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CONTESTED ORTHODOXY: LATINS AND GREEKS IN LATE MEDIEVAL JERUSALEM

Abstract

Starting in the ninth century, Latin-Greek debates on orthodoxy led to the flourishing of the heresiological genre of the so-called "lists of errors". This article discusses the case of the "Greek errors" listed by Latin authors living in the Holy Land, especially those produced by Franciscan friars, who settled in Jerusalem as the exclusive representatives of the Roman Church in the fourteenth century. The article explores in detail one of the errors included in the Latin lists, namely the descent of the Holy Fire on Holy Saturday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Key words: Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Franciscans, Holy Fire, crusades, "lists of errors"

The claim of "orthodoxy" (correct belief) for a certain creed implies the heterodoxy of beliefs that differ from the adopted norm. The history of Christianity bears the sign of these two conflicting notions.¹ This article explores Latin-Greek debates on orthodoxy (the correct belief) and orthopraxy (the correct practice of this belief) in late medieval Jerusalem. It focuses on the Latin view, understood in the larger context of Latin-Greek polemics. The first part sketches the general context of Latin-Greek encounters in Jerusalem from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. The second discusses the so-called "lists of errors" produced by Latin authors to denounce Greek beliefs which they deemed heterodox. The last part is dedicated to the exploration of an "error" particular to the Hagiopolite Church, namely the descent of the Holy Fire.

A Contentious Encounter: Latins and Greeks

In her seminal book, Inventing Latin Heretics. Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century, Tia Kolbaba has shown how the encounter of Latin and Greek missionaries in the territory of the yet unconverted Bulgar khanate led to a better knowledge of the increasingly different dogma and liturgy of the two Churches. Missionaries sent from Aachen and Rome and, respectively, Constantinople, were competing for the souls of the Bulgars. In this context of proselytism, the Greek missionaries become aware of the Latin dogma of the Filioque (the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son) and of Roman customs (such as the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist), which they deemed abhorrent and branded their advocates as heretics.² Thus, the ninth century marks the turning point, when the two Chalcedonian Churches and their heads, the pope of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople, started to refer more often to the other's teaching as "heretical".³ The crusader conquest of Jerusalem and the establishment of the Latin Principalities in Syria and Palestine resulted in similar encounters, in forced coexistence and the sharing of shrines by Latins and Greeks, in what Christopher MacEvitt has described as "rough tolerance".⁴ Following the fall of Jerusalem to the Christian army on 15 July 1099, a Latin patriarch was consecrated for the see of Jerusalem and Latin clergy had precedence in liturgical services at the Holy Sepulchre.⁵ However, this change in hierarchy did not result in the exclusion of the Greek Orthodox. On the contrary, other local Christian denominations, such as the Syrian Orthodox and the Armenians were admitted to the service of the Holy Sepulchre.⁶

The conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusader armies brought Latin Christianity to the fore in the Holy Land. The teaching, liturgy and particularly the hierarchy of the Roman Church superseded the local ecclesiastical structures. However, in spite of Roman primacy, supported by the secular lords, the Greeks maintained their parallel hierarchies, their liturgies, and, at least in the Judean Desert, their monasteries.⁷ This is a state of affairs that even Jacques de Vitry, the thirteenth century bishop of Acre, chronicler of the crusades and connoisseur of all things oriental, had to acknowledge:

They do not really obey their Latin bishops, to whom they only pay lip service fearing the [Latin] secular lords. They have their own Greek bishops, so that they do not fear the Latins' excommunications or whatever other judgements in the least, unless this would stop our lay people to do business with them. But, among themselves, they say that all Latins were excommunicated, which means that their sentences are not binding on others.⁸

As it will be detailed in what follows, living at close quarters and celebrating in the same church increased the outpour of polemical literature, Latin and Greek, produced in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Yet, this enforced coexistence led to a complex liturgical status, exemplified best by the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Daniel Galadza has showed that the crusader rule in Jerusalem marked the final stage in the process of "Byzantinization", that is the adoption by the Hagiopolite Greek Church of the Constantinopolitan liturgical rite. This process ended in the twelfth century, when the Constantinopolitan liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great replaced the local liturgy of St. James the Brother of the Lord.⁹ Galadza describes the Hagiopolite liturgical life as "worship in captivity", first under Muslim rule from 638 to 1099, then under the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1099 to 1187.¹⁰ Under Latin rule, the Greek Church of Jerusalem kept its allegiance to the Emperor in Constantinople and remained in communion with the Great Church. Thus, the complete Byzantinization of the local Greek Orthodox Church was a byproduct of Latin rule in Jerusalem. Adopting the liturgy of Constantinople reinforced the Byzantine identity of the Greek Church and signaled its allegiance to the tenets of Constantinopolitan orthodoxy because "Observing the liturgy of Constantinople could have been seen as a sign of Orthodoxy".¹¹

Galadza has further argued that in spite of Latins and Greek celebrating in close proximity at the Holy Sepulchre, Greek liturgical sources do not mention the Latin presence.¹² Indeed, reading the liturgical instructions from the so-called "Typikon of the Anastasis", which mentions processions to Hagiopolite churches long destroyed or fallen into disrepair, one would think that this twelfth-century book describes the liturgy of the Holy City in its heyday, prior to the Muslim conquest of 638.¹³ Galadza interprets the Greeks' silence as a signal of their refusal to celebrate with Latins. Although this might hold true for the Greek side, although there are hints in the Latin sources that Greek clergy occasionally did participate in Latinled ceremonies, the Latins' apparent flexibility in allowing the local clergy to celebrate in their own rite might have another explanation, rooted in the Latin tradition. A version of this possible explanation was given by the Dominican friar Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, a seasoned missionary, who travelled extensively in the East in the second part of the thirteenth century. In his *Libellus ad nationes orientales*, a handbook written for the instruction of aspirant Dominican missionaries, he compiled a list of rules for approaching Eastern Christians. One of these rules reads thus:

