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A Decisive Phase of Intense Diplomatic Negotiations between the Mamluk Sultanate and Western Powers (the Crown of Aragon, and the Republics of Genoa and Venice), 1288-1293/AH 687-692

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# A Decisive Phase of Intense Diplomatic Negotiations between the Mamluk Sultanate and Western Powers

(the Crown of Aragon, and the Republics of Genoa and Venice),  
1288–1293/AH 687–692\*\*

## ♦ ABSTRACT

The end of the Latin States of the East in 1291 was a decisive stage in the crusades and in the relations between Christians and Muslims, as historiography has long emphasised. However, in the context of this major conflict, some Western powers—the Republics of Genoa, Venice and the Crown of Aragon—managed to define compromise and exchange agreements of various kinds, which were quite remarkable and which for a long time have gone unnoticed, despite their great originality. This article focuses on the negotiations and the audacious double peace treaty concluded between the Aragonese and Mamluk rulers in 1290 and 1293. It draws on the remarkable archival documentation that has survived on this subject, in particular the

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\*\* This paper is an expanded and translated version of the article published in French under the title “Une phase décisive d’intenses tractations diplomatiques entre sultanat mamluk et puissances occidentales (couronne d’Aragon, républiques de Gênes et de Venise) 1288–1293/687–692 H.”, Coulon 2019. I thank very much Stéphanie Alkofer for this translation. A few publications from the same period that I had not been able to use and some that were published slightly later helped me provide more data and bolster the analysis, especially the book published in 2019 by Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche and the articles by Nikolas Jaspert and Daniel Potthast—see below notes 2, 6 and 4. The new research described in this article was carried out in collaboration with the Génesis programme: Génesis, Economic globalisation and new International frameworks: European Markets and Late Medieval trade networks in Mediterranean” (PID2019-104157GB-I00/ AEI/10.13039/501100011033), Barcelona.

Arabic and Catalan versions of the treaty, which has come to new attention thanks to recent developments in the historiography of diplomatic relations in the Middle Ages, both in the Christian West and in the Muslim Levant.

**Keywords:** diplomacy, peace, treaty, exchanges between Christians and Muslims, Crown of Aragon, Genoa, Venice, Mamluk Sultanate

#### ♦ RÉSUMÉ

**Une phase décisive d'intenses tractations diplomatiques entre le sultanat mamelouk et les puissances occidentales (la couronne d'Aragon et les républiques de Gênes et de Venise), 1288-1293/687-692 AH**

La fin des États latins d'Orient en 1291 a constitué une étape décisive des croisades et des relations entre chrétiens et musulmans, ce que l'historiographie n'a pas manqué, depuis longtemps, de souligner. Pourtant dans ce contexte de conflit majeur, certaines puissances occidentales – les Républiques de Gênes, de Venise et la couronne d'Aragon –, sont parvenues à définir des accords de compromis et d'échanges, de différentes natures, tout à fait remarquables, qui sont longtemps passés inaperçus, malgré leur grande originalité. Cet article fait plus particulièrement le point sur les négociations et l'audacieux traité de paix doublement conclu entre les souverains aragonais et mamelouks en 1290 et 1293. Il s'appuie sur la remarquable documentation d'archives qui a subsisté à ce sujet, en particulier sur les versions arabe et catalane du traité, que le renouvellement de l'historiographie des relations diplomatiques au Moyen Âge, tant dans l'Occident chrétien que dans le Levant musulman, permet de remettre pleinement en valeur.

**Mot-clés :** diplomatie, paix, traité, échanges entre chrétiens et musulmans, couronne d'Aragon, Gênes, Venise, sultanat mamelouk

#### ♦ ملخص

مرحلة حاسمة من المفاوضات المكثفة بين سلطنة المماليك والقوى الغربية  
(تاج أرغون وجمهورية جنوة والبندقية)، ٦٨٧-٦٩٢/١٢٨٨-١٢٩٣م

شكّلت نهاية الدول اللاتينية في الشرق سنة ١٢٩١ مرحلة حاسمة للحمالات الصليبية والعلاقات بين المسيحيين والمسلمين، وهو الأمر الذي شدد عليه التأريخ منذ زمن طويل. وبالرغم من سياق الصراع الأكبر هذا، نجحت بعض القوى الغربية-جمهورية جنوة والبندقية وتاج أرغون- في التوصل إلى صياغة اتفاقات توافقية وتبادلية، متنوعة الطابع، جد مدهشة، وإن لم يُلتفت إليها لزمّن طويل، رغم ما تتميز به من طابع فريد وأصالة. يتناول هذا المقال بصورة خاصة استعراض وتقييم المفاوضات ومعاودة السلام الجريئة التي أبرمت لمرتين بين ملوك أرغون والمماليك

في ١٢٩٠ وفي ١٢٩٣. وهو في هذا يستند إلى الوثائق الأرشفية الوفيرة والهامة المحفوظة في هذا الشأن، لا سيما إلى النسختين العربية والكالونية من المعاهدة، حيث تتيح أعمال تأريخ العلاقات الدبلوماسية في العصر الوسيط، في الغرب المسيحي وفي الشرق الإسلامي على حد سواء، تثمينها على أكل وجه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: دبلوماسية، سلام، معاهدة، تبادل بين مسيحيين ومسلمين، تاج أرغون، جنوة، البندقية، سلطنة المماليك

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OF ALL the long-distance relations that were established in the Middle Ages, those between the Latin West and the Levant proved to be some of the most far-reaching and long-lasting as well as some of the most decisive and ambiguous ones. This was first demonstrated in Wilhelm Heyd's masterful synthesis and has been further developed by later historians such as Claude Cahen, Peter Malcolm Holt and David Jacoby up to the recent studies edited by Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche, to name but a few of the scholars who dwelt on the subject, especially in the economic and diplomatic fields.<sup>1</sup>

In the long and eventful history of these relations, in which merchant goals combined with the objectives of the Crusades, in complementary then conflicting fashion, it is worth directing focus on a decisive phase of intense diplomatic negotiations that took place in the late 13th century and resulted in four official agreements between the Mamluk Sultans, on one side, and the Venetian and Genoese authorities and the Crown of Aragon on the other, between 1288 and 1293 (AH 687–692), i.e. at the key moment when the Crusader States fell following Mamluk conquests and crusading expeditions to the Levant came to a halt. The conquest—although it was quite a predictable event given how weak the last remaining Crusader States had been since the mid-13th century—has attracted much greater interest in the historiography of the Crusades and the relations between the Latin West and the Levant—excluding the aforementioned studies—than this high point of negotiations and diplomatic-commercial agreements between Christian and Muslim powers, onto which, admittedly, the main protagonists had probably sought to avoid directing attention. Yet, given the innovative and lasting nature of the agreements, and the elaborate process of negotiations<sup>2</sup> that led to them on both sides, it might be worth considering what objectives were pursued

1. Heyd 1967; Cahen 1983; Holt 1995; Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019. About the work of David Jacoby, see an exhaustive list in Menache, Kedar, Balard (eds.) 2019, pp. XIII–XXXIII. Should also be mentioned Kedar 1976, Ashtor 1983 and Balard 2006.

