**Hostility and Rapprochement**

**In the Crusading Holy Land**

Favorable public opinion has always been an essential condition for successfully starting a war.[[1]](#footnote-1) One crucial stage in this process is the demonization of the enemy, which may contribute the ideological justification for military initiatives.[[2]](#footnote-2) The eleventh-century papacy was well prepared to begin its crusading propaganda campaign, and the First Crusade reflects its unprecedented success. The Holy Land and more particularly, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem -- focus of the papal address at Clermont[[3]](#footnote-3) -- were certainly part of the faithful’s spiritual ethos.[[4]](#footnote-4) Not so the inhabitants, who were rather mysterious or completely unknown to the average believer. The Apostolic See had therefore to portray a suitable image of the enemy, while turning it into a threat to the very subsistence of Christendom. Since the last quarter of the eleventh century, indeed, medieval popes concentrated their propagandistic efforts in portraying the Muslims, their customs and creed as not only pagan but also satanic, cruel, and vicious.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This paper contends that the apostolic initiative of the Muslims’ demonization in both Europe and the Holy Land served two different yet complementary purposes. Papal efforts in Christendom primarily aimed to bring about a massive mobilization to the crusades and, additionally, to the much-needed support for the Latin settlements in the Levant. On the other hand, the same campaign in the Holy Land was devoted to strengthening and clearly delineating the socio-cultural and religious boundaries between the Franks, as a colonial society, and their subjugated neighbors. The decline of the crusades and the continuous dialogue between conqueror and conquered, however, hint at the many challenges inherent in the papal policy.

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Following the Byzantine defeat at the Battle of Manzikert (1071),[[6]](#footnote-6) Pope Gregory VII tried to mobilize Christendom against the Seljuk Turks. The *servus servorum Dei* then began to demonizing the enemy, stereotypically painting them as pagans and worst still, agents of Satan. The pope referred to

*A race of* ***pagans*** (emphasis mine)[that] *has strongly prevailed against the Christian Empire and with pitiable cruelty has already almost up to the walls of the city of Constantinople laid waste and with tyrannical violence has seized everything; it has slaughtered like cattle (quasi pecudes) many thousands of Christians* (1 March 1074).[[7]](#footnote-7)

Gregory VII repeated his call a few months later in a letter to Emperor Henry IV, in which he shared his deep concern with the emperor:

*I called to your attention that the Christians beyond the sea, a great part of whom are being destroyed by the* ***heathen*** (emphasis mine) *with unheard-of slaughter and are daily being slain like so many sheep* (7 December 1074)*.*

St. Peter’s heir further declared that urgent assistance was needed to ensure that “*the religion of Christ may not utterly perish in our time.”* In addition, more confidentially, Gregory recognized that

*I am especially moved toward this undertaking because the Church of Constantinople, differing from us on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is seeking the fellowship of the Apostolic See.*[[8]](#footnote-8)

The emperor’s requested participation would therefore not only save many lives but also prevent the collapse of Christianity overseas, while facilitating the end of the painful schism.[[9]](#footnote-9) Gregory repeated his call to the faithful a few days later, referring this time to the Eastern Christians as those

*Whom the devil through his own person is striving to turn away from the Catholic faith and through his members does not cease from cruelly slaughtering them every day as if they were cattle…*(16 December 1074).[[10]](#footnote-10)

The devil had therefore accomplished hitherto a double mission: his maneuvers had paved the way for the Eastern Christians’ detour from the true faith. A cruel enemy, whom Gregory VII described as pagans and heathen, had further slaughtered them. No wonder therefore that the pope promised eternal reward to those answering his call in defense of the Byzantine Empire against this double threat: the Seljuk Turks outside and the schism inside. Gregory VII further undertook to lead the forthcoming enterprise, whose final goal would be the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Gregory vehement rhetoric, however, papal attempts to enlist Christendom for the holy apostolic war failed this time. In his letter to Count William VI of Poitou (10 September 1074) Gregory referred to the rumors that “*by God’s mercy the Christians have far repelled the savagery of the pagans*,” as the main reason for the postponement of a military enterprise.[[11]](#footnote-11) Still, Gregory’s precedent probably paved the way for Pope Urban II’s initiative a few years later.

Indeed, Urban II confirmed the essential message of his predecessor at Clermont (18-28 November 1095),[[12]](#footnote-12) while, according to Fulcher of Chartres, he referred to “*the Turks, a Persian race,* [who] *have overrun the faithful up to the Mediterranean Sea…slaughtering and capturing many, destroying churches and laying waste the kingdom of God.”*[[13]](#footnote-13) Robert of Reims further claimed that the pope laid bare the many threats inherent in the awful situation:

[A] *foreign race, a race absolutely alien to God*…[that] *had reduced the people with sword, rapine and flame, and has carried off some as captives to its own land, has cut down others by pitiable murder… These men have destroyed the altars polluted by their foul practices. They have circumcised the Christians, either spreading the blood from the circumcisions on the altars or pouring it into the baptismal fonts. And they cut open the navels of those whom they choose to torment with a loathsome death, tear out their most vital organs and tie them to a stake, drag them around and flog them, before killing them as they lie prone on the ground with all their entrails out.*[[14]](#footnote-14)