The third rule [when discussing with Eastern Christians] is that it is necessary to know the opinions, motivations and reasons of every sect, and whether they err or not in things fundamental to the faith, so that it is known who are heretics and who are not. Because they are permitted to have a different rite, which does not pose any danger as long as we agree on the faith, because the Christian faith is one, as God is one. Thus, the Apostle in Ephesians 4: 'One God, one faith etc'. He does not say 'one rite'. However, the brothers often fight with them pointlessly about ritual differences, when they should bring them back to the one faith, not to the one rite.¹⁴

Riccoldo expresses here the Roman view on liturgical diversity, which was acceptable provided that the unity of faith was insured. In this, the Dominican followed the teaching of Augustine and Gregory the Great and the Dominican master Thomas Aquinas, who saw different liturgical customs as traditions of various local Churches, an assertion repeated by Latin authors throughout the Middle Ages in their dialogue with the Greeks.¹⁵ Thus, a likely explanation for the preservation of liturgical individualism at the time of the Crusader Kingdom, in spite of Latin dominance, comes on the one hand from the Latin patristic teaching on liturgical diversity, and, on the other hand, from the Greeks' allegiance to Constantinople, seen as the see of orthodoxy.¹⁶

Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 put an end to this precarious balance. Latin clergy were expelled from Jerusalem¹⁷ and the Greek clergy recovered their primary status at the Holy Sepulchre. Latins received again the right of permanent presence at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre only in the 1330s, when Franciscan friars settled in Jerusalem as Latin guardians of the Holy Places, where they have remained ever since. The friars' restoration to the Holy Land is linked to the patronage of the king of Naples, Robert of Anjou (1309-1343) and queen Sancha of Mallorca (1309-1345), his wife. Sometime in the early 1330s, the Angevin kings bought from the Mamluk sultan of Egypt, al-Malik al Nāsir Muhammad (1310-1341), the right for the friars to settle in Jerusalem and to serve in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, together with the Eastern Christians.

Queen Sancha also bought a plot of land on Mount Sion, where the friars' Jerusalem convent was erected.¹⁸ Two bulls issued in November 1342 by pope Clement VI, *Gratias agimus* and *Nuper carissimae*, confirmed the friars' appointment as guardians of the Holy Places and stressed the role of liturgy in their mission.¹⁹ Moreover, papal documents issued for the benefit of the Jerusalem friars continued to emphasize their ministry to "celebrate masses and other divine offices" (*ibi celebrare missas et alia divina officia*) at the Holy Places.²⁰

This article explores the friars' relations with their Greek counterparts in the fifteenth century, seen in the larger historical context of the Latin presence at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from 1099. If in the days of the crusader rule the Latin clergy played a primary role in the ceremonial life of the Holy Sepulchre, under Mamluk rule they, and all Hagiopolite Christians, were a tolerated presence.²¹ Thus, Latin-Greek relations were shaped by a new historical context: both communities had to acquiesce in the restrictions governing the life of non-Muslims under Muslim rule.²² This was yet another period of "worship in captivity" for the Hagiopolite Church, only this time all Churches were captive, including the Latins. In terms of Latin-Greek relations, the era is marked by the incremental alienation between Rome and Constantinople, echoed by developments in Jerusalem.

Franciscans residing in Jerusalem testify to this spike in animosity in their writings. Francesco Suriano, custos of the Holy Land (superior of the Jerusalem Franciscans) from 1493-1495 and again from 1512-1515²³, delivered in his Trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente a likely explanation for this state of affairs. He mentioned the two failed councils that ought to have led to the union of the two Churches, Lyon (1274) and Florence (1438-1439), and decried the rejection of the Florentine union at Constantinople.²⁴ If references to the Greeks as "heretics" before the two councils were relatively uncommon, Latins speaking rather about their "errors" that could be corrected²⁵, particularly after the Council of Florence, in Latin writings on the Holy Land, the "heretic" tag becomes the norm. This holds through for treatises written both in the West and in the Holy Land. Crusader authors rarely referred to the Greeks as "heretics".²⁶ But by the end of the fifteenth century, what Suriano wrote about the Greeks, with whom he was enclosed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and thus knew well, became the norm:

These perfidious heretics boast that they are better than us, and holier, because both clergy and laymen fast five times a year, when they [actually] do not fast, but they just do not eat meat and dairy.²⁷

This attribute of "perfidious heretics" and its more popular variant, *pessimi heretici*²⁸ (the worst heretics), were reciprocated in Greek heresiological writings, where the epithet "heretic" attached to Latins was a constant in polemical writings from the ninth century onwards.²⁹ The same Suriano registered a practice, which so far I was not able to confirm with another source, which had the Greeks excommunicate the Latins on Good Friday:

Also, every year on Good Friday, they publicly excommunicate the pope of Rome and all his followers as heretics and accursed; to which the faithful gathered in church respond: *Anathema nachusi* [Aváθεµα và ἔχωσι], which means, let them be cursed.³⁰

Although he ascribed this ritual excommunication to the Orthodox Good Friday, the description fits better the public anathematization of heretics on the Greek Orthodox Feast of Orthodoxy (first Sunday of Lent), when the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* was read.

Apart from the obvious animosity generated by the failed union, another explanation for the popularity of the "heretic" slur both in the West and in the East lies in the new life breathed by the scholastic preparation for the councils and the conciliar debates into an old heresiological genre, namely the so-called "lists of errors".

