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THE CHALLENGES OF MEDIEVAL COMMUNICATION: THE MILITARY ORDERS

Keywords
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Abstract
It is the thesis of this study that research into medieval communication, its audiences, purposes, and channels, plays a central role in a better understanding of the crusades. The Military Orders played a significant role in communication developments in Europe and the Levant, because their international character and the fact that their own survival relied on their ability to exchange accurate information in the shortest period. The significant increase in letter exchange, the acceleration of information transmission, and the new awareness of delivering reliable information in the shortest period, all these developments reflect the decisive role of the Military Orders in the emergence of a more communication-oriented society at the Late Middle Ages.

The various aspects of the crusades, whether from a religious, political, or socioeconomic perspectives, have received satisfactory attention in historical research.[1] One crucial facet, however, remained for many years *terra incognita*, mainly, the communication challenges that confronted the cru-

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1 Any attempt to give a historiographical list is condemned to failure. Up to date information can be found in the bulletin of the *Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, published annually.

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saders and the different channels they developed in this regard.[2] Some years ago, I devoted my book *The Vox Dei* to the history of medieval communication, with one chapter dealing with the crusades;[3] still, much work has to be done. From the wide field of medieval communication, this paper focuses in three main questions, namely, 1) The main methodological problems inherent in the investigation of medieval communication. More specifically, 2) The communication challenges that confronted the crusaders, and 3) The leading role of the Military Orders in promoting what can tentatively be regarded as a more communication-oriented society.

The ability to communicate in the highest level is a manifestation of the social nature of humankind.[4] Being an interpersonal process, communication requires a shared code of symbols and some standardized usage.[5] It is a transactional process, affective and purposive, and it implies goal-directed behavior.[6] Traditional societies do not require a skilled, professional communication system nor is it essential to the economy or the production process. The most primitive communication channels were indeed characterized by the immediate contact between the communicator and his audience.[7] The feudal pyramid reflects a *Kommunications-modell*, in which the amount of information assimilated by the various social strata was determined by their socioeconomic status and political functions. Whereas peasants or artisans contented themselves with scanty information, the sociopolitical elite required a considerable amount of data, while dealing with a large and

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2 The failure to continue with the traditional crusades after the fall of the Crusader Kingdom has recently been regarded as a failure in communication, more specifically, in propaganda; see: Karl Borchardt, "On Hospitaller Initiatives in the Western Mediterranean, 1291–1307," in *Communicating the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Sophia Menache*, ed. Iris Shagrir, Benjamin Kedar, and Michel Balard (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 24.

3 Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 98–123.

4 Owen Hargie, Christine Saunders, and David Dickson, *Social Skills in Interpersonal Communication* (Chatham: Routledge, 2000, 3rd edition), 19–55; Charles R. Berger, Michael E. Roloff, and David R. Ewoldsen, *The Handbook of Communication Science* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 2009), 3–11.

5 Charles R. Berger, "Interpersonal Communication: An Introduction," in *Interpersonal Communication*, ed. id. (Berlin–Boston: Sage Publications, 2014), 1–3.

6 Katherine Miller, *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Contexts* (Boston: Macgraw Hill, 2005, 2nd edition), 290–310.

7 Pascal Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1–24; Manashi Mohanty and Pritishri Parhi, "Folk and Traditional Media: A Powerful Tool for Rural Development," *Journal of Communication* 2, no. 1 (2011): 41–47.

miscellaneous range of reports.[8] Still, any attempt to investigate medieval communication faces historians with the risk of limiting themselves to the narrow borders of written documents while ignoring the different expressions of what the *Annales School* has successfully called "culture populaire."[9] Prophecies, coins, artistic manifestations of all kind, music, legends, the whole rich spectrum of popular culture offers new insights for a better understanding of the past. In other words, investigation of medieval communication requires complementing written testimonies with other expressions of medieval society, a task that very often turns historians into archaeologists.[10]

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Alongside ideological, political, and economic factors, the crusades can be regarded as an outcome of communication and, at the same time, an important factor in the development of new channels, primarily in Europe but also between both shores of the Mediterranean.[11] At a first stage, the success of the crusades depended on the convincing transmission of ideological tenets, well rooted in the spirit of medieval Christendom. The crusades further confronted contemporaries with the challenge of developing efficient channels of communication with those who departed overseas, a rather difficult goal due to the heterogeneous character of the crusader armies. At a more advanced stage, the reliance of the Latin States on manpower and supply from Europe made it imperative to find the most efficient communication channels between both shores of the Mediterranean.

The First Crusade provides a suitable case in point because its immediate and extensive response, which was sui–generis in the annals of medieval Christendom.[12] Though the original records of Urban II's speech in Clermont did not survive, analysis of the different versions reflects the main issues that ensured its

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8 Josef Benzinger, "Zum Wesen und zu den Formen von Kommunikation und Publizistik im Mittelalter," *Publizistik* 15 (1970): 295–318.

9 Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), passim, especially 4–14.

10 Menache, *The Vox Dei*, 3–37.

11 Ead., "The Crusades and Their Impact on the Development of Medieval Communication," in *Kommunikation zwischen Orient und Okzident: Alltag und Sachkultur, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, Internationaler Kongress Krems an der Donau (6. bis 9. Oktober 1992)*, vol. 17, ed. Harry Kühnel (Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), 69–90.

