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# Hungarian Historical Review

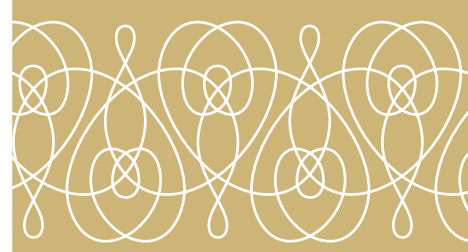
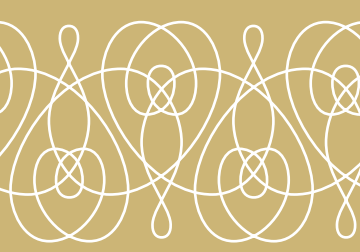
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*Moving Borders  
in Medieval Central Europe*

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## *Moving Borders in Medieval Central Europe*

András Vadas and János M. Bak  
Special Editors of the Thematic Issue

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# Notevole larghezza, notizie così gravi e gelose and un uomo che amava spacciarsi: Human Resources of Diplomatic Exchange of King Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458)\*

Nada Zečević

*Royal Holloway, University of London*

*ZecevicN@ceu.edu*

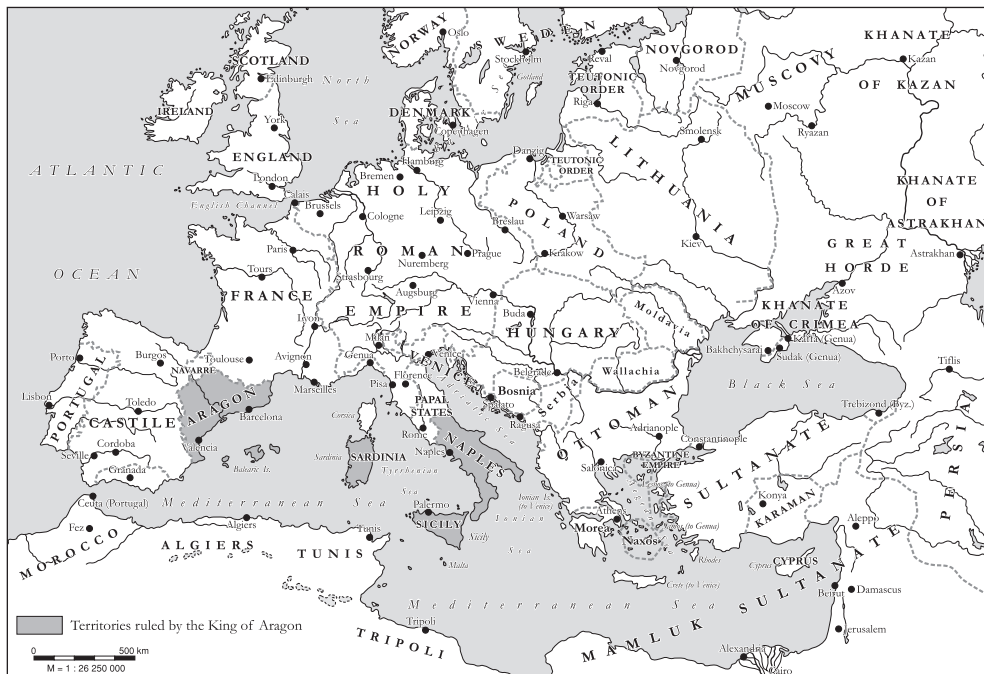
During his reign in Naples, between 1442 and 1458, King Alfonso V of Aragon exchanged a series of diplomatic communications with the Christian East, namely with Byzantine Emperors John VIII (1425–1448) and Constantine XI Dragases (1449–1453) and their close kin, but also with the most prominent feudal lords of the Balkan peninsula (Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, George Castrioti Skanderbey, etc.). The basic historical details of these missions are largely known to modern scholarship, which usually regards them as part of the king's attempt to secure individual allies in his planned anti-Ottoman crusade and expansion towards the imperial throne in Constantinople. Scholarship, however, is limited on the details of these relations, partly due to the fragmentary nature of the sources and partly because of the missions' secret character. In this paper, I am attempting to learn more about King Alfonso's attention to the Balkans by observing the human resources which sustained not just his missions, but also other forms of the kingdom's exchange across the Adriatic. The inquiry, which is based on the study of the available prosopographic data concerning individuals who appear to have been prominent in this, indicates that the basic circle which sustained this process consisted of Catalan bankers and highly ranked notaries, all resident in Naples since Alfonso's access to the throne of the kingdom in 1442, but this circle also received several local commoners loyal to the king, with Simone Caccetta as their leading figure. His networks show that the king's diplomatic exchange with the Balkans was largely characterized by a specific form of corruption, by which the bankers who invested their money in the king's diplomatic activities in the Balkans received lucrative positions in the royal customs and local administration of Puglia, which they further used to enhance their access to the kingdom's economic exchange with the Balkans and, consequently, to augment their wealth. This process was heavily scrutinized by Simone Caccetta, who involved in it an entire circle of small traders and soldiers directly loyal to him, thus affirming their positions but also his own position in the Aragon service and Aragon courtly society.

