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THE VENETIAN CRUSADE OF 1122-1124

On 8 August 1122 a large fleet left Venice for the East. The Venetians, who had taken the cross¹, paused to attack Byzantine Corfu in retaliation for an attempt by the Emperor John Comnenus to reduce their privileges, but they abandoned the siege of the city there on learning that King Baldwin II of Jerusalem had been captured by the Muslim prince Belek of Kharput. The coast of Palestine was reached in May 1123. An Egyptian fleet was destroyed off Ascalon, Christmas was spent in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Tyre was besieged on 15 February 1124 and fell on 7 July. The Venetians were rewarded with a third of Tyre and its territory and with important commercial privileges, which had probably been promised them already by Baldwin of Jerusalem as inducements to crusade². They returned home by way of the Aegean, sacking Greek islands and territory as they went. Their pillaging brought the Greek government to heel and in August 1126 John Comnenus confirmed and extended their privileges³. The story of their crusade is well-known and I do not intend to spend much more time on it. Instead, I want to consider the background to it and its wider implications.

¹ *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, in MGH SS 14:73; *Chronicon Altinate* ed. A. Rossi, in *Archivio storico italiano* 8 (1845), 153; MARTIN DA CANAL, *Les Estoires de Venise. Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. A. Limentani (Florence, 1972), pp. 30, 32; ANDREA DANDOLO, *Chronica*, in RIS NS 12, 1:232. See also Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 657.

² William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, in RHC Oc. 1:551.

³ F. THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne au moyen âge* (Paris, 1959), p. 41; S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1951-54), 2:166-71.

The chain of events that led to the crusade began with the disaster that befell the Latin Christians in northern Syria on 28 June 1119 at the Battle of the Field of Blood, where Prince Roger of Antioch was killed. Baldwin of Jerusalem hurried North to take charge of the principality, and he and the Patriarch of Antioch must have agreed to appeal to the West for help. This subject was certainly discussed on 23 January 1120, at the Council of Nablus, at which the king, the patriarch of Jerusalem and the secular and ecclesiastical leaders of the kingdom were present⁴. Baldwin then sent embassies with letters to Pope Calixtus II and Domenico Michiel, the Doge of Venice. The king's embassy to Venice was joined there by *nuntii* sent by the pope, who brought a letter calling on the Venetians "to hasten, instructed by faith, to help the faithful of Christ." The letters from Jerusalem and Rome were solemnly read to the doge and leading citizens of Venice, who then took the cross. On hearing of their response to his appeal, the pope sent them a *vexillum sancti Petri*, the papal banner traditionally presented to those fighting in wars with papal approval⁵.

It would be good to be able to establish the date of the arrival of the embassies from the East and the exchanges between the pope and Venice. Clues may be provided in Calixtus's correspondence. On 6 July 1121 three letters were sent in his name to Jerusalem. Two of them concerned the Holy Sepulchre, confirming the privileges of the canons and ruling on the status of the *cantor* and *succentor*, who had to live in the commu-

⁴ CERBANUS CERBANI, *Translatio mirifici martyris Isidori a Chio insula in civitatem Venetam*, in RHC Oc. 5:322; H. E. MAYER, « The Concordat of Nablus, » *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 532.

⁵ CERBANUS CERBANI, pp. 322-3; *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, p. 73; *Chronicon Altinate*, p. 153; MARTIN DA CANAL, pp. 30, 32; ANDREA DANDOLO, p. 232; ORDERIC VITALIS, *Historia aeclesiastica*, ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1969-79), 6:128. See also *Annales Venetici breves*, in MHG SS 14:71. For *vexilla sancti Petri* see C. Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, trans. M. W. Baldwin and W. Goffart (Princeton, 1977), pp. 182-200.

nity⁶. The third, addressed to the king, clergy and people, confirmed the election of Patriarch Warmund, in response to letters and "legates" sent to the pope informing him of it; the Latins in the East were told that Bishop Peter of Porto had been commissioned to bring Warmund the *pallium*⁷. Warmund had probably been elected in the autumn of 1118⁸. It is unlikely that he and the king would have waited for over a year, until after the Council of Nablus, before informing the pope. On the other hand, Calixtus had only been made pope in February 1119; the news would not have reached the East until the spring and may have required the commissioning of a new embassy, which might have been delayed in the turmoil that followed the catastrophe of the Field of Blood. So we might assume the departure of an embassy to Rome in the spring of 1120 carrying both the formal announcement of Warmund's election and an appeal for help. The pope's initial exchanges with Venice could have taken place in the autumn of that year. By July 1121 plans were well enough advanced for the crusade to be on Calixtus's mind; his letter on the patriarchate seems to contain a veiled reference to it, since he wrote of the Roman Church which

is working on your behalf every day both beyond the Alps and this side of them (*in ultramontanis et citramontanis partibus*).