12 Ead, "The Communication Challenge of the Early Crusades, 1099–1187," in *Autour de la première croisade. Actes du Colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East (Clermont–Ferrand, 22–25 juin 1995)*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), 293–314.

wide reception; namely, the imperative to help Eastern Christians and Catholic pilgrims, both being oppressed by the Infidel. More important still, to put an end to the Muslim sacrilege of the holy places where Jesus Christ lived and was crucified.[13] The fight of those departing overseas thus became a *bellum justum* and, as such, reflected the will of God.[14] The apostolic appeal to well-known Christian codes provides the key to understand the mass response to Urban's call. Indeed, Jonathan Riley Smith characterized apostolic preaching as one with "emphasis on rhetoric and theatre," an "appeal to the guts rather than to the head."[15] Contemporary chroniclers were aware of the unprecedented scope of the papal call and approached its wide diffusion in a very short time in terms of divine intervention.[16] The Vicar of God in earth, however, relied on more temporal means of transmission, such as preaching and correspondence.[17]

Urban II repeatedly emphasized the same well-rooted themes in the surrounding areas of Angers, Tours, and Limoges.[18] Peter the Hermit complemented the papal efforts in *urbes et municipia*,[19] a trend that led Christopher Tyerman to approach medieval cities as the foci for crusader preaching and recruitment.[20] The

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[13] Dana Carleton Munro, "The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095," *American Historical Review* 11 (1906): 231–242; Ernest O. Blake, "The Formation of the 'Crusade Idea,'" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970): 11–31.

[14] See, for instance, Fulcher of Chartres, "Historia Hierosolymitana," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens occidentaux* (henceforth as: RHC *hist. occ*), vol. 3, (London: Gregg, 1967), 327.

[15] Jonathan Riley Smith, "History, the Crusades, and the Latin East: A Personal View," in *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth–Century Syria*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 16.

[16] Robert of Reims, "Historia Iherosolimitana", in RHC, *Hist. occ.*, 3: 730; "Historia peregrinorum euntium Jerosolymitanum," in RHC, *Hist. occ.*, 3: 173.

[17] *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Hildesheim, 1901 / New York: G. Olms, 1973), 136–138; Wilhelm Wiederhold, "Papsturkunden in Florenz," in *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, ed. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901), 313–314; *Papsturkunden in Spanien, I: Katalonien*, ed. Paul F. Kehr (Berlin: Krauss Reprint, 1926), 287–288; Robert Somerville, "A New Letter of Pope Urban II?" *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 36 (2019): 331–335; Judith McClure, "Pope Urban II. The 'Collectio Britannica' and the Council of Melfi, 1089," *The English Historical Review* 113, is. 454 (1998): 1266–1267; Paul E. Chevedden, "Crusade Creationism versus Pope Urban II's Conceptualization of the Crusades," *The Historian* (2013): 1–46.

[18] Herbert E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," *History* 55 (1970): 177–188.

[19] Ernest O. Blake and Colin Morris, "A Hermit goes to War: Peter and the Origins of the First Crusade," *Studies in Church History* 22 (1985): 79–107.

[20] *Orderici Vitalis Historiae Ecclesiasticae libri tredecim*, vol. 3, ed. Augustus Le Prevost (Paris: J. Renouard, 1855), 478; Christopher Tyerman, "Who went on Crusades to the Holy Land?" in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Yad ben Zvi, 1992), 18.

propaganda success of the First Crusade does not therefore indicate the emergence of new communication channels but the effective manipulation of old values and themes, well-rooted in the minds of eleventh–century believers.[21] As claimed by Joshua Prawer, an average Christian did not probably know the name of the king nor the place of his residence – if there was a permanent royal residence at the time – but most believers were able to identify the name of Jerusalem, the holiest city, where Jesus Christ was crucified for the remission of sins.[22]

Preaching remained a main communication channel during the whole crusader period, though many practical problems remained unsolved. Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, preached the Holy War on the eve of the Second Crusade in the urban centers of France, Lothringia, Flanders, and Germany.[23] Bernard, however, was able to preach in French and Latin while his listeners ignored these languages; still, they were captivated by the saint's message as if it was emitted in German.[24] Gerard of Wales, as well, preached the Third Crusade in Latin and French to Welsh people, whose knowledge of these languages was nil; he further recognized that the main importance of a crusade sermon did not lie in its content but in the way it was delivered and the emotions it raised.[25] Universal weeping and miracles as much as possible were considered fundamental to the success of crusade preaching.[26]

Miracles, however, were not always at the disposal of Christian preachers, who had to deal with the heterogeneous character of their audiences. Many listeners did not understand Latin, and the itinerant character of preachers did not

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[21] Sophia Menache and Esther Cohen, "Holy Wars and Sainted Men: Christian War Propaganda in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Communication* 36, no. 2 (1986): 52–62.

[22] Joshua Prawer, *A History of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (Hebrew)*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1963), 83–87.

[23] Marinus B. Pranger, "The 'Persona' of the Preacher in Bernard of Clairvaux," *Medieval Sermons Studies* 51 (2007): 33–40.

[24] Giles Constable, "The Language of Preaching in the Twelfth Century," *Viator* 25 (1994): 131–152; Natalie B. Van Kirk, "Finding One's Way through the Maze of Language: Rhetorical Usages that add Meaning in Saint Bernard's Style," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 42 (2007): 11–35.