**Keywords:** Alfonso V of Aragon, Aragon Naples, diplomacy, Medieval Balkans, feudal lords in the medieval Balkans, prosopography

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The interest taken by King Alfonso V Aragon (1442–1458) in the eastern Mediterranean, a topic familiar to modern historiography, is most commonly perceived as an important element of his “imperialism.”<sup>1</sup> Centrally focused on his plans to defend and restore Constantinople from the Ottomans and to maintain commercial ties with the Fatimids of Egypt and other Ottoman rivals in the East (see Map 1),<sup>2</sup> Alfonso’s political ambitions, however, can be debated for their



Map 1. Europe in the 1440s (Map drawn by Béla Nagy)

1 Among numerous interpretations, I am referring to the ones that reflect the most common positions found in the modern historiography: based upon the documents of the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón/ Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó in Barcelona, Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 2 (1902), 380–XXVII: 3 (1902), 555–634 and XXVIII: 1 (1903), 154–212; Spremić, “Vazali,” 455–46; Ryder, “The Eastern Policy, 7–26; Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*; Marinescu, *La politique orientale*, 95–99, 119–24; Bisson, *The Medieval Crown*, 144–46; Spremić, “Alfonso il Magnanimo, 741–53; Navarro Sorni, *Calixto III Borja*; Spremić, “Balkanski vazali,” 355–58; Ryder, *The Wreck of Catalonia*, 28, 44; Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, 204–6, 211; Sabaté i Curull, “The ports of the medieval Adriatic, 11–23; Aloisio, “Alfonso V and the anti-Turkish crusade, 64–74. Cf. Cuadrada Majó, “Política italiana de Alfonso V de Aragón (1420–1442),” 269–309. For Alfonso’s relations with other parts of the East, including Ethiopia, which his documents identified as the mythical kingdom of Prester John, see Cerone, “La politica,” vol. 27: 1, 20–88; Garretson, “A Note on the Relations,” 37–44; Salvatore, *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European Relations*, 36–53; Figliuolo, “La Terrasanta nel quadro della politica orientale di Alfonso V,” 484–515.

2 Alfonso’s turn to the East as the part of his plans for the restoration of Constantinople was mentioned in his letter to Francesco I Sforza, Duke of Milan from February 14, 1458. Cf. Cerone, “La politica,” vol.

meager results.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly the case with the Balkan peninsula, where he made various attempts to tie the local lords of the region to the Kingdom in Naples, even though he was facing diverse political challenges from Florence, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Republic of Venice, all of which were aspiring to assert control and influence over the region (see Map 2). Alfonso's ambitions in the Balkan peninsula can also be debated from the perspective of the primary



Map 2. Southern Balkans in 1410. At: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_the\\_southern\\_Balkans\\_1410.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_southern_Balkans_1410.svg), Copyright: Cplakidas. Licence: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

28, 159–60, also referring to his earlier letter to Duke of Genoa on August 5, 1455, in which he proposed first to sort his Italian affairs before turning against the Ottomans; also, cf. letter to Pope Nicholas dated September 8, 1453 advocating a Christian coalition and its anti-Ottoman agenda. More on this, Marinesco, “Le Pape Calixte III,” 77–97; Ryder, *Alfonso*, 45; 294 and n. 110; 295–97; 304–12; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 67; Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 4; 19.

3 Ryder, *The Eastern Policy*, 7–25; Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, 170–71.

evidence, since the sources attesting to his interest in this region give only the basic details of its chronology and prosopography, largely hiding the details of its content behind claims of diplomatic confidentiality.<sup>4</sup> To find out more about how the king's diplomacy towards the Balkans was modeled, in this paper, I focus on the structures that sustained his diplomatic activities in this region. What were the human resources with which the king attempted to assert his interests in the Balkans, and how did their use reflect his ambitions in this region?

