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“*Si concordēs fuissent*”:

*The Italian Merchant Communities during the Siege of Acre (1291)*

ABSTRACT: This article reexamines the roles of the Italian merchant communities – the Venetians, Genoese, and Pisans – during the siege of the Crusader city of Acre in 1291. Primarily through the use of contemporary histories based on eyewitness accounts, it investigates characterizations of the Italian communities, the actions of these individuals during the siege, and what these accounts reveal about the identities of the Italian merchants. The author argues that medieval writers mischaracterize the Italian merchant communities in the context of the siege of Acre by not accounting for how their professional, civic, and religious identities affected their actions.

KEYWORDS: medieval history; Crusader states; kingdom of Jerusalem; Acre; Italian merchant communities; Venetians; Genoese; Pisans; identity; agency

*Introduction*

Writing about the fall of the Crusader city of Acre, the anonymous author of the *Excidium Aconis* blames the city’s leaders for the loss: “if they had been of the same mind [*si concordēs fuissent*],” he argues, “the city might have held out and breathed in full health.”<sup>1</sup> Acre – the final capital and last major territorial possession of the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem – had fallen to the forces of the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalil in May 1291, and by the summer of that same year, the nearly 200-year-long Frankish presence in Palestine had ended.<sup>2</sup> Acre had served as an important port city since its initial conquest by the Crusaders in 1104, and it had developed into the kingdom’s political and religious center after 1191 (i.e., after the original capital, Jerusalem, had been lost to Saladin in 1187).<sup>3</sup> During this time, the kingdom mostly comprised the coastal strip of the Levant (i.e., the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea) from Ascalon in the south to Beirut in the north.<sup>4</sup>

Communities of Italian merchants from the cities of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa had established themselves throughout the Crusader states, particularly in port cities like Acre and Tyre.<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the thirteenth century, each of the

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<sup>1</sup> “*Excidium Aconis*,” in *Excidii Aconis Gestorum Collectio*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 62: [*Si concordēs fuissent...civitas subsisteret et plena valitudine respiraret.*

<sup>2</sup> Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, trans. John Gillingham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 285–286.

<sup>3</sup> David Jacoby, “Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre,” *Crusades* 4 (2005): 75; Roger Crowley, *Accursed Tower: The Crusaders’ Last Battle for the Holy Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 10–11.

<sup>4</sup> Crowley, *Accursed Tower*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> David Jacoby, “Les communes italiennes et les ordres militaires à Acre: Aspects juridiques, territoriaux et militaires (1104–1187, 1191–1291),” in *Etat et colonisation au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, ed. Michel Balard (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1989), 193–198; Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 226–227; Jacoby, “Aspects of Life in

Italian communities in Acre controlled their own quarter, as did each of the military orders, namely, the Templars, the Hospitallers, and the Teutonic Knights.<sup>6</sup> The Venetians even had jurisdiction over those living in their quarter in Acre, giving their community a quasi "extraterritorial status."<sup>7</sup> Citizens of all three merchant republics (Venice, Genoa, and Pisa) were present in Acre until its conquest by the Mamluks in 1291 and played various roles during its siege and fall.

Evidence for the actions of the Italian merchant communities during the siege of Acre comes from two major contemporary accounts of the event, namely, the anonymous *Excidium Aconis* and the *Ystoria de desolatione et conculcatione civitatis Acconensis et tocius Terre Sancte*, written in Messina in 1291 by Thadeus, a citizen of Naples.<sup>8</sup> Bartholomaeus of Neocastro's *Historia Sicula*, also written in Messina around 1291, contains another valuable contemporary account of the siege and the Italian communities' role therein.<sup>9</sup> A final contemporary history with important details about the Italian communities is the chronicle of the so-called Templar of Tyre, written by an associate of the Templar order who had most likely been born on Cyprus and had lived in various cities of the Levant during the last decades of Frankish rule.<sup>10</sup> Each of these early contemporary sources was presumably based on eyewitness accounts, and the Templar of Tyre was probably present at the siege itself in 1291.<sup>11</sup>

While these accounts are especially valuable because of their temporal proximity to the events, slightly later authors offer additional details concerning the role of the Italian communities during the siege. Such later sources include the

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Frankish Acre," 79; Thomas S. Asbridge, *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land* (New York: Ecco, 2010), 547.

<sup>6</sup> Jacoby, "Communes italiennes," 194. The leaders of these factions were included in the group of leaders criticized by the author of the *Excidium Aconis*; see "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 62.

<sup>7</sup> David Jacoby, "The Venetian Privileges in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Interpretations and Implementation," in *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Jonathan Riley-Smith, and Rudolf Hiestand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 158–159, 171; David Jacoby, "Migration, Trade, and Banking in Crusader Acre," in *The Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean, 12th–17th Centuries*, ed. Lenos Mavromatis (Athens: Ethniko Hidryma Ereunōn, Institutouto Vyzantinōn Ereunōn, 1998), 110–111.

<sup>8</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens; Magister Thadeus, civis Neapolitanus, "Ystoria de desolatione et conculcatione civitatis Acconensis et tocius Terre Sancte," in *Excidii Aconis Gestorum Collectio*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 97–164.

<sup>9</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula [aa. 1250–1293]," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores: Raccolta degli Storici Italiani dal Cinquecento al Millecinquecento*, ed. L. A. Muratori, Giosuè Carducci, and Vittorio Fiorini, ed. Giuseppe Paladino (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, n.d.), 8:1–141.

<sup>10</sup> *The 'Templar of Tyre': Part III of the 'Deeds of the Cypriots'*, trans. Paul Crawford (New York: Routledge, 2016); Paul Crawford, introduction to *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 2–4.

<sup>11</sup> R. B. C. Huygens, introduction to *Excidii Aconis Gestorum Collectio*, ed. Huygens, 9; Crawford, introduction to *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 4; Iris Shagrir, "Thadeus of Naples on the Fall of Acre," in *Acre and Its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 148–149, 151.

