Devedo: The Venetian Response to Sultan Mehmed II in the Venetian-Ottoman Conflict of 1462—79

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DEVEDO: THE VENETIAN RESPONSE TO SULTAN MEHMED II IN THE VENETIAN-OTTOMAN CONFLICT OF 1462–79

Stefan Stantchev

> As it is known to all, the Turk this year [1462] captured the island of Lesbos with our ships bringing disgrace on our dominion and grave damage to our citizens and subjects. In order that a similar inconvenience does not occur in future let it be enacted that no carrack or any other vessel of more than 150 *botti* [of a carrying capacity of more than 90–94 freight tons] whether ours or that of our subjects, will be permitted to voyage to Constantinople or to any other place subject to the Turk so that the said Turk can have no help from our ships in the future.[1]

WITH THESE WORDS FIVE MINISTERS OF SEA AFFAIRS (*sapientes ordinum*), each the member of a leading Venetian family,[2] proposed in the Senate on December

[1]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar 7, f. 90^{v} (December 4, 1462). Letters were to be sent to officials in Crete and other Venetian territories in the east, who were expected to implement the order. On *botte* see Frederic C. Lane, "Tonnages, Medieval and Modern," *Venice and History. The Collected Papers of F. C. Lane* (Baltimore, 1966), 345–70 and Ugo Tucci, "Un problema di metrologia navale: la botte Veneziana," *Studi Veneziani* 9 (1967), 201–46: "botte," which meant wine cask, was the unit of measure for the capacity of large vessels. As typical of medieval measures, it lacked the precision or the consistency of usage that are expected of modern ones. The Venetian *botta* can be given a value of .9 cu. m. or 31.8 cu. ft of used space or 600–25 liters, hence 150 *botte* would be 90–4 freight tons. Tucci goes beyond such calculations, however, arguing that considering other factors the *botte* can be given an actual value of 0.8 freight tons, in which case 150 *botte* would be 120 tons.

[2]Nicolò Pesaro, Battista Priuli, Tomaso Lippomano, Nicolò Trevisan, and Giovanni Morosini. A limited number of family clans dominated the economic, social, and political life of Venice. On Venetian families, their inter-relationship and their close correlation to the state see Stanley Chojnacki's collected essays in his *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice. Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore, 2000). Pesaro is, not surprisingly, referred to as "de cha [Cà] de Pesaro," a typical expression, the meaning of which is well-extracted and connected to broader Venetian social and cultural realities by Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice. Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven, 2004), specifically 23–50. On the multifaceted importance of family ties in the later period see for example Alexander Cowan, *Marriage, Manners,*

4, 1462 a motion that was to initiate a long-lasting Venetian embargo against the Ottoman Empire. This embargo was to become a cornerstone of Venice's foreign policy vis-à-vis Mehmed II as well as an irritant in the Serenissima's relations with other Italian powers. Although prominent in the preserved official documents and even mentioned by the Venetian nobleman, captain, council-member, and chronicler Domenico Malipiero (1428–1515), Venice's attempts to cut Italy's ties with the Ottoman Empire in this period has only attracted the attention of few historians, and even they have not realized the great importance that the Senate attributed to it.[3] Hence, the idea that Venice accepted open war with Mehmed II as a result of clashes in the Morea in 1463 permeates the scholarly literature. By way of introduction, this paper first highlights trade and large ships as major concerns of the Venetian Senate upon the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, as well as the usually overlooked military value of round-ships. Based on the records of various Venetian councils while also taking into account narrative sources, it then turns to the period 1462–4 to make three major points: first that concerns over trade and large round-ships, likely carracks, the technologically most advanced ship of the day, not quarrels over land and castles, made the Venetian Senate ready to accept open war with Sultan Mehmed II (1444–6, 1451–81); second, that the embargo was considered a key foreign policy tool by Venice and a matter of Italian politics by fall 1463; and, third, that by the summer of 1464 an embargo on all trade with Ottoman lands had become Venice's chief foreign policy tool against Mehmed.

In the morning hours of June 29, 1453 the Venetian Senate heard news that would alter Mediterranean politics. A month earlier, Mehmed II had earned his nickname, Fatih, the "Conqueror," when his troops awarded him the imperial city of Constantinople.[4] Constantinople proclaimed the continuance of an imperial tradition that was both Roman and Christian. More pertinently, it was

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and Mobility in Early Modern Venice (Aldershot, 2007) and Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago, 1999).

[3]*Annali Veneti di Domenico Malipiero*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1843), 11. For biographical information on Malipiero, ibid., XIX–XX. Among scholars, the embargo is mentioned without reference, and in retrospect as evidence supporting the argument that "Slowly, but inexorably Venetian trade with the Levant was dying out," by Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton, 1978 [1953]), 256 (in fact, Venetian trade with Syria and Egypt flourished in the period, see below). The *devedo* is mentioned with reference in Paula C. Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici. Power and Patronage in Fifteenth-century Florence* (Oxford, 1991), 71 n. 19.

[4]For the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople see Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571* (Philadelphia, 1976), II, 108–37 and the sources quoted therein; for the time Venice received the news, 138. See also Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 81–97. For narrative sources see the especially relevant with regard to Venice Enrico Cornet, ed., *Nicolò Barbaro, Giornale dell'Assedio di Costantinopoli 1453* (Venice, 1856), which is also available in English translation, J. R. Jones, *Nicolò Barbaro, Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453* (New York, 1969) and Agostino Pertusi, ed., *La caduta di Costantinopoli* (Verona, 1976).

an important market where Venetian trade had been tax exempt and where Venetian authorities had ample extraterritorial rights. Its conquest by a power that was accustomed to tax Venetian trade and to keep stricter control over foreigners challenged Venice's economic position within the region and threatened the existence of the Venetian colonies of Crete and Negroponte, which had by this time become an integral part of Venice's imperial persona.[5]

Trade and ships were the matters that concerned the Senate immediately upon reception of the disturbing news. Two ministers of the sea affairs called for the postponement of the scheduled voyage of large Venetian round-ships to Syria.[6] This mattered, for although the Venetian economy did not depend on trade alone, trade was its main engine.[7] Its major trading partners at the time were Egypt and Syria, both under the control of the Mamluk sultan of Cairo.[8] The question whether or not to allow the round-ships to sail to Syria in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople was therefore critical to the income

[5]Dominant in Romania (that is, the former Byzantine territories) at the time of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, 1204–61, Venice was outmaneuvered by Genoa through the 1261 treaty of Ninfeo, which ensured the Genoese a privileged position in the re-established Byzantine empire. Although the Genoese soon lost the exclusivity of the emperor's favor, they became the chief commercial power in the region. From the mid-fourteen century, moreover, Venice's primary focus shifted to Egypt and Syria. At the same time, parts of Romania, specifically the islands of Crete and Negroponte, remained an integral part of Venice's overseas empire and held an important role to the Venetian elite, a role that was both economic and symbolic. Since as early as the eighteenth century, much has been written on Venetian and Genoese expansion in the Romania. Among the most notable works are: Freddy Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age. Le développement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial vénitien (XII^e–XV^e siècles)*, Ecoles Française d'Athènes et de Rome 193 (Paris, 1959); idem, *Etudes sur la Romanie Greco-vénitienne (X^e–XV^e siècles)* (London, 1977); Sally McKee, *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity* (Philadelphia, 2000); Michel Balard, *La Romanie Genoise (XII^e–début du XV^e siecle)*, In *Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* 235 (1978); and *Atti della società ligure di stroria patria* n. s. 18 (42) (1978); and Enrico Basso, *Genova: un impero sul mare* (Cagliari, 1994). For the traditional, pessimistic, Italian-centered view on how the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople affected western trade see Wilhelm Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age* (Amsterdam, 1967 [1885]), II, 313–51. For an alternative view, Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State* (Cambridge, 1999). For a perspective centered on the development of the Ottoman Empire, Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914* (Cambridge, 1994), v. I. For a brief note on taxation, ibid., 199. For the importance of the Ottoman Empire to Venetian self-understanding see Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot. Venice and the Sublime Port* (Ithaca, 1993 [1987]). Over the last few decades, Ottoman-western relations in the early modern period have triggered broader interest see, for example, Robert J. Topinka, "Islam, England, and Identity in the Early Modern Period: A Review of Recent Scholarship," *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009), 114–30.

[6]A. S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 4, f. 197^r (30 June 1453).

[7]For a long view see Frederick C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973); Roberto Cessi, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia* (Florence, 1981); and the multi-editor, fifteen-volume *Storia di Venezia* (Rome, 1991–2002).