*The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458): A Prosopographic Approach to its Structure and Dynamics*

In focusing on the prominent figures of Aragon diplomacy and how they contributed to the king's political presence in the Balkans, it is important to note that the primary evidence on this issue is greatly limited due to the destruction of the Neapolitan State archives (*Archivio di Stato di Napoli*) in 1943. Hence, a more detailed approach can be made by studying some particular figures involved in Alfonso's diplomacy. This approach focuses on the recorded micro-details of these people's lives and career agencies, which might, at first sight, give the impression of a patchy descriptive narrative concerning some outstanding individuals. However, when these people's daily routines and connections mentioned in the remaining sources are put together and compared to other materials concerning Aragon rule in Naples, they offer a more detailed picture of the resources on which the king's diplomacy relied in the Balkan peninsula.

Another important assumption for the analysis of the Aragon diplomacy in the Balkans is that it had a varying dynamics. Its key stages were largely influenced by the Ottoman advancement in the region and the attempts of Christian Europe to prevent these advances, but it was also shaped in part by the king's relations with the major Christian powers of the time, namely the Papacy, the Republic of Venice, Florence, and Milan. Certainly, more intensive stages of these relations were the periods around the Varna "Crusade" (1444), its aftermath, and the second Kosovo Polje battle (1447–1448), the final Ottoman offensive against Constantinople (1451–1453) and its aftermath, when Popes Nicholas V and Calixtus III (1455–1458) called for the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. Each of these stages, however, reflected different political aims of the

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4 For his documents, see Cerone, "La politica," vol. 27 and 28. For a wider interpretation, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 2, 283–84; Gegaj, *L'Albanie et l'invasion turque*, 83, proposing to focus on the political impediments which the King faced from the rulers of Italy and the Christian West.



participating Christian forces, so the king's diplomatic efforts in the Balkans varied accordingly in their structures and agendas. The prosopography of his missions shows that his focus in 1443–1444 was on the Byzantine Palaiologoi in Constantinople and on the Peloponnese, from where he received Greek diplomats who were asking for help and support (the “incoming” diplomatic activities for the Aragon administration),<sup>5</sup> while in the 1450s, it was the Aragon representatives who were more frequent visiting individual lords of the Adriatic and its hinterland in the Balkans (“outgoing diplomacy”), attempting to attract them more formally to the Aragon throne.

*The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458):  
Emissaries and Visitors*

Certainly, the most visible structure of the Aragon apparatus that dealt with the Balkans was the king's diplomats.<sup>6</sup> The ambassadors from Aragon Naples to the region came with particular frequency in 1451–1453, when they sought to establish firm alliances with individual lords in order to ensure background loyalty and support for the “rescue” of Constantinople from the Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> These embassies were highly confidential, so it is of no wonder that the Aragon diplomats sent to the region in this period were figures who had the king's greatest confidence and who had been chosen from his closest entourage. Most of them were Catalans by origin, some even still linked with Barcelona or other parts

5 On major embassies from the Palaiologoi in this period, Cerone, “La política,” XXVII: 1, 431 (November 27, 1444); 436 (May 26, 1447); 442 (August 30, 1448); 449 (August 22, 1448). For visits of Demetrios' man and Fonoleđa's interaction with him, Cerone, “La política,” XXVII: 3 568, n. 1 (January 18, 1451), etc. These men were followed by envoys of the local feudal lords, particularly active among whom were those sent by Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, Albanian leader George C. Scanderbeg, and “Latin” rulers of Greece, King of Cyprus John II of Lusignan, John Assanes Zaccharia of Achaia, and Leonardo III Tocco of the Ionian islands. Some of these visits have been well-researched, cf. the relations with Scanderbeg, Muhaj, “La política oriental de Alfonso V de Aragao,” 237–48, but need to be more substantially compared with the pontifical policies in the region, cf. Gill, “Pope Calixtus III and Scanderbeg,” 534–62. In the same period, Alfonso kept close contacts with Ragusa and Croatian Frangipanes, cf. Thallóczy and Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára*, vol. 2, XXXIX–XL; Thallóczy, *Studien* (August 5, 1453), 393–94; Spremić, “Ragusa tra gli Aragonesi di Napoli e i Turchi,” 187–97.

