise and silence: Sanudo repeats his concerns over privacy in his form letter to generic recipients, likely intended to accompany a copy of his Secreta, warning that, “because I fear lest my writing about the affairs of Italy and Germany, and about the imminent coming of the Bavarian into Italy might come into the

\textsuperscript{521} Roddy, 115; “de multis quae tangunt honorem & securitatem vestri Imperii.” Bongars, \textit{Gesta Dei}, 299.

\textsuperscript{522} Ibid. “Amorem specialem vestri magni Imperii.” Bongars, \textit{Gesta Dei}, 299.
hands of others, I refrain from writing to you about them.” Here, because he wrote the letter without a particular recipient or messenger in mind, he re-emphasized his authority and the importance of that control in sustaining communication: where a satisfactory messenger was not available, where he risked losing control of the information or breaching the community boundary, he elected to remain loudly silent. He made messengers into a paramount element of networking: they not only ensured letters were delivered, they also guaranteed the confidence of both writer and recipient, reducing the risks to all parties involved. Without a good messenger, information was not only transmitted poorly, but not transmitted at all, and Sanudo’s ties in a universal community remained disparate and unconnected. Drawing attention to the silence became communication in itself, emphasizing the uncertainty of long-distance communication. When he trusted his messengers, and did communicate his news, he then demonstrated his attentiveness and commitment to resolving that uncertainty.

Through his emphasis on trust and privacy, Sanudo also created a boundary between those “in the know” about such matters, and those who existed outside, and ultimately built a community of information defined by those privileged with certain news and information, and those who were not. Oystein Ore suggested that merchants manuals were originally a tool among compagnes to hoard information and gain a tactical advantage against more ignorant competitors — a theory Dotson disagreed with on the foundation that such manuals often relied upon and included material derived from public sources like legal

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523 Roddy, 160; “de negotio Italiae & Alemaniae, & de adventu istius Bavariae, qui descendit in Italam vestrae dominationi non scribe: quia timeo ne ad manus perueniat aliorum.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 298; form letter.
Manuals contained no precious secrets and were thus more about ensuring a common and shared body of information within the broader merchant community among those who worked together. Sanudo’s strict policing of the dangerously permeable boundaries of his network, by contrast, speaks to the different role his information played within a non-mercantile news network.

It is inherently dangerous to transmit information from someone “in the know” to someone new through written letters that risked falling into the wrong hands. Oral communication, on the other hand, had no such uncertainty (beyond the inherent risks of trusting the second party). Where neither party could control the information as it journeyed from point A to point B, adding people into the community threatened to break the previously defined boundary between those in the know and those outside it.525 A trustworthy courier solved the problems presented by a community constructed over long distances. Anxiety over the trustworthiness of messengers represented, then, the concern over enforcing social boundaries, and so messengers became the enforcers of Sanudo’s network and his exclusion of others from access to his information.

Meanwhile, Sanudo’s concern over his trust in messengers, and over their reliability, made his messenger a proxy for his physical presence in front of his correspondent. In his letters we see that only two things will suffice for Sanudo: his presence in front of his correspondent, or a trustworthy messenger to act in his stead. He emphasizes how, “I have

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either lacked an adequate messenger or I have hoped to come and speak to your excellency of these important secret matters. The two actions are effectively interchangeable as means of communicating information. In making the two equivalent, Sanudo granted trust in a messenger as a unique personal recommendation: this individual was not a mere nobody, a simple vehicle for the letter; but a stand-in for the writer himself. By pointing to Maius Marioni as the only one he trusted to carry his letter, he gave Marioni as strong a recommendation as he possibly could for trustworthiness — trust him as you would trust me.

Recommendations of trust in delivery and experience abroad rippled outwards, where one person recommended a courier to another, who then recommended the courier to a third person, building a web through a single courier who used his journeys to further build a reputation for delivering letters reliably and protecting community boundaries of privacy. After Sanudo describes the travels of the Jacobini brothers, he passes on their recommendation of another informant: “they [the Jacobini brothers] expressly commended to me Giacomo of Cremona of whom I made mention to you in a copied letter.” Once one trustworthy person recommended a messenger, their word was sufficient for continued recommendation of that messenger to others; and those subsequent recommendations would reinforce that messenger’s reputation as trustworthy while also improving the authority of those who recommended him: now that Sanudo had recommended the

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526 Roddy, 152; “tum propter defectum nuntii sufficientis, tum propter spem adveniendi & loquendi vestrae Excellentiae, de quibus magnis & occultis: quae sic stantibus negotii non parvum periculum secum trahunt.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 302.

Jacobini’s messenger, he reinforced the ability of the Jacobini brothers to judge messengers as trustworthy, granting them that social authority.

Sanudo’s attention to the trustworthiness of his messengers was at its heart an appeal to his reader for authority and trust; he crafted a message of the importance of secrecy and control of information — information that he provided to his reader but continued to control through his delegated, proxy messengers. He built himself up as an authority through his ability to transmit new and dangerous knowledge, and made himself into — or at least, tried to persuade his reader to see him as — a centerpiece of a network founded on the transmission of intelligence about the world around them. Sanudo, in turn, relied upon messengers to control that information, to ensure it did not spread to members he did not wish to access it, to maintain its privacy and thus his position as information broker to the elite of society. In setting himself up as a provider of knowledge and controller of the communication, Sanudo began to position himself as the focal point to the interconnected Christendom he envisioned. In a world dependent on connectivity, Sanudo’s letters and his critical attention to the control of information show how he saw himself as a connector in service of that universal Christendom he desired.
CHAPTER 7:

THE MESSENGER IS THE MESSAGE; INFORMATION EXCHANGES FOR CONNECTIONS

Through his attention to messengers, Sanudo sought to establish himself as an authority thanks to his privileged access to prestigious, rare information about foreign affairs; at the same time, he endeavored to resolve issues of trust endemic to long-distance communication. His merchant’s mentality that so valued information — its distribution and control linchpins to long-distance communities — produced a particular attention to both authority and trust. After grappling with the complications of trust and authority through long-distance communication, he turned to the potential of letters and messengers as tools to strengthen social ties. In doing so, he positioned himself as a “builder of connections” — someone who could fix the divisions that plagued Christendom — by integrating messengers into his networks.

Sanudo used his letters and messengers for social networking: the courier drew upon his role as an enforcer of social boundaries, the proxy-serving and control of information to recommend himself to others (or to recommend others on his behalf), to establish new ties and reinforce old ones. Interactions and introductions that had been previously conducted
casually and incidentally in person were now effectively impossible.\footnote{Eleanor Congdon, “Datini and Venice: News from the Mediterranean Trade Network,” in Across Mediterranean Frontiers: Trade Politics and Religion, 650-1450. ed. Dionisius A. Agius and Ian R. Netton. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 151-171.} He, and other Venetian merchants like him, could no longer rely on in-person introductions to meet new acquaintances, and social recommendations through letter delivery served as substitution.\footnote{Ibid.}

Sanudo leaned on his letters to nurture his social ties and alliances as both substitution for and supplement to in-person communication.\footnote{That Sanudo also frequently relied on in-person introductions and communication is evident in his references in Gesta Dei, 297-298 (Roddy, Letter 14, 155-156), Kunstmann, “Studien,” 799-808 (Roddy, Letter 34, 281-292), and particularly in Gesta Dei, 307-310 (Roddy, Letter 16, 161-171), wherein Sanudo calls upon prior in-person introductions as a point of motivation for his reintroduction via letter.} As merchants wrote more and more letters over the fourteenth century, together with the flourishing of merchant literacy and the advent of paper, that same substitution involved more complex communication beyond substitution of the spoken word for written. Letters still demanded in-person contact in addition to the written word through those who delivered the letters — the messengers and couriers acted on behalf on the letter writers in face-to-face moments otherwise hindered by distance.\footnote{Martin Camargo, “Special Delivery: Were Medieval Letter Writers Trained in Performance?,” in Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages, ed. Mary Carruthers, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173-189.} Orality and literacy intertwined in a mirror to the biblical analysis highlighted by Walter Ong in his seminal Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word, where medieval scholars performed both oral disputation and literary commentary.\footnote{Ong, Orality and Literacy, 157.} Oral and literal communication mingled in letter writing and delivery — complementary, but also codependent. They enhanced one another, and each was necessary to produce the other:
letter writers needed their messengers to complete, so to speak, the written interaction that would otherwise be impossible without them; but the act of travel for letter delivery produced additional knowledge and news that messengers could then carry on to others, reintroducing orality.