[25] Robert Bartlett, "Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales," *Speculum* 58, no. 3 (1983): 598–613; Michael Richter, "Gerald of Wales: A Reassessment on the 750th Anniversary of his Death," *Traditio* 29 (1973): 379–390.

[26] There is a rich bibliography on the subject; see, for example, Christoph T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–70; id., *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), passim; Penny J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Medieval Academy of America, 1991), passim.

make their dialogue with local audiences any easier. The wide success of Bernard of Clairvaux and Gerard of Wales, however, make it clear that beyond linguistic skills, body language and mass suggestion played crucial roles in enlisting medieval audiences to the Holy War. The need to develop a basic dialogue with their contemporaries – usually common people who were not familiar with Holy Scripture even less with the Muslim threat in the Latin East – fostered the preachers' use of what we would call today "audio-visual channels," such as loud voices, songs (mostly in the vernacular), bells, processions, public prayers, ornaments, and gestures, all of them devoted to enhance the Holy War against the Infidel.[27]

The heterogeneous nature of medieval audiences characterized the crusader armies, as well, as colorfully described by Fulcher of Chartres:

> "And whoever heard of such a mixture of languages in one army? There were present Franks, Flemings, Frisians, Gauls, Allobroges, Lotharingians, Alemanni, Bavarians, Normans, English, Scots, Aquitanians, Italians, Dacians, Apulians, Iberians, Britons, Greeks, and Armenians. If any Briton or Teuton wishes to question me, I could neither reply nor understand."[28]

At the crusader period, however, a magnanimous God reversed the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1–9), and the pilgrims *Outremer*, who could hardly understand each other, amalgamated like brothers:

> "Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transformed the Occident into the Orient. For we who were Occidentals have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank has in this land been made into a Galilean, or a Palestinian [...]. We have already forgotten the places of our birth [...]. Words of different languages have become common property known to each nationality, and mutual faith unites those who are ignorant of their descent [...]. He who was born a stranger is now as one born here; he who was born an alien has become as a native."[29]

Linguistic barriers among the crusaders did not disappear in the course of time, and characterized the crusader period as a whole. Thus, contemporary chroniclers

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[27] See the differences of opinion in this regard between Nicholas L. Paul, "A Warlord Wisdom: Literacy and Propaganda at the Time of the First Crusade," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 534–566, and Jay Rubenstein, "The Deeds of Bohemond: Reform, Propaganda, and the History of the First Crusade," *Viator* 47, no. 2 (2016): 113–135.

[28] Fulcher of Chartres, "Historia Hierosolymitana," 3: 336–337; *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem*, trans. Frances Rita Ryan (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967), 271–272.

[29] Fulcher of Chartres, "Historia Hierosolymitana", 3: 336–337.

emphasize the "diversity of nations, customs, and languages" among those who restored Lisbon to Christian rule in 1147, as well.[30]

The heterogeneous nature of medieval audiences represents just one communication challenge inherent in the problematic essence of conducting the Holy War overseas. The evolution and tempo of the Second Crusade reflect additional obstacles that confronted the Christian fight against the Infidel. According to William of Tyre, "when the city of Edessa was captured [...] the story of the ominous disaster was carried by rumor throughout the entire west."[31] However, only by December 1144, i.e., almost one year after the Christian defeat overseas, messengers from Antioch formally delivered the distressing news to the pope. Eugenius III reacted immediately – the first bulls calling for a new crusade dated on 1 December 1145.[32] The pope reissued his call for a new crusade three months later, and the apostolic letter reached England, Denmark, Tournai, the Lowlands, Flanders, and Lisieux very close to its publication. Eugene III also wrote about his crusade project to Emperor Manuel, who replied in August 1146 and again in March 1147. Still, the Christian armies left Europe only by April 1147, almost eighteen months after the papal call and two and a half years after the fall of Edessa.[33] The considerable delay in the Western response appears to be the rule rather than the exemption. The urgent needs of the Latin States encountered a slow response, if any, in Christendom, thus neutralizing even more the fragile cohesion between the two shores of the Mediterranean.[34] Additional examples may clarify the slowness of transmis-

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[30] *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*, ed. Charles W. David (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 52; Jonathan Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War in 'De expugnatione Lysbonensi'," *Studies in Church History* 36 (2000): 123–141; Alan Forey, "The Siege of Lisbon and the Second Crusade," *Portuguese Studies* 20 (2004): 1–13.

[31] *Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 739–740. On the spread of rumors on the fall of Edessa, see also: "Annales Herbipolenses," in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* (henceforth as: MGH SS), vol. 16, no. 1–9, ed. Auguste Molinier (Lyon: Persee, 1902), 4–5; Ralph L. Rosnow, "Rumor as Communication: A Contextualist Approach," *Journal of Communication* 38 (1988): 12–28; Theodore Caplow, "Rumors in War," *Social Forces* 25 (1947): 298–302.

[32] Peter Rassow, "Text der Kreuzzugsbulle Eugens III. vom 1. März 1146, Trastevere (J-L. 8796)," *Neues Archiv* 45 (1924): 302–305 (Source edition "Quantum predecessores").