6 Dover, “Royal Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy,” 57, notes the comparative “backwardness” of Naples' diplomacy in comparison with the glory of other centers in Renaissance Italy, explaining it with a “lack of the narrative of the emergence of ‘new diplomacy.’”

7 As pointed out by Ryder, *Alfonso*, 300, Alfonso's claims to Hungary deriving from his takeover of the Angevin throne in Naples were evoked in 1447 by János Hunyadi, who attempted to create an anti-Ottoman coalition, but failed largely because of Alfonso's dissensions with Florence and Venice.

of the Aragon dominion in the western Mediterranean. For their diplomatic missions, they were prepared and surveyed by the royal council,<sup>8</sup> which checked various conditions according to which individual lords could become the formal vassals of the Aragon Kingdom in Naples.<sup>9</sup> The most notable figure among these envoys was Alfonso's protonotary, Arnaldo Fonoleda (*Arnau Fenolleda*), renown as the king's treaty-maker for his detailed follow-up of the kingdom's political and foreign affairs. Originating from a Catalan notary family of Barcelona and initially educated by the king's main secretary Johannes Olzina (*Joan Olzina*) (who largely focused his attention on Sicily), Fonoleda accompanied Alfonso on his Italian travels, acting on some occasions as his creditor, too.<sup>10</sup> Between 1444 and 1455, Fonoleda surveyed or wrote the majority of Alfonso's communications with the Balkan lords, and in some situations, he even appeared there as the king's envoy.<sup>11</sup> Another distinguished Catalan in Alfonso's notary service who participated in the king's diplomatic missions relating to the Balkans was Francesco Mortorell (*Francesc Martorell*). His family also had origins in Catalonia, namely the juridical district *Sant Feliu de Llobregat* near Barcelona, from where it further expanded to Morella (today's region of Castellón) and other parts of the

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8 On their embassies in the Balkans, as based upon the evidence of the Archivio della Corona de Aragon, see Thallóczy, *Studien*, nos. XXVII–XXIX (February 15–19, 1444), 356–63; no. XXXV (October 16, 1446), 370; LII (September 11, 1450), 384–85; LVIII (November 10, 1452), 389–91, LXIII (June 1, 1454), 394–400; LXXVII (August 3, 1457), 414–15. Ćirković, *Herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača*, 213.

9 In 1451 and 1452, Fonoleda took part in several treaties concluded between Alfonso and the lords of the Balkans: with Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, with the ambassadors of Scanderbeg (March 26, 1451), and with Latin lords in Greece, Leonardo III Tocco (Zečević, "Confirmation grant of King Alfonso V of Aragon," 9–21) and Michael Assanes Zaccharia. A similar arrangement was made with Demetrios Palaiologos in the Peloponnese, whom Alfonso, though, did not condition with vassalage, but rather promised his help in exchange for the presence of his navy in the waters of the Peloponnese and Ionian Sea. See, Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 623; Ćirković, *Herceg*, 74–75; Ryder, *Alfonso*, 303–5.

10 His family originated from Barcelona's urban officials, and his father Francesco was also a notary. Arnaldo's career seems to have started around 1436, when he began to follow the king on his royal itinerary and diplomatic travel, thus becoming the king's most confident diplomatic secretary (cf. his use of formula "*Rex mihi mandavit*"), leaving his master Olzina to control the regular procedures of grant-issuing in Naples. Ryder, *The Kingdom*, 230–32 notes that he held several other offices, and he was mentioned in Sicily in 1448 as the general bailiff of Catalonia. The names of the king's favorites and institutions active in his diplomacy towards the Balkans will be mentioned in this paper in their original forms, as quoted by the primary sources; the italicized forms indicate either specific forms mentioned in the sources or their Catalan versions, also documented in the primary materials. The names of the most notable rulers and highest royal dignitaries will be used in their English forms.

11 An example of his direct participation in Alfonso's secret diplomatic affairs comes from Cerone, "La politica," 27: 3 (May 24, 1453), 621, when Fonoleda was mentioned as just about to come in person to Constantinople and deliver the king's letter to Constantine Palaiologos. This never happened, since only five days later Constantinople was already in Ottoman hands.