[8]See Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983), 450–79.

of many Venetians, especially members of the governing patriciate who controlled the Senate. We should therefore not be surprised that the Senate allowed the round-ships to depart as planned.[9] Thus economic ties with Mamluk lands took precedence over the concern with the Ottoman threat; this was to remain the general rule thereafter, even in the course of the conflict of 1462–79.[10]

Even more pertinently for the purposes of this article, the other matter that the Senate deemed critical was that of the "ships" (*naves*) themselves. Since this has been largely ignored to date and since ship typology and terminology are typically confused in general studies and practically ignored in accounts of the conflict between the Serenissima and Mehmed II, we need to briefly consider the construction and terminology of boats that plied Mediterranean waters. Within the basin of the Mediterranean, large naval vessels were either long-boats (galleys) or round-ships.[11] Both types had remote Roman ancestors and formed

[9]A. S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 4, f. 197^{r} (June 30, 1453).

[10]While this was the case as a general rule, balancing between the desire to keep up trade with the Mamluk state and the need to guarantee the safety of its maritime possessions in Romania was never easy for the Senate, see for example A. S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 4, f. 201^{v} (July 17, 1453), Reg. 5, ff. 3r–5^{v} (August 16–September 18, 1453). The auctions (*incanti*) for the galleys to Alexandria and Beirut date from May 17, 1453, A. S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 4, ff. 188^{v}–9^{r} (Beirut) and f. 189^{v} (Alexandria). For a table that includes the amounts received on the auctions for the years 1453–98 see Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, 475–6. The reference in Ashtor regarding the auctions from 1453 is wrong, likely due to printing error. The new strategic situation required balancing trade and military preparation within Romania, too; the galleys to Romania were not to sail in 1453, but trade was to be impacted as little as possible as carracks were allowed to substitute for them, A.S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 5, ff. 6^{v}–7^{r} [7^{v}–8^{r}] (September 27, 1453).

[11]For galleys, John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War. Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649–1571* (Cambridge, 1988), 57–86; and Frederick C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1934 [Reprinted 1979]), 1–34. On round-ships, ibid., 25–53; Pryor, "The Naval Architecture of Crusader Transport Ships" in idem, *Commerce, Shipping and Naval Warfare in the Medieval Mediterranean* (London, 1987, re-printed from *The Mariner's Mirror* 70, 1984) no. VII, 171–219, 275–92, 363–86; idem, "The Mediterranean Round-Ship," *Cogs, Caravels, and Galleons. The Sailing Ship, 1000–1650*, ed. Robert Gardiner (London, 1994), 59–76; Marco Bonino, "Lateen-Rigged Medieval Ships. New Evidence from Wrecks in the Po Delta (Italy) and Notes on Pictorial and Other Documents," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 7 (1978), 9–28; finally, on cogs—the round-ship of northern provenience that was widely used by Genoese and Venetians in the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century—Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, "To Be or Not to Be a Cog: the Bremen Cog in Perspective," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 29 (2000, 2), 230–46. For the Venetian fleet in general see also Lane, "The Merchant Marine of the Venetian Republic," *Venice and History*, 143–62. For Ottoman ships, naval power, and terminology see Svat Soucek, "Certain Types of Ships in Ottoman-Turkish Terminology," *Turcica* 7 (1975), 233–49; Kate Fleet, "Early Turkish Naval Activities," *Oriente Moderno* 20 (2001), 129–38; Andrew C. Hess, "The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of the Oceanic Discoveries, 1453–1525," *The American Historical Review* 75 (1970, 7), 1892–1919; Colin Imber, "The Navy of Süleyman the Magnificent," *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul, 1996), 1–69. For a brief sketch, Colin

the basis of naval typology throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the fifteenth century, "galley" referred to "triremes with twenty-five or thirty benches on each side, and three oarsmen to a bench, each man pulling a separate oar."[12] Galleys should not be imagined only as war vessels, they were also, indeed primarily, employed in trade.[13] Specifically, they were used for the transport of light-weight but high-value cargo.

Round-ships are often contrasted with galleys in terms not only of their shape but also of their use and are defined as transport vessels for bulky cargoes of non-luxury goods with minimal, if any, military capabilities. Naval scholarship, however, has shown that this notion is unfounded, for round-ships could be effective warships as early as the thirteenth century.[14] The fifteenth century witnessed engineering improvements beyond those of the already improved fourteenth-century round-ship—the cog—due to the development of the full rigged ship, commonly referred to as the carrack.[15] The fusion of

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Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650. The Structure of Power* (New York, 2002), 288–92 and 375–6 for more literature on the Ottoman fleets before 1600. More in general, for ships in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance Michel Mollat, ed. *Le Navire et l'Économie Maritime du Moyen-Age au XVIII^e siècle principalement en Méditerranée* (Paris, 1958); idem, ed., *Les sources de l'histoire maritime en Europe, du Moyen Age au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1962), 7–243. On the fleet of Genoa, the other important maritime power of the time, Eugene H. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA, 1930); Jacques Heers, *Gênes au XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1961), 270–80; Balard, *La Romanie Genoise*, II, 546–62; and Pierangelo Campodonico, *La Marineria genovese dal Medioevo all'unità d'Italia* (Milan, 1989). Campodonico's work is especially useful for the great deal of diagrams and pictures of recovered ships and naval equipment, including artillery pieces from the period of interest here.

[12]Lane, *Venetian Ships*, 9.

[13]Except in Genoa from the fifteenth century. The galley optimized primarily for war (fastest and most maneuverable) was called *galea sottile*. The galley optimized for convoy travel and transport of precious cargo was called *galea grossa* or *galeazza* and could carry up to 250–80 tons of cargo. In the period discussed here, galleasses were used by the Venetian convoys to Alexandria, Syria, Barbary, Flanders, and Romania, and by the Florentine convoy to Constantinople. The bireme, displaced by the trireme, was now called *fusta*, while *galeotte*, *bregantini*, and *fregate* were all various smaller long-boat type vessels, with one or two men per bench, see for example Lane, *Venetian Ships*, 13.

[14]As was the *Roccaforte*, built in the Venetian Arsenal, which resisted a Genoese galley fleet in 1264, Lane, *Venetian Ships*, 4–6, 36, 40. In that early period, however, they had poor sailing qualities, Pryor, "The Naval Architecture," 378–9. Thus, they had limited military usefulness.

[15]In addition to the above quoted literature see Richard W. Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600–1600* (London, 1980), 220 on the use of "carrack" to denote full-rigged ships. The term "carrack" appears "in English documents from around 1350, and at first it was only applied to the Genoese ships." Ian Friel, "The Carrack: The Advent of the Full Rigged Ship," *Cogs, Caravels, and Galleons*, 79. On Genoese carracks see Campodonico, *La Marineria genovese*, 81–101. A three-masted, full-rigged sailing vessel was depicted as early as 1409, Lawrence V. Mott, "A Three-Masted Ship Depiction from 1409," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 23 (1994), 39–40.

northern and Mediterranean shipbuilding traditions,[16] carracks came to carry the bulk of merchandise, to the extent that by the middle of the fifteenth century the Genoese had practically discontinued the use of galleys for trade.[17] They also began to use artillery;[18] in 1455 two Genoese carracks exchanged fire with the Ottoman castles guarding the straits.[19] The carracks did not only dominate the Mediterranean, of course. The Portuguese, employing the same design, though building them even larger, adopted carracks for the routes to India.[20]

What appears to cause much confusion in general studies is the fact that the Latin *navis* is often translated simply as "ship" even though it did not actually convey the general meaning of the modern word. In fifteenth-century Venetian usage the terms *lignum* and especially *navigium* served as a general word for large sea-going vessel, but *navis* did not.[21] Despite the changes in design, large round-ships were indeed typically referred to as *naves* throughout the later Middle Ages, but small round-ships were not, and neither were any of the long-boats. Since there is a modern English word for most types of *naves* the problem can often be solved by substituting precise terms for the use of the general word "ship." What matters the most here, however, is that *navis* referred specifically to the largest, technologically most advanced, and most expensive round-ship of its day, which in the mid-fifteenth century was the full rigged ship, the carrack.[22]

Venice's concern over carracks seized by the Ottomans gains meaning from naval actions that took place in the course of the Ottoman siege of Constantinople in 1453.[23] In February, seven Venetian carracks had broken the

[16]Friel, "The Carrack: The Advent of the Full Rigged Ship," 77.

[17]Heers, "Types de navires et spécialisation des trafics," *Le Navire et l'Économie Maritime*, 110.

[18]Campodonico, *La Marineria genovese*, 90.

[19]Although one of the ships was heavily damaged by a large stone ball that pierced its hull, both made it into the Black Sea, Campodonico, *La Marineria Genovese*, 92.

[20]Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy*, 228.

[21]For example, in the embargo laws coined by the Grand Council,A. S. Venezia, Maggior Consiglio Reg. 22 Ursa, ff. 22^{r-v} (March 12, 1419) and Reg. 23 Regina, ff. 18^{v}–19^{r} (February 6, 1458). *Navigium* was the word of choice to refer to Venetian naval vessels in general, as is also attested in clauses for banishment to be found in many documents from funds as varied as Maggior Consiglio, Senato Mar, Avogaria di Comun, Quarantia Criminal, etc.