Sanudo’s letters show three essential “types” or techniques of constructing social bonds through letters and courier communication: first, he requested that his correspondent act as his courier on his behalf; second, he frequently and specifically cited the courier as someone he wished to introduce to the recipient; finally, he leaned upon his own experiences as a messenger for others as introduction to a recipient he had previously delivered letters to. Letters essentially acted as introductions that both replaced and simultaneously integrated oral communication to enable the construction of new three-way social ties.

_Messengers Introducing Sanudo: Borrowing Authority_

In 1323, Sanudo wrote to Jerome, a Franciscan friar, bishop of the Tartars and of Caffa (modern Theodosia), and a notable Catholic figure who was nevertheless on close terms with Andronikos II Paleologos. He sought to have Jerome deliver letters to the emperor on his behalf: “[you] ought to recommend me to my most excellent and eminent lord emperor of Constantinople, and to present him with the letters I am dispatching him.”

Sanudo’s flimsy acquaintance with the emperor left him unable to contact the emperor directly. He instead begged Jerome to act as go-between, leaning on their closer relationship. By doing so, he gained an additional tie to both figures — with the emperor he

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hoped to gain his mutual friend’s vouchsafing to bolster his reputation, and with the bishop himself he arguably gained a debt of favor that the latter could call upon in the future, intertwining the two further socially. Through Jerome’s recommendation, Sanudo garnered some of his friend’s trustworthiness and authority, increasing the likelihood that the emperor would listen to his persuasions. With this, he counteracted the complications of long-distance communication that made his information less reliable because it came from an unknown source.

A year later, Sanudo wrote to Stephen Sirupulus, a court sebastokrator, whom he praised as a *viro provido, nobili et discreto*, as well as a *domini Imperatoris Graeciae Turchimanno* and again in 1326 an *amico karissimo*. The endearments suggest that through their correspondences they may have grown closer over the years given the new term of affection.534 Even before the first letter, they seem to have already been in contact: Sanudo’s letter addresses previous correspondence, as he notes, “I have never received the letter which the lord emperor sent to me about which you wrote to me.”535 Sirupulus had already served as an intermediary between Sanudo and the emperor before, reassuring Sanudo of

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534 Indeed, he offers Sirupulus some of his warmest words of affection in all his correspondences, and their communication seems to have covered personal topics beyond Sanudo’s political and social interests: in his 1326 letter addressed to his *amico karissimo*, he writes, “know that I have received your most pleasing and welcome letters. To my great comfort they tell of your physical health. With all my heart I am thankful to you for these letters; they attest your sincere affection for me,” addresses him again as “my friend” in the body of the letter and promises that, “since genuine love is enlarged by the exchange of letters, it is good and fitting that we enjoy fully the exchange of correspondence by suitable messengers.” Roddy, 149-150; “Noveritis quod litteras vestras mihi gratas plurimum & acceptas, sospitatem corpoream exprimentes, ad magnam meam consolationem recepi: de quibus litteris, vestram ad me sinceram affectionem attestantibus, vobis regracior corde toto;” “quia per communicationem mutuum litterarum intenditur verus amor. Bonum est & utile, quod cum opportuni suntis, scripturis mutuis perfruamur.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 302. The endearment and enthusiasm seem unfeigned, which suggests that while many, or even most, of the letters Sanudo wrote were primarily pragmatic in their distribution that keeps them from constructing the genuine bonds of affection that we would call “community,” beyond his crusading campaign of letters.

letters sent despite their failure to arrive, soothing some of the uncertainty and anxiety over errant letters. Even if he never actually received a response, Sanudo could rest somewhat easier that his information was properly distributed — not that the emperor was ignoring him. Though Sanudo noted that the emperor had successfully written to “many others from Venice” where his own letters failed to arrive, so perhaps not all offense was avoided.

As a messenger and middleman, however, Sirupulus seems to have achieved some success, bringing him closer to Sanudo. Sanudo did not hesitate to lean on that closeness to attempt to raise his reputation with the emperor through his access to information. With his second letter to the sebastokrator, Sanudo sent copies of the same letters he had sent to the emperor, and told Sirupulus, “But I say, speaking respectfully to you, that the lord emperor ought to want me to visit him. Then, I would describe to him many new things which concern the West, and I would also tell him many old things that would be useful to know. Through these his eminence may find the way and means of conducting the affairs of the empire toward a good end.”

Sanudo reinforced his authority as a source of fresh and uniquely useful information about the places abroad that might not otherwise reach the emperor’s ears. He sought to use Sirupulus’ authority, his position as a senior court official and his intimate relationship with the emperor as his counselor to bolster Sanudo’s own position and trustworthiness as a source of news.

Sanudo again used his intermediary messenger to enhance his status and raise the likelihood of successfully reaching his ultimate “endpoint” contact in a letter to Almerico de

536 Roddy, 122-123; “et tantum dico vobis loquens cum omni reverentia, quod dominus Imperator[io] deberet desiderare adventum meum ad ipsum: tum, quia exprimerem ei multa novitates, quae sunt ex parte Occidentis; tum, quia narrarem ei multa antiquitates quae fuerunt, quae essent commodae ad sciendum, ut sua Magnificentia per has inveniret viam & modum deducendi negotia Imperii bonam executionem & finem.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 303.
Nohalco. He wrote to the archdeacon of Villa Muro and papal *nuncio*, on June 12th, 1330, in response to Almerico’s earlier letter written May 13th, 1330. De Nohalco’s letter remains the only known surviving copy of a letter to Sanudo rather than from him, in which he promised Sanudo that, “our lord [Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget] himself graciously received them [Sanudo’s prior letters to the bishop], saw them, and read them thoroughly with great pleasure. He thanks you as much as possible for sending them, assuring you that by the providence of God he will use care and diligence concerning custody of the city of Bologna.”

Like Stephen Sirupulus before him, Almerico de Nohalco reassured Sanudo that his letters arrived safely, confirming communication as much as communicating anything new. His assurance also substituted for in-person contact: he conveyed exactly how the letters were received and read — lesser elements of communication like body language and tone of voice lost in writing — to give a sense of the details that Sanudo could not see for himself. Almerico served as Sanudo’s eyes and ears from across the Sea.

In his response, Sanudo thanked Almerico for “the dispatching of the letters you graciously sent concerning the feeling of our most reverend father in Christ, lord legate of the apostolic see [Bertrand],” and then beseeched him to “deem it fitting to have me commended to our reverend lord and to yourself. If I am able to do anything for his most reverend paternity and your lordship, freely enjoin what you require.”

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538 Roddy, 271; “de missione litterarum quas de conscientia reverendissimi in Christo patris domini nostri, apostolicae sedis legati, vosstri grati destinatis in immensum gaudeo... quaestus me penses venerabilem dominum nostrum et vos habere dignemini commendatum. Et si qua pro ejusdem reverentissima paternitate et vestra dominatio possum agree, quae sint grata praecipiendio mandetis.” Kunstmann, “Studien,” 790.
letter, Sanudo offered his allegiance to two individuals, relying upon his recipient *cum* messenger to pass on the offer for help. He blurred the roles of recipient, messenger and writer, rather than treating them as distinct and inviolable. Recipients acted as messengers and vice versa, according to the needs of all. Messengers and intermediaries like Almerico provided Sanudo with an alternative access to those ‘correspondents’ who failed — or simply did not deign — to respond to his overtures towards fostering connections. We have another letter written a month prior to his letter from Almerico, addressed directly to Bertrand du Pouget. In it, he mentions the cardinal’s relative silence, but concedes that he persists in writing him thanks to encouragement from his messengers: “although I have written two other letters to your most excellent reverend paternity, and I have received little response to them, I understand more fully from their aforementioned bearers that your praiseworthy lordship received them graciously. Therefore, after contemplating anew the mien of your most kind and laudable paternity, as I observed by your grace at Piacenza, I have purposed to write again to your lordship.”

Sanudo’s complaint at receiving no response to his previous letters did not earn him a response from Bertrand himself, but it was enough to garner notice from Almerico as a messenger and go-between. Where dialogue between Sanudo and Bertrand waned, Almerico pulled together at least some threads of contact, and gave Sanudo some solace that he still had fostered some connections — this, in turn, brought Sanudo closer to Almerico, and helped sustain his ties to Bertrand. That both

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with Almerico strengthened Sanudo’s fragile network that otherwise may have collapsed in the face of silence.

Acting as a Messenger: Transporting Information and Gaining Trust

By relying on others to act as a messenger and deliver letters on his behalf, Sanudo borrowed their authority with new or distant acquaintances, which in turn allowed him to construct new ties and remotely sustain weak links to powerful people. In a similar vein, he also acted as a messenger on behalf of others, and he leveraged those moments in his letters to argue for his trustworthiness as a guardian of information and protector of social boundaries to ingratiate himself with his correspondent, once again underscoring his ability to control information.