Both versions of Urban’s sermon allude to the severe damage caused by the Seljuk conquerors throughout the Byzantine Empire, not only to Christians but to the native population of Syria and Palestine, as well.[[15]](#footnote-15) Both chroniclers further emphasized the desecration of churches and the condemnation of the faithful to dreadful deaths. Of further note is the reluctance of the pope and consequently the chroniclers as well, to refer to these Sunni Turko-Persian conquerors as such or to reveal their Islamic religious identification.[[16]](#footnote-16) Indeed, the Seljuk had converted to Islam by 985, more than one-hundred years before the council at Clermont. Instead, the fearsome enemy was described in contemporary sources as Saracens, Ishmaelites, Hagarenes, Moors, or Mohammedans. From a more denigrating perspective, they were further labelled as pagans, heathen, or, more commonly, infidels.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The complete ignorance of and consequent disregard for the monotheistic nature of the adversary’s monotheistic religion, could be attributed to the lack of information at this early stage about the rising Seljuk Empire and its actual beliefs and practices. Although this premise probably has validity with regard to the chroniclers, the question remains as to the information available to the eleventh-century papacy. Indeed, the first encounters of Christendom with Islam get back to the eighth century, and the Christian authors’ interest on Muhammad and Islam only grew throughout the centuries.[[18]](#footnote-18)

It appears therefore likely that the portrayal of the Seljuk Turks as demonic pagans while deliberately neglecting their monotheistic faith was, in fact, a product of a carefully designed apostolic propaganda campaign. Notable in this regard is the gap between apostolic declarations for crusading propaganda on the one hand and diplomacy on the other. Indeed, when dealing directly with Muslim rulers, medieval popes usually refrained from offending their sentiments while indirectly recognizing Islam as a monotheistic faith, thus hinting at ever-growing intercultural compatibility in the diplomatic sphere.[[19]](#footnote-19) One should further note that the same Pope Gregory VII, who had called for a Holy War against pagans and heathen two years earlier, recognized that both Christians and Berbers believe in one God, albeit in different forms, and worship him as creator and ruler of this world. In a letter to the Berber ruler an-Nãşir b. ‘Alennas (late 1076), while thanking the emir for his goodwill toward his Christian subjects, Gregory indeed declared

*This good action was inspired in your heart by God, the creator of all things, without whom we can neither do nor think any good thing. He who lighteth every man that cometh into the world enlightened your mind in this purpose. For Almighty God, who desires that all men shall be saved and that none shall perish, approves nothing more highly in us than this: that a man love his fellow man next to his God and do nothing to him, which he would not to others than should do to himself. This affection we and you owe to each other in a more peculiar way than to people of other races because we worship and confess the same God though in diverse forms and daily praise and adore him as the creator and ruler of this world.*

After such a moving declaration of fraternal love, the pope wished the emir “*that God himself, after the long journey of this life, may lead you into the bosom of the most holy patriarch Abraham.”*[[20]](#footnote-20) The biblical precept of “love your neighbor” (**Lev.** 19: 18; **Mk**.12: 29–31; **Jn**.13:34) was therefore reinforced by the shared Abrahamic origins and the common faith of the Berber emir and the Roman bishop.

The conclusion is thus unavoidable – the very pope demonizing the Seljuk Turks for propagandistic reasons was well aware of the disparity between the Berbers’ monotheistic faith and the pagan, demonic nature that he himself was ascribing to the Christian enemy as a whole. Did this dual approach reflect a deep apostolic knowledge of early Christian influences in North Africa, as opposed to the steppe culture of the Seljuk? Alternatively, should it be ascribed to the divergence inherent in the imperatives of foreign diplomacy vis-a-vis propaganda campaigns? Indeed, tactful, sensitive gestures of this kind were reserved for the highest levels of international diplomacy but were completely absent from papal crusading declarations. Moreover, in his letter to the kings and lay magnates of Spain (28 June 1077), Gregory VII, again, differentiated between Saracens and pagans while he took care to mention them as different categories.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Gregory’s acknowledgment of the Muslims’ monotheistic faith is less surprising when bearing in mind the recognition of Muhammad’s closeness to Christian and Jewish sources and the monotheistic essence of Islam in earlier Christian theological treatises.[[22]](#footnote-22) On the other hand, Gregory’s hostile approach to the Seljuk paved the way for a new, more extreme and antagonistic approach, which turned Muhammad into a god, thus confirming the pagan essence of the Saracens. In other words, since the end of the eleventh century, the figure of Muhammad was instrumentalized for the condemnation of Islam and the subsequent justification of the crusade.[[23]](#footnote-23) The recognition of Gregory VII of the Berber emir’s monotheistic faith on the one hand, and his call to a Holy War against the Seljuk on the other, further reflects the gap inherent in historical, well-known facts, and manipulative propaganda.