Venetian statesman Marino Sanudo Torsello (c. 1270–1343) and Ludolph of Suchem, a German traveler to the Levant who wrote around the year 1350.<sup>12</sup> Two chroniclers of Genoese affairs, namely, the thirteenth-century annalist Iacobus Auria and the late medieval writer Christophorus Cyprius, also include important accounts of the role of the Genoese in their respective texts.<sup>13</sup>

I argue that medieval writers mischaracterize the Italian merchant communities in the context of the siege of Acre by not accounting for how their professional, civic, and religious identities affected their actions. Firstly, I look at how the Italians' contemporaries characterize them. Next, I analyze specific actions that members of the Italian communities undertook in the context of the siege and show how the evidence for these actions is affected by biased characterizations. Finally, I investigate how the Italians' own various identities informed their actions. Viewing their actions in this way – through the lens of self-perception – refutes some of the charges the Italian merchants' contemporaries level against them.

### *I. Historiography*

Early scholarly works on the Italian communities in Acre from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s generally concentrate on their economic history and mercantile role.<sup>14</sup> Published in 1910, the monograph *Venice in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* by the British historian Francis Hodgson addresses the actions of Italian merchants in thirteenth-century Outremer. A reader gets the occasional glimpse of the identities and motivations of members of the Italian communities, such as when Hodgson indicates that the majority of Venetians were probably not harmed substantially by the loss of Acre. Otherwise, Hodgson's account of the Italian city-states focuses on their political actions and interactions with other groups in the Levant.<sup>15</sup> British scholar Steven Runciman continues this

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<sup>12</sup> Marino Sanudo Torsello, *The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross: Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, trans. Peter Lock (New York: Routledge, 2003); Ludolph von Suchem's *Description of the Holy Land, and of the Way Thither: Written in the Year A.D. 1350*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Iacobus Auria, "Annales Ianuenses," in *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MCCLXXX al MCCLXXXIII*, ed. Cesare Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1929), 5:3–176; Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae rerum gestarum Genuensium" [excerpt], in *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Francescano*, ed. P. Girolamo Golubovich (Quaracchi: Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1913), 2:200–208.

<sup>14</sup> F. C. Hodgson, *Venice in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: A Sketch of Venetian History from the Conquest of Constantinople to the Accession of Michele Steno, A.D. 1204–1400* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910); Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3, *The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); Steven Runciman, "The Crusader States, 1243–1291," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton, vol. 2, *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311*, ed. Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 557–598.

<sup>15</sup> Hodgson, *Venice*, 199, 249–250.

focus on the Italian communities' economic role in the Levant in his three-volume *History of the Crusades*, originally published in 1951, as well as his chapter on the late Crusader states, published in 1969.<sup>16</sup> Runciman is more forthright than Hodgson in presenting his own opinions of the Italian merchants' actions, writing that the Mamluks were "justified" in besieging Acre after Italian Crusaders brought over by Venice in 1290 had broken the kingdom's truce with the Mamluk sultan, opining that the merchant communities "showed a selfish anxiety about their own property."<sup>17</sup> In addition to the merchant communities' economic role, Runciman discusses material conditions in Western Europe in his 1969 chapter, connecting them to a decline in people taking the Crusading vow.<sup>18</sup> This represents another early hint at the mentalities and motivations of members of these communities, although here Runciman is discussing Western Europe in general rather than Italy exclusively.

Works published in the 1970s and early 1980s by American historian Frederic Lane and Israeli scholar Eliyahu Ashtor continue the trend of analyzing the Italian merchants in the Levant primarily within economic-history parameters.<sup>19</sup> However, in 1972, another Israeli historian of the Crusades, Joshua Prawer, published *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages*, which investigates the Crusading movement as a whole, including the Italian communities in the kingdom of Jerusalem, from a colonial-theory perspective.<sup>20</sup> Prawer views the Crusades as the beginning of European colonialism.<sup>21</sup> He is also among the first scholars to address the issue of identity among the Italian groups, in addition to writing about their role in the establishment of the Crusader states and their economy. For example, he notes the geographical separation of the different communities in Acre and hypothesizes about their religious and professional identities.<sup>22</sup>

The Israeli historian Sylvia Schein's 1986 essay on the Italian communities is the first analysis devoted to the interplay between the characterization of the Italian communities in the Crusader states by contemporary Western writers and the Italians' own identities and agency as merchants.<sup>23</sup> In works published in the

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<sup>16</sup> Runciman, *History of the Crusades*; Runciman, "Crusader States."

<sup>17</sup> Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 410, 415.

<sup>18</sup> Runciman, "Crusader States."

<sup>19</sup> Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Eliyahu Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014; originally published 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972).

<sup>21</sup> Prawer, *Latin Kingdom*, ix.

<sup>22</sup> Prawer, *Latin Kingdom*, 412, 484.

<sup>23</sup> Sylvia Schein, "From 'Milites Christi' to 'Mali Christiani': The Italian Communes in Western Historical Literature," in *I Comuni Italiani nel Regno Crociato di Gerusalemme: Atti del Colloquio "The*

late 1980s and early 1990s, Schein, her Israeli colleague David Jacoby, and the German medievalist Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie continue to analyze the identities, mentalities, and actions of members of the Italian communities within a social-history framework.<sup>24</sup> Jacoby and Favreau-Lilie, in particular, are among the first scholars to focus intensely on the social lives and environment of the Italian merchants in the Crusader states. During this same period, however, monographs by British historian Norman Housley and American historian Steven Epstein continue earlier theoretical approaches by looking into the Italian merchants' political, military, and economic actions.<sup>25</sup>