The "Lists of Errors"

The first encounter of Latins and Greeks in a competing territory of mission, in ninth-century Bulgaria, led to the writing of the first Greek treatises condemning the *Filioque* and the other Latin errors, by Photios, the then patriarch of Constantinople (858-867 and again from 877 to 866) and by the polemicist Niketas (Byzantios).³¹ These polemical treatises later started to circulate in an abridged format, as lists describing in a few lines each of the Latin errors. Apart from the *Filioque*, the major doctrinal difference, these lists usually condemned the Latins for: fasting on Saturday, not fasting properly during Lent, presbyterial celibacy, acknowledging the

validity of the sacrament of confirmation only when given by bishops, and the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. $^{\rm 32}$

In their turn, Latins were quick to produce their own treatises condemning Greek errors, which, in a similar manner, started to circulate in the abridged format of lists of the "errors of the Greeks". Already at the time of the so-called "schism of Photios" (867-879), the patriarch's nemesis, pope Nicholas I (858-867), asked Hincmar of Reims and the other Frankish bishops to write a reply in which to answer Photios' accusations.³³ In the six centuries following the "schism of Photios" a lot of ink was spilled in the West and in the East to comply and update these lists. Thus, after the doctrine of the Purgatory was adopted in the West in the thirteenth century, it immediately made its way into the Byzantine lists of the Latins' errors. The lists were produced especially on two occasions: during moments of acute crisis between East and West (for instance the list produced by the patriarch of Constantinople Michael Keroularios after he excommunicated the papal legate Humber of Silva Candida in 1054) or when the union of the two Churches was negotiated (for instance Thomas Aquinas' treatise Contra errores Graecorum).³⁴

The crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 brought this heresiological genre to the Holy Land. Proximity and enforced coexistence made theological and liturgical differences manifest. Hence the flourishing of polemical literature. During the crusader rule describing the errors of local Christians (Greeks, Jacobites, Georgians, Armenians) became a staple of the Latin writing on the Holy Land.³⁵ The heresiological output in Jerusalem was in sync with similar developments in the centers, Rome and Constantinople.

In the eleventh and early twelfth century, the Byzantines saw the Latin use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist as their most serious error.³⁶ Similarly, Jerusalem and the Judean monasteries witnessed an outpour of polemical literature dedicated to the same problem, most notably the three treatises written by the Greek patriarch John VIII (c. 1106/1007), one of which resulted from the debate he had in Jerusalem with a "Latin philosopher".³⁷

However, in the following centuries, the focus returned to the doctrine of the *Filioque* and, in the context of union talks, to the matter of the papal primacy³⁸, which reoccurs in all Latin lists of errors produced in Jerusalem in the fifteenth century. The deepening rift is patent in the language of lists written by Latins in the Holy Land. Jacques de Vitry produced probably the most popular "catalogue of errors" professed by Greeks and the other local

Christians.³⁹ By the fourteenth century, this catalogue became a standard feature in Latin pilgrimage accounts.⁴⁰ Thanks to the immense success of his *Historia orientalis*, the chapter on the *Suriani*, the local Christians who followed the Greek Orthodox rite, made its way in numerous treatises on the Holy Land written in the succeeding centuries. Although the bishop of Acre piled insults on the Greeks, whom he saw as prone to be subjected to others and "useless like women" (*velut mulieres inutiles*)⁴¹, he refrained from calling them heretics. They were schismatics and he listed the errors that brought them into conflict with the Roman Church: first and foremost, the rejection of the *Filioque* and the refusal to acknowledge the authority of Rome, which made them schismatics; the fact that they washed the altars on which Latins have celebrated; their use of fermented bread in the Eucharist; allowing their lower clergy to marry; refusing to acknowledge the subdiaconate; simple priests confirming infants at baptism, not fasting but feasting on Saturdays, which made them "Judaizers".⁴²

By the fifteenth century, Walter von Guglingen⁴³, a German Franciscan who travelled to Jerusalem in 1483, blamed the Latin-Greek estrangement on the Greeks' long descent into heresy.⁴⁴ He acknowledged the apostolic roots of the Greek Church in Antioch and the illustrious history of the Constantinopolitan Church. However, he emphasized their loss of both the imperial and pastoral power to the city of Rome, "the mistress of the universal Church", decline which he ascribed to the "unworthiness of their shepherds" (ex demeritis pastorum eorum per sucessum temporis sublata est eis tam pastoralis quam imperialis dignitas, translataque est ad egregiam civitatem dominamque universe ecclesie, Romam). Like other Latin authors writing after the debacle of the Council of Florence, Guglingen blamed the Greeks' misfortune on their rejection of the decrees and teaching of the Roman Church. He referred to them in veterotestamentary words as a "stiff-necked people"⁴⁵ (hec gens...dure cervicis), who, like the ancient Israelites, disobeyed God, in their case, by disobeying the Roman Church. Consequently, they fell into heresy and error, and continue to pour upon the peoples living in those regions "the venom of the worst heresy" (venenum pessime heresis). A list of errors follows this prologue to the chapter on De Grecis habitantibus in Iherusalem necnon in plaga orientalis. The last error discussed in this list was the Hagiopolite ceremony of the descent of the Holy Fire:

The tenth error is that the Greeks, for a long time now, have persuaded all their peoples living in the East, saying, and thus leading them astray, that

every year, on the Saturday of the Holy Easter, a new fire would descend from heaven into the Sepulchre of the Lord. $^{\rm 46}$

As the only "error" originating in Jerusalem that made it into the lists, the discussion of the descent of the Holy Fire in this heresiological context deserves a more detailed analysis.