Urban’s letters, as well, written shortly after the Council of Clermont, continued the demonization of the Seljuk and ratified the pope’s contempt toward those who by their savage conquest had contaminated the holiest Christian places. In the papal epistles, Urban referred to them as “*barbarians*” who “*have invaded and ravaged the churches of God*,”[[24]](#footnote-24) thus justifying the apostolic plan “*to restrain the savagery of the Saracens … and restore the Christians to their former freedom*” (December 1095, October 1096). [[25]](#footnote-25) Papal rhetoric further ascribed all the attributes of a Just War to the military pilgrimage to *Outremer,* which aimed to cancel the damage caused to the holiest Christian shrines and the faithful as a whole. According to classical jurisprudence, indeed, justice is a steady and enduring will to render unto everyone his right.[[26]](#footnote-26) Urban was not satisfied with a just punishment of the Muslims alone; he went further and described the critical blow that the crusade would inflict on the enemy’s pride, not only in the Holy Land but far and wide, in all Christian lands which with God’s help would be liberated from Muslim oppression.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The thirst for vengeance thus appears to have played a crucial role, becoming an appealing component in the papal message that was especially attractive to medieval knights. Indeed, the Muslims’ acts of sacrilege, their despoliation of ancestral Christian shrines in the Holy Land –which by that time had become the *Patrimonium Christi* – imbued the crusades with all the power and connotations of the Just Biblical War.[[28]](#footnote-28) While calling the faithful to the Second Crusade, Pope Eugene III, as well, referred to the Muslims as pagans and, as such, “*enemies of the cross of Christ*” *(Quantum predecessores,* 1 March 1146).[[29]](#footnote-29)

The message promoted by the Apostolic See with regard the Muslims was therefore very different from the evangelical message of love for God and your neighbor, as expressed in Gregory VII’s letter.[[30]](#footnote-30) It represents, instead, a return to the German heritage of the cult of war and military ethics.[[31]](#footnote-31) These values were further cemented toward the end of the eleventh century by the consolidation of knighthood as a well-defined social class.[[32]](#footnote-32) The question still remains as to the degree to which these feelings of anger and the quest for vengeance, fostered and manipulated by the papacy, permeated contemporary society. To what degree, indeed, was the papal narrative accepted, thus justifying the atrocities committed by the crusaders against those whom they encountered in their pilgrimage to earthly Jerusalem.

Contemporary sources reflect the reception of the apostolic narrative across the Mediterranean, beyond the direct sphere of influence of the Roman Bishop. After initially disapproving the crusades, Anna Comnena alluded to the Turks, Saracens, and Hagarenes as pagans who worshipped “Mahumet” through mystic rites. She additionally refers to those “*barbarian Ishmaelites who were slaves to drunkenness, wine, and Dionysius,”* andscorned at their practice of circumcision. Anna further claims that the Muslims’ castration of their body did not prevent them from becoming slaves of sordid sexual passions.[[33]](#footnote-33) Rather obviously, the Byzantine princess did not discern the Muslim strict prohibition of alcohol or choose to neglect it.[[34]](#footnote-34) On the other hand, she was probably influenced by the Muslim descriptions of earthly pleasures in paradise, which were popularized by Christian treatises since the eighth century.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The expressions of scorn and contempt toward the Muslims and Islam only increased in the crusading circles. Thus, Fulcher of Chartres, participant in and eyewitness of the First Crusade did not refrain from expressing his disdain of Islam, which he regarded as pure idolatry.[[36]](#footnote-36) Whether this assertion may be considered a reflection of Fulcher’s ignorance of the Muslim creed – common to many participants in the First Crusade – or of xenophobic sentiments, is still an open question. Subsequently, Fulcher remained completely insensitive to the suffering inflicted by the crusaders on innocent Muslim women, children, and elderly people whom they met. When Muslim women were captured in Kerbogha’s tents before Antioch (1098), Fulcher reported that the Franks “*did them no evil but drove lances into their bellies.*”[[37]](#footnote-37) Moreover, when describing the slaughter of Muslims at Caesarea (1101), he evidenced no sense of pity while commenting that their bodies were piled up and burned, to recover the money they had swallowed;[[38]](#footnote-38) neither did he express any sign of compassion toward the slaughter of Muslims following the conquest of Jerusalem.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The denigrating approach to the Muslims, their religion and practices, was also common to the political leadership, though from different, more particular political reasons. Following the conquest of Antioch (11 September 1098), the leaders of the First Crusade –Bohemond, Raymond Count of St. Gilles, Godfrey Duke of Lorraine, Robert Count of Flanders, and Eustace Count of Boulogne – proudly reported to the Bishop of Rome“*the capture and slaughter of the Turks, who had heaped so many insults on our Lord Jesus.*”[[40]](#footnote-40) Similarly, letters written in the Latin East often refer to the Muslims as hordes of pagans, and hint at the perpetual agreement between the Saracens and the devil.[[41]](#footnote-41) The Templar Master Bertrand of Blancfort, further referred to the Muslims’ final goal, namely, “*to wipe the memory of us from the region and, God forbid, to crush the Church of the faithful by the weight of their number.”*[[42]](#footnote-42)

Beyond the stereotypic approach to the Muslims, there are other less contentious sources. Guibert of Nogent, writing long away from the Levant but in close contact with former crusaders, provided an original version of Muslim history while enriching his readers with stories about Muhammed and the beginnings of Islam. One should note in this regard Guibert’s acknowledgment of the lack of apostolic and patristic sources, a deficiency that actually had forced him to rely on less faithful information.