2. On diplomacy in the Middle Ages from the perspective of the Latin West, see the recent overview by Moeglin, Péquignot 2017.

at a time when the main Christian powers in the West, led by the Pope, were fiercely trying to defend the last remnants of the Crusader States threatened by the rise of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria. The motivations of the latter also deserve to be studied, using the insights derived from the recent work on Mamluk diplomacy mentioned above, since, given their position of military domination over Western Christian forces, and their awareness thereof, they should have considered that such agreements were not needed. Most importantly, the study of this brief yet remarkable episode of bilateral, or even multilateral, negotiations, provides an opportunity to read together certain documents that were drafted at the same time or translated by the Mamluk and Western chanceries for the occasion, yet have most of the time been dealt with and published separately<sup>3</sup>. The documents reflect an early moment of connected history<sup>4</sup> between Christian and Muslim powers. Since some of the above-mentioned scholars have already explored the agreements concluded between the Mamluks and the Venetian and Genoese authorities, this paper will especially focus on those that were negotiated with the Crown of Aragon, as they have attracted less attention in the historiography of this composite State and as they established bonds between two sovereigns, as could not be the case when the “republics” of Genoa and Venice were concerned<sup>5</sup>.

### The preparations for the 1290 agreements

It is no longer necessary to insist on the importance of diplomacy for the first Mamluk Sultans, although it has long been overshadowed by their warlike successes, with special reference to their training as slave-soldiers and the fact they could rise to the highest functions through war since their 1250 coup. Agreements negotiated in 1267 and 1293, mainly under the impetus of sultans Baybars (1260–1277) and Qalāwūn (1279–1290), were concluded with

3. See especially Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares (eds.) 1940, doc. 145: the Arabic version of the 1293 treaty between the King of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultan, with a Spanish translation; Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 2 and 3: instructions for the embassy from Aragon of 1292 and a Catalan version of the 1293 treaty; Holt 1995, pp. 132–140: the Arabic version of the 1290 treaty between the King of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultan, with an English translation; Potthast 2021, pp. 185–216: a revised Arabic version of the 1293 treaty, with an English translation. In his book, Ashtor (1983) makes a distinction between the various protagonists who established relations with the Levant and thus deals separately with documents which, however, were created in the same context: cf. p. 8 (the 1290 treaty between the King of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultan); p. 10 (the general safe-conduct granted to the Venetians, which E. Ashtor describes as a treaty and dates from 1289, cf. p. 10, n. 31); pp. 11–12 (the 1290 treaty between Genoa and the Mamluks); p. 20 (instructions for the embassy from Aragon of 1292 and the 1293 treaty between the King of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultan). Obviously, I do not mean to challenge the fundamental contributions made by these works, which, in their own ways, all played a large part in shedding light on this series of almost simultaneously drafted documents.

4. For a possible definition of connected history, see in particular Douki, Minard 2007, pp. 7–21.

5. The relative indifference of historians to the diplomatic relations between the Aragonese and Mamluk rulers has been partly corrected since the recent publication of the book edited by Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019; see in particular pp. 143–144. Also see Torra Pérez 2009, pp. 13–37 and Jaspert 2019, pp. 307–342. On the relations between Venice and the Mamluks, see in particular Francisco Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta 2009 and 2020; and Christ 2012 and 2017.

various princes and grandmasters of the military orders of the Latin States, as well as with Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus and the king of Lesser Armenia Leo III<sup>6</sup>. Finally, four agreements or concession agreements concluded with Venice in 1288, Genoa and the Crown of Aragon in 1290 and 1293<sup>7</sup>, marked the crowning achievement of a long-term strategy of negotiations with Christian powers, both near and far. This diplomatic policy was a clever complement to the armed fight that the Mamluks tirelessly waged against neighbouring Latin States during the second half of the 13th century. Yet its goal was mainly to neutralise them, so that the Mamluks might better face the invasions of the Mongol Ilkhans of Persia and Iraq. After destroying Baghdad, the centuries-old capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, in 1258, the Mongols threatened Syria and tried to build alliances with other Christian powers, near and far, in order to close in on the territories under Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria from two sides.<sup>8</sup> What took place during those years, in fact, could be defined as an unprecedented competition between two systems of long-distance alliances in progress<sup>9</sup>.

In addition to the presentation and meticulous analysis of these diplomatic sources by P.M. Holt, F. Bauden, M. Dekkiche and D. Potthast, particular attention should be paid to another document, of a different nature, also collected by the clerk of the Mamluk chancery, al-Qalqašandī: the May 1288 decree (*marsūm*) signed by sultan Qalāwūn in favour of foreign merchants<sup>10</sup>. The decree, which al-Qalqašandī classified as a safe-conduct (*amān*), expressly invited foreign merchants, especially from “al-Rūm”, to trade in the rich markets of the Mamluk Sultanate, where they might enjoy favourable tariffs, justice and the sovereigns’ protection, and prosper in peace. What this first suggests is that sultan Qalāwūn was particularly interested in opening his territories to foreign trade, probably in order to increase his tax revenues.<sup>11</sup> He is known to have also sent a letter to the Rasulid Sultan of Yemen who controlled the trade of spices from India in order to improve the trade relations between their two States<sup>12</sup>,

6. See the works by F. Bauden, M. Dekkiche and P.M. Holt mentioned above. The agreements were described as truces (*hudna*), and so were theoretically concluded for limited periods of time; see below.

7. See de Mas Latrie 1872, doc. I pp. 81–82 (general safe-conduct granted to the Venetians, probably dating from November 1288); also see Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, p. 77. Contrary to what Ashtor wrote, this was not a treaty between the Mamluk Sultan and the Venetians (1983, p. 10 n. 31). The 1290 agreements with the Crown of Aragon and Genoa are translated into English by Holt (1995, pp. 132–140 and 146–151), after the Arabic version; also see Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, pp. 11–12, 24, 66, and 85. Finally see the Latin version of the agreement with Genoa in Pallavicino (ed.) 2007, doc. 1189, pp. 78–83), which is in fact quite different from the Arabic version.