[22]Other round-ships used by the Venetians were the *grippo*, a smaller, one-mast ship, which used both sails and oars; the caravel, which was a round-ship usually of 120 tons that was used, for example, for inter-Adriatic travel, and the Venetian galleon, which was actually a river vessel, Lane, *Venetian Ships*, 50–3. Finally, *tarida* designated a two-masted ship featuring both sails and oars that was used as a troop and bulk cargo transport, Byrne, *Genoese Shipping*, 5–6. It was the *tarida*, not the *navis* that appears to have had limited military value.

[23] Unlike smaller vessels but like galleys traveling in convoys, the large round-ships of the leading maritime powers of the time were the most defensible vessels, not a target of petty pirates and not the subject of frequent seizure by unfriendly rulers. One should also note that the distinction between pirate and merchant was quite murky at the time. The Genoese, not surprisingly, given the social and economic realities of their city, were perhaps the most fearsome of all. An interesting example is an

Ottoman naval blockade of the Straits and sailed to safety.[24] The defense of the chain guarding the entrance into the Golden Horn was provided by the ten largest round-ships available, one of which, a Genoese carrack belonging to a Doria was of 2,500 *botte*, which means that it must have been one of the largest ships of its time.[25] In a widely reported event, three Genoese carracks and an imperial round-ship broke the Ottoman blockade in the opposite direction: after a sea battle, these round-ships successfully delivered men and supplies to strengthen Constantinople's defenses, a victory which brought about the disgrace of the Ottoman admiral Balta-oghlu.[26]

Carracks, therefore, provided the Italian maritime powers with a valuable military resource, one the Ottomans lacked. Throughout the course of the 1462–1479 conflict, the carrack was to be the embodied intersection of technological and military capabilities, political and economic interests, and eventually a last ray of hope for preserving the once undisputed image of Venice as the dominant sea power besides Genoa. Ottoman shipyards (at first Gallipoli, from 1453, and also Galata, the old arsenal of Genoese Pera), at the same time, did not begin to build round-ships of significant size until later in the century.[27] It is therefore not

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event that occurred later in the Venetian-Ottoman conflict. On that occasion the Genoese Branca Doria disturbed the navigation of Ancona in the Adriatic. The Genoese "corsaro et homo de mal afar," whose name is homonymous with famous Genoese personages of which one is to be found in Dante's *Inferno*, had pillaged an Anconitan ship and left it in such a state that it capsized; those on board, including people "de non mediocre pregio," drowned. Ancona armed whatever vessels it could to search for him yet declared that "nostra provisione non po esser alctro che debile" and asked for Venetian help, A. S. Venezia, Libri Commemoriali Reg. 16, f. 115^{r} (6 June 1477), summary in Riccardo Predelli, *I Libri Commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia. Regesti* (Venice, 1876–1914), V, no.105, 223. Although Ancona most likely used submissive language as a rhetorical tool, the fact that it could not cope with a single, albeit very well-prepared Genoese pirate exemplifies the enormous difference that separated the minor from the major seafaring "nations" in naval matters.

[24]In February 1453, Cornet, *Barbaro, Diario*, 13. On the question of Latin ships in Constantinople in early 1453 see Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 111 n. 9.

[25]Cornet, *Barbaro, Diario*, 20. The fact that one of the carracks was that big should be of no surprise given its owner(s): most of the largest ships belonged to the top Genoese families, of which the Doria was one of the four most prominent. On Genoese families see Diane Hughes, "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa," *Past and Present* 66 (1975), 3–28; idem, "Domestic Ideals and Social Behavior," *The Family in History*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia, 1975), 115–43; Edoardo Grendi, "Profilo storico degli alberghi genovesi," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 87 (1975), 241–302; idem, "Problemi di storia degli alberghi genovesi," *La Storia dei Genovesi*, ed. Giorgio Costamagna, (Genoa, 1981), I, 183–97.

[26]Cornet, *Barbaro, Diario*, 23–4, Pertusi, La *Caduta di Costantinopoli*, I, 136/7–140/1, see also Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 117–8. Balta-oghlu had not been able to win at sea and break the chain that guarded the Golden Horn, defended by large round-ships as it was. Hence, the Ottomans had to clear a land path and pull the ships.

[27]Imber, "The Navy of Süleyman the Magnificent," 3, see also the other studies on Ottoman naval activities quoted above.

surprising that large ships figured among the first concerns raised in the Senate's response to Mehmed's triumph in 1453.[28]

Having established that it was trade and large ships that concerned the Senate in the summer of 1453 will help us better understand the outset of Venice's conflict with Mehmed a decade later. While there may be little reason to dispute the standard notion that the underlying explanation lay in tensions provoked by Mehmed's expansionism,[29] this "big picture" does not sufficiently supply the motives for Venice's final decision to go to war. In fact, although the years after the fall of Constantinople were filled with tension and uncertainty, an abrupt change in the relations between Venice and Mehmed II did not occur until 1462.[30] As pointed out through the opening quotation, however, in the late summer of that year, the Ottomans confiscated four carracks from Candia, the chief city of Crete, Venice's largest colony, and used them to reinforce their fleet. They then proceeded to attack the Genoese island of Lesbos in the presence of Sultan Mehmed II and in sight of the Venetian admiral.[31] The Senate perceived in these events a model for future

Richard Knolles, *Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1610), 335. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

[28]Nevertheless, although preparing itself for all contingences, Venice was seeking peace. The Senate wanted its envoy to Mehmed, who had remained in Negroponte, to carry on his mission while also ordering that the gift he carried, worth 500 ducats, be increased to a value of 1,200 ducats to reflect Mehmed's new, imperial, standing, A. S. Venezia, Senato Mar Reg. 4, f. 200^{v} (July 12, 1453). On April 18, 1454 a new treaty with the Ottomans was in fact concluded, Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia* (Venice, 1853), IV, no.7, 528–35 (April 18, 1454).

[29]Between 1453 and 1462, Mehmed II took control over Southern Serbia and its silver mines, 1454–55, Serbia, 1458, two Genoese settlements in Anatolia and one in Thrace, 1455–6, and another one, on the southern shores of the Black Sea, 1459. Ottoman troops occupied Athens in 1456, and by the end of 1460 Mehmed controlled most of the Peloponnesus. In 1461 came the turn of the Empire of Trebizond. For a brief overview, see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 29–31. For a detailed narrative, Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 126–96.

[30]For example, it does not appear that anything suggested disruptions when Paolo Barbadigo was designated new *bailo* in Constantinople on July 15, 1462, A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar Reg. 7, f. 71^{r}.

[31]On the Ottoman conquest of Lesbos see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 209–14; and Geo Pistarino, *Genovesi d'Oriente* (Genoa, 1990), 418–9. On the Venetian fleet and its (in)action see

attacks on its own empire, and it was this episode of 1462 that convinced Venice to set on a course for open war.

This, however, is not what the secondary literature suggests. There the episode of Lesbos is generally presented as a Genoese matter. While Robert Lopez recognized the concern that Mehmed's seizure of Lesbos caused in Venice,[32] both he and the other existing accounts of Venice's conflict with Mehmed attribute no importance to the seizure of the four carracks and overlook the embargo of 1462. These accounts instead provide anecdotal evidence about a Venetian councilor in Coron who had apparently provided refuge to a slave who had fled his master, the Ottoman governor of Athens, with a substantial amount of cash. In clear violation of the 1454 treaty, the councilor had refused to deliver either the slave or the money to their owner. This act of defiance is said to have provoked retaliation from local Ottoman garrisons, which retaliated by attacking Venetian villages, an act that culminated in the seizure of the castle of Argos in spring 1463. These events, which except for the fall of Argos may have never happened,[33] have been traditionally interpreted as a breach of the peace treaty of 1454, an open provocation that would invite Ottoman hostilities, and hence as the start of the conflict.[34]

There is no doubt that the Senate considered the events at Argos as a severe breach of the 1454 treaty and that it did not perceive the embargo of 1462 as

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Annali Veneti di Domenico Malipiero, in *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1843), 11; Robert S. Lopez, "Il principio della guerra veneto-turca nel 1463," *Archivio Veneto*, serie V, 15 (1934), 46–7; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant* II, 238–9. Concerns with the fortifications of Candia and its supply with munitions now loomed large, A. S. Venezia, Duca di Candia, Busta 50 Bis, ff. 56^{r}–7^{v} (September 7, 1462). The Venetian admiral was called Captain General of the Sea and was the supreme Venetian naval and military commander. The position was not permanent, and there was no permanent war fleet either (although galleys usually patrolled the Upper Adriatic, enforcing Venice's self-proclaimed economic rights in the area).