The Holy Fire

Perhaps the most contentious ceremony carried out in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was and remains the descent of the Holy Fire, that is the miraculous lightening of the lamps in the Sepulchre on Holy Saturday. In fact, the very entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre bears the mark of controversies related to the descent of the Holy Fire. On the left hand of the entrance, one of the three Corinthian columns of the portal is split [Fig. 1 and 2]. This column is reverently touched and kissed by the faithful, who place little notes with their prayers inside the broken stone. This crack in the pillar is explained differently by two of the Christian denominations present at the Holy Sepulchre: the Greek Orthodox affirm that the Holy Fire burst out from that spot in 1547, when the Armenians managed to win the favour of the Ottomans and evicted them from the church; the Armenians explain the split in the column by referring to the year 1830, when they received the Holy Fire from that pillar, while the Greeks were expecting its descent inside the church.⁴⁷ Throughout history, this fire, believed to descend from heaven, was appropriated for political and polemical reasons. In what follows, some examples from the fifteenth century are discussed.

The descent of fire from heaven in the Holy Sepulchre was first mentioned, by Christian and Muslim sources, in the late ninth century.⁴⁸ Most medieval Muslim authors described it as a ruse invented and carried out by the clergy serving at this church.⁴⁹ Although they doubted its divine source, authors like al-Biruni in the tenth century mentioned that the Muslim potentates of the city came to the church to witness the ceremony.⁵⁰ This conspicuous involvement of the Muslim lords of the city was confirmed by later sources, which also mention that this provided them with the opportunity to get money from the pilgrims gathered at the Holy Sepulchre.⁵¹



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Figure 1 (Photo by the author)

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Figure 2 (Photo by the author)

The origins of this tradition remain obscure. One hypothesis links it to the ritual lighting of the pascal candle in the Latin Easter Vigil. The Jerusalem Holy Fire could be an adjustment of this Roman ritual brought to Jerusalem by Frankish monks in the ninth century. The eight-ninth centuries in Palestine saw the decline of the Christian community in Jerusalem, with many churches destroyed and abandoned. In these circumstances, the Judean monastic communities and the patriarch sought financial assistance both in Byzantium and in the West. Thus, it is probably in this context of contacts with Latin Europe that the ritual of the Holy Fire initiated in Jerusalem.⁵² Another hypothesis sees the origin of the Holy Fire ceremony in the late antique baptismal rite carried out at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at the Easter Vigil.⁵³

On Good Friday the Sepulchre was cleansed, all lamps put out and the door of the Edicule sealed. Christians from Jerusalem and monks from the Judean monasteries gathered at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the patriarch led the office of the Holy Saturday, waiting for the miraculous descent of the Holy Fire that traditionally happened at the third hour (around 9AM). The patriarch entered the Sepulchre and shared the light with the faithful present in the church, who took it to churches, monasteries, and their own houses.⁵⁴

The arrival of the crusaders impacted on this Hagiopolite tradition. The first moment of tension appeared at Easter in 1101, when the miracle failed to occur in the accustomed manner. The narrative of the 1101 Easter testifies to the rifts dividing Franks and Eastern Christians. This remained a regular feature of their engagement around the miracle of the Holy Fire. Easter 1101 happened in the second year of Latin rule in Jerusalem. If in their first Easter the conquerors partook in the liturgy conducted by the Greek clergy, by 1101 the office had suffered alterations meant to reflect the Latin supremacy in the city, with the new Latin patriarch leading the ceremonies.⁵⁵ The miracle was finally produced on Easter Sunday 1101, after much supplication, but the delay was interpreted differently by the involved parties: as a sign of the unworthiness and sin of the Latins who usurped the place of the Greeks in the service of the Holy Sepulchre (by Eastern Christians)⁵⁶, as a confirmation of the righteousness of their cause as protectors of the Holy Land and local Christians who did not need the miracle after their arrival (by Latins)⁵⁷, and as an opportunity to deal with a political enemy (by king Baldwin, who wanted to discredit the Latin patriarch, Daimbert of Pisa).58

Different narratives developed around the miracle (or its absence) serving the particular agendas of their authors' communities. The meeting

of various branches of Christianity as witnesses of the miracle of the Holy Fire was fraught with enmity, providing all parties with a means to debate with their similar other⁵⁹ about the rectitude of the type of Christianity they professed, which the Holy Fire was supposed to sanction. Thus, the miracle remained a constant in the polemic narratives of Eastern and Western Christians, even after pope Gregory IX denounced its veracity and forbade, in 1238, Latin Christians to partake in the ceremony.⁶⁰ By the fifteenth century, in the accounts left by Latin witnesses, the ceremony was reduced to a rhetorical tool, fit to denounce the irrationality and heresy of the Greeks, and recorded as one of their "errors".

This view was best expressed by Amedeus Boverii, a Franciscan from Dauphiné, who travelled and stayed with the Jerusalem Franciscans in the 1430s.⁶¹ He described his experience of the Holy Fire thus:

Likewise, in the night of the Resurrection a torch of fire appeared from above in this Sepulchre. To commemorate this event, on the same day, a fire is mysteriously lit and showed to the world from the window [of the Sepulchre]. This custom has been greatly abused and misrepresented. For now, the Saracens close the Sepulchre and people gather before the main gates to celebrate, as Greeks and other nations, with the exception of Latins, process around the Sepulchre with chants. Their priests are carried in on shoulders by four men, bearing candles in their hands and asking for fire from heaven. And after the procession is finished, Saracens run through the aforementioned gate and knock on it with sticks, as those vile heretics and schismatics [the Greeks] have showed them to, whilst secretly one of the Saracens enters the chapel and shows the light at the window from afar to all who are gathered there, fretting like animals. And the one who reaches the gate of the Sepulchre first is considered a blessed man by them. And after wicks and candles have been, with great difficulty, lit, they touch their faces and hands with that fire that they consider holy, because they strongly believe it descends from heaven. Which is a great scandal to the faith, because those dirty dogs [the Saracens] laugh at them [the Eastern Christians] and say that they are men of little faith, whilst the Latins are perfect in their faith. This is what I heard being told by those who lit the fire and show it to the others.⁶²