[33] *Willelmi Tyrensis*, ed. Huygens, 326; Giles Constable, "The Second Crusade as seen by Contemporaries," *Traditio* 9 (1953): 213–279; Jonathan Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007), 37; Laurence W. Marvin, "King Louis VII as General of the Second Crusade: A Failure of Command, Control and Communication," in *Louis VII and his World*, ed. Michael L. Bardot and Laurence W. Marvin (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 29–49.

[34] Malcolm Barber, "Supplying the Crusader States: The Role of the Templars," in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Yad be Zvi, 1992), 314–326; John H. Pryor, "*In*

sion: pilgrims delivered in Jerusalem the news of Emperor Henry V's death and his succession by Lothar almost one year later, in Easter day (11 April 1126).[35] Similarly, the notification of Frederick I's death in Filifke Castle (Asia Minor) on 10 June 1190, reached Germany only four months later.[36]

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If the average crusader could cope with the relative stagnation of information, the situation was rather different with regard to the crusade leaders, the Masters of the Military Orders among them. They became, indeed, a leading factor in communication practices between Europe and *Outremer*, the very existence of the Orders conditioned by the reception and delivery of up-to-date reports among the ranks of the institution itself and with the leading powers in Christendom, the papacy at their head, as well. Throughout the crusader period, moreover, the activities of the Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights remained in both shores of the Mediterranean.[37] General Chapters – in which the master, the convent, and capitular bailiffs participated – provincial chapters, and periodical visitations to the Order houses, each of them provided important communication channels.[38]

Subsidium Terrae Sanctae: Exports of Foodstuffs and War Materials from the Kingdom of Sicily to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1265–1284," *Asian and African Studies* 22 (1988): 128–141.

35 Fulcher of Chartres, "Historia Hierosolymitana," 3: 480; Holger Macht, *Lothar III. Kampf mit den Staufern* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2004), 22–25.

36 "Quellen zur Geschichte des 'Kreuzzuges' Kaiser Friedrichs I.," ed. Anton Chroust, in MGH SS, N.S., vol. 5 (Berlin: M.G.H., 1928), 92; Rudolf Hiestand, "'Precipua tocius christianisimi columpnii': Barbarossa und der Kreuzzug," in *Friedrich Barbarossa: Handlungspielraüme und Wirkungsweisen ders staufischen Kaisers*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991), 51–108.

37 This study focuses in the Templar, Hospitaller, and Teutonic Knights due to the international character of these Orders in contrast with the regional essence of those active in the Iberian Peninsula such as Calatrava, Santiago, Alcántara and Avis. See: Enrique Rodríguez–Picavez, "The Military Orders in Medieval Iberia: Image, Propaganda, and Legitimacy," *Mirator* 13 (2012): 1–35.

38 Due to space restrictions, we avoid here reference to the whole Orders' network. From the rich bibliography in the subject, see: Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 229–280; Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus c. 1050–1310* (Edinburgh: MacMillan, 1967), 227–372; Jochen Burgtorf, "Structures in the Orders of the Hospital and the Temple – Select Aspects," in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and József Laszlovszky (Budapest: Central Europe University, 2001), 379–393; Jochen Burgtorf, *The Central Convent of Hospitallers and Templars: History, Organization and Personnel (1099/1120–1310)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 27–121.

The imperative to develop suitable communication channels between Europe and the Levant generated many challenges but the knights also enjoyed some advantages. Against the transitory character of most pilgrims or crusaders who reached the Holy Land,[39] the members of the Military Orders, especially the masters, spent large periods *in situ* thus becoming better acquainted with the Levant and the beliefs and practices of its inhabitants, including Muslims and/or Eastern Christians. Usama ibn Munqidh, a Syrian prince and diplomat who travelled extensively in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt,[40] confirmed the knights' advantages over other Christians:

> "When I went into the mosque al–Aqsa, which was occupied by the Templars, who were my friends, 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."[41]

In the eyes of the Syrian diplomat, the Templars thus represented those Christians who spent long periods in the East, thereby becoming more aware of Muslim practices and rituals. The Templars' behaviour was therefore described in most positive terms, without the charges of heresy that later Capetian propaganda ascribed to the knights.[42]

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[39] Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Passenger List of a Crusader Ship, 1250: Toward the History of the Popular Element in the Seventh Crusade," *Studi Medievali* 13, no. 1 (1972): 267–279.

[40] Adam M. Bishop, "Usama ibn Munqidh and Crusader Law in the Twelfth Century," *Crusades* 12 (2013): 53–65; Robert Irwin, "Usama ibn Munqidh: An Arab–Syrian Gentleman at the time of the Crusades Reconsidered," in *The Crusades and their Sources: Essays presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. John France and William G. Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 71–87.

[41] Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Autobiography of Ousama*, trans. and ed. George Richard Potter (London: 1929 (repr.: Whitefish: Kessinger's Rare Reprints, 2008)), 172–177.

[42] Julien Théry, "A Heresy of State: Philip the Fair, the Trial of the 'Perfidious Templars', and the Pontificalization of the French Monarchy," *Journal of Medieval Religious Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 117–148; Alan J. Forey, "Were the Templars guilty, even if they were not Heretics or Apostates?" *Viator* 42 (2011): 117–148.