8. See in particular Aigle 2008, pp. 395–434.

9. Roughly speaking, the agreements between the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt and Syria, the Byzantine Emperor, the republics of Venice and Genoa and the kings of Aragon were a reaction to the attempted alliance between the kings of France and Naples, the kings of Little Cilician Armenia and the Mongol Ilkhans.

10. The decree has been translated into French by Wiet, 1955, pp. 90–91. The translation has been revised by Vallet, 2015, doc. 33, pp. 136–138.

11. Ashtor 1983, p. 9.

12. Bauden 2007, p. 8 (and doc. XXIII). About the role of Yemen in the long distance trade networks, see Vallet 2010.



and the 1288 decree was probably inspired by a letter from the Prince of Ceylon inviting the Mamluk Sultans to intensify their trade with the distant island<sup>13</sup>.

Yet this welcoming attitude to foreign merchants also manifestly served his diplomatic action. It was admittedly aimed at a very wide range of foreign traders.<sup>14</sup> The term “al-Rūm”, which was used to describe the origins of some of them, should here be clarified: it might have referred to Anatolia, ruled by the Seljuks of Rūm, or to the Byzantine Empire, and more broadly the territories that had formerly belonged to it<sup>15</sup>, in an echo to the way the term *Romania* was used in Latin sources. Now the most active merchants in those territories were no longer Byzantine Greeks in the late 13th century, but Venetian or Genoese merchants who had settled there, in Constantinople in particular, as well as on the Aegean and the Black Seas, in the Crimea more precisely. Besides, the strongest incentive measures included in the 1288 decree were particularly aimed at those who brought Mamluks into Egypt and Syria.<sup>16</sup> These military slaves not only formed the armies but also the very basis of the system upon which the regime was founded since they had taken power in 1250. It is a well-known fact that the main suppliers of Mamluks were Genoese merchants, who brought them in large numbers from the Crimean ports they controlled, especially the port of Caffa, since the slaves mainly came from the steppes of Western Asia and Southern Russia controlled by the khanate of the Golden Horde.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the term Rūm might have been used to avoid direct reference to the Franks, considered as the traditional enemies of Muslims, and thus to prevent the possible outcry such agreements might raise among faithful Muslims, as had been the case immediately after the Jaffa agreement was concluded between Emperor Frederick II and Ayyubid Sultan al-Kāmil.<sup>18</sup>

13. Wiet 1955, pp. 88-89; Vallet 2010, p. 598 and pp. 621-622. The letter from the prince of Ceylon is dated from 1283 (AH 682).

14. Concretely speaking, the safe-conduct was granted to merchants “from Iraq, Persia, al-Rūm, the Hedjaz, Yemen, India and China” and even “from countries that have not been explicitly mentioned”, i.e. to all merchants without distinction, regardless of religion in particular.

15. See Cheikh, Bosworth, “Rūm”, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, en ligne, 2010. The term could refer to Anatolia, among other possibilities; cf. Holt 1995, pp. 139, n. 30. The famous chronicler al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) briefly mentioned the safe-conduct granted in 1288 to foreign merchants, but did not include “al-Rūm” among the places where they came from. He indicated in another passage, from earlier in 1288, that vizier Shudjai had himself engaged in the arms trade with the “Franks”, thus indicating the progressive development and attractiveness of trade relations between high-ranking Mamluks and Latins on the very eve of the fall of Saint John of Acre. Yet Shudjai was disowned and dismissed by sultan Qalāwūn, following his denunciation by one of the financial controllers. See al-Maqrīzī 2007, vol. 1, p. 93 and pp. 97-98; also see Cahen 1983, doc. XVII, pp. 239-240.

16. “Ceux qui importeront des Mamluks ou des femmes esclaves les vendront à des prix supérieurs à ce qu’ils peuvent désirer; ils auront droit, pour ce qu’ils offrent à ce prix, aux exemptions qui sont de règle vis-à-vis des importateurs venant de pays voisins, et à plus forte raison de ceux qui arrivent de contrées lointaines. Car notre désir c’est d’accroître nos troupes, et les importateurs de mamlouks se donnent des droits à notre générosité. Que celui qui en a la possibilité augmente ses envois!”; see the translation of Vallet 2015, p. 137.

17. Balard 1978, vol. 1, pp. 290-302; Amitai, Cluse (eds.) 2017.

18. See for example the vehement reaction of sheikh Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf, the nephew [Sibt] of sheikh Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzi, in Gabrieli (ed.) 1996, pp. 299-300.

This 1288 official decree was admittedly nothing like a diplomatic agreement. Yet, it was designed to be made known to all merchants, regardless of their origin, in the main ports of the Sultanate.<sup>19</sup> The Venetians probably learned about it through this channel, then negotiated to be given a general safe-conduct, which was granted as early as November 26th of the same year<sup>20</sup>. The Genoese soon followed suit; yet, the negotiations lasted longer, even though the Genoese had become indispensable to the survival of the regime since they regularly supplied it in Mamluks<sup>21</sup>, as bringing these military slaves across the continent would have meant traveling through the territories dominated by the Ilkhans, enemies to the Mamluks.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Sultan Qalāwūn had seized the port of Tripoli on April 26, 1289, marking a new stage in his conquest of the Crusader States. The city had been defended by Genoese admiral Benedetto Zaccaria<sup>23</sup>, after it had asked for Genoa's protection. Zaccaria had then turned pirate and seized a ship from Alexandria with its cargo. The incident caused a momentary breach in the relations between Qalāwūn and the Commune of Genoa, but Genoa soon disowned the admiral and sent Alberto Spinola as an ambassador to negotiate the agreement signed on May 13, 1290.<sup>24</sup> The agreement mainly guaranteed favourable commercial conditions, like those that had been concluded before by merchant city-states with various Muslim powers. It particularly granted certain rights to traders as well as protective measures in the event of their dying in the Sultanate. It also allowed them to sell the goods they wanted wherever they wished and set customs duties. Finally, it defined the judicial prerogatives of the Genoese consul, especially in the event of a dispute between Genoese traders and Muslims ("Saracens").<sup>25</sup>

Barely three weeks earlier, on April 23, 1290, another major agreement, also with a strong emphasis on trade, had been concluded by the ambassadors of king Alfonso III of Aragon (1285–1291) with sultan Qalāwūn in Cairo. While Catalan-Aragonese territories can hardly be thought to have been included among the countries of "Rūm", it seems obvious that the diplomatic negotiations which led to agreements with the Venetians and the Genoese had been conducted concomitantly with the Crown of Aragon, given the closeness of the dates. Catalan merchants, who were mainly involved in the trade of precious spices in the Levant, the primary reason for the long-distance relations between the two lands, were indeed increasingly active in Egypt. As early as 1262, king James I (1214–1276) had stepped in so that they might be

19. See al-Maqrīzī 2007, vol. 2, p. 98.

20. L. de Mas Latrie (1872, doc. VI pp. 81–82) dates the document from November 26th, "1288 or 1289"; It is however dated from the year AH 687, which began on February 6, 1288.