Three years before hearing from intermediary messenger Almerico de Nohalco that Bertrand du Pouget did, in fact, read his letters, Sanudo reached out for the first time to the cardinal personally, with no linking actor. He introduced himself by reminding Bertrand of their acquaintance four years prior:

When I saw you at Piacenza, how much grace you offered to me, your closest servant. Approximately four years have elapsed since coming to the festivity of the Lord’s Nativity. There I presented in person to you the letters patent of the most excellent Lord King of Jerusalem and Sicily; also I presented an ordinance of the cardinals so that your amenable paternity might give me assistance, counsel and safe conduct. Then I reported to you certain news which was related to me by Giacobo de la Cana, an agent of the aforesaid most excellent king. To those things you graciously replied to me, your most faithful servant.  

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540 First sentence translation mine; Roddy, 161 (“There I presented to you. . .” onwards); “quam vidi Placentiae, quem mihi vestro intimo servitori, vestri gratia, ostendisti: circa festum Nativitatis Domini proxime venturum erunt quatuor anni elapsi. Et ibi coram vestro dominio praeuentavi litteras apertas Excellentissimi domini Regis Jerusalem & Sicilie, & privilegium Cardinalium, causam habendi subsidium, consilium, &
He then detailed the politics surrounding the entrance of Louis IV of Bavaria into Italy and the state of the peninsula, reflecting on its history mired in political conflict, where he ought to know “the very bad state of Christianity, especially in Italy. . . A man cannot travel over the land except in very great danger, nor by sea, because the Savonese and Sicilians cause very great dangers to the merchants” — he brought that uniquely mercantile concern over safe travel of merchants to his information network yet again.541

Sanudo wrote to Bertrand at least three more times in subsequent years, once in 1328 to inform him that Louis IV of Bavaria had arrived in Rome (where he would have himself crowned emperor and subsequently declared Pope John XXII a heretic and installed Nicholas V as antipope), and to urge the cardinal to encourage the pope to “bring the Bavarian into his favor.”542 He wrote twice again in 1330, at one point warning the papal legate, delegated to Lombardy by John XXII, of the region’s terrible conditions. He may well have sent others, since in his 1328 letter he references having sent multiple letters but only one (from 1327) survives. That initial introduction through letter delivery, and Sanudo’s subsequent recollection of the role, built a successful connection with Bertrand that allowed him to continue correspondence, since he noted in a 1328 letter that he had received responses from the bishop through Giacobo de la Cana. Thanks to that initial contact point

conductum a venerabili vestra paternitate, oretenus vobis referens quaedam nova, quae mihi relata fuerunt a quodam factore excellentissimi domini Regis praedicti, nomine Iacobo de la Cana: super quibus gratiose respondistis mihi vestro fidelissimo servitor.” Bongars, Gestæ Dei, 307-308.

541 Roddy, 167; “statum pessimum Christianitatis, & maxime Italie. . . quia per terram non potest homo ire nisi cum maximo periculo, nec per mare, quia isti Saonenses & Siculi inferunt damnum maximum mercatoribus.” Bongars, Gestæ Dei, 309.

542 Roddy, 208; Bongars, Gestæ Dei, 312. Bongars does not provide a known month for the date, only a year, but it seems most likely that the letter was written before Louis’ deposition of John XXII in April.
at the Christmas feast at Piacenza, Sanudo could nurture a nascent point of contact in that universal community he so desired. He could then, theoretically, levy his role as messenger into an edge of status and authority to lend weight to his crusading message.

Letter delivery garnered couriers social currency that they could later draw upon in future contacts. Sanudo valued delivery as an active role in distributing information — having previously shared and controlled information as a messenger, he now could call back to that role in his attempts to build his own authority as a source for news. When Sanudo used his letters to introduce the recipient to his courier, the letter writer was active while the courier himself was passive.\textsuperscript{543} The letter served as an immediate but brief introduction: for a single moment, the messenger met the recipient at the hand-off, but their interaction ended there. The subsequent introduction as the recipient read the letter was similarly short: he may tuck any reference to faithfulness and trust in the back of his mind, but the interaction need not extend further. The courier could not force the letter writer to recommend or even mention him and had to wait for the content of the letter to establish further social ties. Where Sanudo recalled his previous acts as courier, we can see the long-term effects of the letter delivery introduction and how the courier could become an active participant in the conversation and in the construction of social ties.

By referencing moments where he served as courier, Sanudo granted letter delivery equal or greater footing to other means of introduction or mention of shared common acquaintance. He did not cite common acquaintances they both know outside of this news network, even though they almost certainly shared in-person acquaintances given that they

\textsuperscript{543} Roddy Letters 6, 27, and 29 all feature examples in which Sanudo deliberately introduces his courier to the letter’s recipient.
ran in similar (or at least tangentially connected) social circles and attended the same Christmas feast. This emphasis on these shared “information acquaintances,” so to speak, suggests again that Sanudo expected to build his connections — and his reputation with those connections — through the spread of information, not only by establishing his authority through access to privileged or prestigious information, but also by framing everything about his letters, down to his methods of introduction, around sharing information. Still, his attempts to use his past distribution of news had mixed results — after all, Bertrand was unresponsive by 1330 when Sanudo first heard from Almerico, despite their earlier correspondence.\(^544\) The messenger background only stretched so far, apparently.

Orality and Literacy:

Without messengers, letters were a wholly written interaction – but with them, we see how Sanudo reintegrated orality into his communications to try to fortify ties otherwise held together by the thin threads of writing. In his 1327 letter to Bertrand, Sanudo referenced his role as the bearer of the King of Jerusalem and Sicily’s letters patent and the cardinal ordinances. He then recollects that “I reported to you certain news which was related to me by Giacobo de la Cana, an agent of the aforesaid most excellent king [of France],” offering himself as a link in oral communication. Giacobo de la Cana “related” the news, which Sanudo then conveyed to Bertrand verbally rather than as part of a letter.\(^545\)


\(^{545}\) Roddy, 161; “oretenus vobis referens quaedam nova, quae mihi relata fuerunt a quodam factore excellentissimi domini Regis praedicti, nomine Iacobo de la Cana.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 308. It is unclear whether Giacobo de la Cana also related the news to Sanudo in person or else more literally ‘re-lata,’ or ‘carried it back back,’ in a more physical sense of a letter; but no letters survive from Giacobo de la Cana, so it is quite possible they spoke in person.
Sanudo’s recollection of a face-to-face conversation during his written self-introduction reveals that he used couriersing to resolve other problems caused by long-distance communication: the removal of immediate, oral communication, and the problems of trust and anonymity in writing. Sanudo pointed back to moment of oral contact to remind his reader of his connections to Giacobo de la Cana, agent (and social link) to the King of France.

One could argue that because letters constructed these new bonds between courier and letter writer and recipient, they created social ties confined and even defined by letter writing. These relationships essentially did not or could not exist outside of a network of letters. Sanudo’s network existed only in written form, and so the act of letter delivery became more important than in-person acquaintances that functioned outside this community of letters. This community was foremost defined and limited by its written components, but messengers buttressed it by reintroducing orality and personal contact.

Through the role of messenger, Sanudo ingrained himself into the already extant social bond between the original letter writers and the recipient. He invoked others within a larger social network, acting as middle-man to convey information to his recipient; he reported not only news, but news he heard from a king’s agent; he did not merely ask for assistance, counsel and safe conduct, he did so through an ordinance of the cardinals. He established ties to the King of Jerusalem, the cardinals’ court, and the king, and then used those connections to establish further new ties to courts outside and beyond his usual social reach. The courier’s recollection of their letter delivery, as a writer himself, involved actively

\[546\, \text{Ibid.}\]
inserting himself into an already-extant social bond and into the larger community of Christendom. In these instances of introduction facilitated by letter delivery, letters acted ‘in loco introductoris’—they reified an individual’s social status and approval of others, in place of their presence in a social interaction. Letters and the courier role replaced conventional social interactions because distance precluded the conventional tools to develop new connections.

The preservation and continuation of the importance of orality within written communication echoes that same traditionalist approach to the world of merchants who clutched Acre in their memories. Letters did not so much replace face-to-face interactions or render them irrelevant, as they enabled them through a transitive property of “stand-ins” and representation. Sanudo’s merchant mentality that valued information as a currency for social power and a tool for social cohesion led him to seek ways to integrate and communicate as much as possible; messengers were not only a pillar of a long-distance community’s survival, but a means of allowing it to grow.