[32]Lopez, "Il principio della Guerra," 47.

[33]As pointed out by Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 241 n. 36.

[34]Notably by Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, II, 324; Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 48–9 (who speaks of Modon, not Coron); Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 225–6; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 241 ("...a minor incident now provoked the war..."); and Cessi, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, 405–6. These events have been treated similarly by Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, IV, 314–6; Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne*, 389; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 32; Giuseppe Gullino, "Le frontiere navali," *Storia di Venezia, IV. Il Rinascimento. Politica e cultura*, ed. Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci (Rome, 1996), 62. Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (New York, 2006 [2005]), 63 understands the start of war as Venice's reaction to the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia and similar appears the position of Michael E. Mallett, "Venezia e la politica italiana: 1454–1530," *Storia di Venezia*, IV, 252. Heyd, Babinger, Thiriet, Setton, and Cessi date the fall of Argos to April 3. Lopez, however, speaks of early May, which appears to align better with the chronology of senatorial deliberations stemming from the loss of Argos.

tantamount to a declaration of war.[35] Yet the manner in which these narrative sources, some of which are not even Venetian, are employed gives us an inaccurate picture of the actions of Venice's ruling elite. Traditionally, Venice had avoided military action as a solution to its problems in the Mediterranean.[36] Moreover Argos, a late addition to the Venetian domain, was of secondary economic importance. Why would, then, Venice go to war with the chief military power of its time as a consequence of the loss of Argos? Were Venetian priorities shifting, that is, was maintaining Venice's imperial persona taking prominence over keeping the trade routes open? Or were the aforementioned events of 1462 perceived as enough of a threat to the safety of its maritime trade and to its chief colonies, Crete and Negroponte, to provoke Venice to already be prepared for war by the time the events in the Morea unfolded?

While not without its own complications, a reading of the senatorial and other official records helps solve this conundrum. As early as 1462 the Ottoman seizure of Venetian carracks caused the Senate to consider the 1454 treaty broken. It was that Ottoman action, which affected a traditional Venetian priority, the safety of its trade and not the seizure of Argos more than half-a-year later that first caused the Senate to consider itself in conflict with Mehmed, although not yet in state of open war. How grave that episode was perceived to be is shown by the fact that although Malipiero estimated the Ottoman fleet at Lesbos at "150 sails among biremes, triremes, and other armed vessels, including four carracks from Candia,"[37] the Senatorial motion claims that "the Turk conquered the island of Lesbos with our carracks," thus awarding to the captured Venetian ships an instrumental role in the Ottoman victory.[38]

The Senate's *prohibitio*, as Venice referred to its embargo decision in Latin, or *devedo*, as it was called in Venetian dialect,[39] effectively halted Venetian trade with the Ottoman capital. This we can deduce from the case of Nicola

[35]See respectively A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 152^{v} (May 23, 1463) and, for example, Sen. Mar, Reg. 7 f. 144^{v} (January 13, 1464).

[36]Which was the case no matter what the "conspiracy view" of the crusader–venetian conquest of Constantinople in 1204 might lead one to believe. On political and trade relations in Romania in general see Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne*. For Venice and the Turks, Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade. Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300–1415)* (Venice, 1983). For the fourth crusade, Donald Queller and Thomas Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia, 1997).

[37]*Annali Veneti di Domenico Malipiero*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1843), 11.

[38]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar 7, f. 90^{v} (December 4, 1462).

[39]*Devetum* as a Latin(-ized) word, was employed in official documents by the Genoese (at least since 1151), see Antonella Rovere, ed., *I Libri Iurium della Repubblica di Genova* (Rome, 1992), I/1, doc. 151, 223, not the Venetians. As can be inferred from this and several other documents contained in the *Libri Iurium*, the Genoese *devetum* could refer both to the partial or complete severance of trade with another political entity and to the exclusion from economic contact with the body politic of a disobedient member.

Miconditi, a citizen and inhabitant of Candia, who served in 1462 and 1463 as *missetarius*, the collector of the *messeta* (or *misseta*), a tax levied on all commercial transactions and thus a major source of income to the Venetian authorities.[40] In 1461 Nicola committed himself to pay the very large sum of 16,100 ducats in order to secure tax-farming rights for the year 1462.[41] In that year he apparently expected to collect a great deal of money on taxes to be paid by eight round-ships bound for Constantinople. However, he found he could not secure recompense. In response to the seizure of the four other carracks from Candia, the Captain General of the Sea, Loredan, and the Venetian authorities in Candia refused to allow the eight vessels to depart. Yet Nicola, apparently hoping that the ships would eventually be allowed to set sail, went ahead that December and bought the *messetta* for the following year, 1463. Once it reached Candia, the Senate decree of December 4, 1462 quickly showed him how wrong he had been. The *devedo* (or also *devedado*), as these documents put it, was seen as the direct reason for the losses on the *messetta*, which henceforth Nicola had to absorb.[42] What makes Nicola's case important is the fact that his loss was constituted of forgone tax income. Since Candia's trade and hence the size of the *messetta* was greatly dependent upon Constantinople,[43] Nicola's case points to a noticeable decrease in the total turnover of the port of Candia.

In the opening months of 1463, moreover, Venice took a number of other actions that corroborate the claim that the Senate considered itself in conflict with Mehmed before any military action took place in spring of that year. Alongside the December 4, 1462 ban prohibiting large ships from sailing to Constantinople was the equally significant commission of Alvise Loredan, the new admiral of the sea, dated February 4, 1463. This commission allowed the admiral to attack the Ottoman fleet should it leave the Straits, contradicting the clauses of the peace treaty and breaking with nine years of tolerance of Ottoman sea power.[44] This was critical, but it was not all.

In a turnabout, the Senate began using crusading symbolism. Venice had refused to permit pope Pius II to hold his 1459 crusading congress in Udine and had forbidden preaching the crusade within its dominion.[45] However, on January 20, 1463, after the embargo was proclaimed and before Loredan was allowed to attack Ottoman ships, the Senate ordered that the cross be added to the standard

[40]On this office and tax see David Jacoby, "Venice, the Inquisition, and the Jewish Communities of Crete," *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 130–1.

[41]Venetian style, according to which the year started on March 1, not January 1.

[42]A. S. Venezia, Duca di Candia, Busta 2, no.25, ff. 20^{r}–1^{r}.

[43]As made clear by a letter that Venetian officials in Candia wrote to Venice in the wake of 1453, quoted in Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne*, 433, n. 5 (October 11, 1454).

[44]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del Sec. Reg. 21 ff. 138^{v}–9^{v} (February 4, 1463), the same is partly summarized, partly transcribed in Lopez, "Il principio della guerra," no.2, 106–7, with commentary on 50.

[45]Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 236.

of its patron saint, and on March 5 a golden standard displaying Saint Mark, the cross, and the inscription "in hoc signo vinces" was blessed in the Church of Saint Mark.[46] The message was clear. Venice, perceived as a notoriously reluctant crusader, had begun to adopt a crusading stance, a position which was made visible from Rome to Constantinople.[47]

Simultaneously, the newly adopted hawkish stance began to shape Venice's Italian politics, for in order to achieve anything beyond preventing Mehmed from sequestering Venetian ships the Venetian embargo against him needed the backing of the other maritime powers. Venice may have had no hopes of eliciting the support of archrival Genoa; competitiveness aside, the Genoese controlled cities in the Crimea and hence needed to be able to sail through the Straits at all times. Venice's attempt to forge an anti-Ottoman alliance with Florence and Ancona, on the other hand, one that would center on the embargo, became a continuing feature of its diplomacy during the war years. This problem has been noted, but not really addressed, and has even been interpreted as a Venetian attempt to prevent the rise of Florentine commercial fortunes in the East. This, however, is likely precisely how the Florentines, or at least Benedetto Dei, wanted the matter to be seen.[48] Venetian requests to Florence and Ancona to refrain from trade with the Ottomans were neither footnotes to the preparation for war nor a response to competition, which, contrary to the boasts of Dei, was never substantial by Venetian or Genoese standards.[49] Instead, they formed a

[46]Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 50 n. 19. Saint Mark was the doge's chapel. The bishop's cathedral (in fact by this time the bishop of Castello had become patriarch of Venice) was in the periphery of *sestier* Castello.

[47]Pope Pius II accused the Venetians of having become friends of the Ottomans as a result of "too much intercourse" with them, as quoted in D. S. Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580* (London, 1970), 48. Pius II may have been among the most vocal proponents of the view that Venice's attitude towards Muslims in general and "Turks" in particular deserved criticism, but he was hardly the only one. At the same time, Venice was much stricter in enforcing canon law's dispositions on the relationships between Christians and non-Christians than a reading of such narrative primary sources and existing scholarship would suggest, but this problem cannot be adequately addressed here. For an introduction to Venice and the crusades see Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*; for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and Louise Buenger Robbert, "Venice and the Crusades," *A History of the Crusades V. The Impact of the Crusades on the Middle East*, ed. Kenneth Setton (Madison, 1985), 379–451, for the earlier period.