As signaled by the 1996 publication of a comprehensive essay collection on the fall of Acre, edited by the Italian medievalist Francesco Tommasi, scholars were now conducting in-depth investigations into the Italian merchants' mentalities and motivations. For example, the Swiss historian Rudolf Hiestand emphasizes a line of thought explored by Schein in her monograph *Fideles Crucis* regarding the fact that the fall of Acre was not viewed as inevitable or final by contemporaries.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, an essay by the Italian historian Paolo Pirillo explores the apparent contradiction between the Italians' actions at Acre and their attitudes toward the Crusading project as reflected in Florentine wills from the late thirteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Further articles by Jacoby and a monograph by the American medievalist Olivia Remie Constable published in the late 1990s and early 2000s continue to examine the Italian communities in Acre and the Levant within a social-history framework, while articles from the same period by the American historian John Dotson are reminiscent of scholarship from earlier decades in their focus on military history.<sup>28</sup>

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*Italian Communes in the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem*" (Jerusalem, May 24–May 28, 1984), ed. Gabriella Airaldi and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Genoa: Università di Genova, Istituto di Medievistica, 1986), 681–689.

<sup>24</sup> Jacoby, "Communes italiennes;" Sylvia Schein, *Fideles Crucis: The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the Holy Land, 1274–1314* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, "The Military Orders and the Escape of the Christian Population from the Holy Land in 1291," *Journal of Medieval History* 19, no. 3 (1993): 201–227; David Jacoby, "Three Notes on Crusader Acre," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 109, no. 1 (1993): 83–96.

<sup>25</sup> Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580: From Lyons to Alcazar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Steven Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Schein, *Fideles Crucis*, 1, 73; Rudolf Hiestand, "Castrum Peregrinorum e la fine del dominio crociato in Siria," in *Acri 1291: La fine della presenza degli ordini militari in Terra Santa e i nuovi orientamenti nel XIV secolo*, ed. Francesco Tommasi (Perugia: Quattroemme, 1996), 23–42.

<sup>27</sup> Paolo Pirillo, "Terra Santa e ordini militari attraverso i testamenti fiorentini prima e dopo la caduta di San Giovanni d'Acri," in *Acri 1291: La fine della presenza degli ordini militari in Terra Santa e i nuovi orientamenti nel XIV secolo*, ed. Francesco Tommasi, (Perugia: Quattroemme, 1996), 121–136.

<sup>28</sup> Jacoby, "Venetian Privileges;" Jacoby, "Migration, Trade and Banking;" David Jacoby, "The Trade of Crusader Acre in the Levantine Context: An Overview," *Archivio storico del Sannio*, n.s., no. 3 (1998): 103–120; John Dotson, "Fleet Operations in the First Genoese-Venetian War, 1264–1266," *Viator* 30 (1999): 165–180; John Dotson, "Venice, Genoa and Control of the Seas in the

As of the early decades of the twenty-first century, there are two discernible parallel trends in the scholarship on the Italian communities. One, based on pioneering works from the earlier twentieth century, addresses their role in the Levant in terms of political, military, and economic history. The other, which had first surfaced in the 1970s and gained traction over the subsequent decades, focuses on the communities' social history in an attempt to gain insight into their identities, mentalities, and motivations. Recent monographs on the Crusades by British historians Christopher Tyerman and Thomas Asbridge analyze the Italians' military and economic roles in the Levant.<sup>29</sup> A 2008 essay by Favreau-Lilie on the Venetians in the Holy Land combines the two aforementioned trends by focusing on the economic history of the Venetian communities while also investigating their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identities.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Dotson's 2008 essay on the first Genoese-Venetian war combines his previous military history approach with an examination of how Genoese and Venetian attitudes affected the conflict.<sup>31</sup> American historian Thomas Madden mentions the Venetian communities in Outremer in his 2012 monograph on Venice. Like Schein, Madden hypothesizes about the effect that the loss of Acre may have had on the Venetians but comes to the opposite conclusion, calling it "devastating, not just spiritually and emotionally, but economically as well."<sup>32</sup>

Madden's reflections about the Italian merchants' attitudes and mentalities exemplifies a clear trend in recent scholarship. A 2018 chapter by Favreau-Lilie investigates the Italian communities' self-perception on the basis of medieval annals.<sup>33</sup> In three PhD dissertations completed between 2019 and 2021, the Pisan, Venetian, and Genoese communities take center stage:<sup>34</sup> Eva Wolynes's work on

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Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. John B. Hattendorf and Richard W. Unger (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2003), 119–135; Constable, *Housing the Stranger*; Jacoby, "Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre."

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); Asbridge, *Crusades*.

<sup>30</sup> Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, "Die Venezianer im Heiligen Land," in *Venezia, incrocio di culture: Percezioni di viaggiatori europei e non europei a confronto: Atti del convegno, Venezia, 26–27 gennaio 2006*, ed. Klaus Herbers and Felicitas Schmieder (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008), 47–70.

<sup>31</sup> John Dotson, "Naval Strategy in the First Genoese-Venetian War, 1257–1270," in *Medieval Ships and Warfare*, ed. Susan Rose (New York: Routledge, 2016; originally published 2008), 403–409.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History* (New York: Viking, 2012), 180.

<sup>33</sup> Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, "The Fall of Acre (1291): Considerations of Annalists in Genoa, Pisa, and Venice (13th/14th–16th Centuries)," in *Acre and Its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 166–182.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew E. Parker, "Sinking Pisa: The Decline of a Commercial Empire in the Thirteenth Century" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2019); Eva C. Wolynes, "Migrant Mentalities: Reconstructing the Community, Identity and World of Venetian Merchants in the Late Medieval Mediterranean" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2020); Padraic Rohan, "Transforming Empire: The Genoese from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1282–1492" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2021).