*Geographic Representation and Substitutions in Messengers:*

Not satisfied with making messengers into his avatars abroad, Sanudo also transformed messengers into geographical representatives. He referenced their origins and regional connections to convey their (and, thus, his) mutual allegiances and his access to disparate lands through his access to their representatives. In turn, a journey gave messengers roots in multiple locations that Sanudo could draw on to create new bonds between himself and his correspondent, allowing messengers to serve as a ‘social glue’ to close the gap between distant lands.
On multiple occasions, Sanudo noted in his letters how the messenger had ties with both his and his correspondents’ local communities — that they were born in Venice but now lived or worked near the correspondent, or that they were a native of the correspondent’s land but were passing through Venice as they became fast friends with Sanudo. In his 1328 letter to Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget, Sanudo mentions how he had relied on two messengers for delivering previous letters, and drew particular attention to their geographical origins and apparent allegiances for both: “I have written letters to your reverend paternity about matters advantageous to the Catholic faithful in order that peace and tranquility may exist among them. I sent them by Jacob, Turkoman and nuncio of the king of Armenia and by Raymond, your servant who lives in Venice. Moreover, I have received a response from your reverence by them and I am pleased you received them kindly and gladly. As much as I can be, I am humbly grateful to you.” He confirms their faithfulness: that both successfully delivered letters to the bishop, but also that they had also acted as messengers for the bishop in return. The messengers’ geographical ties served as Sanudo’s way of explicitly recalling the connection between his and his correspondents’ respective communities.

Sanudo chose a Turkoman and, more notably, a Venetian inhabitant. It seems only natural that Sanudo would choose someone who lived in Venice to deliver his letter —

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547 Roddy, 206; “scripsi vestrae Reuerndae Paternitati, per scilicet Iacobum, Turchemannum & nuncium Regis Armeniae, & per Raimundum habitatorem Venetiis, seruitorum vestrum, litteras super negotiis oportunis Catholicorum fidelium, ut posset in eis pac & tranquilitas interesse: Responsionem autem a vestra Reuerenda paternitate per eosdem grato animo suscepi, quia benigna & gratanter receptistis: de quo vobis humiliter regratior quantum possum.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 312. Sanudo’s reference to “turkoman” is unclear here, as to whether it is a role or an ethnicity — elsewhere he refers to “Arab Bedouins and Turkomanni who are on horses.” [Arabis Beduinis et Turchomanni in equis existentibus, Kunstmann, 795], but he also writes to “the prudent, noble and discreet sebastocrator, Lord Stephen Sirupulus, turkoman of the Lord Greek Emperor,” “[viro provido, Nobili, & discreto Sevasto, domino Stephano Sirupulo domini Imperatoris Graeciae Turchimanno.” Bongars, *Gesta Dei*, 302] which suggests that turkoman was a role as well as an ethnicity.
perhaps it is almost too obvious to point out that they were the ones most readily at hand.

But in that case, why would it be necessary, or even relevant, for Sanudo to mention his messenger’s geographical affiliations? Here, at least, the recipients had previously employed those same couriers for their own letters, and Sanudo had received a response through them.

By choosing someone from his hometown, perhaps Sanudo implied that he hoped to expect a response — not only because Bertrand had previously employed the messenger, but because the messenger would be more likely to return to Venice than a messenger only passing through. By then further emphasizing his messenger’s Venetian ties, Sanudo hinted to the bishop that a slow response could not be blamed on lack of an available messenger.

At the same time, he highlighted a shared sense of trust, repeating his concerns about the protection of boundaries, authority and trust.

In his letter in 1329 to Pierre de la Vie, bishop of Albi and nephew to Pope John XXII through his sister Maria Duèze’s marriage to Pierre I, Sanudo reiterates his use of geographic origins to communicate both his and his messenger’s reliability and common social connections: “Your eminent lordship is aware that I wrote to you by Raymond, a Venetian resident who was native to your district of Cahors and is your devoted servant. I believe you have received them well.”

Sanudo described “the very terrible condition of Italy,” — the state of constant warfare (with attempts by the Count of Hainault and Philip VI of France to intervene in negotiations for peace), the death of Giovanni Soranzo, doge of

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548 Roddy, 213; “noverit vestra Magnifica dominatio quod scripsi vobis per Raimundum habitatorem Venetiis, qui fuit oriundus de contratis vestris de Caors, qui est devotus servitor vester: quas credo quod bene recepistis.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 313. Sanudo’s wry observation that he thinks, but does not know, his previous letters were well-received suggests that he had yet to receive a response to his previous letters. In pointing it out, he again subtly encouraged a response in the face of apparent silence and non-response from his letters’ recipients.
Venice, and subsequent election of Francesco Dandolo in his place. Sanudo asked that Pierre de la Vie inform Hélon de Villeneuve, commander of the Knights of Hospitaller, then at Avignon, that the Hospitallers at Rhodes were welcoming pirates — “as many Sicilians, as Genoese and from other parts” — into the port in the commander’s absence.549

As with his Venetian messenger sent to Bertrand of Pouget, by paying attention to his courier’s geographic origins, Sanudo vouched for the reliability of his messengers — messengers unfamiliar with new lands or regions might well fail to deliver letters if they spent too long reaching their destination, but with Raymond’s familiarity with Cahors, any failure to deliver the letter could not be attributed to the messenger’s ignorance. Thus, again, sending a messenger whom Sanudo expected to return to Venice conveyed the hope — the expectation? — of a swift response, and of the messenger’s potential role as a bridge between writer and recipient due to his ties to both parties’ regions. And thanks to his messenger’s mutual ties, he could confirm that Pierre de la Vie had “received [the letters] well,” explicitly drawing attention to the successful communication, trustworthiness and reliability.550

When Sanudo called on a messenger with links to both Venice and Cahors, he did more than just increase the likelihood that the letters would be quickly and faithfully delivered; he also allowed the messenger to act as a tie between the two communities. As a resident of Venice but native to Cahors, Raymund had a foot in each city. Geographic identity served as an effective social tie: Raymund was trustworthy and loyal not just to


Sanudo himself, but to Bertrand de Pouget and to their larger geographic communities — not just their information-based networks. By tying the messenger's identity to his geographic communities, Sanudo gave a physical context for his attempts to construct an information network and the broader, universal Christendom that he envisioned. Both information networks and Christendom inherently lack a clear physicality — instead they are bound by those “in the know” and those not, or those who adhere to the Christian faith and those who do not. Yet its members by necessity took part in communities with physical and geographic boundaries: their cities, their kingdoms, their empires, which in turn shaped how they interacted with their more ephemerally defined communities. Being part of the former helped to integrate them into the latter. Sanudo’s appeals to and recognition of his letter-recipients’ geographic ties speaks to the way he understood how they influenced who people knew and trusted, even as he argued that correspondents like Pierre de la Vie should care about the distant lands of Italy (plagued by “tribulations, distresses, hunger and famine” on land and sea alike) and Germany (“quite devastated because of the division which existed among the brothers”), thanks to their economic interdependence and their shared Christian identity.551

It was, however, not always easy to find those common geographic connections. In at least one instance Sanudo seems to have contrived a geographical connection between a messenger and his recipient, as with his letter to Pierre de la Vie. After naming his former courier, a Venetian resident and native of Cahors, Sanudo then turns to the current occupier of that role, whose common ties were somewhat more tenuous:

551 Ibid., “tribulationes & angustiae, fames & caristiae in terra; sed etiam in mari;” “in Alemania, propter divisionem quae fuit inter pratres illos Duces Austriac, patri est multum devastate.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 314.
At present a bearer of letters has landed thither, a procurator for the convent Santa Maria de Virginibus. It was established and endowed by the most holy Pope Alexander [Alexander III] [when] he was in Venice. The monastery was commended to the lord doge and now more than ninety nuns of holy life and great virtue live there. Therefore, I entreat your eminence with reverence to God and honor to our lord supreme pontiff that you deem it worthy to consider the aforesaid procurator of the convent and the business entrusted to him. Also I entreat you out of charity for me.\footnote{Sanudo leaves out whether the messenger was a close friend to either party, suggesting perhaps that he was relatively unknown to both — or at least any common acquaintance he shared to them merited less mention than his position at the convent. At the same time, he makes a great deal out of the messenger’s geographical and professional origins: a monastery in Venice, and one particularly favored by Alexander III during a visit to Venice where he, not coincidentally, met with Frederick Barbarossa. There in Venice, Barbarossa submitted to the authority of the pope in the Peace of Venice, a convenient parallel, and likely subtle allusion, to the ongoing struggle between John XXII and Louis IV of Barbary.\footnote{This event also eventually became the mythical origins for the ceremony of the Marriage of the Sea, wherein Alexander III allegedly gave Doge Sebastiano Ziani a ring for his role in the negotiations, and then bade him cast it into the sea to marry it and grant Venice dominion over the Adriatic.}}

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threats to papal authority. Sanudo placed this procurator of Santa Maria de Virginibus — and, by correlation of the *in loco introductoris*, Sanudo himself — as similar potential reconcilers, facilitators of connections and healers of fragmentation. Here, again, the messenger served as a social link between writer and recipient, where their origins and ties to places embodied shared history and helped to elevate the reputation of Sanudo and Venice as a whole.