21. For an overview of the relations between the Genoese and Egypt, see Coulon 2005a, pp. 63–90.

22. Qalāwūn had negotiated the 1281 treaty with Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus so as to ensure that the Mamluks carried from the Crimea by the Genoese might safely travel across the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles straits to reach Egypt and Syria by sea; see Holt 1995, pp. 123–124. Also see, Amitai 2008, pp. 349–368, and Amitai, Cluse (eds.) 2017.

23. On Benedetto Zaccaria's brilliant career, see Lopez 1996.

24. Ashtor 1983, p. 11; Holt 1995, pp. 141–142.

25. Holt 1995, pp. 142–151. On the role of the consuls who represented Western merchants, in Egypt in particular, see Jacoby 1995, pp. 83, 86–88. On Catalan consulates in Syria, see Coulon 2005b, vol. 1, pp. 179–188.



represented by a consul, who was soon appointed by the Barcelona authorities, in Alexandria where a *funduq* was to be established for them, as was already the case for their fellow merchants from Venice, Genoa, and Pisa, making competition with them more even.<sup>26</sup>

King James I's policy, indeed, should not be judged solely by the crusade he prepared in 1269 to the Holy Land against the Mamluks, nor by his conquests of the Balearic Islands (1229) and the region of Valencia (1238), then under Muslim domination, which were part of the territorial expansion strategy of the Crown of Aragon. The 1269 crusade was mainly due to pressure from the Papacy and motivated by competition with his virtuous neighbour, King Louis IX of France, also known as Saint Louis, who was about to leave for another crusade at the time. In fact, ever since the Pope had chosen Louis IX's younger brother, Charles of Anjou, in 1245 to become Count of Provence instead of James I, the relations between the King of Aragon and the Popes had become strained. That is the reason why James I had finally chosen in 1260 to marry his son, the infant Peter, to Constance, the daughter of Manfred of Hohenstaufen, who was himself the bastard son of Emperor Frederick II—as a result of his fierce opposition to papal policy<sup>27</sup>, Emperor Frederick II had carried out an exclusively diplomatic crusade in 1228–1229, crowned by the famous Treaty of Jaffa. James I's hasty return after facing a storm at the very start of his crusading expedition, in September 1269, as he sailed off the Balearic Islands—which was strangely reminiscent of Emperor Frederick II's misstart in September 1227 due to illness—thus could appear as a pretext which he had seized on, however little glorious it might have been, to officially renounce taking part in the crusade.<sup>28</sup> In any case, shortly after his death in 1276, his son and successor, Peter III, had freed ambassadors sent by Sultan Baibars who had been imprisoned in the context of a crusade that the Mamluk Sultan was visibly little aware of.<sup>29</sup> The violent conflict which then broke out between king Peter III and Charles of Anjou following the 1282 Sicilian Vespers revolution, whereby the island came under the King of Aragon's control, logically prompted the king to develop an anti-Papal policy and revive the strategy of the Hohenstaufens whose legacy he claimed on behalf of his wife Constance. The new context thus proved much more conducive to establishing solid bonds with the Mamluk Sultans, whom the Pope liked to present as the worst enemies of Christendom but who were in any case much too remote from the Crown of Aragon to constitute a real threat to it.

Did Peter III have the time to make contact with one of them by means of an embassy or did the initiative fall to his son and successor, Alfonso III (1285–1291), who pursued the same strategic goals as his father in the Mediterranean? According to the clerk of the Mamluk chancery and chronicler Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (d. 1292), Alfonso III requested an agreement of the same kind as that negotiated by Emperor Frederick II with Ayyubid Sultan al-Kāmil

26. See Coulon 2013a, vol. 2, pp. 663–664. On the presence of Italians in Egypt, see in particular Jacoby 1995.

27. See Coulon 2013a, vol. 2, p. 663 (n. 27).

28. See the autobiographical chronicle by king James I, *Llibre dels feits*, § 485–490. Two illegitimate sons of the king nevertheless manages to reach the Holy Land and took part, with several knights, in various military operations; cf. Richard 1996, p. 439.

29. The ambassadors were freed in 1277. See Zurita, *Anales*, Lib. IV, cap. II; and Gazulla 1919, p. 7.

in 1229.<sup>30</sup> Whatever the case may have been, the 1288 decree of Sultan Qalāwūn in favour of foreign merchants probably gave new impetus to the negotiations between the two sovereigns, in the wake of those that were being conducted with Genoa at the same moment. Through ambassadors Esteve Noguera and Ramon Alamany,<sup>31</sup> citizens of Barcelona, and Jewish physician David ben Hasday, an agreement including a little more than twenty clauses was officially signed on April 23, 1290.<sup>32</sup> It was the first time such a major agreement had been concluded between a Mamluk Sultan and a Western ruler, thus marking the crowning achievement of the diplomatic strategy developed by the Mamluks since the reign of Sultan Baibars. According to P.M. Holt, the agreement could be considered as a real treaty of alliance rather than as a mere truce, as was usual between Muslim and Christian rulers<sup>33</sup>, in compliance with Islamic legal and religious norms. Like the agreement that was about to be signed with the Genoese, the treaty also gave pride of place to commercial interests. It insisted again on the eased trade conditions for the subjects of the two sovereigns—although it did not specify the amount of taxes to be paid—and stipulated that the merchants from Aragon could trade in goods prohibited by the Pope in the Sultanate.<sup>34</sup> It did not however refer to the prerogatives of the consul representing the merchants of the Crown of Aragon, although the position had been created in Alexandria in 1262 as mentioned above.<sup>35</sup> Even more surprisingly, in the political-military clauses of the agreement, it was stated that the King of Aragon was to warn the Sultan if he learned that an expedition against him was being mounted in the West. In the event of a Christian attack against the Sultanate, the king was to try to divert it and even oppose it by force if necessary,

30. Holt 1995, pp. 20 and 31.

31. Esteve Noguera was a famous merchant and shipowner, which other sources describe as very much involved in trade with western Maghreb in the late 13th century; see Dufourcq 1966, pp. 42, 57 and 158 n. 4, and Coulon 2005c, p. 514. He was referred to as the “leader of the embassy” in 1290; see Holt 1995, p. 132. Ramon Alamany already had close relationships with king Peter III; see Péquignot 2009, p. 216, (242) and appendix I, notice 5.