*According to popular opinion, there was a man, whose name, if I have it right, was Mathomus, who led them away from belief in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. He taught them to acknowledge only the person of the Father as the single, creating God, and he said that Jesus was entirely human. To sum up his teachings, having decreed circumcision, he gave them free rein for every kind of shameful behavior. I do not think that this profane man lived a very long time ago, since I find that none of the Church doctors has written against his licentiousness. Since I have learned nothing about his behavior and life from writings, no one should be surprised if I am willing to tell what I have heard told in public by some skillful speakers. To discuss whether these things are true or false is useless, since we are considering here only the nature of this new teacher, whose reputation for great crimes continues to spread. One may safely speak ill of a man whose malignity transcends and surpasses whatever evil can be said of him...* [[43]](#footnote-43)

Notwithstanding his strong criticism of Muhammad and his deeds, or perhaps in consequence, Guibert recognized that the Saracens do not consider “Mathomus” God, as some people hold, but as a just man through whom divine law was transmitted.[[44]](#footnote-44) Guibert further reports the expansion of Islam in the Levant, while putting emphasis on the conquest of Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Holy Sepulcher. On the other hand, the testimony of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos brought Guibert to depict a most despicable image of the Muslims, referring to them as pagans, notwithstanding his previous acknowledgment of the Muslim faith on one Almighty God,

*The churches which the* ***pagans*** *held had been turned into stables for horses, mules and other animals… they set up in them temples, which they called Mahomeries, and they carried out all kinds of filthy activity in them, so that they had become not cathedrals, but brothels and theaters… those who survived led lives wretchedly bound by the yoke of slavery, harsher, … than those who died endured. They took virgins and made them public prostitutes…mothers were violated in the presence of their daughters, raped over and again…*.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Crusader leaders, as well, took great pains to maintain the satanic image of the enemy, a policy expected to encourage the continuous but in fact still reluctant support of Christendom, and reinforce the social barriers between conquerors and conquered*.* Faithful to this purpose, Amalric of Nesle, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Bertrand of Blancfort, Master of the Temple, wrote to King Louis VII, “*We find ourselves surrounded by a perverse, evil nation of tyrannical infidels,”* portraying the Muslims as “*persecutors of truth and faith”* and *“persecutors of the Church*.”[[46]](#footnote-46) The Christian setback at the Horns of Hattin[[47]](#footnote-47) further intensified the satanic portrayal of the Muslims. [[48]](#footnote-48) Terricus, the Gran Preceptor of the Temple, depicted Saladin’s followers as “*a horde of pagans*” intoxicated by Christian blood (July-August 1187),[[49]](#footnote-49) while Eraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, claimed:

*Our Christian brothers were slain by the sword of Mafumetus the Unbeliever and his evil worshipper Saladin… Indeed, the perfidious enemies of the Cross of Christ have turned our Churches into stables for the horses and they copulate with Christian women in front of the altars* (September 1187).[[50]](#footnote-50)

Reports of this kind, written in the Holy Land, were consistent with the papal message and consequently received full support of the Holy See. Thus, Pope Gregory VIII referred to “*those savage barbarians thirsting after Christian blood and using all their force to profane the Holy Places and banish the worship of God from the land*.”[[51]](#footnote-51) In his call to the Fifth Crusade, Innocent III found necessary to teach the faithful his own, apostolic version of Muslim history while accusing the Muslims of usurping Christian ancestral rights in the Holy Land (*Quia Maior,* 19–29 April 1213):

*The Christian peoples, in fact, held almost all the Saracen provinces up to the time of Blessed Gregory; but since then, a son of perdition has arisen, the false prophet Muhammad, who has seduced many men from the truth by worldly enticements and the pleasures of the flesh*.

After such a compelling opening, the pope further referred to the latest, dreadful news, mainly, the building of the fortress in Mount Tabor by “*the same perfidious Saracens*” that was expected to facilitate their conquest of Crusader Acre.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Not surprisingly, the Muslims reciprocated the pejorative approach. John Sarrasin, Chamberlain of France and participant in the Fifth Crusade, reported to Nicholas Arrode that when the Christians approached Damietta, “*the Saracens had fled…telling each other that the* ***pigs*** *had arrived*” (23 June 1249).[[53]](#footnote-53) Perhaps this animal reference hints at the Christian diet as opposed to the Muslim prohibition of pork. Still, one cannot ignore the derogatory nature of such description.