All these references speak to Sanudo’s consciousness of the messenger’s role as a bridge between writer and recipient, and a mentality about communication that focused on building connections. It can be easy for us to dismiss Sanudo’s use of a Venetian messenger, or one from his recipient’s region, as little more than a byproduct of the fact that most messengers likely had ties to the places they went. It could have been a convenient, but ultimately coincidental, happenstance. But here, because Sanudo clearly, deliberately constructed a geographical and social tie between himself, the messenger and Pierre de la Vie, we can see that such ties were no accident but a central part of Sanudo’s attitudes towards the messenger’s role in communication and community building.

*Messengers as Complementary Communicators, Authority through Travel:*

Messengers also often served in a more direct capacity: That is, Sanudo frequently called upon his messengers to provide the correspondent with their own information and knowledge beyond Sanudo’s purview, and in doing so simultaneously granted them his authority and borrowed theirs that they gained through the experience of travel. Their journeys and personal experiences granted them familiarity with distant regions where Sanudo’s own knowledge was lacking or out of date. The ever-present problem of time-lagged information drove merchants to look to the future to predict the present. Sanudo
resolved it by relying on his messengers to collect news during their journeys. Messengers compensated for the gaps in knowledge held by either Sanudo or his correspondent. This made messengers active participants in medieval communication and in constructing communities through spreading knowledge, while elevating the role of travel over long distances to gather new information to, in turn, help strengthen social bonds.

Letters allowed Sanudo to expand and construct new social bonds via three-way introductions again in his missive to Paolino, bishop of Pozzuoli, a frequent correspondent, appearing in eight of the total surviving forty-two letters. In a fragment of one of his last known letters to the bishop, he provided a series of recommendations for several messengers: the “Jacobini brothers,” Giacomo of Cremona, and Guillaume Baden, named as reliable and knowledgeable informants whose travels gave them access to exclusive and extensive information on far-reaching corners of Christendom. Sanudo focused his attention primarily on the two brothers, who apparently crossed most of Europe in their journeys, delivering letters in each region they passed through, forging a steady path of communication:

Two brothers Jacobini, who know many dialects, came with their families from Tartaria of the northern hemisphere, the land which Uzbec holds... They carried many letters from Christian lords who live in the North. They were with the king of Hungary, who received the said brothers honorably and with great gifts. He caused them to be conducted into Austria, and by the grace of God they landed in Venice, healthy, safe and cheerful. They presented to my lord doge letters sent to him by their Christian lords. They were received with joy, and they received gifts from the commune. Afterwards they departed from Venice with my letters and directed their way to the Supreme Pontiff. I will cause a number of these [letters] to be copied,
if it is possible for me. They were sent to the Constantinopolitan emperor. I have received letters about these from them.554

The letter suggests that messengers frequently helped construct information networks not only in a two- or even three-way thread of communication, but also in a more complex weaving of interactions: at each new stop they delivered news and collected letters, all the while enabling introductions of others and themselves through letters. We cannot call the Jacobini brothers simply avatars acting in Sanudo’s stead, because they crafted the path of their journey with their own motivations and delivered letters on behalf of many others. Instead, they facilitated new bonds, while they also actively shaped the physical shape of the community by deciding their course. With this interweaving of communication and travel, messengers decided where news flowed and where it ran dry based on their own routes, destinations and interests.

When Sanudo could not control the flow of information, he recast that lack as a reflection of his place as part of a network of desirable information. Though the Jacobini brothers did not answer to Sanudo alone, their role as messengers put them into contact with the upper echelons of political power from far-reaching corners of Christendom: they hailed from Tartaria and rubbed elbows with lords from the North, the king of Hungary, the doge of Venice and even the Pope. With his reference to their well-traveled and well-

connected experience, Sanudo helped himself to the authority they derived from knowing both elusive knowledge and powerful people from distant corners of Christendom.

In long-distance networks like Sanudo’s merchant community, gathering information was as paramount as disseminating it. Sanudo develops a clear tie between travel, personal experience and his messengers’ roles as participants in information transmission, building upon the centrality of gathering news in merchants’ networks and integrating it into his crusades correspondence. We see this first in a letter written in 1329 addressed to an unknown recipient titled only as “your reverend paternity,” containing news Sanudo had heard through correspondence with the archbishop of Thebes: “May your reverend paternity know by the presents [present letters], that recently I have received letters from the reverend lord archbishop of Thebes, once patriarch of Antioch.” Sanudo provided his correspondent with the latest Mediterranean affairs passed on from Thebes: the imminent fall of Negroponte without further support, the role of Rhodes and Cyprus in the control of the Knights Hospitallers, as well as the current turmoil of the Italian peninsula, whose blame he lays at the feet of the Genoese who “strike the whole world by sea.”

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Sanudo concludes his news with a promise of further updates gained not from the archbishop, but from the messenger bearing the letter: “with deference, I beseech you to have the bearer of these presents commend to whatever extent you think proper. He is a friend of the lord archbishop. He will inform you fully of the news of the parts of Romania and Italy through which he will travel.”

The recommendation first bolstered the messenger’s status by ensuring his connection not only to Sanudo, but to Sanudo’s own source of information, the archbishop of Thebes, that comprised the bulk of the letter. The recommendation, as those discussed before, spoke to the messenger’s social status and trustworthiness — that if his unknown correspondent trusted Sanudo’s information because it came from the archbishop, then so too should he trust the messenger as a source because of his friendship with the archbishop. But the recommendation was more than merely social, since Sanudo states that the messenger would “inform [him] fully of the news of the parts. . . through which he will travel.” Sanudo lacked the more current information on events available in the regions outside his immediate purview, and instead he promised to facilitate the gathering and transmission of this information by offering the knowledge of his messenger — knowledge which Sanudo explicitly ties to the former’s experiences through traveling, that he would provide the news only for the regions he visited personally. By recommending his messenger to his correspondent, Sanudo strengthened his position and

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558 Roddy, 219-220; “praentium insuper portitorem, familiatem domini Archiepiscopi supradicti, supplico reuerenter, quatenus habere dignemini commendatum. Nam de nouitatibus illarum partium Romaniae & Italie per quam transibit, vos plenarie informabit.” Bongars, Gesta Dei, 315-316. Note that the recipient is given no name, but Sanudo refers to him as, “Revered Paternity,” suggesting a religious authority as the recipient. Also, Roddy translates “praesentes” as presents, but it more closely translates to “present things” — the letters, rather than any gift, since Sanudo does not mention items accompanying his correspondence.
his network by constructing initial bonds and introductions that could provide a broad social benefit at some time in the indefinite future.

And in doing so, he also provided more immediate, concrete benefits to both the recipient and himself through this transfer of information. First, the recipient gained the most recent and up-to-date news possible, rather than having to rely upon potentially outdated sources. Second, Sanudo himself gained the reputation benefit of having facilitated contact as an informant and trusted member of the information-based community. He sought to improve his reputation, and the trust placed in him by his reader, by informing his reader more completely and thoroughly than he would have otherwise been able to without the assistance of his messenger.559

Where Sanudo and his correspondent benefitted, so too did Sanudo’s messenger: he gained social status and authority from Sanudo’s recommendation and then reinforced that status and authority through his own participation in the network. Sanudo delegated his own authority as a judge of accurate and important information to his messenger. This delegation echoes Sanudo’s treatment of trustworthy couriers as replacements for his own presence in front of his correspondents. But because they imparted their own knowledge, gathered independently through their journeys, rather than from Sanudo, they became more than mere avatars or puppets parroting his words. As a result, messengers gained status and

559 For a similar discussion of the role of information distribution as a part of reputation, see George Christ’s “Beyond the Network,” which discusses a Venetian merchant’s decision to share Venetian trade secrets about the regulation of grain in Mamluk markets with his social network, which Christ attributes to the merchant’s social obligation to share whatever information he had among his trading partners, despite his political obligation to Venice to keep such information secret, in order to preserve his reputation as a trustworthy and reliable merchant. Georg Christ, “Beyond the Network -- Connectors of Networks: Venetian Agents in Cairo and Venetian News Management,” in Everything is on the Move: The Mamluk Empire as a Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks, ed. Stephan Conermann, Mamluk Studies 7 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2014), 27-59.
authority, and were ingrained into the network twice over: first through Sanudo’s commendations, praise and trust, and second, through the process of travel, which gave them exclusive access to fresh knowledge unavailable to either Sanudo or his correspondent. Sanudo promises that the letter bearer would inform “fully” — “plenarie” — but that he will only do so for regions through which he traversed as part of his journey to deliver the letter, implicitly tying his authority to travel itself.  