Boverii saw this ceremony as a tradition of the Jerusalemite church, which he could accept as a local custom, but which he felt obliged to reject as a genuine miracle. Thus, he used the word "custom" to describe it, whilst he usually referred to liturgical traditions associated with the Holy Sepulchre by *misterium*. Moreover, he stressed that this mere custom "has been greatly abused and misrepresented" (*ex qua consuetudine facta est abusio et illusio magna*), its significance being manipulated into a pseudo-miracle. In this he was seconded by Guglingen, who called the whole thing a sham (*illa truffa*).⁶³

What Boverii found most disruptive was the involvement of Muslims in the production of this sham, which could only belittle the credibility of all Christians in the Holy Land. He blamed the Greeks, who in their hubris tried to prove the superiority of their brand of Christianity by determining the production of the miracle at the hands of their patriarch, of employing Muslims to enter the sealed Sepulchre and deceitfully light the Holy Fire. To him this was an offence to the faith and a disruptive scandal to the Christian community, because it provided their enemies with a chance to laugh at them and to point out the feebleness of the Christian faith. However, the friar was careful to note that this observation applied only to Greeks, as Muslims held the faith of the Latins to be "perfect".

In calling the miracle a scam, the friars were inadvertently in agreement with the Muslim opinion on the topic. Although the ceremony was attended by high ranking Muslim officials, Arab Muslim historians usually disregarded it as a ruse. They even explained the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by al-Hākim in 1009 by the caliph's rage at the Christian reverence towards this trickery.⁶⁴

In Suriano's account we have a somewhat more colorful description of the Holy Fire, leading to a similar conclusion: this was a sham born out of Greek hubris, in which the friars did not believe and which they interpreted as a proof of the heresy of the "quelle natione" (*i.e.* the Eastern Christians). Explaining the layout of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the presence of an opening (window) in the gallery, Suriano offered a glimpse into how the descent of the Holy Fire was perceived by the friars:

The upper part of the gallery is open, like at Santa Maria Rotonda in Rome⁶⁵ [...]. This opening was made for two main reasons. First, to let light into the church. The other reason is that, as I read in the *Ordinal* of the Divine Office, in this church, every year, on Holy Saturday, around the third hour, fire was seen coming from heaven into the Holy Sepulchre, where it lit all the lamps and the Paschal candle. I cannot describe the arrangements made by the person charged with the ceremony of the holy fire, the people's cries and sobbing when God bestowed on them such a gift, the tears they shed piously and joyfully. Nor will I speak about their calls to heaven, the cries, sobbing and the pain when the miracle failed to occur in the accustomed manner, as if they were not worthy of such

a gift. This old ritual is still followed today by the local Christians. Men and women from Egypt, Syria, Pamphylia, Armenia and Lebanon come [to Jerusalem] for this ceremony and for the feast of Holy Saturday. They call it *id el nar*, that is, the feast of the fire. But, we, the friars, think that in fact this fire does not descend from heaven. We affirm this, although the other Christians believe this lie to be the truth. Probably because of their sins and heresy, they lack the gift [of discerning the truth].⁶⁶

Thus, the creation of this opening was dictated by the necessity to allow some more light into the Sepulchre and to allow the descent of "fire from heaven" (*foco dal zielo*) on Holy Saturday. He has read about this tradition in the old *Ordinal* of the Church, by which he most likely meant a liturgical book describing the office in the crusader period, when Latin Christians partook in the event.⁶⁷ Both the enthusiasm of the faithful when the miracle was timely bestowed and their clamorous disappointment when the fire failed do descend from heaven at the accustomed time (as it happened in 1101) were vividly described by Suriano.

He made a clear distinction among these traditions observed in the old days (*antiquamente*) by the entire Christian community and the custom of his own days, when this particular celebration pertained exclusively to Eastern Christians. The discussion dedicated to the "fire from heaven" ended with a strong emphasis on the friars' lack of involvement in the celebration, because "in their opinion" the fire did not have a divine origin and did not descend from heaven, and it was due to their sins and heresy that the other Christian nations believed this fallacy to be a miracle. Suriano continued by recording what the friars were doing while all this was happening in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (*in quell medesimo tempo*). It follows that the brethren were locked in the church with the other Christians from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, with the friars conducting services on the Calvary and in the Sepulchre, separately from what was going on around them.⁶⁸

From his description it appears that Suriano witnessed the ceremony of the Holy Fire, which he recorded through the pre-established interpretative framework of us-and-them, as an indicator of the heterodoxy of Eastern Christians, with, however, the addition of some personal spiteful remarks about the Greeks.

What the fifteenth century accounts discussed here seem to make clear is that the perception of the miracle of the Holy Fire by the community of Latin Christians in Jerusalem continued in the strain established in Western narratives after pope Gregory IX's 1238 interdict, namely using this tradition as a means of emphasizing the errors of Eastern Christians. This watershed moment explains the contradicting observations, such as those left by Francesco Suriano, who appeared to agree with the tradition of the Holy Fire when practiced by Latins during their reign in Jerusalem but was quite ready to disown it in his own time. Born by direct observance infused in formulaic traditions, the Latin narrative of the Holy Fire underlines the polemical nature of the Christian coexistence in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Conclusions

Centuries before the Crusaders' arrival in Jerusalem, far away, in Illyricum and Bulgaria, Latins and Greeks became aware of differences in their teaching and customs. In the centuries that followed this first encounter, the Churches of Rome and Constantinople broke communion and a lot of ink was spilled to denounce the heterodoxy of the "other". In Jerusalem, Latins and Greeks followed the same pattern, mostly recording their encounter as a long list of the others' errors. There was room for scholarly debate, as we see hinted at by patriarch John VIII, and, no doubt, for personal sympathy. However, in spite of their direct experience of the other, living and celebrating in the confined space of the same church, Latins and Greeks usually wrote about their encounter in the formulae of the us-and-them narrative, popularized by the "lists of errors". In this polemical context, both communities manipulated the significance of the descent of the Holy Fire, which was supposed to endorse their claims to orthodoxy. Tied by different customs and theological differences, their celebrations remained parallel. They still are.