[48]The fact that Venice tried to convince Florence not to send its galleasses to Constantinople has been noticed by Lopez, "Il principio della Guerra," 51 and 85; and by Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici*, 69–72 but neither studied the case. In a footnote, Clarke acknowledges the possibility that Venice's major concern was the halt of trade, 71 n. 19, but in the text accepts what appears to be the Florentine interpretation (71). For an overall impression on the Florentine take on trade in Constantinople vis-à-vis Venice see Roberto Barducci, ed., *Benedetto Dei. La Cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500* (Florence, 1985), especially 130, 141, 161, 164–5.

[49]Dei's work is thoroughly anti-Venetian (notable is the language he uses on 130) and interprets the events after 1462 as a sign of flourishing Florentine business in Constantinople at the expense of

part of an embargo through which Venice opposed Mehmed's reshaping of the political map of the Aegean.

In March 1463 the Senate decided that an envoy be sent to Florence to argue that the Tuscan capital should respect the sanctions imposed by Venice by withdrawing the customary two-three galleass convoy it sent to Constantinople. The picture that the envoy was to present to Florence is more remarkable than it may appear at first view. He was instructed to explain that Mehmed had breached the peace treaty by detaining the four carracks in 1462, that Venice had prohibited that galleys and ships over 150 *botte* sail to Constantinople, that Mehmed undoubtedly would want to seize the Florentine galleys should they sail to the Straits, and that Florence should not provide the Ottomans the opportunity to fight Christians by using the arms of Christians. If Florence answered negatively or ambiguously, the envoy was instructed to explain that the Venetian admiral was currently at sea with ample powers to enforce Venetian policy and that he would prevent the galleys from entering the Straits.[50] Thus the document speaks of a rupture of the treaty by Mehmed before any war action had taken place, requires Florentine cooperation, and subordinates the Venetian relations with Florence to Venetian concerns in the east.

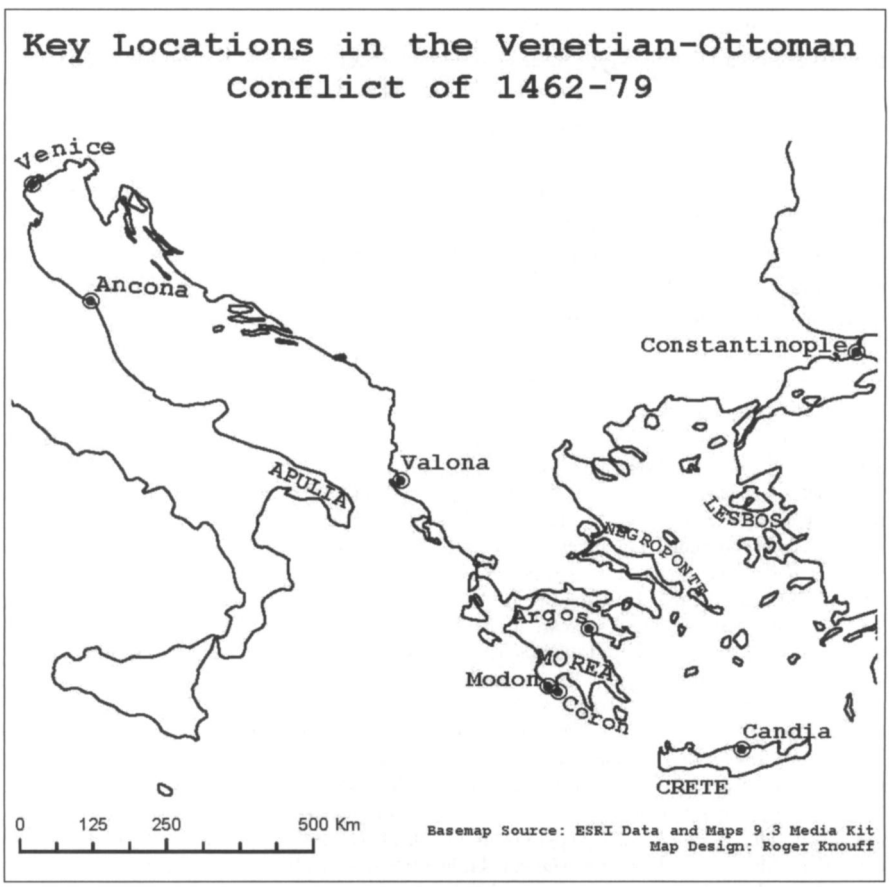
In light of the document's diplomatic nature, Lopez claimed that it exaggerated the realities of the situation, stating that Venice was at war with the Ottomans in order to strengthen the argument presented to the Florentines.[51]

Venice. This may have been correct only in the short term. First, Dei fails to connect Florence's success with the Venetians' voluntarily withdrawal due to the embargo. Second, Dei's own numbers and statements do not always help his argument; see Dei, *La Cronica*, 94–100, 130, 161. Most importantly, extant documents paint a different picture. The Florentines, newcomers to the region, sent only a single galley annually from Pisa (Florentine since 1406) to Constantinople until 1457 when a second was added only because of security concerns, Giuseppe Müller, ed., *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane coll'Oriente cristiano e coi turchi fino all'anno MDXXXI* (Florence, 1966 [1879]), part II, no.9, 293 (August 27, 1457). By 1462 there were three galleys, ibid., no.14–18, 297–303, a number that did not increase further. Even more pertinently, starting precisely with 1462 the Florentine consuls introduced the practice of subsidizing the galley convoys to Constantinople. Thus, instead of auctioning the galleys to the highest bidder, they now auctioned them to whoever would require the smallest subsidy, Michael E. Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1967), 44. Furthermore, in 1470 the triremes were only two in number, and the voyage had to be postponed due to organizational problems, Müller, *Documenti sulle relazioni*, II, no.25, 310 (February 23–7, 1470). In 1471, plague disrupted Florentine trade in Constantinople, Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, 66. In 1477 no one was willing to rent the two galleys, Müller, *Documenti sulle relazioni*, no.27, 311–13 (May 12–18, 1477) "...and this was virtually the end of the enterprise." Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, 44. In 1480 Mehmed II himself complained to Florence about the galleys. The Florentines excused themselves with the political complications in Italy, Müller, *Documenti sulle relazioni*, I, no.191, 230–1 (May 11–12, 1480).

[50]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 143^{r} (March 3, 1463). It is worth noting that this document refers to Ottoman galleys and vessels, but not to Ottoman round-ships.

[51]Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 51.

There is no doubt that Venice often embellished its arguments in diplomatic correspondence, but is this the case here? The document does not actually state that Venice was at war with Mehmed; rather it attributes to Mehmed the blame for the breach of the peace treaty. It thus serves as a fairly explicit piece of evidence that it was not the alleged actions of the councilor of Coron but rather Mehmed's seizure of the four carracks in 1462 that was seen as the provocation of war. Unfortunately, in his otherwise meticulous study, Lopez focused his attention on 1463, therefore overlooking both the partial embargo from December 1462 and its development into a full-scale withdrawal of trade from all Ottoman lands in early 1464.



To succeed in depriving Mehmed from seizing western ships of a class that his shipyards could not yet build, the Venetian embargo, as pointed out above,

needed the assistance of other maritime powers. Because it could not be legally binding for non-Venetians unless backed by the papacy, cooperation could not be obligated. It makes sense, then, that Venice would adopt for its own purposes the papal ban, perpetual from 1179, on all exports—in theory—and of war material—in practice—to Muslims.[52] In fact, by stating that Florence should refrain from providing the "Turk" with the opportunity to fight the faithful of Christ with the arms of the Christians, the Senate substituted Christians for Venetians, adopted the language of the papal prohibitions, and placed its own embargo in the context of the long-standing papal bans.

In sum, the Senate perceived the 1454 treaty as undermined in late summer 1462 when Mehmed seized and pressed into service the four carracks from Candia. In response, most Venetian trade with Ottoman lands was halted, at first for the time being, and, then, in December 1462, indefinitely. Shortly thereafter, and before any castles changed hands, the Senate started marketing Venice's crusading persona: from crosses on the ships to the language through which it tried to sell its embargo. It is only in light of these developments that Venice's aggressive reaction to the loss of Argos and quick organization of a land offensive in spring/summer 1463 can be understood.