Kingdom of Valencia and the Balears. In the mid-1440s, Mortorell recorded Alfonso's diplomatic activities with Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača (1435–1466). He then advanced to the administration of the kingdom's customs, where he became a portulan master (before 1456/7), and, in this year, the “*baiulus* of the Jews.”<sup>12</sup> Other, less elevated notaries of the Catalan origin involved in Alfonso's diplomacy dealing with the Balkans were *Arnaldo di Castello* (1447) and *Giovanni Felin* (1451).<sup>13</sup>

Local commoners from the Italian towns were also deployed in some of these missions. Among them, a notable figure was *Filipo Pantella* of Piacenza, the king's envoy, mentioned in Albania in June 1451.<sup>14</sup> His recruitment seems to have greatly relied on his social connections and familial links across the Adriatic. Pantella's brother traded in Ragusa with acorns, while several of his relatives resided in Ragusa's immediate neighborhood, on the island of Curzola, in the town of Cattaro, and at marketplaces at Narenta and Gabella, all ensuring regular trade exchange between the two sides of the Adriatic and focusing in particular on the shores of the Aragon kingdom in Puglia and the ports of Bari and Barletta.<sup>15</sup> Filippo Pantella was a frequent traveler of the era, and he maintained close links even with Florentine traders whom Alfonso had expelled from the kingdom between 1447 and 1453 during his conflict with the Florence's then ally, the Republic of Venice. Such connections with “adversaries” furnished Pantella with various news and intelligence which the king certainly needed in order to plan his activities in the region.<sup>16</sup>

12 Thallóczy, *Studien*, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX (all on February 15–19, 1444), 356–63; *The Jews in Sicily*, vol. 18, 12030.

13 Under his authority, in 1446 we find one other notary in charge of fixing the king's correspondence with Herzeg Kosača, an Arnaldo di Castello, Thallóczy, *Studien*, no. XLV (July 24, 1447), 378.

14 On his diplomatic travel, see Cerone, “La politica,” vol. XXVII: 3, 585 (October 17, 1451) and *ibid.* (December 10, 1451); Pantella's fixing of the arrangement with Golem Arianiti took place on June 7, 1451, Cerone, “La politica,” XXVIII: 1, 176–77. This document was signed by Pantella and sealed with the Arianiti seal.

15 While the Pantellas originated from Piacenza, his kinsmen Pietro (perhaps his nephew, as suggested by Hrabak, “Trgovinske veze Pezara i Dubrovnika,” 26) traded grain and other food with Ragusa, as is known from the correspondence of Giuliano Marcovaldi of Ragusa. Pietro was a tintore in Ragusa, interested to commercialize his products, with factories which colored and sold textiles in Trani, San Severo, San Giovanni Rotondo, Manfredonia and Fortore, and also to Florentines Girolamo di Giovanni Marchionni e Cristofano di Giovanni, see more in *Il Carteggio Marcovaldi*. Other Pantella's relatives operating in the East Adriatic cf. Dinić, *Iz dubrovačkog arbiva*, vol. III. On Peter Pantella and his connections, see Dinić Knežević, *Petar Pantela*.

16 Among other confident envoys of Alfonso, we also find Marquise of Gerace, dispatched to visit his own grandson Leonardo III Tocco and his neighbor, Assanes Zacharia (September 4, 1454 and April, 5,

To accomplish his diplomatic agenda, the king occasionally also relied on incoming ambassadors and envoys sent by his counterparts to negotiate with him. Some of these envoys were destined to visit other European courts too (Milan, Burgundy, Habsburgs), and with such mandates, they represented a rich source of intrinsic diplomatic information collected from multiple parts of the Christian West. On several occasions, the collaboration of these envoys with Alfonso seems to have been arranged by his effective bribes,<sup>17</sup> while some of these informants may also have been motivated to collaborate because of personal loyalties and familial connections they had with the Aragon realm. One such case was that of the envoy of the Byzantine Emperor, a certain Pietro Rocco (*Ritzo*, *Rotzo*) of Salerno (October 12, 1443), whose close family originated from the Aragon-governed Italian South,<sup>18</sup> like that of *Giovanni Spagnolus*, diplomatic representative of Constantine Palaiologos in early 1452, whose family was scattered around the Aragon domain between Catalonia and Italy.<sup>19</sup> Other informants of the king from the Byzantine East were Greeks or Italians who served various Latin lords in Greece, as well as the Palaiologoi

1455), Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3, 624. This communication was done orally, and we know that the king received the news with the utmost joy and pleasure.