32. Holt 1995, pp. 132–140. For his translation, Holt relied on the version given by diplomat and chronicler Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, in his *Taṣrīf al-Ayyām*. He also used the 1293 treaty concluded between al-Aṣraf Ḥalīl and James II of Aragon, which was in fact largely similar, see *infra*; Holt 1995, p. 131. The text of the second treaty has been preserved in the Archives of the Crown of Aragon, but there are significant gaps (the protocol and the first clauses are missing) and it is in a bad condition; cf. Potthast 2021, p. 186; it was also copied by al-Qalqaṣandī in his famous administrative encyclopedia; al-Qalqaṣandī, *Subḥ al-a’šā*, pp. 63–71. This last version served as the basis for M.A. Alarcón y Santón and R. García de Linares’s translation of the 1293 treaty: Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares 1940, doc. 145, pp. 335–344.

33. Holt 1995, p. 6.

34. See clause 13 of the treaty in Holt 1995, p. 136 and *infra*.

35. This is one of the main differences between the commercial clauses in the treaty and in that signed with the Genoese a few days later; see *supra*. The lack of reference to the consul can probably be accounted for by the strong commitment of the King of Aragon himself, who appeared as the higher authority in charge of protecting the merchants in the Sultanate. Significantly, in the event of one of them dying in Egypt or Syria, he was the one who was to recover the goods left behind, just as the Mamluk Sultan was to in the case of one of his merchants dying on the territory of the Crown of Aragon; see clause 9 of the treaty, Holt 1995, pp. 135–136.

both on land and at sea.<sup>36</sup> These extreme measures thus marked indeed a radical break with the Western crusade logic and were consistent with the anti-Papal strategy followed by the kings of Aragon, in particular Alfonso III. On his side, the Mamluk Sultan was to authorize the Christian pilgrims who had been granted a safe-conduct by the King of Aragon to visit the Holy-Sepulchre. The collaboration between the two rulers thus went far beyond a simple commercial agreement, as was the case with Venice and Genoa, and extended to the political and military spheres; as a real treaty of alliance, the agreement even insisted, in its first lines, on the relations of “friendship and concord” between the two sovereigns.<sup>37</sup>

### Peace treaties or truces?

At this stage, a key issue needs to be discussed: should the treaty concluded in 1290 with the King of Aragon, that signed in 1293 and modelled on the previous one—see below—and the treaty negotiated with the Genoese in May 1290, be considered as actual peace treaties, as (mostly Western) historians have done so far, and as P.M. Holt has been keen to emphasise?<sup>38</sup>

Based on a minute analysis of the Arabic documents from both a philological and diplomatic perspective, F. Bauden considers that they have been too systematically labeled as “peace treaties” and challenges Western scholars’ simplistic approach, which does not take into account the uses of the Mamluk chancery. He writes that “scholars continue to believe misconceptions based on a Eurocentric point of view or interpretation. Words like peace treaties, capitulations, and privileges are still used to describe documents or parts of documents that were never intended to mean that for the Mamluk chancery. In such cases, reference should be made to the technical terms describing these documents in the Mamluk diplomatic tradition”.<sup>39</sup> The word “truce” (*hudna*) was indeed repeatedly used to refer to the Arabic version of the 1293 treaty for example, for which exceptional original archival documents are available, so that F. Bauden rightly describes it as the “oldest original truce (*hudna*) concluded between a Christian ruler and a Mamluk sultan”.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, despite the explicit use of the term, the two agreements of 1290 and 1293 were not limited to a specific period of time, which broke with the Mamluk habit of concluding only temporary truces—the Mamluks were, indeed, used to negotiating with the Franks, but

36. See in particular clause 5 of the treaty, Holt 1995, pp. 134–135.

37. The 1290 treaty between the Mamluk Sultan and the King of Aragon opened with the words “Istaqarrat al-mawadda” (“friendship is established”). P.M. Holt underlined that this formula was rarely used, so that the relations created by the agreement appear as some of the closest bonds ever established with the Mamluks and the treaty may be described as an alliance rather than as a mere truce, as was the rule with non-Muslim sovereigns (1995, p. 6, and 132).

38. See the preceding note.

39. Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, p. 3.

40. Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, p. 11.

mostly fought against them.<sup>41</sup> Some clauses even insisted on the fact that “this amity and friendship shall continue perpetually and continuously between the two parties” and added that the provisions of the treaty were to be applied “for by it the two kingdoms have become one entity and one kingdom”.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the duration of the treaty, the 1290 agreement more precisely mentioned that the Sultan would observe the agreement as long as the King of Aragon remained faithful to the oath he would swear before the Sultan’s ambassadors, and that the king “shall continue to observe it while days and nights endure”.<sup>43</sup> Even though the two sovereigns thus were not bound in similar ways, yet they both committed to the treaty in the long term. Their nevertheless different type of commitment visibly reflected their uneven position, probably due to the fact that the negotiations took place at the Sultan’s Court in Cairo and that the King of Aragon was the one requesting the agreement.

Besides, the word *ṣulḥ* was also used in the Arabic version of the 1290 treaty. It can be translated by the words “peace” or “conciliation”, but in fact was used when a pact was made with infidels, in order to draw a tribute from them for example<sup>44</sup>, i.e. in uneven or asymmetrical types of agreements—which the 1290 treaty *de facto* was. On the other hand, in the 1290 agreement, the word was systematically associated with those meaning amity and friendship, suggesting the desire to establish mutual trust and recreate a balance between the two sovereigns, or even to build a true alliance, also linked to the notion of friendship in the Western Christian conception.<sup>45</sup>

Given this partly ambivalent vocabulary, it is worth looking at the Catalan version of the same agreements, only available for the 1293 treaty. No mention is made of any truce or temporary peace (nor is it the case in the instructions for the embassy dated from August 1292), but the treaty is defined as a “convention of peace and friendship” (*convinençes de la pau e les amistatz*). As can be seen, the two versions are not perfect translations one of the other and reflect somewhat divergent conceptions of the agreement, in quite significant ways. For the chancery of the Crown of Aragon, no ambiguity was to be tolerated as the aim was to establish a permanent or at least long-lasting peace. The word “truce” therefore could not be mentioned.<sup>46</sup>

41. According to D. Potthast, there is nothing surprising about the lack of a time limit for the 1293 agreement, from the Mamluks’ point of view, although it contradicted Islamic law, since they could no longer hope to extend their territory on Christian land after taking Acre; cf. Potthast 2021, p. 187. Yet this argument loses some of its force when one bears in mind that the 1293 agreement largely drew from that of 1290 and that at that date, Saint John of Acre had not yet been reconquered. The unprecedented lack of an explicitly mentioned time limit in the agreements conducted with a Christian sovereign therefore deserves to be emphasised.