Venetian merchants focuses primarily on mentalities, whereas Matthew Parker's and Padraic Rohan's works incorporate analysis of identities and mentalities into discussions of military and economic agency. Scholarship on the Italian communities has investigated the link between their identities and their roles in the Crusader states. In this article, I focus narrowly on the question of how identity affected these communities' actions during the 1291 siege and fall of Acre.

## II. Characterization

The majority of the contemporary sources – the *Excidium Aconis*, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro's *Historia Sicula*, the Templar of Tyre, and Marino Sanudo's *Liber Secretorum* – portray the Italian communities as inherently factious and discordant. Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, alongside Thadeus of Naples, characterizes the Italian merchants as worldly and greedy. Christophorus Cyprius and the author of the *Excidium Aconis* are ambivalent, viewing at least some of the Italians' actions as Christian. Most of these characterizations tell us more about their respective authors' biases than the actual nature of these communities (which, after all, consisted of diverse individuals).

The author of the *Excidium Aconis*, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, the Templar of Tyre, Ludolph of Suchem, and Marino Sanudo all dwell on the Italian merchants' antagonistic nature before and during the siege of Acre. The latter three authors describe in detail the conflicts between the Venetians and Pisans on the one side, and the Genoese on the other, leading up to the siege.<sup>35</sup> Ludolph of Suchem's criticism is the strongest, going so far as to accuse the Pisans and Genoese of making peace with the Mamluks to "better fight against one another within the city."<sup>36</sup> It resembles Thadeus's criticism of the Venetians' and Pisans' actions (to be discussed below) in trading war materials with the Mamluks, although Ludolph ties it directly to his characterization of the Italian communities as inherently quarrelsome. Marino Sanudo and the Templar of Tyre provide more succinct descriptions of the military conflicts between the three communities: these authors' banal descriptions of the infighting between members of these city-states demonstrate that they viewed a factious nature as characteristic of the Italians.

Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, Ludolph of Suchem, and the author of the *Excidium Aconis* focus on the Italians' propensity for conflict even as the Mamluks began to besiege the city.<sup>37</sup> In his *Historia Sicula*, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro writes that the Venetians and Pisans did not heed the commands of the three military orders.<sup>38</sup> The author of the *Excidium Aconis* is even more direct in his characterization of the Italians (and other factions in the city), writing that they

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<sup>35</sup> Ludolph of Suchem, trans. Stewart, 54; Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Book of Secrets*, 353; *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Ludolph of Suchem, trans. Stewart, 54.

<sup>37</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132; Ludolph of Suchem, trans. Stewart, 57–58; "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 71–72.

<sup>38</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132.

refused to work together for the city's defense due of their "contempt" (*contemptum*) for one another.<sup>39</sup> Ludolph of Suchem corroborates this characterization, writing that "one party would not defend the castle or palace belonging to the other."<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, in his chapter on the later Crusader states, Runciman concurs that the military orders were just as divided as the Italian communities.<sup>41</sup> In an article about the military orders during the siege of Acre, the American historian Paul Crawford argues that blame shifted from the military orders to the Italian communities over time.<sup>42</sup> Writing about the conflicts between Venice and Genoa in the decades leading up to the fall of Acre, Dotson and Epstein note that, in 1291, Venice and Pisa were allied against Genoa for reasons not wholly related to their trading presence in the Crusader kingdom, while the Canadian historian Anne Gilmour-Bryson and Housley agree that disunity among the Italian communities strengthened the Mamluk position but that other (external) forces also contributed to the fall of Acre.<sup>43</sup> Among the major characteristics ascribed to the Italian communities, the claim of excessive division is the one most strongly supported by concrete examples. When comparing them to other groups in the city, Ludolph of Suchem and Bartholomaeus of Neocastro disproportionately place blame on the Italians.

Thadeus of Naples, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, and Christophorus Cyprius all allude to the Italians' lack of Christian piety and characterize them as worldly and greedy. Describing the Italian Crusaders brought over by Venice in 1290, Christophorus Cyprius is ambivalent, acknowledging that they might have been motivated by faith, but alternatively suggesting that they might have been "impelled by a diabolical spirit."<sup>44</sup> In the contemporary sources, Thadeus's criticism of the Italian communities is the strongest, calling them "Christians in name only" and comparing their piety negatively with that of the Muslims.<sup>45</sup> Bartholomaeus of Neocastro also characterizes the Italians as lacking in Christian piety, alluding to classical mythology to relate their behavior during the siege.<sup>46</sup> For example, he describes them as "calling out to Bacchus," saying that, "Mars

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<sup>39</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 72.

<sup>40</sup> Ludolph of Suchem, trans. Stewart, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Runciman, "Crusader States," 593–598.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Crawford, "Did the Templars Lose the Holy Land? The Military Orders and the Defense of Acre, 1291," in *Acre and Its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 114.

<sup>43</sup> Dotson, "Naval Strategy," 405–407; Dotson, "Venice, Genoa and Control of the Seas," 146; Anne Gilmour-Bryson, "The Fall of Acre, 1291, and Its Effects on Cyprus," in *Acre and Its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 119–120; Housley, *Later Crusades*, 8–9.

<sup>44</sup> Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 205: *diabolico spiritu suasi*.

<sup>45</sup> Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 133: *solo nomine Christiani*.

<sup>46</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132.



having been disregarded, they did not release their heart and arms from the embraces of Venus."<sup>47</sup> Such allusions to pagan deities represent a striking contrast to what Bartholomaeus believes should have been the Italians' priority, namely, fighting for the "victory of the Cross."<sup>48</sup>

In an article on trade in Crusader Acre, Jacoby notes that the Venetians continued to provide war materials to the Mamluks even after this had been prohibited (one of the primary actions of the Venetians and Pisans criticized by Thadeus of Naples).<sup>49</sup> Writing about the establishment of the Italian mercantile communities in the Holy Land, Praver notes that there was always an "ambiguous balance between religious aspirations and cupidity."<sup>50</sup> Their strong religious bias led most medieval authors to seek a religious explanation for the fall of Acre: thus, they accuse the Italian communities of a lack of Christian piety without considering the complexities of faith and other forms of identity.