Paradoxically, the Mongols’ advance in the mid-thirteenth century brought about some improvement in the Muslims’ image. Robert, Patriarch of Jerusalem and papal legate, together with other prelates in the Holy Land, reported to his colleagues in France and England that the Mongols

*Profaned everywhere, the graves of the kings…their wickedness was greater than that of all Saracens who had always shown the utmost reverence for our holy cities during their numerous occupations of the land of the Christians*.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Mongol threat thus engendered a reassessment of the Muslims’ image, rendering them and their actions less satanic and more human shape.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Beyond the fields of ideology and politics, however, the need to subsist in the same space gradually paved the way for more accessible forms of coexistence between conquerors and conquered. First and foremost, after the early ethnic cleansing, when all non-Christians were terrorized into flight, the Latins' adaptation of the Muslim *dhimma* system[[56]](#footnote-56) recognizedthe autonomous existence of Muslim communities, who since then enjoyed the legal status of protégés.[[57]](#footnote-57) The possibility of nonviolent and sometimes cordial coexistence receives further confirmation from an unexpected source. The Valencian traveler Ibn Jubayr, who constantly prayed for God's help in destroying the Christian rule in the Latin East, described in a rather positive manner the Franks' good treatment of Muslim farmers.[[58]](#footnote-58) Whether his appreciation was part of a hidden political agenda, the main goal of which was to improve the Muslim landowners' treatment of their own tenants, is still a matter of controversy.[[59]](#footnote-59) It seems, however, that after the first, brutal stage of conquest, the Latins allowed the continuance of traditional practices and institutions among their Muslim tenants.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The new state of affairs was reflected in the adoption of common gestures and intercultural language in the sphere of politics as well as in literary sources. [[61]](#footnote-61) Thus, William of Tyre refrained from calling the Muslims pagans, and portrayed Nũr al-Din as a man who feared God, albeit “according to the superstitious traditions of that people.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to describe the Christians’ enemy as repugnant “dogs,” who had profaned the holy places where Jesus had walked and subjugated the people of God to their tyrannical rule.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Still, toward the end of the twelfth century, the stereotyped characterizations of Muslims and Islam gradually gave way to more accurate and detailed descriptions, especially by those who sojourned in the Levant.[[64]](#footnote-64) Oliver of Paderborn, who participated in the Fifth Crusade, provides a rather impartial description of the Moslem creed:

…*For as they had written in the Qur’an, the book of their law, they believe that Jesus Christ Our Lord was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary and they protest that he lived without sin as a prophet and more than a prophet. They firmly assert that he gave sight to the blind, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead; they do not deny the word and the spirit of God, and that he ascended alive into heaven. But they do deny his passion and death, and also that the divine nature is united to the human nature in Christ, They likewise deny the Trinity of Persons. Therefore they ought to be called heretics rather than Saracens, but the use of the false name prevails.*[[65]](#footnote-65)

James of Vitry, bishop of Acre (1216–1228), further refers to different Muslim sects, namely,

*Some respect the law of Muhammad, others scornfully ignore his precepts drinking wine, eating pork, and unlike the others, they do not practice circumcision. The Old Man of the Mountain is the abbot of the religions of the Brothers of the Knives or Assassins, who recognize only one religious precept, that they will find salvation through obeying to do whatever they are asked, whether it be killing Christians or Saracens. There are other Saracens called of the occult belief…they would rather be killed than divulge their secret beliefs to anyone…I found others who say that the soul dies with the body, and so they do exactly as they please like animals satisfying their worst instincts….*[[66]](#footnote-66)

Although James complains that he could not freely preach or baptize in Muslim lands, he expressed some satisfaction at his progress in this endeavor.[[67]](#footnote-67) Indeed, James took upon himself baptizing Muslim children, who felt captive during the Fifth Crusade, and forwarded them to nuns for their Christian education.[[68]](#footnote-68) The Master of the Hospital, Geoffrey of Donjon, reported c. 1201 the miraculous conversion of a young Saracen of humble birth, who after discovering the true faith devoted his life to the Christian mission. He further states that about two-thousand pagans followed his example and converted to the true faith.[[69]](#footnote-69) Although one may doubt the accuracy of such considerable number, which did not receive additional confirmation, it still reflects the possibility of Muslims’ conversion to Christianity, by either compulsion or other means. [[70]](#footnote-70)

Notwithstanding the lack of conclusive evidence concerning conversions in either direction, there are some additional accounts. There were three well-known cases of Templars who joined Islam, whether willingly or after being captured in the battlefield and then forced to renounce their faith.[[71]](#footnote-71) The Order dignitaries responded with utmost severity to apostasy and whenever possible, the traitorous knights lost their habits and were condemned to life imprisonment.[[72]](#footnote-72) Conversely, Humbert of Romans opposed the Christian mission to the Muslims, advocating most radical solutions:

*…As long as they remain in the world, they will multiply without measure unless they are destroyed by some Christian or barbarian power…It is clear that it is pleasing to God and to the saints that the Christian faithful purify countries from the Saracens through warfare. For formerly, God similarly wanted the sons of Israel to expel the gentiles from the Promised Land through warfare, so that were previously dreadful things hateful to God were done, the worship of God might be established.*[[73]](#footnote-73)