In his letter to Louis, Duke of Bourbon and Count of Clermont and March, and royal treasurer, to whom he commended his courier, Guglielmo Bernardo de Fumo, called Badin, Sanudo further integrates the process of travel into his characterization of messengers as travel ‘experts’ and long-distance specialists. Sanudo describes Guglielmo as “a circumspect man,” and, “our most faithful servant and bearer of this letter, with whom I have visited during his Venetian visits.” Guglielmo had “seen very many remarkable places, wherefore, he will be able to inform your eminence about many things. Indeed, during the short time of two years [of his journey] I do not know how he could have investigated more.” And in the same letter, Sanudo names Giacobo of Cremona — this time a former messenger who helped deliver letters to the Roman curia in Avignon, to the

560 Ibid., fn. 527.


French King, and to the patriarch of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{563} He praises him as “prudent and discreet,” and later in the same letter as “faithful and wise.”\textsuperscript{564} As with his letter to the anonymous Reverend Paternity, he lauds his messenger’s reliability and faithfulness for having delivered letters to a wide variety of places and to people of high social status and prestige. He trusted Giacobo to deliver news that was implicitly more valuable or necessarily private because of its high-placed audiences. And in praising Giacobo’s trustworthiness, Sanudo once again augmented the notion that reliability and trust granted an informant access to the highest echelons of society.

Giacobo’s reliability earned him the moniker \textit{fidelis}, but it was his experiences and knowledge gained through his voyages — not only the length, but the diversity of his journeys — that made him \textit{sapiens}, “knowing,” or “wise.”\textsuperscript{565} Travel and personal experience stood as a strong second to reliability for the messenger’s ability to speak to the state of the Mediterranean world. Sanudo observes that “for more than thirty years Giacobo sojourned in the parts of the Great, or Pontic, Sea, in Romania and in other places.”\textsuperscript{566} Because Giacobo had lived extensively abroad, unmoored from a single rooted home, Sanudo

\textsuperscript{563} Note that this is a difference Giacobo than his previously mentioned Giacobo de la Cana referenced in his letter to Bertrand of Pouget — de la Cana appears only once, in relation to the king of Sicily and Jerusalem, while Sanudo names Giacobo of Cremona in three separate letters: first, in a letter to Philip VI of France in 1334 (“After this I also wrote to you by Giacobo da Cremona, a faithful man whom I have commended as much as I can and do commend to your serenity.” Roddy, 282); second to Louis, duke of Bourbon, count of Clermont and the March and royal treasurer (See quote above; Roddy, 298); and lastly to Paolino, bishop of Pozzuoli in 1335 (“Giacomo of Cremona of whom I made mention to you in a copied letter. He is wonderously informed concerning the deeds of the northern people, if anyone wishes to give attention to his words.” Roddy, 307).


\textsuperscript{565} \textit{Ibid., Fidelis et sapiens}.

confidently recommended him to the Duke of Bourbon with the promise that Giacobo “will be able to inform [him] of many things.” Diverse knowledge came from seeing diverse things, accomplished best by visiting many places. In effect, Sanudo saw travel as a something that could not only inhibit communication, but facilitate it: long-distance travel allowed messengers to learn things that were otherwise unavailable to the more sedentary members of the community. Couriers could then draw on their personal experience as an advantage over writers and recipients, whose information would inevitably be delayed and derived from secondary sources, and thus more unreliable. Their experiences made these messengers specialists in regional knowledge: they were quite literally expertus or “experienced” in their knowledge of a region because of their journeys. This advantage allowed them to further integrate themselves into the community as an active participant in this network of information distribution, remodeling travel into a tool by which one could gain special reputation and authority.

Sanudo elevated travel from an incidental hindrance of communication into something more central to his universal Christendom’s overall strength. He claims that Guglielmo Bernardo de Fumo had visited many places and, in doing so, could not possibly “have investigated more.” Here, he uses the verb explorasse to describe Guglielmo’s gathering of news and his journeys across the Black Sea, treating travel as an exploration or investigation, making the unknown known. Sharing news became something akin to “discovery,” not unlike Marco Polo’s “discovery” of China where he was responsible not for learning about the mere existence of Cathay, but for bringing a heightened level of familiarity


with the region to a broader audience who otherwise had no access to it. The language makes letter delivery into an active investigation: Guglielmo “explored” these places in seeking news and knowledge, rather than passively moving from one place to another. In turn, the activeness of his travel speaks to the completeness of his information, that there was nothing left to find after his journeys that might be left out or forgotten when speaking to the duke.

Travel also promised completeness: in his letter to the Reverend Paternity, Sanudo assures him that his messenger will inform him *plenarie*, and that he left no stone unturned during his journeys; Guglielmo Bernardo de Fumo had nothing more to explore during his two years abroad, and Giacobo of Cremona boasted thirty years to perfect his knowledge the Pontic Sea. In his praise of their exhaustive wisdom, Sanudo recognized implicitly that news gained indirectly, rather than from personal experience, risked relative incompleteness or inaccuracy, either from the secondary source’s own imperfect knowledge of the region, or simply the danger of information lost or forgotten in the chains of contact.

Sanudo relied upon his messengers to actively pursue news that he and his correspondents could not otherwise access. Their knowledge was directly tied to place and region; Sanudo promises that his messengers would inform his correspondents about the regions through which they moved — places, rather than people or events. Likewise, Sanudo valued Giacobo of Cremona for having “seen many remarkable places” — not many events, or many people — that then made him “able to inform [the recipient] of many things.”

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Sanudo mentions the Jacobini brothers and their rich contacts with lords and popes, and in doing so granted them (and himself) authority through their social hobnobbing — but those connections were not only to people in power, but elites from a vast array of scattered places. Sanudo ties his messengers to space twice over: the information itself was defined by its geographic origins, much as Sanudo cited Venice itself (as much as the travelers it drew in) as a locus for sources from abroad. Where Sanudo sought to distinguish himself through his dissemination and control of news, this meant that the “universal Christendom” that he sought to craft, although technically with no clear physical boundaries, was still bound to geography and space. Ultimately, to battle the problems introduced by long-distance communication — of delayed, incomplete or out-of-date information — Sanudo delegated messengers to collect more news during their journeys to enhance long-distance networking, and thus created a community at once removed from geographic borders but also reliant upon information defined by its geographic origins.

Shayne A. Legassie discusses the connection between travel, personal experience and authority in *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, investigating how medieval travel writers – and especially pilgrimage narratives – developed a connection between the struggles of travel and spiritual struggle, an association that then reshaped the medieval author’s relationship with exoticism, “literate labor,” and the *auctoritas* of Latinity and theology to demonstrate that pilgrimage was not “less searching and self-aware than latter-day modes of mobility.”

Legassie’s discussion is one of literature and its labor, arguing that with *Le devisement dou monde*, Rustichello sought to circumvent traditions of Latin *auctoritas* to elevate Marco Polo

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571 Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 95.
into a source for illusive and exotic knowledge of foreign lands to both the elite and “all people who want to know about the diverse races of men and the diverse wonders of diverse regions of the world,” in parallel with the late medieval European growing emphasis on travel as a transformative experience.572 Legassie’s work builds off of Mary W. Helms’s seminal *Ulysses’ Sail: an Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance*, in which she explores the attitudes people from nonindustrial and traditional societies held about geographical space and distance, the acquisition of knowledge of distant lands, and the connection of that knowledge to political power. Helms argues that the further away a space was from someone’s “axis mundi,” the more they treated that space as “increasingly supernatural, mythical, and powerful,” and so-called “long-distance specialists” (particularly, in Helms’ analysis, non-merchants) who had knowledge of those places were “accorded an aura of prestige and awe.”573 She focuses on “sacred” experiences of travel, even when addressing the Middle Ages, touching on “peregrinatio, pilgrimages and the Crusades” as common forms of travel medieval Europeans experienced, arguing that “for this intellectual elite of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance . . . travel as part of a quest for knowledge or, as in the case of the sailors, even as part of more mundane survival, is, directly or indirectly, divinely inspired and associated with God-like or at least saint-like qualities. It is both a heroic activity and a Christian activity.”574 Legassie, in turn, further developed that analysis by looking at the connections between labor, *travail* and travel in medieval


573 Helms, *Ulysses’ Sail*, 4-5.

pilgrimage, recasting pilgrimage narratives as a spiritual journey of self-discovery (rather than the ethnographic discovery of Polo and his merchant kin) that others could recreate through reading.⁵⁷⁵

Both Helms and Legassie focus on travel as, on some level, a spiritual, religious or cosmological experience, and a product of contact with people beyond the boundaries of Helms’ *axis mundi*. Sanudo, however, had little “spirituality” visible in his descriptions of the knowledge his messengers gained during their journeys, even as spirituality permeated his goals. The information they garnered was much more “down to earth” than the quasi-mythical travel narratives Helms describes as rampant even in the best (or, perhaps, least miraculous?) account of the Middle Ages, Marco Polo’s *Le devisement dou monde*.⁵⁷⁶ And yet we cannot call Helms’ arguments as completely inapplicable: while there is little exoticism to Sanudo’s messengers, their travel, made in service of his efforts to construct a universal Christendom, to connect disparate reaches of his world, were nevertheless in his estimation a “Christian activity.” To Sanudo, travel was not about bringing something from the outside world *into* Christendom, but instead about bringing different parts of Christendom together, forging connections through shared information.

