

## Thesis Overview

The field encompassing relations between Europe and the rest of the world in the late Middle Ages tends to be fractured by topic rather than time in modern scholarship. Contemporary study has largely taken a thematic strand and examined that over a period rather than looking at wider areas, resulting in a somewhat stratified approach to European relations with the rest of the world. Crusade, mission, diplomacy and trade are all usually treated in isolation, consisting of separate, stand alone subjects with little in common with one another. Of these thematic strands, only the crusades have taken a wider view, comparing different approaches occurring at the different frontiers of Christendom at the same time, while recent scholarship on the Mongols has also gone some way to rectify this in regards to those empires.<sup>1</sup> Never-the-less, there is a dearth of works approaching the idea of medieval extra-European relations from the perspective of a timeframe smaller than centuries. A focus on a shorter chronological period combined with a broad examination is an approach that carries the benefits of being able to see that there are common threads to the entire movement, regardless of its geography. It is the contention of this thesis that such an approach can be taken with regards to Catholic relations with the rest of the world: essentially, papal foreign policy.

This thesis will take the overarching theme of papal relations with the non-Catholic world in the first half of the fourteenth century, and explore how the popes attempted to bring about a truly universal Church, as they regularly proclaimed they had the right to rule.<sup>2</sup> The scope of the project currently extends from Clement V's election in 1305 to Innocent VI's pontificate which ended in 1362. It will examine the diverse regions along the frontier of Catholic Christianity with which the popes maintained contact. The project's starting point coincides with the papal move to Avignon, which has often been seen to mark a new epoch in papal policy. This project seeks to understand if and/or how this was the case in terms of their foreign policy.

In order to remain within the practical limits of publication within a three or four year period, the project has to be relatively selective. Non-Catholics within Catholic Europe, whether they were Jews, other Christians or Muslims, will be considered outside the scope of the project, as will events beyond the first five pontificates of the Avignon Popes. In so much as it is possible, events which are predominantly concerned with Europeans but which involve non-Catholics in a minor role will be considered, though tangents away from the papal authority over non-Catholics will not be pursued.

As the project is primarily concerned with papal attitudes and policies, the source material is necessarily going to be predominantly documents produced by and for the papal court. These include, but are not limited to, public and curial letters, bulls, petitions, and financial records. These have the advantage of being contemporary and factual, requiring little interpretation to access

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, from Lyons to Alcazar 1274-1580*, 1992 is a good example of this approach. The Mongols are a subject that also cover large areas, due to the large size of the Empire. Jackson's *The Mongols and the West* stands as a great text covering this topic (Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West 1221-1410*, 2005). However, both these excellent monographs, and similar works, tend to cover huge time scales. This project, by contrast, will be looking to cover a wide range of themes over a smaller time frame.

<sup>2</sup> Yves Renouard, *The Avignon Papacy 1305-1403* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 15, 124; Diana Wood, *Clement VI. The Pontificate and Ideas of an Avignon Pope*, 1989, pp. 26–9; James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels: The Church and the Non Christian World, 1250-1550* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), pp. 11–21.

factual information in most cases. As well as these, more literary works must be used to supplement, confirm and give depth. These include chronicles, especially non-European chronicles, council reports, crusading propaganda texts, witness accounts and anything else that concerns the topic.

The project will begin by outlining the theory of papal dominance, from which the Pope draws his right to supremacy over all peoples of the world. Once the theoretical understanding of papal authority has been established, the project will look at how this was put into practice in different areas over the half-century in question.

### The Theory of Papal Authority

The authority of the popes was a popular topic for intellectuals in the fourteenth century, and indeed, the reactions to papal excess seen in the reformation can be seen to have their origins during this period. However, while this is a well covered topic, little discussion, whether contemporary or modern, focuses on what seems to have been perceived as given: papal authority over non-Catholics.

Much of the dispute voiced by William of Okham and his contemporaries revolved around papal power over the European secular world, in particular in relation to the German emperors.<sup>3</sup> However, while this subject drew the ire of contemporary intellectuals, claiming authority over the Emperor was far from the only proclamation made by the popes, before, during, and after the Avignon papacy. Foremost amongst these, for the purposes of this thesis, is the papal claim to spiritual authority over every man and woman on the earth. The Pope was the 'world's pastor', and he held spiritual responsibility for all men, as everyone is part of Christ's flock under canon law.<sup>4</sup> Under a series of expansions to canon law, the Pope had gained increasing authority to redistribute property and power. Yet, canon law also limited ecclesiastic power in some ways. Forced conversions were considered unlawful, as they were insincere.<sup>5</sup> How these laws were practiced and what effect they had on the expansion of Christendom will be examined in this section of the project.