However, a few accounts actually praise the Italian merchants' Christian virtues. Christophorus Cyprius and the author of the *Excidium Aconis* characterize at least some of the Italians' actions as Christian. In his chronicle recounting the deeds of the Genoese, Christophorus Cyprius states that the Genoese sailors rescued refugees from Acre out of "the zeal of the faithful and charity."<sup>51</sup> Similarly, he relates that the actions of the Italian Crusaders might have been "animated by zeal of faith, without discernment or reason."<sup>52</sup> The author of the *Excidium Aconis* quotes the patriarch as praising the sailors for rescuing the city's merchandise and women from the Mamluk soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Jacoby notes that "religious affiliation was the basic criterion" of identity in the Crusader states, and the members of the Italian communities would have identified as Latin Christians (at least nominally, as in Thadeus's characterization).<sup>54</sup> Christophorus Cyprius's characterization of the Genoese sailors as faithful and charitable is clearly influenced by his bias toward the Genoese, as he is writing a chronicle of their deeds. The other evidence is very ambivalent, and Christian faith either appears secondary to other characterizations or is viewed as lacking (as in the case of the Italian Crusaders who had broken the truce).

The characterization of the Italian communities in the context of the siege of Acre differs between contemporary histories, but is largely negative. Authors like Thadeus of Naples, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, Marino Sanudo, and Ludolph of

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<sup>47</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132: *Baccho vacabant...Marte postposito, ab amplexibus Veneris pectus et brachia non solvebant.*

<sup>48</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132: *victoria crucis.*

<sup>49</sup> Jacoby, "Trade of Crusader Acre," 116.

<sup>50</sup> Praver, *Latin Kingdom*, 484.

<sup>51</sup> Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 207: *fideliū zelo et caritate.*

<sup>52</sup> Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 205: *zelo fidei sine discretione ac ratione animati.*

<sup>53</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 77.

<sup>54</sup> Jacoby, "Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre," 86.

Suchem are writing from a religious perspective and thus characterize the Italians as insufficiently Christian. Other chroniclers, like Christophorus Cyprius, view at least certain Italians, in his case the Genoese, as pious Christians because his chronicle is intended to celebrate the deeds of the Genoese. In most cases, these characterizations are sweeping generalizations of communities composed of many individuals with different senses of identity and varying motivations. Nevertheless, they affect how the Italian communities' agency is portrayed.

### III. Agency

One year before the siege of Acre, a force of Italian Crusaders, who had arrived on Venetian ships to defend the city, massacred a group of Muslims. This action provided the Mamluk sultan with the pretext for besieging the city. Two contemporary historians, the Templar of Tyre and the author of the *Excidium Aconis*, along with the later chronicler Christophorus Cyprius, recount this episode with slightly different details. Thadeus of Naples, Bartholomaeus of Neocastro, and the author of the *Excidium Aconis* are either highly critical of the Italians' actions after the beginning of the siege, or ambivalent, while the Templar of Tyre commends the Pisan community in particular for their defense of a portion of the city walls. Unsurprisingly, the Genoese chroniclers praise the actions of the Genoese during the siege and its aftermath. The narratives of all these discrete actions are again shaped by the authors' biases and the characteristics they attribute to the Italian communities.

Three chroniclers – the author of the *Excidium Aconis*, the Templar of Tyre, and Christophorus Cyprius – all place the blame for the siege of Acre on the Italian Crusaders brought over by the Venetians in 1290.<sup>55</sup> In the *Excidium Aconis*, the Italian Crusaders are presented as aggressors, exiting the city and killing Muslim peasants in their homes.<sup>56</sup> By contrast, the Templar of Tyre and Christophorus Cyprius recount that these Muslims were merchants who had come into the city to trade.<sup>57</sup> Housley blames the recruitment of the Italian Crusaders on Pope Nicholas IV's preaching, calling it a "grave error."<sup>58</sup> Jacoby notes that a large volume of pilgrims continued to travel through Acre up until its fall in 1291. He and Lane agree that the Venetians were very involved in transporting pilgrims to the East, including Acre, throughout the Crusader period.<sup>59</sup> While the primary

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<sup>55</sup> Thadeus of Naples refers to Crusaders, whom he describes as virtuous, but claims that they hailed from all over the world; he does not describe them as Italians or connect them to Venice: Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 108. The *Templar of Tyre* confirms that they were Italians transported by the Venetian captain Jacopo Tiepolo to Acre: *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 101–102.

<sup>56</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 49–50.

<sup>57</sup> *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 102; Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 205.

<sup>58</sup> Housley, *Later Crusades*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Jacoby, "Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre," 73; David Jacoby, "Ports of Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Eleventh-Fourteenth Century: Jaffa, Acre, Alexandria," in *The Holy Portolano: The Sacred*

sources draw the obvious conclusion between the culpability of the Italian Crusaders and the ultimate siege and fall of the city, the Venetian merchants who transported them must have believed that they would be aiding the city, however misguided their attempt would ultimately prove to be. Even if it was motivated in part by financial reasons, the Venetians' transporting of Crusaders demonstrates their continued interest in the maintenance of Frankish rule in the Holy Land.