Sanudo treated his humbler messengers’ experiences with similar gravity to the more divinely inspired journeys of pilgrims and crusaders. He lent them authority through experience, encouraged his correspondents to trust their news of lands more familiar than exotic Cathay. They could provide information that was elusive not because of the region’s inherent exoticness but because of its novelty — this was news, valued primarily for its

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freshness and accuracy, a byproduct of the interference of time and delay within long-distance communities. Sanudo’s letters reveal how the rise of authority through travel and experience extended to more mundane trips in addition to spiritual journeys of pilgrimage and crusading.

In relying upon his messengers to combat the problems of long-distance communication, Sanudo created a solution in which distance not only inhibited but enhanced a network. Couriers disseminated information as they gathered even more, which they could then subsequently relay to other members of the network by messengers who would then gather new information to share and so on ad infinitum. Compare this to communication where no messenger plays a role, as in, say, modern day email, where technology has eliminated the need for any human courier: here, a letter writer could offer current information about his own region’s news, but when writing to someone half a continent away, any news about the space in between, they would have to collect independently. When Sanudo used his messengers as investigators and collators of news, and not merely as transporters of information, he made his information network self-reinforcing. Each act of communication produced more information, newer and more reliable, allowing distance that would otherwise weaken the community’s reliance upon information to strengthen them and allow them to form further social bonds through communication.

**Conclusions:**

As a political player, Sanudo took part in long-distance information-based, non-mercantile communities. He encountered many of the similar struggles and problems that plagued migrant merchants: efforts to sustain ties to others, to establish trustworthiness and authority in the absence of face-to-face conversations. Fourteenth-century merchants’
migrations were novel in that they grew out of an economic impetus that found people newly separated for long stretches of time from their hometowns and communities. But these newer long-distance merchant communities were only a part of a larger system of long-distance communication in the later Middle Ages. These letters show how merchants like Sanudo carried their mentalities about trust, authority, communication and travel, born from their migrations and participation in long-distance communities, into the other communities in which they took part.

Even as we discuss merchant communities as a distinct phenomenon during the fourteenth century, Sanudo’s conversations with religious and political figures across the Mediterranean and Europe reveal how we cannot consider Italian merchants in isolation, as distinct and separate from other long-distance communities. Sanudo sought to foster discussion towards a new crusade with both political and religious audiences. In doing so he integrated his own mercantile interests and perspectives into his political and religious communications, often framing his crusade in mercantile terms of trade blockades and piracy’s threat to Mediterranean stability.577 And he was hardly alone in his crossing into political and religious communities: we can see similar interactions in how political news was central to merchants’ communication within their own networks, where political turmoil could ripple outwards into economic effects for merchants, and how a merchant like Francesco di Marco Datini could find himself in frequent contact with religious figures like Giovanni delle Celle, Chiara Gambacorta and Giovanni Dominici over religious concerns.578

577 David Jacoby, “Marino Sanudo Torsello on Trade Routes, Commodities and Taxation,” in Travelers, Merchants and Settlers in the Eastern Mediterranean 11th-14th Centuries (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

Migrant merchants constantly encountered problems of how to gather up-to-date information in the face of delays inherent to travel and migration, or of how to know the trustworthiness and reliability of information — or even simply who to trust to act in the merchant’s interest when they were half a continent away and with no way to know, let alone enforce, loyalty. We can see these concerns in merchants’ fears about the loyalty and reliability of their agents hired to act on behalf of sedentary trading partners, and in the rise of different legal contracts intended to enforce safeties to protect against an agent’s betrayal. 579

Resolving these problems — or, at least, attempts to resolve these problems — transformed how merchants engaged with information as the foundation of their long-distance networks. Knowledge and communication were the lifeblood that sustained and forged connections — connections which Sanudo saw as critical for the construction of a truly universal Christendom. And so we see in his letters the ways he brought his merchants’ mentality about communications and connections into his letter writing: how he positioned himself as an authority derived from his access to exclusive and prestigious expertise in distant and exotic places and sought to show his control over information through the trustworthiness of his messengers. He commodified information and then tried to broker a deal, trading information for contacts and connections — not unlike how he saw trade of physical merchandise bringing together disparate parts of Christendom. Here he traded knowledge to bring himself and his messengers closer to his correspondents, raise himself in


579 Frederic Lane, Andrea Barbarigo: Merchant of Venice 1418-1449 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1944), 93-99; Frederic Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), 138-140.
their esteem and persuade them to his cause. In doing so, he adopted techniques to compensate for the flaws of long-distance networks: he used messengers as his proxies to integrate orality and face-to-face contact into his letters, and he drew on the travels of his messengers to gain more news that they could share with others. Ultimately, he attempted to create a self-reinforcing system where communication of knowledge produced even more knowledge than before — which Sanudo expected would bring people closer together as they traded their information amongst one another, all in service of the stronger, universal Christendom that Sanudo sought. In this sense, his crusade propaganda was, in fact, a crusade itself. 580

580 This, in turn, parallels Helm’s argument that travel was an inherently “Christian” act. For Sanudo, communication (and the trade that facilitated it) was an act in service of Christendom.
CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUSIONS

Venetian merchants were far from the only migrant peoples of the late medieval world, an era that saw increasing movement both on the Mediterranean and beyond it. But by looking at them, by exploring their mentalities about issues both ephemeral and immortal – time, space, community, identity, trust and authority – we can identify the lingering impact of migration on the mentalities of at least one group, even after they had returned to their native cities, neighborhoods and homes, had reconnected with family and friends, yet found their thoughts transformed by their time away.

On its most basic level, travel and migration changed how merchants saw the world in terms of space and geography: which regions they connected to each other and which they saw as most important, which places they remembered and which they forgot or ignored, based upon where they lived abroad. They adopted distinct mental maps that they then communicated to others within their networks and communities through their merchant manuals that guided others through trade with different parts of their world. Their migrations, in turn, influenced these imaginary geographies: they focused on “big cities” and entrepots, creating an image of a relatively urbanized Mediterranean of economic powerhouses – merchants were fundamentally urban. Their manuals reveal how often they had one foot in Venice and the other in another world independent of Venice itself, as with
the author of the *Zibaldone da Canal*, gazing toward the Barbary Coast and Sicily as one circle of trade, the author of the *Tarifa zòè Noticia* focusing on the Great Entrepots of the Eastern Mediterranean, and Marc. It., XI, 87’s Acre and Alexandria as two twins of Mediterranean trade. Peninsular Italy (although especially Northern Italy) emerges from their works only because they saw it from a distance and then treated it as homogenous despite their home’s physical proximity to the region. This perspective hints at a conception of “Italian Identity,” though not one they precisely identified with so much as they applied to others. Sicily was a parallel connector to Venice, one of the cities that often appears as a secondary city through which other trade filtered into Italy and thence to Europe. Sicily especially helped to connect to North Africa. Each had a distinct perspective on the different spheres of the Mediterranean determined by their migrations.