Of course, theory and practice are different things. While European intellectuals might have been comfortable with the notion of Catholic ascendancy over the world, the extent to which this was put into effect is less understood. Even less clear is how seriously anyone actually took it as anything more than a point of principle: it is extremely hard to tell if anyone honestly believed that the Pope was able to bring the entire world under his spiritual command. The relation between this theoretical dominance and the practical aspect of actually convincing the world to accept Catholic rule is the central consideration of this thesis.

It is initially tempting to attribute the Catholic Church's eventual failure to conquer the world to the pursuit of an impossible goal that was not taken seriously. Never-the-less, the papacy was very active in its attempts to expand and secure the Catholic world, by various means. The most discussed method in modern scholarship is, of course, the crusade, but it was by no means the only

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<sup>3</sup> Wood, p. 41; Ludwig Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 5th edn (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1923), I, pp. 75–6.

<sup>4</sup> Muldoon, pp. 6–13; Pastor, I, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Muldoon, pp. 20–21.

method pursued, and nor was it pursued exclusively for the sake of expanding Christendom. Increasingly, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the mechanisms of crusade were turned inward against heretics in Europe or uncooperative Catholic secular rulers.<sup>6</sup> Missionaries were sent far into the east and to the newly conquered lands in northern Europe. Proposals were made for voyages of discovery and conquest in Africa.<sup>7</sup> In addition to these activities, the papacy held and attempted to enforce wide ranging powers over interactions between Catholic Europe and the non-Christian world, limiting trade and secular diplomacy.

This thesis aims to shed light on the practical approaches taken by the Apostolic See to support their claims of universal authority.

## Case Studies:

### The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church has always maintained an unusual relationship with the Catholic Church. Ideologically the two Churches were regularly opposed to each other throughout much of their existence, yet it took them a long time to separate. Modern scholarship has often attributed the beginning of the schism between the Greek and Roman Churches to the mutual excommunications that took place in 1054, but this is problematic. Few people at the time were aware that the event had taken place, and very few paid it any attention.<sup>8</sup> The Roman and Greek Churches continued to work together despite their differences up until the sacking of Constantinople and the creation of the Latin Empire there in 1204. After that, reconciliation proved difficult, though attempts were still made.

This is commonly where the narrative of Eastern and Western Church relations ends, generally due to the failure of any concrete act of union in later centuries. However, it is far from the whole story, and this thesis aims to explore how the Papacy attempted to bring the Greek Church under the rule of the Roman pontiff and the basis he used to attempt this. In many regards, this subject is one of the better illuminated, and we are able to read many letters that still exist on this subject exchanged between the Greek emperors and the popes of Avignon.<sup>9</sup> Never-the-less, probably as a result of the overall failure of dealings between the two sides and the absence of large ecumenical councils like Lyons in 1274 or Florence in 1439, relations in the early fourteenth century have received very little attention. While the Council of Vienne was held in 1312, it was an exclusively western affair. While they did discuss the East in the form of planning a crusade to the Holy Land, the Greek people and Church wasn't on the agenda. Nearly all of the attention that has been paid to the period has been

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<sup>6</sup> J.E. Weakland, 'Administrative and Fiscal Centralization under Pope John XXII (1316-34)', *Catholic Historical Review*, 54 (1968), 285–310 (p. 308). Weakland points out that 63% of the annual budget was being spent by John XXII on wars in Italy at one point, which were being given Crusader indulgences. These wars were clearly a serious concern of the popes.

<sup>7</sup> Eugène Déprez, *Clement VI: Lettres Closes, Patentés et Curiales*, 3e Série (Paris: Bibliothèque des écoles Françaises D'Athènes et de Rome, 1925), 1:3, pp. 311–5, 333–6. Letters 1315, 1316, 1317, 1348, and 1349.