Thadeus of Naples and Bartholomaeus of Neocastro both claim that the Venetians and Pisans abandoned the city due to greed and laziness. In his characterization of the Italians as un-Christian, Thadeus describes them as possessing a "cowardly [*ignava*] fear of dying."<sup>60</sup> The Latin adjective *ignava* can be translated as "cowardly" in this context but also connotes laziness or idleness. In recounting their flight from the city while it was under attack, Thadeus shows, by contrast, that the Italians fled "hastily [*festinanter*]" toward the ships where they had secured all their valuable merchandise.<sup>61</sup> In Thadeus's view, it was un-Christian to fear dying, especially for a cause as worthy as the defense of the Holy Land. The fact that the Venetians and Pisans then demonstrated haste in fleeing with their material goods made their flight all the more contemptible. Bartholomaeus of Neocastro makes this connection even more explicitly, writing that "while we might believe that they would give [their] souls over for the victory of the Cross," because of their status as Christians in the Holy Land, in actuality they failed to heed the call to arms.<sup>62</sup>

The author of the *Excidium Aconis* is more ambivalent than Thadeus and Bartholomaeus. He notes that members of the Italian communities provided weapons for the defense, but also writes that they took up arms "cautiously [*pedetentim*]."<sup>63</sup> The Latin adverb *pedete[mp]tim* can be translated as "cautiously" in this context, but like the adjective *ignava* used by Thadeus it can also connote sloth. Similarly, the author of the *Excidium Aconis* implies that some abandoned the city after rescuing their merchandise, which also parallels Thadeus's account.<sup>64</sup> By contrast, the Templar of Tyre singles out the Pisan community for praise, recounting that they had "great engines," which aided in the city's defense.<sup>65</sup>

In his monograph on the Crusades, Tyerman notes that the Venetians and Pisans helped defend the city during the siege.<sup>66</sup> In contrast to Tyerman's

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*Geography of Navigation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Michele Bacci and Martin Rohde (Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2014), 55; Lane, *Venice*, 180.

<sup>60</sup> Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 124.

<sup>61</sup> Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 123.

<sup>62</sup> Bartholomeus de Neocastro, "Historia Sicula," 132: *dum crederemus pro victoria crucis animas tradere*.

<sup>63</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 72–73, 75.

<sup>64</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 68–69.

<sup>65</sup> *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 110.

<sup>66</sup> Tyerman, *God's War*, 820.

assertion, Favreau-Lilie argues, in an article on the military orders, that many of the Italian merchants would have planned their escape and left Acre before the siege began.<sup>67</sup> Thadeus of Naples, in particular, portrays the Italian merchants as a monolith—all shamefully abandoning the city because of a worldly desire for material wealth and a lack of Christian piety. This monolithic view of the Italians is echoed in the *Excidium Aconis*, where the communities are never singled out by name but only described as *communes* among the other factions in the city. However, the author of the *Excidium Aconis* at least acknowledges, perhaps unintentionally, that members of the Italian communities undertook a variety of actions during the siege. Some may have fled, but others remained and aided in the defense of the walls.

While Thadeus of Naples and the author of the *Excidium Aconis* characterize the Italian merchants as greedy for rescuing merchandise and relics, the Templar of Tyre and both Genoese chroniclers note that they also rescued those fleeing the city after its capture by the Mamluk army. All three of these latter texts recount the Venetians or Genoese rescuing people fleeing the city after its fall. While Iacobus Auria and Christophorus Cyprius only mention the actions of the Genoese, given the focus of their chronicles, the Templar of Tyre indicates that both Venetian and Genoese ships rescued refugees.<sup>68</sup> Christophorus Cyprius is more general in his praise of the Genoese, simply writing that "they entered the port of Acre courageously, and those whom they could gather up they carried down to the same ships."<sup>69</sup> The Templar of Tyre and Iacobus Auria more specifically single out a Genoese captain—Andrea Peleau—for praise. In his annals, Iacobus Auria indicates that the captain even overrode the complaints of the captains of other ships and forced them to take on refugees.<sup>70</sup> This further exemplifies the diverse reactions within the Italian community to identical events.

In his monograph on the siege of Acre, *The Accursed Tower*, British historian Roger Crowley relates how dangerous the rescue by Genoese galleys would have been, whereas Runciman notes that the Genoese were only coincidentally in the harbor the day the city fell, as their presence in the city had been reduced following their conflicts with Venice.<sup>71</sup> Favreau-Lilie highlights that the Genoese annalists were sure to include this anecdote because of how it portrayed their city in a positive light.<sup>72</sup> While the Genoese chroniclers' bias affects their presentation of the events, the fact that the same narrative occurs in the contemporary Templar of

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<sup>67</sup> Favreau-Lilie, "Military Orders," 212–214.

<sup>68</sup> Iacobus Auria, "Annales Ianuenses," 130; Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 207; *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 115–116.

<sup>69</sup> Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 207: *animose portum Aconis intraverunt, et quos recolligere potuerunt ad ipsas naves deportaverunt.*

<sup>70</sup> Iacobus Auria, "Annales Ianuenses," 130.

<sup>71</sup> Crowley, *Accursed Tower*, 183; Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 415.

<sup>72</sup> Favreau-Lilie, "Fall of Acre," 167–168.

Tyre's chronicles demonstrates its reliability, even if the courage and piety of the Genoese are slightly exaggerated in the Genoese chronicles.

When contemporary historians like Thadeus of Naples and Bartholomaeus of Neocastro recount the actions of members of the Italian communities during the siege, their accounts are colored by their characterization of the Italians as un-Christian, greedy, factious, or some combination thereof. Similarly, when the Genoese annalists relate the actions of the Genoese, they attempt to portray them in a positive light. What these authors fail to do is see the actions of the Italians outside of their own perspectives. Looking at how members of the Italian communities themselves identified helps explain some of their actions in the context of the siege.

#### IV. Identity

The Italian merchants' actions during the siege should be viewed in light of their identities as merchants, as citizens of their own cities in Italy as well as Acre, and as Christians. While the evidence for how identity affected their actions in the context of the siege comes from the same biased sources as the evidence for their agency, a close reading offers hints at how members of the Italian communities viewed themselves. More importantly, it demonstrates the motivations for some of their actions. These motivations offer an alternative explanation to the religious characterizations found in these contemporary accounts.