Whether it helped prevent the Ottomans from sequestering other Venetian ships or not, the embargo became an irritant in Venice's relations with the other Italian powers.[53] The Florentine answer to the Venetian request to refrain from trade with Constantinople was ambiguous at best. In light of a later document, it appears that Florence did not provide any firm answer to this request and that it postponed rather than canceled its convoy.[54] This should not surprise us. Upon his triumphal return to his imperial city in 1462, Mehmed had ordered the crews of the three Florentine galleasses that made the annual convoy to Constantinople

[52]In 1179, and likely already in the mid-twelfth century, the papal embargo covered arms, iron, and timber for galleys (and by extension probably all materials useful in war), but in the aftermath of Saladin's takeover of Jerusalem it extended to cover all trade. Contrary to common opinion, it remained total as a legal construct thereafter. In practice, trade in items other than war material was usually allowed, but only if licensed by the Papacy. Similarly, despite the claims to the contrary, the papal embargo, although often violated, mattered in more ways than one, and it played a part in European political life not only during Venice's conflict with Mehmed, but also as late as the early sixteenth century. In addition, it did not target only Muslims, let alone only Egypt; by the late thirteenth century it was deployed against a plethora of perceived enemies of the Papacy both outside and within Christendom. I focus on the papal embargo in my book manuscript in progress, working title *Spiritual Rationality: Papal Embargo as Cultural Practice, ca. 1150–ca. 1550.*

[53]On these relations in general, Garret Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 1964 [1955]), specifically 78–86.

[54]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, ff. 186^{v}–7^{v} (September 17, 1463). This is also the opinion of Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, 69, which is based on Florentine records.

to participate in the festivities for the seizure of Lesbos.[55] His intention may have been to play Florence against Venice. Throughout the conflict the Florentines would remain unimpressed by Venice's crusading posture, demonstrating that they were all too happy to play Mehmed's game. Ancona, another second-tier maritime power whose round-ships often carried Florentine merchants, seems to have held a similar position.[56]

With the start of open hostilities in spring 1463, and the failure to obtain any firm commitments from Florence and Ancona to respect the embargo, the Senate ordered its admiral to enforce it by singling out the galleys of Florence and the carracks of Ancona, the cities with whom its diplomats were negotiating.[57] At the same time, Venice was launching its land campaign against the Ottomans in order to conquer the Peloponnesus. Ultimately, it represented the most short-lived front on which Venice fought the war, but it was a big enterprise, the focus of Venetian action in 1463, and, since no Ottoman armies were stationed in the Morea, a remarkable success at first.[58]

Venice missed no chance to present the now open war with Mehmed as a Christian struggle with Islam. It completed the adoption of crusading posture: on August 28, 1463 Fra Michele, a well-known Franciscan from Milan, preached the crusade on piazza San Marco before an enormous crowd and in the presence of the Venetian nobles as well as of Cardinal Bessarion, who had played an instrumental role in the union of the churches, proclaimed at the Council of Florence in 1439. An ardent supporter of the crusade Bessarion was not only the papal legate on that occasion but also remained an important Venetian ally in the curia for the remainder of his life (he died in 1472) and Venice's preferred candidate to the papal throne in 1471.

Although Venice had not allowed the collection of crusading tithes in previous years, Fra Michele was permitted to threaten with excommunication every man and every woman who would not pay one thirtieth of his or her income for the crusade. Thus Venetian women—deprived of legal and economic

[55]Dei, *La Cronica*, 161, rejoiced in the perspective of Florentine preeminence in trade with the Ottomans. See also Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 224.

[56]On the trade of Ancona in this period see Eliyahu Ashtor, "Il commercio levantino di Ancona," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 88 (1976), 213–53.

[57]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 154^{r} (May 26, 1463) shows that Venice had requested both Florence and Ancona to refrain from sending vessels over 150 *botte* to the straits (more precisely galleasses and other vessels in the case of Florence, round-ships and other vessels in that of Ancona).

[58]For the campaign itself, which Malipiero treats at some length, see Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 53–4, 64–74, 79–84, 96–101; and Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 247–9, 252–7. The General of the Army in the Morea was never a Venetian and was always subordinated to the admiral, who remained at all times the supreme Venetian commander beyond-the-sea. See, for example, the commission of Orsato Giustiniani, A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, ff. 220^{v}–2^{r} (January 10, 1464); and Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 54. On the Morea in the decades preceding the war see John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor, 1987), 538–46, 561–8.

persona as they were—found themselves personally obliged to contribute to the crusade. Venetian Jews, who did not have access to the most lucrative Venetian commerce,[59] were obliged to pay a twentieth and hence to support the interests of the patriciate (presented in a Christian dress on top of that) more substantially than the lay Venetians themselves. At the same time the Papacy readily volunteered the local church's taking of the biggest burden, as a tenth had to be levied on ecclesiastical incomes.[60] Thus Venice, which as recently as the summer of 1462 had not been willing to consider participation in a crusade, radically changed its views over the course of only one year to the point of embracing it.

At this point the Senate engaged in a flurry of activity aimed at enhancing the war effort. Venice attempted to build military alliances that would surround Mehmed from east and west. Two days after Fra Michele had preached his sermon, the Senate ordered that ambassadors be sent to Uzun Hasan, ruler of the Aqquyunlu, and to Ibrahim, emir of Karaman, the eastern neighbors of the Ottomans.[61] On September 12 Mathias Corvinus, the King of Hungary, accepted

[59]Throughout the Middle Ages, and even in the fifteenth century, commerce between Venice, the Levant, and Romania was in the hands of Venetian citizens. Marked by restrictions in law and pragmatism in practice, the Jewish presence in the city of Venice itself was sporadic prior to the at first temporary and then permanent reception of the Jews from Mestre (confined to the Ghetto Nuovo in 1516), in the wake of Venice's defeat at Agnadello at the hands of the League of Cambrai in 1509. On Venice, Jews, and long-distance trade see Benjamin Arbel, "Jews in International Trade. The Emergence of the Levantines and Ponentines," *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, ed. Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore, 2001), 73–96; on the Jews in Venice prior to the establishment of the ghetto, David Jacoby, *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XIIe au XVe siècle. Peuples, societies, economies* (London, 1979), no. VIII–XII; and Benjamin Ravid, "The Legal Status of the Jews in Venice to 1509," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 54 (1987), 169–202. More in general, see Benjamin Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice, 1382–1797* (Aldershot, 2003); and Gaetano Cozzi, ed., *Gli Ebrei e Venezia: secoli XIV–XVIII* (Milan, 1987). On the intricacies of Venetian citizenship see Reinhold Mueller, "Veneti Facti Privilegio: stranieri naturalizzati a Venezia tra XIV e XVI secolo," *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri XIV–XVIII secolo*, ed. Donatella Calabi e Paola Canaro (Rome, 1998), 41–51; idem, "Greeks in Venice and Venetians in Greece. Notes on Citizenship and Immigration in the late Middle Ages," *Ricchi e poveri nella società dell'Oriente Greco-Latino*, Chrysa ed. A. Maltezou (Venice, 1998), 167–80.

[60]The income from this crusading tax is said to have amounted to the very large sum of 700,000 ducats, *Annali Veneti di Domenico Malipiero*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1843), 18. See also Lopez, "Il principio della guerra," 60 n. 65, and 77; and Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 244–5. The papal instructions to Bessarion are published in L. Mohler, "Bessarions Instruktion für die Kreuzzugspredigt in Venedig (1463)," *Römische Quartalschrift* 35 (1927), 337–49. The crusading bull became valid for all Christendom in October, Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 92.

[61]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, ff. 181^{v}–2^{r} (August 30, 1463), see also ff. 191^{v}–2^{r} (October 6, 1463), the latter also in Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," no.23, 123–4, full text. On Venice and naval help to Uzun Hasan,A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 209^{v} (December 2, 1463). On Uzun Hasan and on the relations between him and Mehmed II including the emirs of Karaman

the proposed anti-Ottoman pact, which guaranteed Venice at least one ally with significant land forces willing to fight the Ottomans from the west.[62] In October Venice concluded an anti-Ottoman alliance with Pope Pius II and Philip, Duke of Burgundy,[63] and the Senate deliberated a commendation of Pius for his intentions to personally head the crusading army.[64] In addition, Venice tried to help its military effort by reaching peace in its immediate hinterland: it was important that Pope Pius II and Sigismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini, formerly excommunicated by the Pope but supported by Venice, put an end to their conflict.[65]

Venice also took measures to ensure the supply of war material. Concerned with the state of the Arsenal, the Senate ordered local authorities throughout the Venetian dominion to help with the supply of munitions as well as to apply diligence in seeking out debtors to the Signoria.[66] It then elected a nobleman to collect horses, arms, and whatever else was deemed necessary for battle.[67] Despite the war, Venice was also maintaining patrol galleys in the upper Adriatic determined as ever to counter any infringement of its self-proclaimed exclusive economic rights in the *Golfo*.[68]

Venetian efforts to enforce the embargo represented a very significant portion of this frenzy of activity. On September 9, Paolo Mauroceno, a minister of war, proposed a set of instructions to the Venetian ambassador at the papal curia, which included the order to ensure "that from now on it will not be licit for any of the faithful to practice trade in the country of the said Turk."[69] He thus proposed an embargo very different from the one already in force. The 1462 embargo was selective, aimed at depriving the Ottomans of access to new

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Ibrahim and Pir Ahmed, see John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu. Clan. Confederation. Empire* (Salt Lake City, 1999 [1976]), 87–123; and Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 302–22.