<sup>8</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Great Schism* (New York, 2001), p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> Some examples of these can be found in 'Registra Vaticana 62', f. 126r–143r, Vatican Secret Archives.

dismissive of efforts to secure an accord between the two Churches.<sup>10</sup> On the surface, these two Churches should have been the easiest to reconcile. For centuries they managed to coexist, if uneasily, prior to the sack of Constantinople. The schism that occurred between them happened much later than the highly independent Church of Armenia or other sects entered schism with the Roman Church, many after the Council of Chalcedon. Thus, an explanation has to be sought in what changes after the start of the thirteenth century. From the Greek perspective, the main differences were the expansion of the authoritarian nature of the papacy, which the Greeks found extremely difficult to accept, as well as lingering ill will to Latin occupation and fear of Latin dominance. All of these aspects will be examined in this section of the project.

From the Latin perspective, we can observe a marked shift in foreign policy from Clement V to Innocent VI with regard to the Byzantine Empire and the Greek Church, particularly in the fourteenth century. This shift is part of a fairly regular fluctuation in relations between the Greek and Latin Churches over the course of several centuries, as power moved between Latin parties arguing for union and those who believed that violence was the only method to convert the Greeks. Clement V fell very much into the latter camp, and his reign is characteristically hostile towards the Greeks, as is the language that is used to describe them. By contrast, Innocent VI appears to have genuinely pursued dialogue on union with Emperor John V Palaiologos and he made serious efforts to bring this about independent of ecumenical councils. Between the two extremes lies a variety of attitudes and approaches that fit a broad trend from opposition to union. This thesis seeks to analyse this trend and place it in a wider context of papal attempts to expand their spiritual power.

## The Armenians

In contrast to the Greek Church, the Armenian Church held a much more open and accepting approach to the Roman Church in this period. The Armenians had flirted with union with Rome and, much like the Greeks, eventually accepted a union with the Roman Church in the thirteenth century. Unlike the Greeks, they successfully managed to force the principle of unification on their priests despite local hostility. This put the Armenians in a very different political situation with the Catholic Church than the Greeks, as the Armenians notionally accepted Roman spiritual authority. However, the suspicion of heresy remained strong on the part of the popes, and pleas from the Armenians for military aid largely fell on deaf ears in Avignon, regularly citing spiritual 'errors' as a reason that help could not be sent.<sup>11</sup> The Armenian kingdom did not last long in the face of western indifference and Mamluke aggression, and in 1374 the kingdom ceased to exist.

This, while being the general narrative found in modern western history books, is a simplification of a complex relationship. Far from being loyal subjects that were spurned by the west, the Armenian

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<sup>10</sup> Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), pp. 79–89; Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> Déprez, 1:3, p. 27, letter 873 ; Clement V, *Regestvm Clementis Papae V [annus Primus-Annus Nonus]¶: Ex Vaticanis Archetypis Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Ivssv et Mvnificentia / Nvnc Primvm Editvm Cvra et Stvdio Monarchorvm Ordinis S. Benedicti Anno MDCCCLXXXIV[-MDCCCLXXXVIII]*, 9 vols. (Rome: ex Typographia Vaticana, 1885), vii, pp. 242–3, letter 8610. These two letters are good examples from opposite ends of the period, but are merely a couple of examples from a much larger pool.

Church struggled at a local level to implement Catholic policies, while the popes found themselves without the resources to help the Armenians, however much they would like to have done.<sup>12</sup> The interplay of these two factors will help to understand how the Armenian kingdom was allowed to fall, and this section of the thesis will seek to explain how the Armenian kingdom and Church's relations with the west, and in particular the papacy, caused this loss of Christian territory.

Sources on the Armenian Church and their relations with Rome are harder to come by than for the Greek Church. There were vigorous diplomatic efforts conducted in the 1340's and 50's, evidenced by papal letters, but the Armenian people and their struggles appear in few surviving narratives or chronicles after the majority of their own end in the very early fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Never-the-less, the Roman-Armenian negotiations were an important blueprint for efforts by the Roman Church for union with the Greek Church. Additionally, the perception of the Armenian Church as a continued source of heresy makes these post 'union' relations extremely important in understanding papal efforts to expand their spiritual mandate beyond those who already explicitly accepted the Pope's authority and the customs of the Catholic Church.

### 'Eastern' Christians

As a distinct group, for the purposes of this thesis, 'Eastern Christians' are considered to be non-Chalcedonian sects that inhabited Egypt, the Near and Middle East and north Africa. Unlike the unified and distinct Greek and Armenian Churches, these sects tended to be religious minorities and decentralised, making generalisations much more difficult. However, the papacy at the time appears to have tended to regard these Christians as a singular group, allowing for a valid amalgamation for the intents of this project.