17 Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3, 596, quoting Angelo di Constanzo, who noted Alfonso’s exceptional preference for spending money on spies, “more than any other ruler.” In some cases, it seems that the exquisite gifts Alfonso gave to some incoming envoys were also part of these bribes. Cf. Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 4 (January 29, 1454), 817, according to which the king prepared 20 falcons which his envoy Johannes Claver was to deliver to Giorgio Donna of Candia, while on August 14, 1454 (Cerone, 27: 4, 825–6), he ordered vestments and boots for a Demetrios Caleba, the “camerlench of the Greek Emperor.” As pointed out by Ryder, *Alfonso*, 294, by October 1453, this help had already been exhausted, to the point that Alfonso foresaw needing three years of taxes to restore his finances and prepare his military for another potential conflict.

18 Del Treppo, *I mercanti Catalani*, 491. Cf. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, 291–92. A possibility to connect this figure with a family from Salento was hinted at by from *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 10. no. 24305, 122 (Πιτζος), referring to a Peter Rizzo of Salento from the same period, as from de Capmany y Montpalau, *Memorias históricas*, t. II, 218, 231, 266, 273: append. 61, 66, showing the presence of the Catalan consuls in Constantinople in 1428, 1434, 1437, 1445, 1448 and 1453.

19 *Spagnolus* was mentioned in several relations of the court in Naples between mid-1452, for instance in Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3 (August 30, 1452), until August 30, 1452. The family’s Spanish origins are documented by ASNA, Regia Camera della sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda, sec. XVI–1808, busta 386, fasc. 9432 (*Spanuolo Giovanni Glorio, commune di Barca*). In 1506, a Giovanni *Spagnuolo* was mentioned with several other Aragon officials in Abruzzo, while resisting Ottoman attacks on these shores in 1506, as from ASNA, Regia Camera della Sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda sec. XVI–1808; busta 509, fasc. 15305. Some Spaniards were mentioned in the early 1440s in Andrubitsa in the Peloponnese, as from *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 4, 132, no. 8315 (a Niccola Ἰσπανός in 1440). For Frapperio’s presence, see Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3 (March 30, 1453), 611.

in the Peloponnese.<sup>20</sup> Among these figures, a remarkable one was Athanasius Laskaris, the offspring of a high aristocratic Byzantine family who resided on the Ionian islands at the time, which were governed by Latin lord Leonardo III Tocco (1448/9–1479).<sup>21</sup> Laskaris was recorded in Naples in 1451 while representing Despot Demetrios Palaiologos (1449–1460), on which occasion he promised loyalty to the Aragon king in the capacity of a subject of Leonardo III Tocco.<sup>22</sup> The case of *Ioannes Torsellus* was similar. Torsellus was an envoy of the Byzantine Emperor originating from a Venetian family which exported wine from the Greek islands to the European West. Alfonso's officials designated Torsellus as a man ready to show off and plot, hinting at his openness to share information about the situation in Byzantium, but also strategic information he exchanged with Western Christian rulers he met on his travels, such as the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1419–1467).<sup>23</sup> Between 1455 and 1458,

20 On February 25, 1448, a Manuel Disipatus was mentioned as the Byzantine imperial envoy in Naples; some time earlier, in 1435, he seems to have been one of the attendees of the Council of Basel, cf. Landon, *Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, 85. His noble title was stressed in his diplomatic credentials and Alfonso's reports on this (*nobilem militem Manuelem disipatum ad vestram claritudinom legatura, mittimus* [...]). More on his diplomatic activity in *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 3, nos. 5540, 54 Δισύπατος: 1437–1448; in 1437 meeting Emperor Sigismund in Eger; 1438 he was in Venice, and in 1449 in Naples, cf. V. Laurent, *Les Memoires de Sylvestre Syropoulo*, 180; 182; 274–78; 300.

21 This is, apparently, a branch of the renown Byzantine ruling family (Laskaris/Tzamantouros). See more in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1180–1181; Trapp, “Downfall and Survival of the Laskaris Family;”, 45–49. The family's connections with the Venetians and Naples through the Peloponnese has been noted in *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 6, no. 14521, p. 145: Kaballarios in Morea, 1450, 1451; Archon; οὐκείος of Demetrios Palaiologos, while the activities of Athanasius were recorded in 1450–1451 also in Venice, Florence and Ferrara. On Athanasius' letter to the Florentines, see Spremić, “Vazali;” 462–64. In 1672, a Lascaris Giovanni Battista, was mentioned as a Fisico Regio, as from ASNA, Regia Camera della Sommaria, Processi, Pandetta generale o seconda, XVI–1808, unità 860.