42. See the final clauses and the sworn oaths in Holt 1995, (p. 132) and pp. 138–139.

43. See Holt 1995, respectively p. 138 and 140. In the protocol, the 1290 document already mentioned the unlimited duration of the agreement: “from the above date throughout the coming years and the succession of nights and days”; cf. Holt 1995, p. 133.

44. Denoix 2018.

45. Cf. Moeglin, Péquignot 2017, p. 547. Also see P. Holt’s comment on this logic of alliance, *supra* n. 38.

46. Despite the widespread use of the phrase “peace and truces” (*pax et treugae*) in the Christian West, the two types of agreements, temporary truces on the one hand, and “perpetual” or “final” peaces on the other, were clearly distinguished; see Moeglin, Péquignot 2017, pp. 542–546.

Similarities can be found with the draft agreement written in 1339 between Merinid Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī and King James III of Majorca, which nevertheless clearly established a ten-year truce—although its editors called it a “peace treaty”<sup>47</sup>... As S. Denoix explains, the two versions of the agreement, despite being placed opposite each other on the same parchment, were not perfectly similar, especially in the way they defined the agreement itself: while the King of Majorca called it (in the Catalan version) a “peace treaty” (*carta de pau*), the Merinid Sultan only referred to it as a simple “document” (*kitāb*) and as an “act” (*‘aqd*). S. Denoix underlines that “in the Arabic text, the word ‘peace’ is never used to describe this act”.<sup>48</sup> In this instance as well, the two versions of the same agreement corresponded to two distinct conceptions, which could result in unfortunate misunderstandings when the agreement was to be enforced.<sup>49</sup>

The best option will therefore be to speak of “agreements” to avoid using the terms “truce” or “peace treaty”, which should be reserved for more strictly defined contexts; the word “treaties” is also suitable, since in both cases they were indeed “formal agreements between two or more countries”,<sup>50</sup> provided the specification “truce treaty” be added when appropriate.

It now remains to be seen why the 1290 agreement between the Mamluk Sultan and the King of Aragon was renegotiated and rewritten in 1293 when it had been intended to last for a long period of time.

### **Did the events of the years 1290–1291 make it necessary to renegotiate the treaty with the Crown of Aragon?**

Once the two treaties had been signed by Sultan Qalāwūn with the Crown of Aragon and with Genoa in April and May 1290, events took place that seemed to modify the existing situation both in the Levant and the Crown of Aragon. Shortly after the fall of Tripoli, as mentioned above, the Mamluks took Acre on May 28, 1291, after a brief siege that lasted a few weeks, leading to the ultimate destruction of the Crusader States that had been founded barely two centuries earlier. The event was to have a resounding impact both in the Christian West and in Islamic countries. In parallel to his pointed diplomatic policy, Sultan Qalāwūn indeed had undertaken to methodically reconquer the Crusader States and was fighting to contain the Mongol Ilkhans in the name of jihad. This twofold, diplomatic and military, strategy, initiated under the reign of Sultan Baibars, was not as paradoxical as it seemed, since it was based on exploiting and cleverly intensifying the divisions between Christian powers.

47. Bresc, Râgib 2011.

48. Denoix 2018.

49. Prior to the treaties of 1290 and 1293, in the context of the Mamluk Sultans’ diplomatic moves, the word *sulh* also appeared next to the term “truce” (*hudna*) in the oath sworn by the Franks of the Kingdom of Acre (or Kingdom of Jerusalem), in the ten-year truce treaty concluded with Sultan Qalāwūn in 1283, whereas it was not mentioned in the oath sworn by the sultan; see Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḥ*, p. 271 (the word *ṣulḥ* is translated as “peace” in Holt 1995, p. 91). N. Jaspert (2019, p. 312) insists on the fact that the expressions used in Christian and Muslim diplomacy are very rarely equivalent.

50. *Oxford English Dictionary*.



In the face of looming disaster in the Holy Land, the Pope did not remain inactive. Nicholas IV (1288–1292) had proclaimed another crusade on April 10, 1290, which was due to start on June 24, 1293.<sup>51</sup> After the fall of Acre, on August 23, 1291, he renewed and extended the prohibitions on trade with the Muslims, and more particularly, with the Mamluks: trade with them was from then on altogether forbidden. Yet, the fact the measure had to be renewed, as had actually been the case for more than a century, showed how difficult it was to enforce, given the extent of the coastline and the numerous port activities that would have had to be monitored to make the ban effective.<sup>52</sup> As the provisions of the 1290 treaty show, the King of Aragon had explicitly promised the Sultan not to observe the ban.

The Mamluk and Catalan-Aragonese rulers were both to die within a few months shortly after the agreement had been concluded. Qalāwūn, who died on October 10, 1290, was succeeded by his son al-Ašraf Ḥalīl (1290–1293)—he was the one who took Acre—while Alfonso III, who died on June 18, 1291, was replaced at the head of the Crown of Aragon by his brother James II (1291–1327), the king of Sicily.<sup>53</sup> Yet, there was no need to renegotiate the 1290 treaty, since al-Ašraf Ḥalīl as the Sultan's son and the brothers of the King of Aragon had been directly associated to it and had explicitly committed to the treaty. Moreover, no time limit had been set for the treaty, which clearly differentiated it from a simple truce, as mentioned above.

For what reasons, then, did the Mamluk and Catalan-Aragonese rulers swear a second similar treaty<sup>54</sup> on January 29, 1293?<sup>55</sup> Part of the answer can be found in the instructions for the embassy drawn up by order of king James II on August 1292, which were published a long time ago by A. Capmany i de Montpalau,<sup>56</sup> but have been little explored in comparison with the two agreements of 1290 and 1293. Ramon Alamany, who had already represented the king in 1290, was again among the ambassadors, this time escorted by the royal counsellor Romeu de Marimon, who was also the *veguer* for Barcelona and Vallès.<sup>57</sup> The negotiations had, then, been initiated by the King of Aragon. What explicitly emerges from the instructions is that he was in fact requesting financial aid from the new sultan in order to continue the fight

51. Richard 1996, p. 476.

52. The trade prohibitions had first been limited to iron, timber and weapons. They were then extended to horses and victuals, and then to all types of goods in 1291. See Coulon 2013b, p. 166.

53. For an overview of James II's diplomatic action in the West, see Péquignot 2009.

54. Because of the similarity between the two treaties, P. M. Holt decided not to publish the translation of the 1293 text after translating the text of the 1290 treaty; cf. Holt 1995, p. 131.