Although the extreme solution fostered by the Dominican Master was at the very heart of the crusades as Holy War, day-to-day life actually encouraged a more peaceful and fruitful interaction between Latins and Muslims. There is the well-known story of Ousamah Ibn Munkidh, a Syrian prince and diplomat who traveled extensively in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, which reflects the mutual respect and collaboration between members of both religions:

*…When I went into the mosque al-Aqsa, which was occupied by the Templars,* ***who were my friends****,* (emphasis mine) *they assigned me this little mosque in which to say my prayers. One day I went into it and glorified Allah. I was engrossed in my praying when one of the Franks rushed at me, seized me, and turned my face to the east, saying, "That is how to pray!" A party of Templars made for him, seized his person, and ejected him. I returned to my prayers. The same man, escaping attention, made for me again and turned my face round to the east, repeating, "That is how to pray!" The Templars again made for him and ejected him` then they apologized to me and said to me, "He is a stranger who has only recently arrived from Frankish lands. He has never seen anyone praying without turning to the east." I answered, "I have prayed sufficiently for today."….Among the Franks, we notice those who have come to dwell in our midst and who have become accustomed to the society of [Muslims]. They are greatly superior to those who have more recently joined them in the country, which they occupy. They form, in fact, an exception, which must not be made into a rule.*[[74]](#footnote-74)

Beyond his patronizing approach to new comers, Ousamah Ibn Munkidh undoubtedly reflects the socio-cultural coexistence between conquerors and conquered, even in the most sensitive places of ritual. Moreover, the gradual rapprochement between Latins and Muslims did not go unreported and prompted criticism, especially from those coming from the West. One participant in Frederick II’s crusade bemoaned,

*There is no difference between a Christian and a pagan…. Young and elderly Christians speak the pagan languages, and they appreciate more an infidel than two or more people of their own race*.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Writing in the early thirteenth century, Abbot Arnold of Lübeck, as well, referred to the Franks’ imitation of Muslim practices while recognizing that, “*the Muslims who are in their generation wiser than the children of light* (Franks)*, contrive many things that our people did not know, unless they learned from them*,” and pointed at carrier pigeons as an example.[[76]](#footnote-76) Although Arnold could not be considered an eyewitness, his testimony merits full consideration since on several occasions he avoided using stereotyped generalizations with regard the Muslims.[[77]](#footnote-77) Moreover, he twice recorded the Abrahamic origins of Islam and ascribed to the Muslims some readiness to recognize certain basic principles of the Christian dogma.[[78]](#footnote-78)

One can further identify a constant interaction between Franks and Muslims in terms of economy, trade, agriculture, and warfare. Crusader castles were considered “the outcome of a lengthy, ongoing dialogue between two schools of military tactics and approaches.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Indeed, the cultural dialogue between crusaders and Muslims covered almost every facet of daily life. The use of paper in the Frankish Levant – although less developed than among the Muslims – is indicative of this process.[[80]](#footnote-80) The permanent employment of salaried physicians in the Hospital of Jerusalem further reflects Oriental influence.[[81]](#footnote-81) The proliferation of bathhouses in the Frankish Levant reflects direct Muslim impact on daily practices, as frequent bathing became a characteristic of the *Pullani*, i.e., the Franks. Some members of the clergy, who cared more about Christian moral principles than about hygiene, often held a hostile, disapproving view of this practice, which sometimes was performed in mix-sex contexts.[[82]](#footnote-82) Although we still lack a comprehensive study of mutual influences in the field of art,[[83]](#footnote-83) there is clear evidence of Muslim effect on luxury goods, glass, textiles, and other merchandise destined to the social elite. The constant traffic of people and goods throughout the Mediterranean, both through gifts at the court level and trade among the merchant class, proved an effective recipe for maintaining a fragile co-existence and a delicate balance of power.[[84]](#footnote-84)

In conclusion, the stereotyping of the Muslims as agents of Satan was elaborated and promoted by the eleventh-century papacy as an essential tool for serving its crusading campaign. The portrayal of the enemy as frightening and satanic was successfully manipulated to promote the Holy Apostolic War and was incorporated into the symbolic and linguistic repertoire of Christendom. It would not be redundant to emphasize here the grave implications of the papal propaganda campaign. The demonization of the enemy in most ruthless terms, whether in the religious and/or the human levels, while neglecting the atrocities committed by the crusaders themselves, left its mark on modern propaganda campaigns to justify the diffusion of fake news and the consequent extermination of minorities. As in other many cases of state building, the papacy thus actually provided an original, unprecedented model. Unfortunately in this case, the manipulation of truth for political interests.

The apostolic initiative was further accepted and adapted, especially by the Latin leaders, to justify their atrocities against native populations and became a principal means of rousing support in Christendom. In parallel, it was expected to reinforce the social boundaries between the Frankish as a colonial society and the native inhabitants. Conversely, there was a continuous dialogue and mutual influence at the practical level between the different societies who convened in the Levant. The very existence of such a dialogue – as much as it was criticized at the theoretical and ideological levels – could perhaps have significance today as well.