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NOTES

- ¹ The literature on the topic is vast. For a brief introduction to the notions of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" in Christianity and the historiographical challenges posed by them, see: Karen L. King, "Factions, Variety, Diversity, Multiplicity: Representing Early Christian Difference for the 21st Century", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 216-237. For the history of the creed and its imposition as the norm for orthodoxy, see: Wolfram Kinzig, *Faith in Formulae: A Collection of Early-Christian Creeds and Creed-related texts*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); On Byzantine self-identification as "orthodox" and its challenges, see: Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016) 87-111.
- ² Tia M. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).
- ³ For earlier, short-lived periods, when the accusation of heresy was used by Rome and Constantinople against one another, see: Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes,* fourth edition (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2015), 74-85.
- ⁴ Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East. Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
- ⁵ Christopher Tyerman, *God's War. A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 160.
- ⁶ MacEvitt, The Crusades and the Christian World of the East, 120.
- ⁷ Andrew Jotischky, "Greek Orthodox and Latin Monasticism around Mar Saba under Crusader Rule", in J. Patrich (ed.), *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 85-86, 92.
- ⁸ "Latinororum autem prelatis in quorum diocesibus commorantur non corde sed ore tantum et superficialiter se dicunt obedire, timore scilicet secularium dominorum. Habent enim proprios episcopos grecos, nec Latinorum excommunicationes vel alias quascunque sententias in aliquo formidarent, nisi ab eorum communione in contractibus et in aliis necessitatibus laici nostri se subtraherent. Dicunt enim inter se quod Latini omnes excommunicati sunt, unde non posssunt aliquos aliqua sententia innodare". Jean Donnadieu (ed. and French trans.), *Jacques de Vitry Histoire Orientale Hisoria Orientalis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 298.
- ⁹ Daniel Galadza, *Liturgy and Byzantinization in Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹¹ *Ibid.,* 135.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 350-357.

- ¹² Daniel Galadza, "Greek Liturgy in Crusader Jerusalem: Witnesses of Liturgical Life at the Holy Sepulchre and St Sabas Lavra", *Journal of Medieval History* 43(4) (2017), 421-437.
- ¹³ A. Papadopoulou-Kerameos (ed.), "Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐκκλεσίασ", in 'Aνάλεκτα Τεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυλογίασ, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1894), 1-254. See, for instance, the mention that the patriarch, people and clergy are coming in procession from Hagia Sion to the Anastasis (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), a procession which would have been impossible in the context of twelfth century Jerusalem. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- "Tertia regula est, quia oportet scire positiones eorum et motiva et causas diversarum sectarum, et si errant ab essentialibus fidei vel non, ut sciatur, qui sunt heretici vel non. Nam licet non concordent nobiscum in ritu, non est periculum, dummodo concordent in fide, quia fides christianorum est una, sicut et Deus est unus. Unde Apostolus Ephe. 4 : 'Unus Deus, una fides etc.' Non dicit 'unus ritus'. Fratres autem sepe contendunt cum eis inutiliter de diversitate ritus, cum habeant eos reducere solum ad unitatem fidei, non ad unitatem ritus". Kurt Villads Jansen (ed.), *Riccoldi florentini libelli ad nationes orientales. Editio princeps telina*, elctornic edition: http://kvj.sdu. dk/Riccoldo/Riccoldo/6.html [last accessed 21.08.2018].
- ¹⁵ Henry Chadwick, East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 32, 181 n.6, 229; Marcus Plested, Orthodox Readings of Aquinas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27.
- ¹⁶ Daniel Galadza, "Various Orthodoxies: Feasts of the Incarnation of Christ in Jerusalem during the First Christian Millenium", in Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Derek Krueger (eds.), Prayer and Worship in Eastern Christianities, 5th to 11th Centuries (London-New York: Routledge, 2016), 185-186, 194; Galdaza, Liturgy and Byzantinization, 134-135, 162, 248-249.
- ¹⁷ Tyerman, *God's War*, 374.
- ¹⁸ Augustino Arce, "De origine Custodiae Terrae Sanctae", in *Miscelanea de Tierra Santa*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1973), 86-92; Beatrice Saletti, *I francescani in Terrasanta (1291-1517)* (Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni, 2016), 69-74.
- 'Gratias agimus': Bullarium Franciscanum Terrae Sanctae, in Diarium Terrae Sanctae II (1) (1909): 14-15; 'Nuper carissimae': Bullarium Franciscanum Terrae Sanctae, in Diarium Terrae Sanctae II (2) (1909): 70-71.
- ²⁰ See, for instance, the so-called *Acta causae Gradensis*. *Bullarium Franciscanum Terrae Sanctae*, in *Diarium Terrae Sanctae* III (1) (1910), 12-3.
- ²¹ On the status of Christians in the lands conquered by the Muslim armies, particularly in the Mamluk period, see: Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque. Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 11, 154-155.