55. The treaty of January 29, 1293 is dated from January 28, 1292 by most historians: See Heyd 1967, vol. 2, p. 31; Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares (eds.) 1940, doc. 145; Labib 1965, pp. 78–79; and Jaspert 2019, p. 313. On the other hand, M. Amari dated the Arabic version of the agreement to 1293; see Amari 1882–1883, pp. 423–424; and the Catalan version of the treaty is also dated to January 29, 1293; see Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 3, pp. 266–270 and p. 79, n. 8; Holt 1995, p. 131, and Coulon 2004, p. 44, n. 5; Coulon 2019, p. 119, n. 38.

56. Capmany i de Montpalau 1961–1963, vol. 1, t. II, doc. 53. Also see Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 2, pp. 263–265 and Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, pp. 68.

57. About this ambassador, see Péquignot 2009, appendix I, notice 186. The Catalan version of the treaty indicates that Romeu de Marimon was a royal notary in Valencia; cf. Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 3.

against the Pope and his French and Angevin allies.<sup>58</sup> In return, James II offered to extend their alliance to the kings of Castile and Portugal, who were respectively his father-in-law and his brother-in-law. He also asked the Sultan to release the prisoners from Aragon, but also from Castile and Portugal.<sup>59</sup> As we know, the new treaty made no mention of these requests. Al-Ashraf Ḥalīl might have expected an embassy from the distant kings of Castile and Portugal so that they could personally confirm their desire for an alliance with the sultan.<sup>60</sup> He might, nevertheless, have granted the king of Aragon's requests for subsidies and for the release of prisoners. Whatever the case may have been, the new 1293 treaty merely rehearsed the clauses of the 1290 treaty and reasserted the alliance and friendship between the two monarchs.

In conclusion, it can be said first that P.M. Holt himself somewhat downplayed the significance of the treaties, considering their contributions to the Crown of Aragon, the Republic of Genoa and the Mamluk Sultanate to have been ultimately limited. As he rightly points out, neither Qalāwūn nor his successor used their alliance with the King of Aragon against other Christian powers, nor were they able to support his claims in Sicily.<sup>61</sup> The States were arguably too distant for the rulers to be able to guarantee effective military assistance one to the other. Besides, King James II eventually made peace with the Pope and the Angevins of Naples through the treaty of Anagni on June 24, 1295. From the point of view of the King of Aragon, the alliance with the Mamluk Sultan thus lost most of its interest. Still, the agreements of the years between 1288 and 1293, in particular those that were concluded by the Crown of Aragon—by which a Western Christian sovereign committed for the first time to an alliance with a Mamluk Sultan—carried a strong symbolical significance as they demonstrated a radical break with the traditional logic of crusading and confrontation that

58. “Qu’el dit Solda fassa ajuda en prest o en altra manera, al dit Senyor Rey, perço que les dites guerres pusca mils è pus esforcidament è pus longament menar è tenir”; Capmany i de Montpalau 1961–1963, vol. 1, t. II, doc. 53 and Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 2, pp. 263–265.

59. They were probably Templars and Hospitallers who had been taken captive during the last stages of the conquest of the Crusader States. Some of them were still the subject of negotiations during embassies sent by James II in 1303 and 1305 for example; see Masià de Ros 1951, doc. 25, 290, doc. 28, 292–293, doc. 31, 296–299. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir mentions in his biography of Sultan Qalāwūn that among the many gifts he had presented at the court of the Sultan in 1290, king Alfonso III had offered seventy Muslim prisoners who had long been held in the Crown of Aragon; cf. Holt 1995, p. 131.

60. No embassy from Castile or Portugal seems to have been sent to the court of the Mamluk sultans in the last decade of the 13th century. There is the case of the astonishing reply addressed by Sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad, dated 5 radjab 699/28 March 1300, to king “Alfonso” of Castile—when at that time king Fernando IV (1295–1312) ruled the kingdom. But it was prompted by the embassy of an impostor, Catalan merchant Bernat Ricard, a subject of the king of Aragon, who had pretended to be a knight sent by king “Alfonso” of Castile; see Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares (eds.) 1940, doc. 146. The hoax was uncovered by envoys of the Sultan who had traveled back with Bernat Ricard, as shown by the reply from the Sultan to king James II of Aragon, dated 13 shawwal 703/14 February 1304; Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares (eds.) 1940, doc. 147. About the letter of 28 March 1300, see, although the author did not understand the imposture and overlooked the 1304 letter, Holt 1990, pp. 23–29; also see Coulon 2005c, p. 513. The incident reveals the multiplication of diplomatic negotiations and embassies between Western Christian princes, especially from the Crown of Aragon, and the Mamluk Sultans in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

61. Cf. Holt 1995, pp. 27–28.

prevailed in the Levant between Christian and Muslim powers. The main protagonists were probably quite aware of initiating an alternative, pragmatic as well as self-interested, strategy, given the “non conventional and technically illegal nature of the agreements”.<sup>62</sup>

In a broader perspective, the active negotiations conducted between 1288 and 1293 between the Venetians, the Genoese, and the Catalan-Aragonese and Mamluk rulers marked the climax of the diplomatic policy which the Mamluk Sultans had been pursuing at least since the 1260s with Christian powers and sovereigns. The documents produced during the negotiation process demonstrate sustained communication efforts on both sides of the Mediterranean and the creation of true diplomatic dialogue in order to outline agreements that might benefit both parties. However, this took place as the Crusader States were collapsing, which did not move the Catalan-Aragonese sovereigns in the least, but has had the effect of diverting the attention of later generations of historians away from this high point of negotiations between Muslim and Christian sovereigns. Yet, by consolidating their commercial agreements with the Mamluks, the main merchant “nations” were only reviving connections which had been existing even before the crusades since they dated back to the late 10th and 11th centuries.<sup>63</sup> The references made by the clerk of the Mamluk chancery Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, a contemporary of the 1290 agreements, to the negotiations conducted in 1228–1229 between Emperor Frederick II and Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil, which had led to the famous truce treaty of Jaffa, demonstrate that the Mamluks had preserved a vivid memory of this groundbreaking precedent. Moreover, although he tended to simplify them, the biographer of Sultan Qalāwūn was aware of the links that existed between king Alfonso of Aragon and the Emperor, which made comparisons all the more relevant between these two high points of diplomatic dialogue.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the truce treaty of Jaffa did not include any commercial clauses, while it was precisely in this area that the 1290 (and 1293) agreements were to have the most significant and lasting impact.<sup>65</sup> In addition to intensifying their trade relations with Egypt and Syria, the treaty with the Genoese allowed the latter to develop a quasi-monopoly in the supply of Mamluk slaves, whom they brought from their trading posts in the Crimea. B.Z. Kedar described for example the way Segurano-Sakrān Salvaygo benefited from this favourable context to make a fortune and lead the life of an adventurer, in no way intimidated by the wrath of the Church.<sup>66</sup> The kings of Aragon, for their part, continued to regularly send embassies to Cairo, despite

62. Holt 1995, p. 27.

63. Heyd 1967, vol. 1, pp. 93–125; Cahen 1983, pp. 37–41; and Jacoby 1995, pp. 76–77.

64. See above. It should be noted, however, that Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir compared the 1228–1229 negotiations to those of 1290 to insist on the fact that on both occasions, the Christian sovereign was the one who had approached the Sultan of Egypt. Regarding the links between the king of Aragon and the Emperor, he—erroneously—indicated that king Alfonso had seized “the Emperor’s kingdom”.

