

Rome on 25 May 2012. About 50 diplomats, academics and policy experts attended a very lively discussion. Several papers have been presented and published that discuss contemporary international relations: ‘Libya 1986–2011: a testing ground for the evolution of US foreign policy’, published in February 2012 in the *Papiers d’actualité/Current Affairs in Perspective* series by the Fondation Pierre du Bois; a paper on ‘The war on terror and its cold war burdens’, presented at the British International Studies Association’s annual conference in Edinburgh in June 2012; a paper on the Obama administration and the transitions in northern Africa presented at Senate House (London) in February 2013 during the conference ‘Democracy Promotion: Hegemony, Resistance and the Shifting Discourses of Democracy in International Relations’.

In addition, during the second year of the Fellowship I worked on the international conference on ‘Constitutionalism and the Arab Uprisings’, jointly organized with the Centre for Global Constitutionalism of the University of St Andrews, and held at the British Academy on 2–3 May 2013. This project will be brought to fulfilment with an edited volume to be published with Cambridge University Press.

Finally, my period at the BSR was crucial for my academic education. The BSR library provided me with the right environment for completing my book, *The Origins of the US War on Terror* (London, 2012), and it was a crucial step in broadening my research capabilities to include also the study of current events. Moreover, living and studying together with scholars from all disciplines helped me to develop a multidisciplinary approach.

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#### ROME FELLOWSHIP

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#### *Trade and crusade between the Italian merchant republics and the Turks: 1300–1500*

My project hopes to shed light on the contradictory position that Italian merchants held in the late medieval Mediterranean, where they acted as both the established medium of exchange with the Muslim powers of the region, but also the spearhead of western military aggression against them. A key aspect of this task is the analysis of trade exemptions granted by the Church to merchants, and, as such, the primary focus of my research as a Rome Fellow has been the study of a number of ‘trade licences’ found in the unpublished *Registra Supplicationum* (Register of Petitions) of Pope Clement VI (1342–52), held in the Vatican Archivio Segreto. These licences were papal privileges granted to merchants exempting them from the papal ban on trade with the Muslim world. They therefore shed considerable light on the complex web of religious and economic ties that connected the western Church, Latin merchants and the Muslim groups of the eastern Mediterranean.

During the Fellowship I was able to identify and transcribe over 50 of these documents, which ranged from standard privileges, such as the permission to send a merchant galley to Alexandria, typically to trade in all goods with the exception of war materials and

slaves, to licences that were granted in exchange for certain 'pious' actions. For example, on a number of occasions licences were granted to allow Italian merchants resident in Constantinople to import grain from *Turchia* in order to help relieve famine in the city, and at other times permission was granted to trade with Mamluk Egypt on the condition that the proceeds be used to subsidise humanitarian gestures, such as the foundation of a hospital in Palermo, or the redemption of Christian captives in Granada. In this sense, these licences provide a fascinating insight into what the papacy thought contact with the infidel was 'worth' in a non-monetary sense. In addition to this, I have uncovered numerous licences that provide important and rare information about the shifting attitudes of the papacy and merchants towards the different Muslim groups of the Mediterranean, especially the emerging Anatolian Turks. For example, on a number of occasions permission to trade with the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt was granted only on condition that the proceeds be used to help fund galleys for the defence of Latin Aegean territories against the Turks, and on other occasions licences were granted to trade in Syria and Egypt that specifically forbade trade in *Turchia*.

These petitions, although of seemingly minor significance on their own, help to build a more detailed picture of western perceptions of the Muslim world in the later Middle Ages. The Ottoman Turks would come to dominate western attitudes towards Islam in the early modern period, and the trade licences provide one of the first instances of this change of thinking, as the Turks began to emerge in the consciousness of western Christendom. In addition, the conditions attached to the licences, along with the commodities and destinations permitted, tell us a great deal about papal attempts to exert control over Christian activities on the fringes of Christendom in the East, as well as about the concerns of merchants for their own spiritual well-being, and the subtle interplay that existed between the seemingly contradictory practices of trading with the infidel whilst attempting to defend Christian territories from their incursions. Importantly, they are also evidence of the high level of cross-cultural exchange that existed at this time. Christian-Muslim relations during the period were characterized by periods of peaceful contact, but also of religious animosity; the licences held in the *Registra Supplicationum* demonstrate this juxtaposition better than most other sources. The fact that they never before have been used in this manner suggests that this research will make an important contribution to existing scholarship on cross-cultural Mediterranean history.

Over the course of my Fellowship I was able to draw up a calendar of the trade licences, which I intend to publish as part of a larger article on cross-cultural trade in the medieval Mediterranean. As well as this, I contributed to the workshop *Albania and Italy: Past and Present* at the British School at Rome in December 2012, and presented research papers at the University of Winchester in April and at the Fifteenth Symposium of the Mediävistenverbands at the University of Heidelberg in February. Towards the start of my Fellowship I was also able to submit draft chapters of a monograph based on my Ph.D. to publishers, and I finished co-editing a volume, *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean (1204–1453)*, which will be published by Ashgate in 2014. I would like to express my thanks to the staff at the BSR, my fellow scholars, and the many visitors whose friendship and encouragement during the course of my Fellowship made my stay in Rome both intellectually rewarding and great fun.

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