22 On his mission, see Cerone, “La politica;” XXVII: XXX, 572 and 573 (January 18, 1451). Apart from him and Manuel Disipatos, other envoys coming from the Palaiologoi were Andronikos Leander, and John Apokaukes. Among the Latin emissaries from the East, in April 1447, we find Filip Celano, ambassador of the King of Cyprus and Michael Assanes (September 4, 1454 and April 5, 1455), a liege of Demetrios Palaiologos (1455), and Assanes' man, Francesco d'Ariano, as noted in Cerone, “La politica;” XXVII: 4 (April 5, 1455), 835; this person was Δαριάνω Φραγγίσκος = Francesco d'Ariano, μισθρ Captain of the Tocco stronghold on Zakynthos in 1461, MM, *AD*, vol. 5, 69; cf. for a Jacob Ariano under Carlo I Tocco (b. c. 1375–d. c. 1429), Zečević, “The Italian Kin of the Tocco Despot;”, 243–55. For a *Todoros*, captain of Kruič, also registered as an envoy in Naples. See *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, addenda zu fascikel 1–12 (1995), no. 93405, p. 36.

23 Cerone, “La politica;” XXVII: 3 (May 26, 1447), 439–40. *Torsellus*, calling himself a “chevalier, serviceman and chamberlain of Emperor in Constantinople;” acted as the Byzantine envoy among the Ottomans allegedly for twelve years. For his advice to the Duke of Burgundy on how the West should confront the Ottomans, see *Curiosa lettera di Giovanni Torzelo a Filippo di Borgogna*, 263–68. The Aragon reception of him was far more negative, as he was noted as a man who liked to show off, ready to provide

Alfonso's diplomats made wide use of the Greek Humanist Nicolaus Secundinos (*Sagundinus*) (1402?–1464), then subject to Venetian dominion in Crete, who visited Naples in the entourage of Matthew Palaiologos Asen, governor of Corinth at the time (1454–1458). In Naples, where his translation of Plutarch had already been highly appreciated, Secundinos' practical knowledge of the Ottomans and their military resources was inserted into Panormita's translation of Onosander's *Strategikos*, while Secundinos' glorifications of the king's model of "power pedagogy" influenced the education of future Christian rulers.<sup>24</sup>

*The Diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458):  
Building up Human Resources*

To support his emissaries to the Balkans and to reward his informants from the Balkans, King Alfonso had to expand his material resources significantly. This is why, in the early 1450s, he started reinforcing ship-building in Naples' marina, developing from 1452 another new ship-building facility in Trani, where galleys and caravels were built for traffic across the Adriatic. The funds for this endeavor were provided by the Aragon *Escribano de ración*, a royal office surveying the king's expenditures (including those in the Balkans), tightly controlled by the king's loyal Catalans.<sup>25</sup> Similarly to a model previously set by Angevin rulers Charles II (1285–1309) and Robert the Wise (1309–1343), who, at the beginning of the fourteenth century used Florentine banking finances (largely those of Niccolò Acciaiuoli, their renown Florentine banker-ally) when planning their "Crusading" attempts on Sicily and in the Byzantine East, to finance his activities in the Balkans, the Aragon king turned to the banking institutions of Naples. Since 1442, these institutions had largely been held by his Catalan compatriots, who, in exchange for the money, received important privileges and posts in the royal administration, thus infiltrating the kingdom's bureaucracy.

intelligence but also do many other actions which enabled secret double diplomacy. While in Naples, Torsellus was seen as a mirror of Alfonso's main diplomat involved in the affairs on the Apennines, Luiz des Puig. A person of the same name was mentioned in Τορτζέλος, *Prosopographisches Lexikon*, vol. 12. no. 29144. p. 22. *Torcello?*; *Turtzelos*, as selling wine in Venice in 1470; Schreiner, *Texte zur spat-byzantinischen Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 4/2, 41, 44, 53.

24 *Ad serenissimum principem et invictissimum regem Alphonsum Nicolai Sagundini oratio*. This model of Alfonso is particularly apparent in the depiction of the Archduke of Austria in his *Elegiarum de rebus gestis archiducum Austriae libri duo*. On Alfonso's propaganda that followed his policy, see Delle Donne, *Alfonso il Magnanimo e l'invenzione dell'Umanesimo monarchico*.

