

4-2017

Mike Carr. Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean, 1291-1352.

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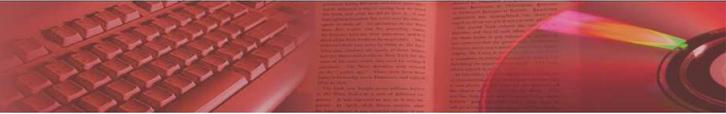
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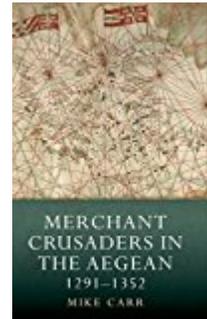
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Mike Carr. *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean, 1291-1352*. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2015. xii + 196 pp. \$99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84383-990-3.



Reviewed by Matthew King (University of Minnesota)

Published on H-War (April, 2017)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air War College)

Mike Carr's monograph *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean: 1291-1352* presents an innovative perspective on the history of the eastern Mediterranean during the period following the fall of Acre in 1291 through the middle of the fourteenth century. In writing this book, Carr "aims to cut across the sub-genres of economic and crusading history" by considering how people of the Latin West perceived the Turks, how they formulated a military response to the Turks, and how the maritime republics of Italy negotiated their mercantile goals with the crusading ideals of the papacy (p. 6). By analyzing the dynamic relationship between the commercial bottom line and religious ideology, in which the interests of the latter almost always took priority over the former for Italian merchants, Carr paints a nuanced picture of the complexities of the eastern Mediterranean in the years following the fall of the Levantine crusader states.

Chapter 1 outlines the splintered and "insecure" political world of the Aegean Sea in the late thirteenth century, which featured a diverse landscape of peoples and polities competing over this strategic region (p. 18). A plurality of Latins, Greeks, and Turks sought supremacy to no avail in the region, all while the papacy sought to motivate Latin Christians to fight against the Byzantines

in order to restore (in some form) the Latin Empire of Constantinople. Although the 1320s saw a time of reduced Latin and papal aggression against the Byzantines, there was still hostility against the schismatic Greeks that would influence political policy throughout the period.

Chapter 2 considers how various chronicles and documentary sources from the Latin West depicted the Turks and their *beyliks* (principalities) in the early-to-mid fourteenth century. Carr argues that there was a fundamental transformation of depictions of the Turks during this time. In the early fourteenth century, Latin sources regarded the Turks and their patchwork of beyliks in Anatolia with both amity and ambiguity. Most Latin authors held negative views of them, inspired by centuries of anti-Muslim rhetoric that had fueled the Crusades, but other authors saw the Turks as potential allies or used their victories as rationale for the sins of Christians. As the decades progressed and Latin authors became more familiar with the Turks, particularly their legendary hero Umur Pasha, they consequently developed more refined rhetoric for holy war against the Anatolian beyliks. Rhetoric that was previously transferable between Muslims or non-Christians of different ethnicities became distinctly "anti-Turkish" and more specific

to the political situation in the Aegean (p. 57).

Chapter 3 traces the foundation and use of naval leagues to combat the Turks at sea. Local Latin powers in the central and eastern Mediterranean formed these fleets of galleys for campaigns against the Turks. The papacy helped to facilitate the formation of naval leagues and often granted crusader privileges to their participants. The creation of these small fleets was a far cry from the grand campaign of the First Crusade and other early crusades, which saw large-scale cooperation from different polities. Instead, naval leagues were a pragmatic solution to the fragmented political landscape of the Aegean, in which local Latin lords cooperated for smaller campaigns aimed to help their lands. These conflicts were more about local politics than they were about a clash between Latins and Turks.

Chapter 4 explores the logistics required of the campaigns that these naval leagues conducted. Carr outlines the development of bireme galleys as the standard vessel for Latin powers fighting in the Aegean against the Turks. The battles between Latin and Turkish forces on these ships were largely amphibious affairs, in which fleets sought to use both the coastline and the sea to their advantage. Through an analysis of naval battles between Latins and Turks during the mid-fourteenth century, Carr concludes that these naval leagues “were highly effective enterprises, which combined powerful and well-equipped fleets with skilled captains and crews” to resist Turkish aggression in the Aegean (p. 93).

Chapter 5 considers the role of the papacy in the campaigns of the Latin West against the Turks in the larger context of the crusading movement. Pope John XXII (1316-34) was reluctant to provide sweeping crusader privileges to naval campaigns against the Turks, instead choosing to support French campaigns targeting the Holy Land. His only contribution to Aegean campaigns came in 1333-34, in which he opportunistically supported a Venetian campaign after all the logistics and financial arrangements had already been provided. The papacy of John XII contrasts with that of Pope Clement VI (1342-52), who was more eager to be involved in and support campaigns against the Turks. He committed substantial papal resources, both financial and spiritual, to campaigns in the Aegean and had a vested interest in its success. Papal letters reveal the extent of his involvement in these campaigns. Clement VI’s support in Aegean crusading manifested in the use of his “full arsenal of crusading mechanisms,” including the full crusade indulgence

(p. 118).

Chapter 6 moves away from military campaigns and to a discussion of the commercial ties that bound the Aegean amidst this violence. The changing role of the papacy is central to Carr’s analysis. In the early fourteenth century, the papacy promulgated to Christian traders an embargo on trading with the Muslim world. This policy was unsatisfactory to merchants (and merchant crusaders) in the Aegean, for whom trade with Muslims in Egypt was essential to the maintenance of their colonies. As the fourteenth century progressed, Carr argues, the papacy came to realize the need for Christians to trade with Muslims for the benefit of crusading. This seemingly contradictory policy manifested in the issuance of licenses that exempted Christian merchants from the ban on trading with Muslims. During the reign of Clement VI, for example, some 48 cogs and 110 galleys were given permission to trade in Mamluk Egypt. The expansion of these licenses shows the willingness of the papacy to amend its anti-Muslim trade policies in consideration of the economic realities of those in the Aegean who were fighting on its behalf.

Carr draws on a diverse array of archival sources to craft this argument. He conducted extensive research in the Vatican archives, which are used to particular effect in chapter 6 to show the proliferation of trade licenses for merchant crusaders. He uses these documents alongside a host of published Latin sources that document papal policy during the fourteenth century. Carr complements these papal-centric sources with archival documents from Italian archives relating largely to trade as well as published chronicles, histories, and treatises that provide patchwork coverage of events in the Aegean. Turkish sources are unfortunately slim for this period, with the *Düstürnâme* (an epic poem devoted to the life of Umur Pasha) being the only one of particular relevance.

Carr’s research is part of a growing body of medieval scholarship that transcends the boundaries of modern nation-states and instead focuses on cross-cultural interactions around a particular body of water. *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean* complements transnational research projects that are at the center of burgeoning fields like Mediterranean studies and Atlantic studies. His work also complements recent scholarship on the Crusades that works to undermine the idea that relationships between Christians and Muslims during the Middle Ages were little more than a “clash of civilizations.” Carr convincingly argues that relations between merchant cru-

saders and their Turkish adversaries were a complicated affair, one in which the landscape was divided by divergent political, economic, and religious motivations. By pitting interfaith conflict against the backdrop of the larger Mediterranean world in which it was happening, Carr makes a compelling case for the “merchant crusader,” one that ought to be considered in other theaters in which the crusading phenomenon occurred.

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Citation: Matthew King. Review of Carr, Mike, *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean, 1291-1352*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. April, 2017.

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