1. Jay Seitz, “Propaganda and War,” *SOJ Psychology* 5-2 (17 December 2018): 1-7. [**http://dx.dot.org/10**](http://dx.dot.org/10) **15226/2374-6874/5/2/0015.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David L. Altheide & Jennifer N. Grimes, “War Programming: The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 46:4 (2005): 617-643, DOI: [**10.1111/j.1533-8525.2005.00029.x**](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2005.00029.x)**.** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. As claimed by Joshua Prawer, it is one of Western history’s ironies that the original papal address was not preserved, but only some reports written about ten years later. Joshua Prawer, *A History of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,* 2 vols. [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1963), vol. 1, pp. 66 ff. On the papal discourse, see, Dana Carleton Munro, "The speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095," *American Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (1906): 231-42; H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's preaching of the First Crusade," *History* 55-184 (1970): 177-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Robert Ousterhout, " ’Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination’: Remembering Jerusalem in Words and Images," *Gesta* 48-2 (2009): 153-68; Maria E. Dorninger, "Memory and Representations of Jerusalem in Medieval and Early Modern Pilgrimage Reports." In *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem,* ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, *Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 421-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On the transmission of information, see, Peter J. Graham, “Conveying Information,” *Synthese* 123 (2000): 365-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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7. Gregory VII, *Epistolae et Diplomata Pontificia* in *Patrologia Latinae,* vol. 148, ep. 49, col. 329; H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Das Register Gregors VII,* ed. E. Caspar, *MGH Epistulae selectae* 2 (Berlin 1920-1923),l. II. 31, col. 165; Trans. Ephraim Emerton, *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the Registrum* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On Gregory’s hopes for reunion, see his letter to the Eastern Emperor Michael VII Dukas (9 July 1073), *Das Register Gregors VII,* l. I. 18, 29-30, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation,* p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Das* *Register Gregors* VII, l. II. 37. *The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation,* pp. 127-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Das* *Register Gregors* VII,l. II. 3. *The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation,* p. 95. Crowdrey further claims that there was not any Byzantine request at this time. See his “Pope Gregory VII’s Crusading Plans of 1074,” in *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem presented to Joshua Prawer,* eds. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Hans E. Mayer and R. C. Smail (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1982), pp. 27-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Alan Cutler, “The First Crusade and the Idea of Conversion,” *The Muslim World* 58-1 (1968): 57-71, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana,* I. 3, 2,ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1913), pp. 132-34. Trans. Louise and Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Robert of Reims, “Historia Iherosolimitana”,in *Recueil des historiens des croisades* (hereafter RHC), *historiens occidentaux* (hereafterHist. occ*.)*, 3: 730. Trans. *Robert the Monk’s history of the First Crusade Historia Iherosolimitana,* trans. Carol Sweetenham (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005)*,* pp. 79-80. See, also, Penny Cole, “’O God, the heathen have come into your inheritance’ (Ps, 78.1): The Theme of Religious Pollution in Crusade Documents, 1095-1188,” in *Crusades and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria,* ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 84-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Alexander D. Beihammer, "Defection across the border of Islam and Christianity: Apostasy and cross-cultural interaction in Byzantine-Seljuk relations." *Speculum* 86-3 (2011): 597-651. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Nasir Khan, *Perceptions of Islam in the Christendoms* (Oslo: Solon Publishers, 2006), p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See in this regard the illuminating collection of Michelina Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image of the Prophet Muhammad in Medieval Latin Literature: A Repertoire* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), passim. One should note, however, the gap between Europe’s and Byzantium’s interest on Muslims in the Early Middle Ages, Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, pp. 18-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Benjamin Z. Kedar, "Religion in Catholic-Muslim Correspondence and Treaties," in *Diplomatics in the Eastern Mediterranean 1000-1500*, ed. Alexander D. Beihammer, Maria G. Parani and Christopher D. Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 407-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Das Register Gregors VII,* 3. 21, pp. 287-288. *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the Registrum,* pp. 94-95; *The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation,* pp. 204-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Das Register Gregors VII,* 2, 4. 28, 346.*The Register of Pope Gregory VII: An English Translation,* p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
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23. Avinoam Shalem, “Conclusions,” in *Ibid*., p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. H. Hagenmeyer, *Epistolae et chartae ad historiam primi belli spectantes: Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100* (Innsbruck, 1901, repr. Hildensheim: G. Olms, 1973)), pp. 136-37. Trans. Louise and Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. W. Wiederhold, “Papsturkunden in Florenz,” *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (1901): 313-14; trans. L. and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