A fourth letter from Calixtus's correspondence appears to confirm that the pope was in touch with Venice about the crusade at this time. On 24 July he recognized a religious foundation made by a Venetian cleric. This had been notified to him by Peter of Porto, who had obviously been in Venice⁹. Since Peter

⁶ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, ed. U. Robert, 1 (Paris, 1891), 362-3, 365-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-5.

⁸ R. HIESTAND, « Chronologisches zur Geschichte des Königreiches Jerusalem um 1130, » *Deutsches Archiv* 26 (1970), 228-9.

⁹ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, 1:366.

had been commissioned to take Warmund's *pallium* to Jerusalem, he had presumably gone to Venice on his way to the East. Perhaps he also took the *vexillum sancti Petri* for the doge; perhaps he had been appointed crusade legate.

This, of course, is supposition. But it is clear that, since Pope Calixtus addressed a formal crusade letter to Venice, the general view that there were no appeals to crusade in the East issued by the popes between Paschal II and Eugenius III is erroneous. And the question arises whether Calixtus's appeal was sent only to the Venetians. There is, in fact, evidence that he aimed at a larger audience. First, the crusade was discussed at the First Lateran Council, which met between 18 March and 6 April 1123. The council, perhaps at its session on 27 March, approved a decree granting the indulgence and the protection of the Church to

those who go to Jerusalem and offer powerful aid to the defence of the Christian people and to the vanquishing of the tyranny of the infidels;

it peremptorily ordered those who had taken the cross "either for the expedition to Jerusalem or for that to Spain" — a point to which I will return — and had "taken their crosses off" to put them back on their clothes and depart before Easter 1124 under threat of excommunication and interdict¹⁰. The wording of this decree, and that of a letter probably associated with it in which Calixtus wrote of "the remission of sins that we conceded to the defenders of the eastern Church,"¹¹ suggest that the pope's appeal had not been confined to Venice.

Secondly, although I know of no other letters from him concerning the crusade to the East, there is some evidence for

¹⁰ Conc. Lateran. I § 10, in *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo, P.-P. Joannou, C. Leonardi and P. Prodi (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1962), pp. 167-8. See K. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, (Paris 1907-52) 5:630-44.

¹¹ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, 2:266-7.

other crusaders to Palestine besides the Venetians. Fulcher of Chartres, who was present in the East, wrote of the Venetian ships carrying "armed men, both Venetians and pilgrims (*peregrini*) attached to them." Heinrich Hagenmeyer, Fulcher's editor, thought this was a reference to pilgrims, perhaps Germans, who had sailed with the Venetian fleet, but *peregrini* was, of course, a word that could be used of crusaders and I am inclined to believe that that is what these were¹², since there is evidence for men in eastern Europe, Germany and France taking the cross at this time. An abortive crusade of Bohemians under Count Dlugomil and Bishop Henry of Olmütz departed in March 1123; most had returned to Bohemia by the end of the year without, apparently, ever reaching the Holy Land¹³. They were followed by two leaders called Hermann and Lutebor, who left for Jerusalem on 12 February 1124¹⁴. In 1123 Meingot, the son of the *camerarius* of the archbishop of Mainz, made the church of Mainz his heir on his departure for Jerusalem¹⁵. An eclipse of the moon at the beginning of February 1124 so terrified the future Conrad III of Germany that he took the cross, vowing "to go to Jerusalem to fight for Christ." Many apparently agreed to go with him¹⁶; perhaps Count Dedo of Wettin, who went to the East about this time and brought back with him a relic of the True Cross for the monastery of Lauterberg, was among them¹⁷. A group of French charters ap-

¹² Fulcher of Chartres, p. 657 and note 7. See also the reference to the "Christiani nominis milites qui militiae Christianae ibidem [Jerusalem] studuerant," who offered Charles of Flanders the crown of Jerusalem in 1123. Galbert of Bruges, *Passio Karoli comitis*, in MGH SS 12:564.

¹³ Cosmas of Prague, *Chronica Boemorum*, in MGH SS 9:125; R. RÖHRICHT, *Die Deutschen im Heiligen Lande* (Innsbruck, 1894), p. 25.

¹⁴ Cosmas of Prague, p. 127.

¹⁵ *Codex diplomaticus Nassoicus*, ed. W. Sauer, 1 (Wiesbaden, 1885), 99-100.

¹⁶ Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon*, in MGH SS 6:262.

¹⁷ *Chronicon Montis Sereni*, in MGH SS 23:139; *Genealogia Wettinensis*, in MGH SS 23:228.