The strongest sense of identity that emerges in the *Excidium Aconis*, as well as in the histories of Thadeus of Naples and Christophorus Cyprius, is the Italians' sense of identity as merchants. This professional identity appears even stronger than specific ethnic or territorial identities. In his criticism of the Italian merchants' greed, Thadeus of Naples lists some of the things most important to them, namely their "goods, arms, naval equipment, and other necessary things."<sup>73</sup> Similarly, even when praising the Genoese sailors' actions, Christophorus Cyprius states that they were not "withdrawn from [their] love of trade."<sup>74</sup> The author of the *Excidium Aconis* makes reference to the leaders (*capitanei*) and the different communities (*communes*) but does not ever name them by territory or city of origin.<sup>75</sup> While Thadeus's bias against the Italian merchants' occupation is evident, the fact that Christophorus Cyprius finds it necessary to mention the Genoese sailors' "love of trade" – even when praising them for rescuing refugees – highlights its centrality in their self-identification. Likewise, the fact that the Italian communities are only ever *communes* in the *Excidium Aconis* hints at the lower importance of their individual cities of origin to their identities.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 133: *victualibus, armis, vasis navalibus et aliis necessariis*.

<sup>74</sup> Christophorus Cyprius, "Chronicae," 207: *nec amore mercium retracti*.

<sup>75</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 71–72, 75.

<sup>76</sup> While the author of the *Excidium Aconis* is generally vague when referencing the different factions within Acre, he does mention some of the military orders by name, as well as other Frankish military leaders.

In fact, in an article on identity in the medieval Mediterranean, American historian Kathryn Reyerson gives examples of Italian merchants who passed themselves off as citizens of other cities, noting that, in the medieval world, identity could easily be mistaken.<sup>77</sup> Writing about the military orders, Favreau-Lilie characterizes the Italians as "business-oriented" rather than oriented toward religion, while Jacoby notes that, in Crusader Acre, the merchant class was dominated by Italians, but French remained the common language.<sup>78</sup> Evidence for the strength of the Italian communities' identification with their occupations as merchants, as opposed to being citizens of specific cities or even Christians, comes through in even the most critical and praiseworthy accounts of their actions during the siege of Acre. The authors' religious bias means that their identity as merchants is framed in relation to religious piety, but glimpses of their own self-perception emerge nonetheless.

Despite the fact that the strongest evidence for identity concerns the Italians' occupations, the Templar of Tyre, Marino Sanudo, and Ludolph of Suchem also reveal how the Italian communities identified both with their cities of origin and as citizens of Acre, and how these identities were malleable. In their accounts of the years leading up to 1291, the Templar of Tyre and Marino Sanudo provide detailed descriptions of the Venetians, Pisans, and Genoese acting on behalf of their metropoleis in Italy, as well as their physical separation within the city of Acre. For example, Marino Sanudo relates how the Venetians and Pisans were reconciled in the years leading up to 1291 due to their common enemy, the Genoese.<sup>79</sup> Both he and the Templar of Tyre describe how, together, Venetians and Pisans destroyed the Genoese quarter in Acre.<sup>80</sup>

Ludolph of Suchem demonstrates how their individual possessions in Acre remained important to the Italian communities, even late into the siege, writing that "for the first time they would have willingly defended themselves, could they have come together."<sup>81</sup> In his dissertation on the rise of Genoese sea power, Rohan argues that the division of responsibility between the Italian communities did hinder the defense of the city.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, Jacoby notes that, despite the communities' spatial separation, there is evidence for their cooperation in daily life in thirteenth-century Acre.<sup>83</sup> As the evidence from the actions of the members of the Italian communities leading up to and during the siege makes clear, identification with their home cities in Italy was secondary to their identities as

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<sup>77</sup> Kathryn Reyerson, "Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean World of Merchants and Pirates," *Mediterranean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2012): 138–142.

<sup>78</sup> Favreau-Lilie, "Military Orders," 216–218; Jacoby, "Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre," 84.

<sup>79</sup> Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Book of Secrets*, 349.

<sup>80</sup> Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Book of Secrets*, 350; *Templar of Tyre*, trans. Crawford, 29.

<sup>81</sup> *Ludolph of Suchem*, trans. Stewart, 54–58.

<sup>82</sup> Rohan, "Transforming Empire," 65.

<sup>83</sup> Jacoby, "Aspects of Life in Frankish Acre," 82.

merchants. Nevertheless, it was still important, especially as these cities were so frequently in conflict with one another.

Members of the Italian communities identified as Christian as well, but they employed their Christian identity in ways that show that a religious identity remained subsidiary to a mercantile and even ethnic or territorial identity. Evidence for how the Italians did and did not identify with a Christian religious identity emerges from the two primary accounts of the siege of Acre, Thadeus's *Ystoria* and the anonymous *Excidium Aconis*. Thadeus of Naples devotes an entire section of his *Ystoria* to criticizing the Venetians' and Pisans' willingness to trade war materials with the Mamluk sultans of Egypt. Separately, he criticizes them for being less devoted to the Christian faith than the Muslims were to their own "impious worship."<sup>84</sup> The author of the *Excidium Aconis* praises the merchants for transporting "sacred relics" by ship from the city after it had fallen, but—in the same sentence—he criticizes them for abandoning the city's defense.<sup>85</sup>

As Ashtor notes in a monograph on Levantine trade, the Italian merchants were not the only Christians to trade war materials with Muslim states, which had been prohibited by a treaty in 1283.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, Jacoby describes that some Venetians left money for the defense of Crusader cities in their wills, demonstrating a concern for the maintenance of Christian rule in the Latin East, which Pirillo echoes in his essay on Florentine wills.<sup>87</sup> Favreau-Lilie argues that, from the time of the First Crusade, Venetian interest in the Holy Land was both religious and economic, whereas Wolynes contends that Venetian migrants maintained separate religious and political identities from their mercantile identity.<sup>88</sup>

In her monograph on the recovery of the Holy Land after the thirteenth century, Schein emphasizes that contemporaries did not view the fall of Acre as final, permanent, or the end of the Crusading movement.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the loss of Acre was particularly devastating for the Venetian and Pisan communities, who, as Parker notes, had centered their operations in the Levant in Acre.<sup>90</sup> Pirillo shows that there was ambivalence toward aid for the Holy Land in Florentine wills from the late thirteenth century. On the one hand, money was being given explicitly for the aid of the Crusader states; on the other hand, there is evidence that "hope for a definitive defeat of the infidels" was decreasing.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria," 124: *cultum sacrilegum*.