In order to ensure the Orders' survival in a hostile environment, however, the information advantages implied in their permanent residence in the Latin East should be effectively channelized to medieval Christendom, to recruit a positive response time and again. Messengers and delegations performed a most important function in this regard. However, the long delays in transmission and the many dangers in the route intensified the sense of insecurity that was an intrinsic part of the crusaders' existence overseas and weakened the fragile cohesion between the two shores of the Mediterranean. They justified, even dictated, an independent policy, since it was impossible to rely on timely advice, not to mention concrete help from the West. The communication perspective thus helps to counterbalance the colonial essence ascribed by some scholars to the Latin Kingdom,[43] whose rulers had no choice but to act or more often react in a rather independent way.

Along with their original duty as couriers, messengers orally transmitted a large amount of their information.[44] The continuous dependence on the substantial assistance of Western Christendom – much expected but only exceptionally received in time – brought about numerous delegations to the West, the main goal of which was to increase support in funds and manpower. The Military Orders played a main role in the many delegations that called for the much needed support of the Orders but also of the Latin settlements as a whole. From the very beginning, the knights embarked in a series of journeys to the West, very often promoted by the Kings of Jerusalem. According to William of Tyre, Baldwin II sent Hugh of Payns westwards in order to recruit *potentes* for his campaign against Damascus. Between 1128 and 1130, indeed, the First Master of the Temple travelled through Champagne, Anjou, Normandy, England, and Scotland, and then back to Flanders, probably returning to the East via the Rhone Valley and Marseilles.[45] The Council at Troyes (13 January 1129), where the Templar rule was approved, was therefore preceded by a vigorous campaign to recruit donations and new volunteers.[46] Arnold of Torroja, the ninth master as well,[47] set out for the West in 1184 with other prominent Latin leaders. The plan was to visit Italy, Germany, France, and England in order to alert about Saladin's threat. Though Arnold

43 See the classical book of Joshua Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), passim.

44 Markus Stock, "Letter, Word, and Good Messengers: Towards an Archaeology of Remote Communication," *Interdisciplinary Science Review* 37 (2012): 299–313; Mary C. Hill, "King's Messengers and Administrative Developments in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *The English Historical Review* 61 (1946): 315–328.

45 *Willelmi Tyrensis*, ed. Huygens, 620.

46 Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 8–20.

47 Nikolas Jaspert, "The Election of Arnau de Torroja as Ninth Master of the Knights Templar (1180): An Enigmatic Decision Reconsidered," *Archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de* (2009): 372–397.

died at the very beginning of the mission, the essence of such delegations is rather clear: only most reliable men were sent to the Continent both because their knowledge of the critical situation *Outremer* and their ability to negotiate in the highest levels. Similarly, the Master of the Hospital, Garin of Montaigu, led in 1222 a delegation to Europe, where he met Emperor Frederick II, before he visited England and France.[48] The last Master of the Temple, Jacques de Molay, as well, participated in various delegations to Europe, where he held general chapters and met the King of Aragon.[49] Members of the Military Orders also played a main role in delicate diplomatic missions, which required most subtle skills. During the Second Crusade, King Louis VII sent Everard des Barres – the Templar Master in France who became Grand Master later on[50] – to conduct difficult negotiations with Emperor Manuel I.

Beyond their rivalry, the Orders joined forces many times to cope with the apathy of Western Christendom, an apathy that turned into open enmity from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards.[51] Thus, the newly appointed Templar Master William of Beaujeu and the former Hospitaller Marshal William of Corceles, appeared before the Second Council of Lyons (1274),[52] to enlarge the support of both Orders in the critical situation overseas.

Notwithstanding the importance of such delegations as the situation *Outremer* deteriorated, they turned often into a "mission impossible". Indeed, the Grand Commander of the Temple, Geoffrey Foucher, warned King Louis VII not

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48 Jochen Burgtorf, "Travels, Troubles and Trials: The Montaigu Family between Capetian France and Lusignan Cyprus," in *The Capetian Century, 1214 to 1314*, ed. William Chester and Jenna R. Phillips (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 281–303.

49 Sophia Menache, "Jacques de Molay, the Last Master of the Temple," in *Knighthood of Christ: Essays on the History of the Crusades and the Knights Templar presented to Malcolm Barber on his 65th Birthday* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 229–240.

50 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. Virginia G. Berry, Records of Civilization 42 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 52–55. On Everard's influence in the Latin East, see: Marion Melville, "Les débuts de l'Ordre du Temple," in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein and Manfred Hellmann, Vorträge und Forschungen XXVI (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1980), 23–31; Jonathan Riley Smith, "The Templars and the Castle of Tortosa in Syria: An Unknown Document concerning the Acquisition of the Fortress," *The English Historical Review* 84 (1969): 278–288.

51 Sophia Menache, "A Clash of Expectations: Self-image versus the Image of the Knights Templar in Medieval Narrative Sources," *Analecta Turonensia* 13 (2005): 47–58.