For all of them, however, Venice functioned as a hinge and connector, linking East to West and North to South. But different merchants varied in how intensely they centered their worlds on Venice – whether they were interested in nothing but Venice, or instead depicted other, independent links of trade to which Venice then connected. Merchants were nostalgic or hopeful about Acre’s potential return to the “economic fold” so to speak, holding onto outdated information, reflecting a vision of the world not completely rooted in current economic reality or necessity, but rather economic *potential* -- simultaneously hopeful and conservative. Ultimately, however, the influence of trade and migration led them to root their mentalities in the connections between regions forged by trade, even where their specific views varied in nuances due to individual migrant experiences. In turn, they brought those mental maps to other merchants, even those who had not lived abroad, or not traveled to the same locations, to create a common sense of the world and their place in it as a foundation of their community.
Sanudo, though writing to non-merchants, likewise built a cohesive and coherent worldview in his letters shaped by his merchant identity and the centrality of connections forged by trade, demonstrating how at least one merchant shared his mentalities with the wider Christian community and integrated them into the larger cultural milieu. Like authors of manuals (as well as other many crusade propagandists), Sanudo focused on connections and the isolation and fragmentation brought by the loss of the Crusade States and Jerusalem. Among those divisions numbered Italy, a mess of internal conflicts, a demonstration of the problems that strife could produce among people who theoretically should have had mutual interests. Like his manual author compatriots, he had a nascent view of a “Peninsular Italy,” brought by his perspective as a merchant that looked at Italy from the outside-in. He also anxiously worried about the liminal “grey” members of Christendom, those who undermined Christian unity by exhibiting behaviors or taking actions that removed them from complete Christendom, but who could still potentially be brought back in. These included “bad” Christians, who conducted trade with Muslims, reflecting the way he saw trade enable connections outside of Christendom that then weakened their ties to Christendom. It also included the Greeks, who symbolized the ultimate division and separation, and the Catalans, who represented a mixture of Christian beliefs and Muslim actions. Sanudo’s participation in a scattered merchants’ community had him particularly invested in the cohesion and unity of Christendom, on the boundaries of the Christian community, and the role that trade could play in both strengthening and weakening it.

As a former migrant and member of long-distance communities, both merchant and political, Sanudo focused not only on the present divisions in Christendom, but also on the ties people could develop over long distances and across regions; and as part of a merchant community, he focused on how trade and communication could serve as key tools to sustain
and enhance long-distance/non-geographically bound networks, equating the trade of goods with the exchange of information. In his vision, he saw Venice as not only a hinge that tied together East and West but a prism that concentrated light (people) before casting a rainbow (information) out to the broader community. Venice concentrated people and facilitated communication, demonstrating the different relationships merchants developed with information and authority. In all this connection, Sanudo held that trade was a key to connecting different regions’ self-interests to one another – profit in one place meant profit for somewhere else, acting as the core connector in a divided Christendom. Sanudo centered many of his concerns on the way that internal and external conflict hindered trade, but where it flourished, connected regions flourished too. He was, in the vein of Christian Bec’s Florentine merchants, deeply pragmatic at heart, willing to play to his correspondent’s more selfish interests if it convinced them to cooperate with his grander ambitions of Christian unity.  

And in highlighting trade’s ability to unite disparate and divided parts of Christendom, he demonstrated how it could help heal the fractions brought by the fall of Jerusalem and the Crusade States. His merchant’s mentality not only resolved the conflict that at times roused tensions between Christian and merchant identities but transformed trade into an act of Christian service (as long as, of course, it was limited to the right people).

Travel and migration gave merchants distinct mindsets about not only the physical space of the Mediterranean and the people that occupied it, but about time itself: the past, the present, and the future. Sanudo understood that the present, not the past, was where the future lived: the present was where trade was made, where new relationships were established, and where the future was created. As Sanudo wrote, “trade is the key to connecting different regions’ self-interests to one another – profit in one place meant profit for somewhere else, acting as the core connector in a divided Christendom.”

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present and future, and how they all intertwined in long-distance travel, migration and communication. Merchant manuals reveal how their authors often used the past histories of their cities to contextualize and articulate their identity as tied to their native city even when they were physically removed from that city itself. Where they reflected upon civic values, they could in turn embody those values during their long absences. They articulated their identities as Venetians by describing the roles of Venice in the world, as with the author of the Zibaldone da Canal, who focused upon the international character of Venice: it was a fundamentally Mediterranean, Imperial and Christian city. Other times they framed their values with their political identities and the unique position of Venetian merchants as noble patricians: Marc. It., XI, 32’s author reflects on Venice’s role as a stable republic in the face of the threat of political unrest and even tyranny, demonstrating his own expectations of being involved in the political world of Venice and his allegiance to its values of republicanism. Reflecting on the past, rooting themselves in it, grounded merchants who had been unmoored from the terra firma of their homelands. Both relied upon their city’s past to reflect on and strengthen their Venetian identities in the wake of their migration away from their native home.

At the same time, merchants turned to the future in their manuals as safeguard against ever-present risks, further still enmeshing them in a complex relationship between time and distance: they engaged in predictive sciences such as astrology, astronomy, and physiognomy, and dabbled in dice games to help counterbalance the unpredictability of the ever-changing whims of trade and the wild winds of the Mediterranean that controlled their lives. The stars guided merchants not only in their practical navigations, an age-old pairing born from the earliest days of sailing, but now in their daily lives, too, astrology advised them on common merchants’ worries: when to travel by land or sea, to send letters, or to make
new companionships and companies. Living in a community lagged by time, where letters could only reveal the past from the moment in time when they were sent to a future recipient, merchants looked to the future to foresee the present. In their manuals, with their nostalgia for lost times and the lost city of Acre, they preserved the past in the hopes that it might return to the present. They then saved those manuals for posterity, freezing the image of their economic and imaginary worlds in writing for future readers, and saved those manuals for ongoing use, reference, and expression of wealth and learning. Merchants were not quite a “forward-looking” people, as we so often like to picture them; instead, they lived in a reality where past, present and future constantly coexisted with one another, thanks to the ever-present problems of distance.

Of course, time was not the only problem that lurked in the shadows of long-distance communities in medieval Europe; merchants grappled, perennially, with questions of trust and authority made uncertain and risky with the diminished role of direct, oral communication. Due to long-distance trade and migration, merchants needed to be highly literate to sustain their contacts with others, and they needed to circulate information as much as possible. As a result, they developed a unique relationship with authority and trust derived from access to privileged information. We see this relationship manifest in Sanudo’s constant concerns over the distribution and control of knowledge. He paid explicit attention to his messengers, who served as enforcers of social boundaries and distributors of news and drew on their reputations and alleged trustworthiness in order to establish his own privileged access to information and cast himself as an authority. Sanudo treated knowledge itself as a social currency and made himself into a banker: he borrowed it from some messengers and lent it to others, but always controlled it. He not only served as a font himself but also positioned himself as a forger of connections between others through it. He likewise used
messengers to hybridize oral and written communication: while merchants were highly literate as a product of the need to communicate, literacy did not completely supplant orality in their interactions. Instead, Sanudo utilized messengers as an in-person, immediate form of contact built into a system of written communication with intrinsic delays. He also emphasized how messengers gained information through their journeys: their information was far fresher than anything that Sanudo could pass on. This advantage meant travel provided a means of gathering news and became a source of authority itself. Long-distance communities needed communication, which needed travel, which in turn provided more information that needed to be communicated, which in turn needed more travel, and on and on. Thanks to merchant’s migrant mentalities about trust and authority, long-distance networks based on information could essentially become self-reinforcing and self-strengthening.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I promised to paint a portrait of a late medieval Venetian merchant, to capture his likeness as a man changed by his time abroad, his life as a long-term migrant in lands distant from friends and family. A portrait captures its subject as they existed in a single moment, independent from the changes of age. Here, I have explored Venetian merchants in the wake of their transition to resident and sedentary trade, to isolate the impact of travel and migration on its people. Braudel emphasized the “grand movement” of the Mediterranean that brought change to the Venetian merchants who sought to make the Sea into their livelihoods in the wake of the Commercial Revolution beginning in the thirteenth century. I, in turn, have sought to freeze that Sea’s waves in time, to capture

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how merchants at this moment developed unique mentalities about space, geography, time and sense of identity and community that they then brought to their other communities and medieval Europe. I chose to do so on the grounds that it allowed me to dedicate more attention to drawing out the nuances and specifics of the impact of migration and distance on this unique community. This approach is not perfect: by focusing on merchants after the advent of sedentary trade, I have given less attention to the question of their mentalities that predated that shift to migration, leaving room for us to further question how exclusively short-term travel might still have impacted merchants and created unique mentalities even prior to the thirteenth century. There is, then, still room to explore further how the minds of medieval merchants were impacted by their lives on the Sea and off it, to highlight the question of change over time rather than isolate a single “moment” in transformation.

And, too, I titled this dissertation “Migrant Mentalities,” and used my Venetian merchants as a prototype for understanding the impacts of migration on just one particular community, looking at how it influenced their perceptions of their identities, communities and the world; but they are but one of many such communities who migrated in the medieval world, before and after it. We must now still grapple with asking similar questions of other migrants and their mentalities, to ask whether we can find common threads of the impacts of distance, travel, and migration or whether these Venetian merchants were a unique and isolated case. Migrants’ mental worlds flowed constantly with their journeys over time and space; with no shortage of migrants both on the Mediterranean and beyond its shores, they provide endless new territory for historians to explore.
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