65. King Henry II of Cyprus himself foresaw the importance of such commercial agreements: in October 1291, a few months after the fall of Acre and the collapse of the Crusader States, he offered to reduce customs duties for Catalan merchants in Cyprus in order to attract them there; see Capmany i de Montpalau 1961–1963, vol. 1, t. II, doc. 31.

66. Kedar 1977.

the official reconciliation between king James II with the Pope and the kings of France and Naples in 1295. No fewer than seven legations to the Mamluk Sultans were sent between 1295 and 1327, the year king James II died,<sup>67</sup> and there was no slackening of the pace afterwards.<sup>68</sup> Each embassy in fact provided an opportunity to send a ship to trade freely in Egypt<sup>69</sup>, since, given the religious objectives of the journeys<sup>70</sup>, the Pope willingly granted permission.

The 1290 (and 1293) treaties and the general safe-conduct granted to the Venetians in 1288 thus provided solid foundations and stable conditions for the expansion and flourishing of the trade activities of the main Western “merchant” nations throughout the 14th century.<sup>71</sup> It is important to underline that they had a foundational and lasting role, unlike other agreements which were concluded through a no less rigorous and elaborate protocol but were ultimately never enforced<sup>72</sup>. This favourable context did not of course prevent sometimes fierce competition between Christian and Muslim merchants, piracy or abuse from Mamluk governors, which indeed regularly occurred. But when this type of incidents threatened to become serious, the kings of Aragon generally stepped in to allay the tensions and appeal to their ancient friendship with the Mamluk Sultan.<sup>73</sup> While “negotiation between powers under different religious authorities” and separated by long distances<sup>74</sup> can raise legitimate questions, valuable insights can be provided when examining the relations between the Venetians, the Genoese, Catalans and Mamluks in the late 13th century, in the context of the collapse of the Crusader States and the end of the crusades to the Levant. For Christian and Muslim rulers alike, the distance between them provided a kind of direct non-aggression guarantee—when crusading was no longer considered—which might incite them to build an alliance with each other. Moreover, the distance also allowed the sovereigns of Aragon to keep the agreements out of the spotlight, as they placed them in a position of diplomatic isolation among Western Christian countries—

67. In 1300, 1303, 1305, 1314, 1318, 1322 and 1327. See Finke 1908–1922, vol. II, no. 461, 467, 470 and 472; Golubovich 1906–1927, vol. 3, pp. 73–85, 185–187, 232–237 and 309–318; Atiya 1938, pp. 7–71; Alarcón y Santón, García de Linares (eds.) 1940, no. 147–151; Masià de Ros 1951, pp. 100–129; Ashtor 1983, pp. 33–34.

68. Coulon 2004, pp. 47–48.

69. Excluding—at least theoretically—forbidden goods, i.e. timber, iron, weapons, horses and victuals.

70. Officially, most of these embassies aimed at freeing Christians held prisoners in the Sultanate and defending free access to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims; they might more simply be followed by a pilgrimage to the Holy City.

71. These fruitful relations were only interrupted by the expedition mounted by the king of Cyprus, Peter I of Lusignan, against Alexandria in October 1365, in which the Venetians, Genoese and Catalans actively took part, leading to retaliation against Western merchants in the following years.

72. For instance, the 1430 agreement between Sultan Mamluk Barsbay and king Alfonso the Magnanimous of Aragon, was no longer observed barely two years after it had been concluded; see Coulon 2004, p. 59.

73. See in particular Coulon 2004, pp. 202–204.

74. See Péquignot 2013, p. 238.

whereas the 1229 treaty of Jaffa had had such a resounding impact that it had unleashed the anger of the advocates of warlike confrontation between Christian and Muslim sovereigns, based on their so-called traditional opposition. Thanks to this type of prudence, the kings of Aragon were also able, in parallel to their agreements with the Mamluks, to establish diplomatic contact with the powerful Mongol Ilkhans, who were great enemies of the Mamluks and thus very much courted by the main Christian sovereigns, and above all by the Pope.<sup>75</sup> While the negotiations between the kings of Aragon and the Ilkhans took place in much more ostentatious ways, they never went beyond the stage of making contact and significantly did not result in any agreement. In any case, negotiating with such distant powers was also a way for the sovereigns involved to assert their power by insisting on their far-reaching influence. The negotiations conducted between the Venetians, Genoese, Catalans and Mamluks, while providing another example of the broadening of horizons that characterized the 13th century, also demonstrate that they were able to build up a new institutional logic of exchange between Christians and Muslims, establishing the most regular and sustained dialogue that existed between them in the late Middle Ages.<sup>76</sup>

75. In 1268, as he was preparing his crusade against the Mamluks, king James I had sent an ambassador, a man named Jaume Alarich from Perpignan, to the Ilkhans of Persia; see *Llibre dels feits* § 476 pp. 467–468. Then, following the last great attack of the Mongol Ilkhans against Syria in 1299–1300, James II—who had been reconciled with the Pope in 1295—sent a new embassy led by Pere Solivera to Khan Ghazan on May 19, 1300, to propose military assistance; cf. Capmany i de Montpalau 1961–1963, vol. 1, t. II, doc. 60, p. 92. The Genoese also initiated diplomatic contact and proposed maritime collaboration with the Ilkhans as early as 1290, the very year when they negotiated a treaty with the Mamluks; cf. Ashtor 1983, p. 12 and Jaspert 2019, p. 313. This seemingly contradictory strategy should be understood in the context of a fierce struggle between rival factions in Genoa.

76. The desire to exalt the power of the sovereigns and to establish a new institutional logic of exchange also implied that the treaties should take particular forms, just as they complied with a time-tested rhetoric and protocol. On these determining aspects, see the illuminating comments of Grévin 2008, pp. 523–533. Also see Bauden, Dekkiche (eds.) 2019, in particular pp. 121–122.



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