- ²² On the status of "protected people" (*dhimmīs*), non-Muslims living under Muslim rule, see, for instance: Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire. From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- ²³ Girolamo Golubovich, (ed.), *Il trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente di frate Francesco Suriano* (Milano: Tipografia Editrice Artigianelli, 1900), XIV-XV.
- ²⁴ On the two councils, see: Chadwick, *East and West*, 248-251; 257-272; Golubovich (ed.), *Il trattato di Terra Santa*, 73-74.
- ²⁵ Plested, Orthodox Readings of Aquinas, 22-23.
- ²⁶ MacEvitt, The Crusades and the Christian World of the East, 101
- ²⁷ "Questi perfidi heretici se gloriano esser migliori de nui, et più spirituali, per que fano cinque quareseme l'anno, si religiosi come seculari, in le quali non deiunano, ma solum non magiano de grasso, nè lacticinia". *Il trattato di Terra Santa,* 74.
- ²⁸ See, for instance, in Walter von Guglingen: Neuburg an der Donau, Staatliche Bibliotehek, MS 04/Hs.INR 10, 349v.
- ²⁹ Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*, 142.
- ³⁰ "Item, ogni anno lo venere santo publicamente excomunicano el Papa de Roma, cum tuti quelli che li credono, como excomunicati heretici e maledecti; e tuto il populo responde: *Anathema nachusi* [Ἀνάθεμα νὰ ἔχωσι], zioè siano maledecti". *Il trattato di Terra Santa, 72*.
- ³¹ Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*, 3-54.
- ³² Kolbaba, *Ibid*, 60
- ³³ Kolbaba, *Ibid.*, 131-138.
- ³⁴ Tia M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists. Errors of the Latins* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 11-12; Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 23-24.
- ³⁵ Camille Rouxpetel, *L'Occident au mirroir de l'Orient chrétien. Cilicie, Syrie, Palestine et Égypte (XIIe-XIVe siècle)* (Rome: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2015), 348.
- ³⁶ Tia M. Kolbaba, "Byzantine Perceptions of Latin Religious 'Errors': Themes and Changes from 850 to 1350", in Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 121, 126.
- ³⁷ Jotischky, "Greek Orthodox and Latin Monasticism", 91.
- ³⁸ Kolbaba, "Byzantine Perceptions", 127-132.
- ³⁹ Rouxpetel, L'Occident au mirroir de L'Orient chrétien, 347-348.

⁴¹ *Historia orientalis,* 294.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 351.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 298-304.

- ⁴³ I would like to thank Marianne Ritsema van Eck, my former colleague in the project "Cultural Memory and Identity in the Late Middle Ages: the Franciscans of Mount Sion in Jerusalem and the Representation of the Holy Land (1333-1516)", for bringing this manuscript to my attention and sharing with me a digital copy.
- 44 "Greci ab initio ecclesie sancta fuere famosi in fide Christi, Antiochiae et Constantinopolis civitatis principaliores cum latis terminis in pace pro longa tempora possidentes. Hii ex Veteri Testamento prout legitur in libro Machabeorum transferunt regiam dignitatem. In Novo Testamento magnificum honorem imperialem tenuerunt quotiens super omnia summam dignitatem pastoralem principis apostolorum in fede Antiochie civitate meruerunt possidere. Deinde ex demeritis pastorem eorum per sucessum temporis sublata est eis tam pastoralis quam imperialis dignitas, translataque est ad egregiam civitatem dominamque universe ecclesie, Romam. Hec gens ab initio dure cervicis et clare mente sempter extitit et usque hodie Sancte Romane ecclesie et Spiritu Sancto indesmenter restitit, suasque ferentes hereses et errores dampnabiles, manifeste convictos contra determinationem Sancte Ecclesie non solum presumptuose tenentes sed etiam aliis simplicioribus longe lateque venenum pessime heresis iugiter infundentes. De quibus multa essent inferenda que causa brevitate rescinda et solum decem hic propalabo". Neuburg an der Donau, Staatliche Bibliotehek, MS 04/Hs.INR 10, 349v.
- ⁴⁵ Exodus 32, 9 ; 33,5; Deuteronomy 9,6.
- ⁴⁶ "Decimus error est quod Greci per longena tempora consueverunt omnem populum eis adherentem in tota plaga orientale sic dementare, dicentes: Quod omni anno in sabato Sancte Pasce descendat ignis novus de celo et hoc in sepulchro Domini". *Ibid.*, 353v.
- ⁴⁷ Otto Meinardus, "The Ceremony of the Holy Fire in the Middle Ages and Today", *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 16 (1961-1962), 249.
- ⁴⁸ Marius Canard, "La destruction de l'Église de la Résurrection par le calife Hākim et l'histoire de la descente du feu sacré", *Byzantion* XXXV (1965): 28, 34-35.
- ⁴⁹ Ignatij Kratchkovsky, "Le 'feu béni' d'après le récit d'al- Bīrūnī et d'autres écrivains musulmans du Xe au XIII siècle", *Proche Orient Chrétien* 1999 (49) (fasc. 1-2), 266-273.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.,* 261.
- ⁵¹ F.E. Peters, Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 493, 572-578.
- ⁵² Andrew Jotischky, "Holy Fire and Holy Sepulchre: Ritual and Space in Jerusalem from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Cnturies", in *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the 2009 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Frances Andrews (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011), 49-51.