52 *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint Jean de Jérusalem, 1100–1310*, vol. 4, *(1301–1310)*, ed. Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1906), no. 3528; Paul Amargier, "La défense du Temple devant le concile de Lyon en 1274," in *1274: Année charnière: mutations et continuités*, ed. Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1977), 495–497.

to expect further delegations since the Christians strongholds in the Holy Land remained too weak to allow the dispatch of additional emissaries to the West.[53] A partial solution was found later on throughout the thirteenth century with permanent representatives of all Military Orders at the papal and royal courts, often acting in some official capacity such as royal almoners or treasurers.[54] Brother Marquisius, for example, was appointed the Hospital full-time representative at the Apostolic See with plenary power in all legal actions (1231).[55] Long before the Western powers – with Venice at their head – the Military Orders thus discovered the importance of permanent embassies.[56]

The Masters of the Military Orders, like other rulers in the Latin East, were confronted with the need to balance between the very few and defective communication channels at their disposal and the imperative to receive continuous and urgent support from Europe. Bearing in mind the impediments of large delegations as those mentioned by Geoffrey Foucher,[57] correspondence became a very important if not a most indispensable communication channel.[58] Although letter-exchange across short distances – between Byzantium, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Acre – was relatively efficient, it encountered many difficulties between the Crusader Kingdom and Europe.[59] The maritime journey between Western Europe and the Latin East was relatively short, lasting from fifteen to twenty–five days with favourable winds, but only during specific seasons, from late March to late October.[60] Notwithstanding the many difficulties, the Masters of the Military Orders

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[53] *Patrologia Latinae*, vol. 155, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1854), cols. 1269–70; *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani (1097–1291)*, vol. 1, ed. Reinhold Röhricht (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1893 (repr.: New York: Burt Franklin, s.d.)), no. 383.

[54] Helen Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights: Images of the Military Orders 1128–1291* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 104–105.

[55] Riley Smith, *The Knights of St. John*, 379–380.

[56] Garrett Mattingly, "The First Resident Embassies: Mediaeval Italian Origins of Modern Diplomacy," *Speculum* 12, no. 4 (1937): 423–439; Marc von der Höh, "Muslim Embassies in Renaissance Venice: The Framework of an Intercultural Dialogue," in *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marc von der Höh, Nicolas Jaspert, and Jenny Rahel Oesterle (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 163–182.

[57] See above, note 53.

[58] Sophia Menache, "Understanding the Crusades: The Contribution of Correspondence," in *Verba Sapientium*: Festschrift in Honor of Adrian Boaz (forthcoming).

[59] Hans Eberhard Mayer, "Latins, Muslims and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *History* 63 (1978): 175–192; Jonathan Rubin, *Learning in a Crusader City: Intellectual Activity and the Intercultural Exchanges in Acre, 1191–1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15–46.

[60] Michelle Mollat, "Problèmes navales de l'histoire des croisades," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 10 (1967): 345–359; John Pryor, "Transportation of Horses by Sea during the Era of the Crusades: Eight Century to 1285 A.D.," *Mariner's Mirror* 68 (1982): 9–27 and 103–125; id., "*In*

were forced to develop a fluent communication with Christendom, their critical condition dictating the frequency and weight of correspondence. Some examples may clarify the current state of affairs: In 1150, the Seneschal of the Temple, Andrew of Montbard, wrote to Everard des Barres, the Grand Master then in France, asking for funds to cover the considerable expenses incurred by Baldwin III's expedition to Antioch.[61] The seneschal's request found full response the same year at the chapter meeting in Paris (14 May 1150).[62] From September 1163 until January 1165, at least thirteen letters were written to King Louis VII by the Templar Master, Bertrand of Blancfort, and Geoffrey Fulcher, the procurator and preceptor of the Temple, among others.[63] In his letter to the King of France, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Amalric of Nesle, recommended Gilbert d'Assailly, the Master of the Hospital, who had departed for Europe for fund raising and would be able to deliver more information orally. Found raising remained therefore the first concern of all Military Orders, which sometimes found a positive response. After the Master of the Teutonic Order, Hermann von Salza, wrote to Gregory IX about the great expenses caused by the fortification of Montfort,[64] the pope urged the faithful to contribute to the Order, since all "Christians in the area are known to receive great advantage" from the castle.[65]

The exchange of correspondence with Christendom increased in times of crisis, which characterized the history of the Latin Kingdom from the second half of

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subsidium," 127–146; id., "A View from a Masthead: The First Crusade viewed from the Sea," *Crusades* 7 (2008): 87–152.

61 *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 261; *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*, vol. 1, *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta auctore, ut videtur, Ricardo, Canonico Sanctae Trinitatis Londoniensis*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864), 291–294; Hans E. Mayer, "The Wheel of Fortune: Seigniorial Vicissitudes under King Fulk and Baldwin III of Jerusalem," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 860; Andrew D. Buck, "The Noble Rebellion at Antioch 1180–82: A Case Study in Medieval Frontier Politics," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 60 (2016): 93–121.

62 *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules de de la France*, vol. 15, *Contenant la suite des monumens des trois règnes de Philippe Ier, de Louis VI dit le Gros, et de Louis VII surnommé le Jeune, depuis l'an MLX jusqu'en MCLXXX*, ed. M. Bouquet, Michel-Jean-Joseph Brial, and Lèopold V. Delisle (Farnborough: Engl. Gregg, 1968), 540–541; *Cartulaire general de l'ordre du Temple, 1119––1150*, ed. Marquis André d'Albon (Paris: Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1913), 362.

63 *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, nos. 382–384, 393–394, 398–399; *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules de de la France*, 15, ed. Bouquet, Brial, and Delisle, nos. 125, 195, 197, 244, 245.

64 Kristjan Toomaspoeg, "Montfort Castle and the Order of the Teutonic Knights in the Latin East," in *Montfort: History, Early Research, and Recent Studies of the Principal Fortress of the Teutonic Order in the Latin East*, ed. Adrian J. Boas (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 13–23.