[62]A. S. Venezia, *Libri Commemoriali*, Reg. 15, f. 88^{r} (September 12, 1463) with summary in Predelli, *I Libri Commemoriali*, V, no.93, 150. See also A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 192^{r-v} with summary in Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," no.24, 124.

[63]Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 249. Philip had displayed a strong interest in the crusade, Richard J. Walsh, "Charles the Bold and the Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977, 1), 53.

[64]But its transmission to the pope was postponed; A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f194^{r} (October 13, 1463), partly transcribed in Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," no. 25, 124–5. Lopez seems to have thought that he had fully transcribed the document and accepted it as a passed motion, ibid., 94–5 n. 196, but it is not; the transmission of the letter was postponed until the next report from the Venetian ambassador at Rome had arrived.

[65]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 185^{r} (September 9, 1463). The news reached Venice on September 2. Much information on the relations between Venice, Malatesta, and Pope Pius II can be found inA. S. Venezia Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21.

[66]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Terra Reg. 5, f. 51^{v} [52^{v}] (September 24, 1463).

[67]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Terra Reg. 5, f. 54^{r} [55^{r}] (October 2, 1463).

[68]Which can be deduced from A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 174^{r} (August 11, 1463) and f. 175 $^{r-v}$ (August 14, 1463).

[69]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 184 r–v (September 9, 1463). Quotation from f. 184^{v}.

technology. It appears to have seriously hurt Venetian trade with the Ottomans, but this was the side-effect of the fact that valuable cargo and large quantities of common goods alike were in fact transported by large vessels, those struck by the prohibitions. Conversely, Mauroceno proposed an embargo that may have included ships but that focused on trade itself.

Thus the idea of a total embargo on trade with the Ottomans was now on the table. But, although it did not fail, it was put aside.[70] Instead of offering a detailed exposition, the ambassador was to simply assure the pope that Venice had entered into open war with Mehmed.[71] While Venice postponed the attempt to convince the pope that a general embargo against the Ottomans was necessary, news arrived that the Florentine galleasses were preparing for their voyage east, and the Senate decided to raise this narrower issue both in Florence and in Rome; its new crusading stance and the peace between Pius and Malatesta enabled this new initiative.[72] In addition, the Senate decided to send an envoy to Ancona to ask for that city's halt of trade and to threaten action in the case of non-compliance.[73] Finally, the Senate instructed admiral Loredan to prevent vessels from those cities from entering the Straits.[74]

The new Venetian attempts to enforce the embargo met with some initial success. From a new set of instructions to Loredan we learn that Pius II had in fact agreed to write to Florence on Venice's behalf and that, under the weight of his letter, Florence had agreed to withhold its galleys to Constantinople and the Straits. Venice had been informed that the galleasses might be headed to Chios instead, which Loredan was to allow. However, he was to remain vigilant and oppose any Florentine attempt to penetrate into the Straits and go to Constantinople.[75]

Whatever the sentiments on the streets of Florence and the gossip at the Roman curia, the Florentine government itself took the Venetian and papal letters seriously and did indeed send to Venice a prominent ambassador, Tommaso Soderini. The office of diplomatic representative was the "pinnacle of

[70]A.S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 184^{v} (September 9, 1463).

[71]A.S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 185^{r} (September 9, 1463).

[72]Which was taken up by the ambassadors Febo Capella in Florence and Bernardo Giustiniani in Rome, A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, ff. 186^{v}–7^{v} (September 17, 1463). See also Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 85.

[73]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, ff. 187^{v}–8^{r} (September 18, 1463).

[74]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 189^{v} (September 22, 1463).

[75]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 193^{v} (October 11, 1463). Accepted motions were usually, but not always, marked by cross in the margin. There are cases, however, in which that was not the case, as when no cross was put for dozens and dozens of folios. There are some cases in which it is difficult to determine whether a given decision was passed or not. On this occasion there is no cross, but since the voting record is 102 to four "against" to three "neutral" it can be regarded as a passed decision. In his brief summary of the Venetian decisions on the embargo in September 1463, Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 85, also treats this decision as a passed one.

a Florentine's political carrier,"[76] and in fact Soderini was not just any Florentine. He had married into a family known for its close relations with the Medici, had occupied himself with matters of commerce, including a new legislation concerning the Florentine galleys, had twice been Standard-Bearer of Justice, and in 1472 was listed among the wealthiest Florentines.[77] Once in Venice, Soderini raised the issue of the galleasses. In its answer Venice stressed that it wanted Florence to refrain from sending the galleys to Constantinople and the Straits, not to the whole of Levant.[78] Soderini was not satisfied with this answer and remained in Venice where he had a long conversation with doge Cristoforo Moro[79] but this did not alter the Venetian stance.[80] Thus the Venetian embargo against Mehmed II became a matter of Italian politics that concerned the Papacy, the Florentines, Ancona, and even Milan.[81]

Just before the arrival of Soderini, Venice found itself in a favorable position not to be equaled throughout the course of the war. Its embargo had apparently prevented the Ottomans from seizing further Venetian vessels and had disrupted trade by limiting the access of Venetian-transported goods to the Ottoman market. The land campaign in the Morea had been a success as territory that had never been in Venetian hands had been conquered.[82] The king of Hungary had become an ally, and his land forces provided a welcome addition to the power of the Venetian fleet, whose superiority over the Ottoman the Senate deemed secure.[83] Venice was hopeful that it could use Uzun Hasan and Pir Ahmad as powerful allies in the rear of the Ottomans as well as Skanderbeg in Albania.[84] Finally, Pius II was to personally head a general crusade of all Christians, and there was still hope that at least the Duke of Burgundy might participate with a powerful land army.

While Soderini was negotiating in Venice, the reversal in the Morea came just as quickly as the initial Venetian offensive. By November 4 the commander of the land troops lay dead and disease attacked the Venetian army as captured

[76]Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici*, 69.

[77]Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici*, 30–1 on his marriage to Dianora Tornabuoni, 119, on his being listed among the wealthiest Florentines by Benedetto Dei, 66–7 for the rest.

[78]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 199^{r} (November 4, 1463).

[79]In the *promissioni* of whom one finds the change from *comune* to *signoria*, Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, IV, 312–3.

[80]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 204^{v} (November 18, 1463).

[81]See for example Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," no.29, 126–7 (October 19, 1463).

[82]For the initial successes in the Morea, Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 64–75, 79–82.

[83]Even a few years later, Venice was to still consider itself superior in "power, virtue, and experience in naval matters" to the "perfidious Turks," Sen. Mar Reg. 8 ff. 137^{v}–8^{r} (August 17, 1467).

[84]On Skanderbeg and the Ottomans see Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans,* 556–8, 595–9. The diplomatic efforts of the Senate early in the war are well noted by Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 78, as are other episodes later in the war elsewhere in the literature, yet the place of diplomacy in the Venetian foreign policy instrumentarium throughout the conflict as a whole remains only partly explored.

Ottoman spies revealed that preparations for an attack were under way in the Ottoman camp. Consequently, the Venetian forces withdrew from the newly rebuilt Hexamilion, the defensive fortifications designed to defend the Peloponnesus by preventing access to the peninsula. The Ottoman army was now awarded the initiative in the Morea, a situation from which Venice was not to recover.[85]

As the land army was suffering defeat in the Morea, the Senate transformed the 1462 embargo on travel to Constantinople on large ships into a total one. The "new" embargo was shaped through a sequence of decisions taken between late December 1463 and late May 1464. Directed at the Ottomans as well as the Genoese of Chios, it encompassed all trade and even forbade the Venetians from selling ships to foreigners other than crusaders. In this form, the "new" embargo would remain in place for the duration of the war, and the papal curia was to be consistently supplicated to make it legally valid for all Christians.

First, the Senate unanimously decided to place the issue of access to the Straits (and to any other Ottoman territories) before the pope. Ludovico Foscarini, the Venetian ambassador, was instructed to use whatever words and reasons he found suitable in order to obtain Pius II's backing of the Venetian embargo.[86] Alongside this attempt to reinvigorate the papal embargo, which it had often found an irritant in the past, Venice strengthened its own. The instructions that the Senate prepared for the new Captain General of the Sea and supreme commander of all Venetian naval and land forces, Orsato Giustiniani, required him to ensure that saltpeter (which was essential for gunpowder), arms, and any other munitions and things (*res*) not be delivered to the "Turks."[87]

Just three days after Giustiniani's instructions were approved, the Senate prohibited all sales of ships to foreigners. The Senate recalled that it had prohibited the travel of ships of more than 150 *botte* to the Straits so that they would not be confiscated by the Ottomans and used against the Christians. However, the motion explains, many Venetian subjects from Crete had found ways to profit from the situation by selling their carracks in Genoese Chios, from which island they ended up in Ottoman hands. Hence, the Senate now forbade Venetian citizens or subjects from selling carracks to foreigners; only potential crusaders, such as the duke of Burgundy, were exempted. The order was to be published throughout the Empire: in Corfu, Modon, Coron, Negroponte, and Candia.[88]

[85]For the reversal in the Morea, Lopez, "Il Principio della Guerra," 82–5, 96–101, and specifically 99–100; see also Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 248–9.