These sects represent a halfway stage between Chalcedonian Christians and members of other faiths. While they accepted the basic tenets of Christianity, they (as a general rule) would not accept the authority of foreign Christian Patriarchs, particularly the Patriarch of Rome, and diverged on a myriad of theological points from the Latins, the Greeks and each other. Never-the-less, they were a group that would have realistically had to have been either removed or brought under the authority of Rome before any Catholic expansion could hope to take root outside of Europe. For this reason, they represent a crucial aspect of papal foreign relations that must be analysed.

These groups all existed in lands either indifferent to or outright hostile to Christians, further setting them apart from the accepted national Churches of the Christian powers in the East. This also makes them the least most visible group of Christians outside of Europe, as they rarely factored into political decisions and few members of the political elite belonged to these sects. Their activities rarely appear in chronicles or other written sources, and they could not negotiate with foreign powers on their own behalf. However, they are occasionally mentioned in papal letters, and it is clear that the papacy was aware that they existed. They appear several times in letters to individuals

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<sup>12</sup> Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 204–5; Déprez, 1:3, pp. 163–4, letters 1086, 1087 and 1088 .

<sup>13</sup> One exception is the *Chronicle of King Het'um II*, which is continued up until 1351, but the majority finish around the turn of the century.

around Cyprus, and it is clear that there was a vibrant community of small Churches in the Near East.

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Through a combination of papal letters, papal bulls and local sources, a picture of the Catholic understanding of and their approach to these minority sects will be examined and analysed to see what efforts were made to bring them under Catholic domination.

## Muslims

This section will look at three disparate groupings of Muslims and their relations with the Apostolic See in the first half of the fourteenth century. The first is the Mamluke Sultanate of Egypt, which also occupied the Holy Land and Syria. The second group includes the Turkish emirates of Asia Minor, which had risen dramatically in power just prior to this period. The final group are the Muslims of South Spain and North Africa, locked in conflict with the Christians of the reconquista, but still a powerful group.

Diplomacy with the Muslim powers was always difficult for the Vatican. By its very existence, Islam represented a major threat to all Christians and the power of the Pope, but Islamic states remained secular neighbours to Christian countries and trading powers. This trade off between ideological opposition and opportunist politics can be seen quite clearly with regards to the Mamluke Sultanate, where, following the loss of Acre, contemporary discourse consisted entirely of military reconquest.<sup>15</sup> Clement V, and eastern leaders such as Fulk of Villaret, the Master of the Hospital, and Henry II of Cyprus, advocated a strong naval blockade on trade with Muslim ports as a means to weaken the area prior to invasion.<sup>16</sup> They attempted to organise a crusade to the Holy Land and got as far as appointing a legate and a leader, as well as raising funds for it. Yet, throughout the period, compromises are repeatedly made by the popes in light of Christians ignoring the blockade in favour of profit, the lack of a successful passage to the Holy Land and the increasingly entrenched position of the Muslims in the Near East.

Conversely, there is very little evidence of dialogue with or acceptance of the position of Granada or the Turks by the Roman Church. Both were the target of vigorous military campaigns sponsored by the popes, with the intention of military conquest.<sup>17</sup> However, this only tells part of the story. Turks were regularly used by Greeks as mercenaries, particularly toward the end of the period, and the degree of religious tolerance in captured Turkish cities far exceeded that of the previous Christian

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<sup>14</sup> Anthony Leopold, *How to Recover the Holy Land: The Crusade Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 96; Nicholas Coureas, *The Latin Church in Cyprus 1313-1378* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2010), pp. 475-90.

<sup>15</sup> Leopold talks about this point at length.

<sup>16</sup> Leopold, pp. 28-36

<sup>17</sup> Clement V, *Regestvm Clementis Papae V [annus Primus-Annus Nonus]*: *Ex Vaticanis Archetypis Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Ivssu et Mvnicificentia / Nvnc Primvm Editvm Cvra et Stvdio Monarchorvm Ordinis S. Benedicti Anno MDCCCLXXXIV[-MDCCCLXXXVIII]*, 9 vols. (Rome: ex Typographia Vaticana, 1885), iv, pp. 98–124 contains a series of letters concerning Spanish aggression against the kingdom of Granada; *Registra Vaticana* 62, f. 48r–84r documents much of the correspondence with the 1344-7 naval league that captured Smyrna.

rulers.<sup>18</sup> In addition, despite the contemporary rhetoric about the Turks being the enemies of Christ and a host of other unpleasant adjectives, flashes of diplomatic activity can be found in papal letters in the 1350's.<sup>19</sup> Clearly with regard to the Muslim powers, there was quite a disconnect between political reality and the ideological assertions made in public.