65 *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Legum*, vol. 2, ed. Georg H. Pertz (Hannover: impensis bibliopolii aulici Hahniani, 1837), 264.

the twelfth century onwards. During Saladin's advance (1177–1187),[66] the Masters of all Military Orders multiplied their calls for assistance. Between 10 July––6 August 1187 and January 1188, the Grand Commander of the Temple after the Battle of Hattin, Brother Terricus, wrote a series of letters informing Pope Urban III, Henry II of England, and Philip of Alsace, as well as the brethren in the West about the dramatic episodes in the Latin East, primarily, Saladin's execution of 230 Templars.[67] This last example exemplifies the awareness of the Military Orders with regard the imperative to report most accurate information about the actual situation in the Holy Land not only to the brothers across the sea but also to the papal curia and most prominent Christian rulers. Letters to the pope claiming for supply actually characterized the Maters' interplay with the Apostolic See. Although we lack evidence of all letters written by the Hospitallers to the pope,[68] the letter of William of Chartres to Honorius III in October 1217[69] clearly testimonies the desperate situation of all Military Orders in the Latin East. Already in January the same year, the pope had called the faithful to help the knights who devoted themselves to the service of Jesus Christ and the defence of the Christian faith. This plea was repeatedly voiced during the course of the year and, again, in November 1218.[70]

What we may call today "emergency pleas" accompanied the Mongols' advance in the following century, as well.[71] The Master of the Temple, Thomas Bérard,

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[66] Yehoshua Frenkel, "Political and Social Aspects of Islamic Religious Endowments: Saladin in Cairo and Jerusalem," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62 (1999): 1–21; Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Battle of Hattin Revisited," in *The Horns of Hattin*, 190–208; Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019), 157–261.

[67] *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 660; *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi benedicti abbatis. The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I, AD 1169–1192, Volume 1: Known Commonly under the Name of Benedict of Peterborough*, ed. William Stubbs, Cambridge library collection. Rolls Series 49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1867), 13–14; *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1869 (repr.: Kraus Reprint Ltd, 1964)), 346–347. See also: Hans E. Mayer, "Henry II of England and the Holy Land," *English Historical Review* 97 (1982): 721–739.

[68] Judith Bronstein, *The Hospitallers and the Holy Land: Financing the Latin East, 1187–1274* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 109.

[69] *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 902; *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules de de la France*, vol. 19, *Contenant la troisième et dernière livraison des monumens des règnes de Philippe-Auguste et de Louis VIII, depuis l'an MCLXXX jusqu'en MCCXXVI*, ed. Martin Bouquet, Michel-Jean-Joseph Brial, and Lèopold V. Delisle (Farnborough: Engl. Gregg, 1968), 640.

[70] *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers*, 4, nos. 1536, 1543, 1554, 1572, 1631, 1633.

[71] Malcolm Barber described the Templars' correspondence as one that "bombarded" the West; see: id., *The New Knighthood*, 156. See, for instance, the letter from all leaders in the Holy Land to Theobald of Champagne (May 1267), *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 1348. Jean Rich-

wrote to the Order officials about the Mongol devastation that brought about the conquest of Aleppo and Damascus, and an endless number of refugees (4 March 1260), as well.[72] Thomas further complained about the distressing incidents of letters' theft, a crime rather common in the Levant.[73] Delinquency of this kind justified the parallel use of oral messages, while special messengers orally delivered part or the entire message.[74] Three months later (10 June), Thomas's letter reached the Visitor of the Temple in the West, Guy of Basainville, who sent messengers to Françon of Borne, Preceptor of Aquitaine, and to Pope Alexander IV. The *Flores historiarum* validates the dramatic impact of the Master's report in London by 16 June, the dramatic situation being confirmed by letters of the papal legate, Thomas Agni on 1 March,[75] and by officials of other Military Orders on 22 April.[76] From a communication perspective, one may also note the Muslim influence in the use of carrier pigeons, a practice unknown Europe but regularly used in the Frankish States during the thirteenth century.[77] Regular mail services, however, like those operating in the neighboring Muslim States and Byzantium, remained completely extrinsic to the crusaders' world. Yet, the Teutonic Order developed an advanced postal system in the Baltic area.[78]

The desperate situation *Outremer* is clearly reflected in the letter of Hugh Ravel, Master of the Hospital, to Ferrand des Barres, prior of St. Giles (1268):

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ard, "The Mongols and the Franks," *Journal of Asian History* 34 (1969): 45–57; Peter Jackson, "The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260", *The English Historical Review* 95 (1980): 481–513.

72 *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 1299; "Annales Monasterii de Burton 1004–1263 from Ms. Cotton. Vespas. E. iii." in *Annales Monastici*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series 36/1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864 (repr.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)), 491–495. Reuven Amitai, "Mongol Raids into Palestine (AD 1260 and 1300)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 119, no. 2 (1987): 236–255.

73 *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 1290. Already Bertrand of Blancfort complained about this inconvenience in his letter to King Louis VII (1163), see: no. 383.

74 Menache, *The Vox Dei*, 18–19; Ruth Crosby, "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 11 (1936): 88–93.

75 Jonathan Rubin, "Benoit d'Alignan and Thomas Agni: Two Western Intellectuals and the Study of Oriental Christianity in the Thirteenth–Century Kingdom of Jerusalem," *Viator* 44, no. 1 (2013): 189–199.