[86]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Terra, Reg. 5, f. 65^{r} [66^{r}] (December 30, 1463). Between December 1463 and October 1472, Venice wrote to its ambassadors in Rome to request a papal ban on all trade with the Ottomans at least fourteen times.

[87]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 21, f. 221^{r} (January 10, 1464).

[88]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar, Reg. 7 f144^{v} (January 13, 1464).

Meanwhile, when ambassadors of the Genoese Mahona that ruled Chios approached the city of St. Mark for aid against the "Turk," Venice did not miss the chance to make its case for its anti-Ottoman embargo. The Senate was ready to supply naval support, but it also raised the question of merchants from Chios who supplied the Ottomans with munitions, arms, saltpeter, anchors, and other war material. The Senate also wanted the Mahona to stop paying the annual tribute to the sultan, which amounted to several thousand ducats.[89]

As these attempts to collaborate with the Genoese of Chios failed, the Venetian embargo against the Ottomans attained its final shape on May 29 when an almost unanimous Senate declared that

> It is banned by law ... for a citizen or subject of ours to have any commerce in any land or place subject to the Turk; by reason of which prohibition many found a way to send their merchandise and goods to the island of Chios which is nothing else but to say that they practice trade in the said lands and places of the Turks.[90]

Consequently, all Venetians were prohibited from sailing to Chios on any vessels, Venetian or foreign, under penalty of the forfeit of their goods and a ten-year term of exile from Venice or the place of origin. This was a heavy penalty, but it appears that Venice did not consider enforcing such a ban on the Genoese themselves, thus making allowance for a continuance of some trade between the islands.[91] Hence, this document exemplifies not only the importance that the Senate awarded to the halt of trade but also the limitations that Genoese naval and commercial power placed on Venetian action, demonstrating the limits that a city that depended on commerce faced when using an embargo as its chief foreign policy tool.

As the embargo, which in 1462 was a measure aimed at preventing Ottoman access to large ships, became an all-encompassing one in 1464, ad-hoc senatorial decisions became necessary even for trade meant to ensure the sustenance of

[89]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 22, ff. 6^{v}–7^{r} [8^{v}–9^{r}] (March 17, 1464). The Senate rallied behind this motion, 144 senators supported it and only 7 opposed it. Of course, except when in conflict with the Ottomans, Venice itself regularly paid tribute for its possessions in the Balkans, see Momčilo Spremić, "I tributi Veneziani nel Levante," *Studi Veneziani* 13 (1971), 221–51.

[90]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar Reg. 7, f. 171^{r} (May 29, 1464). The decision was voted 125 to 2 nays to 2 *non sinceri* (senators who want a rephrased motion). Meanwhile trade between Chios and Constantinople appears to have been going on as usual, on May 29, 1464 the patron of a caravel from Naples obliged himself for the transport of wine to Pera, Philip Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island, 1346–1566*, III, *Notarial Deeds* (Cambridge, 1958), 789–90.

[91]In fact, later in the war, we find two Genoese, one born in Genoa but an inhabitant of Venice and the other born in Pera yet resident of Crete, in front of a notary in Chios, Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios*, III, 804–5 (August 12, 1471).

Venetian subjects. First in March and then in October 1464, the Senate issued a permit for the Venetians in Corfu and Negroponte to cross religious and political divides and purchase grains from Ottoman-held territory. On both occasions, the Senate stressed that no other trade was permitted. It is notable that despite the necessity to ensure the food supply of Venetian territories, neither motion made it through the Senate without difficulty.[92]

In 1465, the Senate sought to strengthen the embargo further. Apparently, Apulia had served as a crossroad of contraband; steel (refined iron, *azalia*) had been legally imported in the *Regno* only to be shipped to Valona (Vlore, in Albania) and other Ottoman-held territories on the eastern shores of the Adriatic. The Senate hence enacted an order requiring those who wished to export *azalia* to the *Regno* to place surety and to obtain a 'counter-letter' (testifying that delivery to a legal recipient had, in fact, occurred) from the Venetian officials at the destination. Those found guilty were to be subjected to the penalties prescribed in the law that enforced the perpetual papal ban against Muslims for Venetian citizens and subjects.[93]

Thus by spring 1464 Venice had deployed a total embargo against Sultan Mehmed II, which it then sought to strengthen by closing perceived loopholes. This total embargo appears to have been not the result of premeditated action, but rather of a sequence of ad-hoc decisions, an outcome contingent upon developments which the Senate seems not to have foreseen. The Senate, for whose members the conflict—if not the war—with Mehmed started with the seizure of four Venetian carracks in Constantinople in the summer of 1462 appears to have at first followed the old Venetian practice of coercing foreign rulers to effect policy changes in favor of Venice through the withdrawal of Venetian trade, a tactic that may had worked well as recently as 1450 against Constantine XI, the last Byzantine emperor.[94] In addition, both official statements and senatorial actions from 1463 suggest that the Senate anticipated a short conflict. Only when stalemate ensued in late 1463—when the Ottomans recovered the Morea but did not attempt to conquer any key Venetian territories

[92]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 22, f. 6^{r-v} (March 17, 1464), which passed with 70 approvals, 50 nays, and 14 *non sinceri* and Sen. Mar Reg. 7, f. 199^{v} (October 11, 1464), which failed to pass on the first attempt.

[93]A. S. Venezia, Sen. Mar Reg. 8, f. 16^{r} (March 21, 1465). Venetian penalties for transgressing the papal embargo, which, contrary to common opinion, Venice often enforced, consisted, for first offense, of a two-year prison term, loss of the contraband or the profit from it and that much more as a monetary fine; the punishment for a second offense discriminated on the basis of social standing, A. S. Venezia, Maggior Consiglio Reg. 23 Regina, ff. 18^{v}–19^{r} (February 6, 1458). For enforcement see the records of Avogadori di Comun.

[94]See Freddy Thiriet, *Régestes des Délibérations du sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie* (Paris, 1961), III, no.2834, 159 (August 17, 1450) and Predelli, *Commemoriali,* V, no.168–9, 55 (23 October 1450).

or outposts—did what appears to modern eyes as a war plan emerge. Venice was to attempt to win the conflict by preventing the Ottomans from access to large ships and hence securing control over the sea and by halting all Venetian trade and disturbing that of Florence and Ancona, and even that of Genoa, in an attempt to hurt Mehmed II's revenues on foreign trade. It was to also use diplomacy backed by economic aid to Mehmed's enemies as a counterpart to its embargo against him.[95] The embargo, however, was to be not only the first but also the only foreign policy tool that Venice consistently employed against Mehmed II during the conflict of 1462–1479. Indeed, from mid-1464, the Ottoman conquest of Negroponte in 1470 and the constant skirmishes elsewhere in the western Balkans notwithstanding,[96] Venice was to oppose Mehmed II primarily through the *devedo*.

[95]Venice, in fact, provided economic support to the anti-Ottoman efforts of the King of Hungary and the Papacy; a papal legate, for example, was licensed to export whatever necessary for the completion of the papal galleys without the payment of taxes or custom dues, A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 22, f. 17^{r-v} [19^{r-v}] (June 1, 1464). Venice was also to try to furnish the Aqquyunlu leader Uzun Hasan, perhaps the greatest opponent Mehmed II ever faced, with cutting edge technology, artillery, at no cost to him. For documents concerning Venice's relations with Uzun Hasan see A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 25; and Enrico Cornet, *Le guerre dei Veneti nell'Asia 1470–1474* (Vienna, 1856). On the relations between Venice and Persia in the period see Giorgio Rota, *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450–1797)* (Vienna, 2009).

[96]These involved possessions in the Western Balkans, which were less important to Venice than the maritime empire, see for example A. S. Venezia, Sen. Del. Sec. Reg. 28, f. 59^{v} [69^{v}] (November 18, 1477), $f60^{r-v}$ [70^{r-v}] (November 18, 1477), ff. 62^{v}–4^{r} [72^{v}–4^{r}] (November 29, 1477). On Venice's possessions in Albania see Giuseppe Valentini, "Appunti sul regime degli stabilimenti veneti in Albania," *Studi Veneziani* 8 (1966), 195–265.