- ⁵³ Meinardus, "The Ceremony of the Holy Fire", 243.
- ⁵⁴ Renata Salvarani, Il Santo Sepolcro a Gerusalemme. Riti, testi e racconti tra Constantino e l'età delle crociate (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012), 212-224.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 217. Camille Rouxepetel speaks about the "latinisations des lieux saints". Rouxpetel, "Trois récits occidentaux de la descente du feu sacré au Saint-Sépulcre (Pâques 1101): polyphonie chrétienne et stratégies discoursives", Mélanges de l'École française de Rome 126-1 (2014): 5-6.
- ⁵⁶ Salvarani, *Il Santo Sepolcro*, 217; MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World*, 118.
- ⁵⁷ Fulcher of Chartres, chaplain of the first king of Jerusalem, Baldwin I, and canon of the Holy Sepulchre, wrote that the miracle was necessary when local Christians needed it to prove the truth of their faith to Muslims, but after the Franks freed and took them under protection, the occurrence of the miracle did not hold the same urgency. Thus, the Latins were the *successores ipsius ignis*. Rouxpetel, "Trois récits occidentaux", 9-10.
- ⁵⁸ King Baldwin (1100-1118) succeeded his brother, Godfrey of Buillon (1099-1100), to the throne of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Daimbert of Pisa, patriarch of Jerusalem from 1099, favoured another candidate for the throne of Jerusalem. Moreover, he fought royal control over Jerusalem, which he wanted to keep under ecclesiastical jurisdiction. King Baldwin manipulated Daimbert's failure to bring about the miracle on expected day to his political advantage. Faced with this public humiliation the patriarch renounced his office. He resumed it one day later, when the king allowed him to be reelected. The king's manipulation of the miracle bore fruits: after Easter 1001, Daimbert acknowledged royal control over Jerusalem and Baldwin was crowned in the Holy City. Jay Rubinstein, "Holy Fire and sacral kingship in post-conquest Jerusalem", *Journal of Medieval History* 43 (4), 476-483.
- ⁵⁹ Camille Rouxpetel speaks about "alterité interne" to describe the Latin Christians' encounter with Eastern Christians. Camille Rouxpetel, "Indiens, Éthiopiens et Nubiens dans les récits de pèlerinage occidentaux: entre altérité constatée et altérité construite (XIIe-XIVe siècles)", *Annales d'Éthiopie* 27 (2012), 71.
- ⁶⁰ Salvarani, *Il Santo Sepolcro*, 212.
- ⁶¹ Paravicini, Werner, (ed.), Europäische Reisberichte des späten Mittelalters. vol. 2, Französische Reiseberichte, eds. Jörg Wettlaufel and Jacques Paviot (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 78.
- ⁶² "Item in isto sepulcro in nocte surrectionis ignis facem desuper apparuit, ad cuius memoriam omni ano simul die ignis occulte incenditur et per fenestram foris ostenditur. Ex qua consuetudine facta est abusio et illusio magna. Nam modo Sarraceni sepulcrum claudunt et ante eius hostium maiorem congregantur in signum sollempnitatis, ut Greci et cetere naciones,

exceptis Latinis, cum hymnis et canticis, processionaliter circumcidant sepulcrum cantando. Accedunt sacerdotes eorum super quatuor homines in altum portantes, qui stupas in manibus gerunt ignem de celo querentes. Et complecta omni processione, Saraceni ante portam predictam quomodo in se faciunt fugentes se cum baculis velle verberari et in cumque illi heretici et schismatici pessimi ad Saracenos ostendunt, clam aliquis Sarracenorum capellam intrat et a remotis per fenestram luminum ostendit ad quam omnes velud bruta ad salturam. Et qui pimus ad illam portam pervenire, beatus apud eos videtur esse. Et cum scilicet suis stupis et candelis cum magna difficultate lumen accedunt, faciem et manus ex igne tangentes velud esset sanctissimus et ferma fide tenentur illum de celo descendissem. In qua magnum fidei opprobrium, quoniam illi canes immundi ipsos derident et asserunt eos esse modice fidei et Latinos in sua fide perfectos. Prout audivi ab illis qui ignem posuerunt et aliis ostenedrunt". MS BNF Latin 4826, 36r.

- ⁶³ MS 04/Hs.INR 10 Staatliche Bibliotehek Neuburg an der Donau, 353.
- ⁶⁴ Canard, "La destruction de l'Église", 20-24.
- ⁶⁵ The Roman church of Santa Maria ad Martyres (the Pantheon).
- 66 "Dal canto de sopra de la tribuna è aperto, como è sancta Maria de Roma [...] Questa apertura de la tribuna per doe casone principalmente fo facta. La prima per dar lume alla chiesia, però che, como te ho dicto, lo terreno soprasta, et non se li po fa fenestre. L'altra si è, come ho lecto ne l'Ordinario de lo officio divino, che se faceva in guesta chiesia el Sabato sancto circa l'hora terza omnì anno, visibilmente descendeva el foco dal zielo, sopra lo sancto Sepolchro, et accendeva tute le lampade, similiter lo Cerio paschale. Laso stare la preparazione che faceva quello tale che era deputato alla ministratione del predicto foco divino: Li chridori et pianti che facevano li populi, quando tal dono li era concesso da Dio. Postpongo le lachryme che per componctione butavano et dolceza. Similiter li grida al cielo, pianti, lamenti, et dolori che faceano, quando secundo et solito tardava ad ascendere, como indegni de tanta gratia. Quello stillo et modo que antiguamente se usava, usano et tengono al presente quelli christiani del paese. Et convengono de lo Hegypto, Syria, Pamphilis, Mesopotamia, Capadocia, Grecia, Armenia et Libano, homini et donne alla predicta solennità et festa de Sabato Sancto. La gual chiamano Le id el nar zioé vuol dire: La festa del foco. Non però descende lo predicto foco, secondo la verità (et opinione de nui frati), per ben che tute le altre natione, excepto nui frati, fingono questa falsità esser vera. La privation de la qual gratia existi(mo), che sia per li peccati et heresie de quelle natione". Il trattato di Terra Santa, 30.
- ⁶⁷ The so-called "Ritual of Barletta", a liturgical book used during the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, described the ceremony of the Holy Fire. Nicola Bux, "La liturgia del Fuoco sacro dal Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme al Laterano di Roma", in *Le rotonde del Santo Sepolcro: un itinerario europeo,* eds.

Piero Pierotti, Carlo Tosco and Caterina Zannella (Bari: Edipuglia, 2015), 213-216.

⁶⁸ "In quel medesimo tempo li frati di monte Syon stano renchiusi intro la predicta chiesia con tute quelle natione lo Venerdi et sabbato sancto et la Domenica mane de la resurectione; et facemo lo offitio sopra el monte Calvario (lo venerdi sancto), et sul sancto sepolchro la risurectione de Christo". *Il trattato di Terra Santa,* 31.

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