## The Mongols

The breakdown of the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century had gone some way to allaying the fear of the Mongols in Europe. However, the remnant kingdoms still lay on the edge of Christendom and featured prominently in political discourse on the East. The fact that the Ilkhans converted to Islam in the very early fourteenth century, the Golden Horde did not until the mid fourteenth,<sup>20</sup> and the far eastern empires never converted at all would indicate a level of spiritual disharmony between the empires. Despite this, all the Mongols tend to be referred to as Tartars by the papacy without distinction between them. Papal sources also treat the Mongols very differently to the Turks or the Muslim kingdoms of Egypt, Granada or Morocco. They are generally perceived as friendlier to Christianity and the language used in reference to the Mongols was often quite deferential, in stark contrast to that used to describe other non-Christian powers. This section of the thesis will consider how the papacy interacted with the Mongol rulers of the successor states to the great Mongol empire, despite their pagan faiths, and how they attempted to influence these rulers toward Catholicism.

The two major Mongol powers that directly interacted with Europe were the Golden Horde in modern Russia and the Ilkhans of Persia. The Far Eastern empires had very little regular contact with Europe, and the only local contact they had with Europeans was with Catholic missionaries and travellers. However, despite the very different interactions between these groups and Europe, they were generally treated as one entity by the papacy.

The Golden Horde was a power that was fairly antagonistic to the north-eastern Christian kingdoms, clashing with Hungary and Poland on several occasions, with a major dispute flaring up over Ruthenia in the 1340's. However, these actions do not seem to have generated much interest in the papal court, and very little is said about it in papal letters beyond a fairly cursory grant to preach crusading indulgences in wars against the pagans.<sup>21</sup> The Ilkhans were much more amiable to the Christian world, particularly to the Armenians, who were fast allies of the Mongols at the beginning of the period. They had a common enemy in the Mamlukes, and took part in several campaigns together. However, despite quite generous offers to the popes by the Ilkhans in exchange for aid against the Mamlukes, nothing came of offers for alliance with the wider Christian world.<sup>22</sup> This,

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<sup>18</sup> Geanakoplos, p. 105; Nicol, pp. 170–1.

<sup>19</sup> Eugène Déprez and Guillaume Mollat, *Clement VI: Lettres Se Rapportant a La France*, 4 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque des écoles Françaises D'Athènes et de Rome), III, pp. 105–6, letter 4622, 204–5, letter 5028. Both these letters contain references to payments made to some 'ambassiatoribus' in various places, including Greece, Armenia and the Turkish Emirates.

<sup>20</sup> Leopold, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> Norman Housley, *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades 1305-1378*, 1986, pp. 71–2; Housley, *The Later Crusades*, pp. 345–8; Jackson, pp. 129–33.

<sup>22</sup> Muldoon, pp. 59–61; Dashdondog, pp. 213–4.

combined with more local problems in Persia, led to less interaction with the Levant, to the detriment of the kingdom of Armenia.

Understanding papal attitudes to the Mongols is vital to understanding the papacy's approach to spreading Catholicism. Beyond the immediate borders of Europe, the Mongols in various forms ruled virtually the entire known world, and securing their cooperation was vital to the successful expansion of the Roman Church. This section of the thesis will explain and discuss the conflicts in this relationship and explore how the papacy reacted to these distant powers.

## Conclusion

The thesis will ultimately conclude by identifying and drawing together the common threads between the different groups discussed, reaching an overall interpretation of papal foreign policy in the first half of the fourteenth century.

At this point, so early in my research, anticipating a conclusion feels somewhat premature and runs the risk of leading me to subconsciously bend evidence to fit any conclusion I would draw. As it stands, there appears to be a disconnection between the papal assertion of supreme authority and their efforts to establish such a reality. However, it is far too early to say whether this was due to a deliberate policy of political compromise, a lack of resources or a non-deliberate failure to expand. What is clear is that ultimately the popes were unsuccessful in bringing about universal Catholicism. How this failure plays out during the first half of the fourteenth century will be explored and set out in this thesis.