76 Matthaeus Westmonasteriensis, *Flores historiarum*, vol. 2, *A.D. 1067 – A.D. 1264*, ed. Henry R. Luard, Rolls Series 95/2 (Nendeln / Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1965), 451–452; *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 1238.

77 Susan B. Edgington, "The Doves of War: The Part played by Carrier Pigeons in the Crusades," in *Autour de la première croisade*, 167–75.

78 Jürgen Sarnowsky, "Written Communication in the Later Middle Ages: The Letter Registers of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia," in *Communicating the Middle Ages*, 76–87.

> The tiny number of Christians who are on this side of the sea are unable to resist the indescribable power of the Saracens. Even the city of Acre cannot be fortified as it ought to be by all the Christians everywhere on this side of the sea. In any case, the Christians are so stupefied at the immense damage which they have received and which they are receiving every day that they can provide no remedy of defence.[79]

The repeated calls for assistance usually found a positive response at the Papal See, being the papacy the sponsor of the crusades and the patron of all Military Orders. Pope Gregory X, for example, sent the Archbishop of Corinth to Philip III asking the King of France to strengthen his support of the Orders *Outremer* (4 March 1272), and the same day informed the Visitor of the Templars and the Prior of the Hospitallers in France about the apostolic mission to the Capetian King.[80] The papal affirmative, effective response, however, was not in line with the hesitant attitude of most Christian princes, who conditioned their support of the crusade to their immediate political interests.

Regardless the slowness of transmission, medieval chroniclers regarded letters as an important and faithful source and, as such, gave them some place in their writings. Matthew Paris, one of the most prolific chroniclers in the thirteenth century, based much of his description of the crusaders' dealings *Outremer* on letters written in the Holy Land.[81] Matthew was not an exception; on the contrary: Following the conquest of Damietta (5 November 1219), the *Chronicle of Melrose* copied the detailed letter of Hermann von Salza, the Master of the Teutonic Order, to Leo, Cardinal of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem.[82] Besides the master's concern for the crusaders' greediness and their wild pursuit of booty, one may note his touching awareness of the Muslims' suffering:

> Such a terrible mortality broke out among its inhabitants, that the living could not bury the dead. The survivors were so oppressed with the burden of disease that when we first gained an entrance into the city we found more than three thousand human corpses lying in the street, like so many dead dogs [...] before

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79 *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers* , 4: 3308; *The Knights Hospitaller*, trans. Helen Nicholson (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 35–36.

80 *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers*, 4, no. 3440.

81 *Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica majora*, vol. 4, *A. D. 1240 To A. D. 1247*, ed. Henry R. Luard (London: Longman, 1882), 25–26, 288–291, 307–311; 6: 152–154, 155––162, 167–169, etc. See: Sophia Menache, "Rewriting the History of the Templars According to Matthew Paris," in *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois*, ed. Michael Goodich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 183–213.

82 *Chronicle of Melrose: A Facsimile Edition*, ed. Alan O. and Marjorie O. Anderson (Lund: Humpries, 1936), 47–48; *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 926.

> the city of Damietta was taken, the citizens declared that they were so exhausted that they could no longer hold out.[83]

The *Annals of Burton*, as well, included a letter of the Templar Master, Thomas Berard, to the Master of the Order in England.[84] Letters, indeed, were a first-hand and sometimes a unique source of the main developments in the Crusader Kingdom, as clearly reflected in the letter of John de Villiers, Master of the Hospital, to William de Villaret, Prior of St. Giles, following the painful fall of Crusader Acre (31 May 1291):

> They [the Muslims] entered the city on all sides early in the morning and in very great force. We and our convent resisted them at St. Anthony's Gate, where there were so many Saracens that one could not count them [...] I myself on that same day was stricken nearly to death by a lance between the shoulders, a wound which has made the writing of this letter a very difficult task. Meanwhile a great crowd of Saracens were entering the city on all sides, by land and by sea, moving along the walls, which were all pierced and broken [...].[85]

Notwithstanding the emotive essence of letters of this kind, they did not succeed to overcome the indifference of thirteenth–century Christendom. This was not only a political failure that heralds the decadence of papal leadership but perhaps primarily a propaganda fiasco.

To conclude, in contrast to the localism inherent in feudal practices, in the crusader period, a growing number of people began travelling between Europe and the Levant thus requiring and eventually also developing a constant exchange of information between both shores of the Mediterranean. The Military Orders became an important catalyst for communication developments in Europe and the Levant because their international character and the fact that their own survival relied on their ability to exchange the most accurate information in the shortest period. The significant increase in letter exchange, the acceleration of information transmission, and perhaps above all, the new awareness of the crucial importance of delivering reliable information in the shortest time, turned the Military Orders into an important promoter of communication developments at the Late Middle Ages.

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[83] *A Medieval Chronicle of Scotland: The Chronicle of Melrose*, trans. and ed. Joseph Stevenson (Lampeter: Llanerch Press, 1991), 54–56.

[84] "Annales Monasterii de Burton," 491–495; *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, nos. 1299, 340.

[85] *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 1, no. 1513; *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers*, 4, no. 4157; *The Knights Hospitaller*, 37–38.

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