<sup>85</sup> "Excidium Aconis," ed. Huygens, 68–69: *sacrosanctis reliquiis*.

<sup>86</sup> Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 8–9; P. M. Holt, "Qalāwūn's Treaty with Acre in 1283," *The English Historical Review* 91, no. 361 (October 1976): 807.

<sup>87</sup> Jacoby, "Three Notes on Crusader Acre," 93–96; Pirillo, "Terra Santa," 121–124.

<sup>88</sup> Favreau-Lilie, "Venezianer," 50; Wolynes, "Migrant Mentalities," 10.

<sup>89</sup> Schein, *Fideles Crucis*, 1, 73.

<sup>90</sup> Parker, "Sinking Pisa," 171.

<sup>91</sup> Pirillo, "Terra Santa," 122: "la speranza di una definitiva sconfitta degli infideles."

The status of the Italian communities' inhabitants as merchants meant that their interest in the kingdom changed from the time of its establishment to the fall of Acre, which was reflected in contemporary opinions of them.<sup>92</sup> Despite their authors' bias, evidence from Thadeus's *Ystoria* and the *Excidium Aconis* indicates that, while members of the Italian communities identified as Christians, their religious identities were often secondary to their identities and motivations as merchants. For example, they were willing to rescue sacred relics from the city but unwilling to sacrifice themselves for its defense when the loss of the city to the Mamluk forces had become clear. Other markets for trade existed, and there was no indication at the time that the loss of the Holy Land was final. As Hiestand argues, "[t]he total collapse was not inevitable, nor was it seen that way by all."<sup>93</sup>

Ultimately, the contemporary Venetians, Pisans, and Genoese were among those who did not see the loss of Acre as synonymous with an inevitable collapse of the Crusader presence in the Levant. Their strong sense of identity as merchants first led them to make the rational choice to save themselves and their goods, when it became clear that the city was about to fall in May 1291. While Ashtor does show how the fall of Acre ended Venetian and Genoese trade with the Mamluk sultans due to Pope Nicholas's decree, and Charles Connell argues that the reality of a new Crusade to reclaim Acre was more of an ideal than "a matter of real political action," this conclusion would not have been apparent to the Italian merchants in the city at the time of the siege.<sup>94</sup>

### Conclusion

The major contemporary chroniclers of the fall of Acre in 1291, including Thadeus of Naples and the author of the *Excidium Aconis*, write from a religious perspective that strongly identifies with the Crusading project. While they may not see the loss of the city as the ultimate end of Frankish rule in the East, they recognize it as a grave setback. Another near-contemporary writer, Marino Sanudo, advocates in his *Liber Secretorum* for the recuperation of the Holy Land. Even if later chroniclers like Christophorus Cyprius do not identify as strongly with the Crusading movement, they maintain their own biases, such as identification with the European city whose history they are, in fact, chronicling. The religious perspectives of many of these writers mean that they often misunderstand the actions of the Italian merchants in the context of the siege of Acre because they mischaracterize them as greedy, lazy, or un-Christian.

Members of the Italian communities identified as Christians, but their religious identity was often less important than other forms of identity. A strong

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<sup>92</sup> Schein, "From 'Milites Christi,'" 681, 685.

<sup>93</sup> Hiestand, "Castrum Peregrinorum," 37: "Il collasso totale non era inevitabile, né fu visto da tutti come tale."

<sup>94</sup> Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 298; Charles W. Connell, "The Fall of Acre in 1291 in the Court of Medieval Public Opinion," in *Acre and Its Falls: Studies in the History of a Crusader City*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 143.



professional identity as merchants meant that they were willing to make pragmatic choices during the events of the siege. This does not mean that they were necessarily lazy or cowardly, or even that they did not identify with the Crusading cause. Rather, their strong identification with their professions allowed them to make rational economic choices during a time of crisis.

The Italians are not the only groups that contemporary sources, like the author of the *Excidium Aconis*, single out for criticism. An interesting avenue for further research would be to apply a similar methodological framework to other groups present in the city during the siege. This could include military or religious groups, of which the military orders were both, or even segments of Acre's population divided along ethnic or class lines. Similarly, it would be interesting to research if and how the forms of identity explored in this article for the Italian communities evolved over time. Were they similar over the course of Crusader rule in the Levant, or did they change greatly from the time of the initial establishment of Italian merchant communities in the states of the Latin East until the fall of Acre?

I do not claim that members of Italian communities acted unimpeachably during the siege of Acre. There is much evidence that the charges of Ludolph of Suchem and the author of the *Excidium Aconis*, among others, are accurate that the Italians were overly divisive. While these accusations may be exaggerated, and other groups may have been equally prone to division, the quarrels between these communities cannot have helped the situation in Acre in 1291. Nevertheless, the characterization evoked most vividly by Thadeus of Naples and echoed in the accounts of his contemporaries, namely, that the Italians were faithless and completely undevoted to the Crusading cause, does not stand up to scrutiny when one analyzes the various identities and motivations for their actions during the siege. Instead, one sees a diverse group of individuals whose rational actions during a time of crisis were informed in part by their professional and personal identities and by the roles that had helped shape their worldviews.

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