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27. Paul Kehr, *Papsturkunden in Spanien. I Katalonien* (Berlin: Forgotten Books, 1926), pp. 287-88; trans. L. and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. There is a rich bibliography on the idea of Just War and Holy War. See, for example, James A. Brundage, ‘Holy War and the Medieval Lawyers’, in *The Holy War,* ed. Thomas F. Murphy (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1976),pp. 99-140; H. E. John Cowdrey, ‘The Genesis of the Crusades: The Spring of Western Ideas of Holy War’, in *The Holy War,* ed. Murphypp. 9-32; Esther Cohen and Sophia Menache, ‘Holy Wars and Sainted Warriors: Christian War Propaganda in the Middle Ages’, *Journal of Communication* 36 (1986), 52-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. P. Rassow, “Der Text der Kreuzzusgsbulle Eugens III,” *Neues Archiv* 45 (1924) : 303. Trans. Louise and Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality,* p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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33. Anna Comnena, *Alexiad, ,*l. X, c. 5, 7.Ed. Bernard Leib (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1937-1945), vol. 2 (1943), p. 205, 208. *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena, being the history of the reign of her father Alexius I, Emperor of the Romans, 1081-1118 A.D.*, book X. Trans. Elizabeth A. S. Dawes (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1967), pp. 248-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
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36. Fulcherii Carnotensis *Historia Iherosolymitana,* l. I, xxvi, 9, p, 290; xxviii, 3, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Fulcherii Carnotensis *Historia Iherosolymitana,* l. I, xxiii, 5, pp. 256-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Ibid., l.* II, ix, 8, p. 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid.,* l. I, xxvii, 13, p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
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43. Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos et cinq autres textes,* ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), I 244-260, p. 94. Trans. Robert Levine, *The Deeds of God through the Franks* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), p. 32. Jay Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 99-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos* I. 130, pp. 90-91. On the similar views of William of Malmesbury, and Otto of Freising, See, Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, pp. 87-88 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
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55. On the Mongols’ attempts to contrast the prevailing hostility against them, see, Sylvia Schein, “*Gesta Dei per Mongolos*: The Genesis of a Non-Event,” *English Historical Review* 95 (1979): 805-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. According to Muslim Law, monotheistic peoples enjoy a special status, since they are not in the category of Infidels. Christians and Jews, but also members of the Zoroaster religion, were therefore allowed to live in autonomous communities, while enjoying State protection. They were, however, obliged to pay a special tax and remained under special restrictions. See, "Dhimma" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 2, pp. 227-31; and "People of the Book," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an,* vol. 4, pp. 36-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
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58. Ibn Jobair, *Voyages,* tr. Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 3 vols. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1949-1965), vol. 3, pp. 334-35, 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
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60. C. Cahen, "Notes sur l'histoire des croisades et de l'Orient Latin: Le regime rural syrien au temps de la domination franque," *Bulletin de la faculté des lettres de Strasbourg* 29-7 (1951): 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
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63. *Sarracenorum enim gens impia et inmundarum sectatrix traditionum loca sancta, in quibus steterunt pedes domini, iam a multis retro temporibus violenta permit tyrrannide subactis fidelibus et in servitutem dampnatis. Ingressi sunt canes in sacta, prophanarum est sanctuarium, humiliates est cultor dei populous, angarias patitur indignas genus electrum servit in luto et latere regale sacerdotium, princeps provinciarum facta est sub tribute civitas dei. Ibid.,* I, 15, 36-43, p. 132. See, also, *ibid.,* I. 3, 36-55, pp. 108-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Aryeh Graboïs, *Le pèlerin occidental en Terre sainte au Moyen Age* (Paris-Bruxelles, 1998), pp. 138-39, 144-51; Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Oliver of Paderborn, *Historia Damiatina,* ed. Jessalynn Bird, in *Christian-Muslim Relations 600 - 1500*, General Editor David Thomas. Consulted online on 05 December 2022 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_24244>, Trans. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters and James M. Powell, *Crusade and Christendom*, *Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pp. 178-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Serta Medievalia. Textus varii saeculorum x-xiii in unum collecti,* ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis* 171 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 558-78. Trans. Barber and Bate, *Letters from the East*, pp. 107-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Ibid.,* p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission,* pp. 118-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Cartulaire général de l’Ordre des Hospitaliers* *de St, Jean de Jérusalem,* ed. J. Delaville LeRoux (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894-1906), 4 vols.vol. 2, no. 1131, pp. 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission,* pp. 57-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Moreover, the Aragonese Templars who fled to Muslim territory in 1307 and 1308 did so under the exceptional circumstances of the impending trial. Even then, they may not have meant their exile to be permanent. I would like to thank Malcolm Barber for bringing this example to my knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
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74. Ousama Ibn Mounkidh, *The Autobiography of Ousama,* ed. and tr. G. R. Potter (London: G. Routledge, 1929), pp. 172-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
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76. Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum,* ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg, *M.G.H., Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum,* vol.14 (Hanover: Hahn, 1868), p. 204. See, also, Susan B. Edgington, “The Doves of War: The Part played by Carrier Pigeons in the Crusades,” in *Autour de la première croisade,* ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Sorbonne, 1985),pp.167-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
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83. Anthony Cutler, “Everywhere and Nowhere: The Invisible Muslim and Christian Self-Fashioning in the Culture of Outremer,” in *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, eds. Daniel H. Weiss, Lisa Mahoney (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 253–81.

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