25 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 295.

There, they further privatized their new positions, using them to augment their private cash flows. Particularly influential figures in this circle were several bankers who maintained close familial and business connections with Barcelona and some other parts of the Aragon dominion (e.g. Sicily), while leading their businesses in Naples. One of them was Piero Cimart (*Piro Cimert*, *Pere Cimert*), whose wealth had originally relied upon his trading links with the knights of St. John, and a bank he had established in Naples around the time when Alfonso Aragon came to power (1442).<sup>26</sup> Cimart was exceptionally loyal to Alfonso, and he financed the king's takeover of the throne in Naples from the Balzo Orsini rival fraction. Thus, it is not surprising that, in 1447, after the king expelled the Florentine merchants who had previously credited the throne (1447–1452) from Naples, Cimart took on the supply of the king's larger credits.<sup>27</sup> Specifically in Alfonso's Balkan affairs, in 1451, Cimart financed the royal gifts to Andreas, Bishop of Albania, assigning, on one occasion, 72 ducats to cover the purchase of luxurious garments for the Bishop and 25 ducats for his *salvus conductus* to Albania.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, Cimart also provided 500 ducats in cash to bribe Athanasius Lascaris, the aforementioned Tocco subject from the Ionian islands, then in the service of Despot Demetrios Palaiologos.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the key figure to assume control of the royal finances and the king's policy in the Balkans was an Italian from the local neighborhood of Trani,

26 Cerone, "La politica," 27: 3, 566–68, about his property and citizenship status in Barcelona, as well as his connections with the Order of St. John. His wife was *Sibilla*, and they had a daughter named *Eulalia*, married to a *Bartomeu Simo*. His property in Barcelona consisted of a corridor de canvi of three houses in the street of *Sant Cugat alcarred d'en Ombau* (today's *carrer de Gombau*); he also had some land in parish of Cencen de Sarria, near the Monastery of Santa Maria de Jesus, and a corridor *d'orella* in the parish of *Santa Maria de Sants al Iloc* which was called *Los Pins d'en Lull* and was governed by the Hospitallers. This may explain his immediate connection with them. In 1451, Cimart was active in financing the king's relations with the Balkan lords, most notably Albanian envoys, but also a *Guido Storjone*, a man of the Despot of Arta (Leonardo III Tocco) who was recorded in Naples, Athnasio Laskaris (*lasqujr*), Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3, 566. His banking activities were aligned with Alfonso's main banking liaison, the institution held by Giovanni Miraballo, through which his main courtiers were paid. Navarro Espinach, "Las elites financieras de la monarquía aragonesa 23, n. 41.

27 On October 17, 1451, Cimart negotiated with a Florentine merchant named *Damianus Lotteri* (who seems to have originated from Piedmont), even though the Florentines had already been banned from Naples. As noted in Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 1, 71 and 75, Cimart also financed diplomats communicating between Egypt and Ethiopia. In this, he cooperated with another Catalan, Andreas Ferrer, who carried diplomatic gifts to Africa.

28 This kind of financing was applied to a number of traders whose contributions were always requested when the king had to regulate the debt to his creditors, cf. Cerone "La politica," XXVII: 3 (October 17, 1451), 572.

29 Cerone, "La politica," XXVII: 3 (January 18 and 28, 1451), 573, and *ibid.* (October 17, 1451), 586.

Simone Caccetta (*Caczetta*, *Cazzetta*). He started his career in the early 1420s<sup>30</sup> as an ambitious commoner on a temporary juridical post in the small provincial center of Trani.<sup>31</sup> Caccetta's swift ascent certainly coincided with the beginning of Alfonso's rule in the Italian South (1442), when he, like Cimart, supported the king against Giovanni Antonio Balzo Orsini (1393?–1463).<sup>32</sup> Demonstrating exceptional skills in stirring urban uprisings and creating civil unrest against his master's rivals,<sup>33</sup> Caccetta gained lavish profits from his loyalty (Figs. 1–3), first with the position as Trani's notary,<sup>34</sup> then with a royal donation of an important hereditary income of 1/3 of taxes to iron and steel circulated through this town. By the end of the 1440s, Caccetta can be seen as financing the king with 3,000 ducats, for which he received the influential position of the *magistro portolano e secreto per la Puglia e Capitanata*.<sup>35</sup> From this position, he was able to control royal diplomatic communication with the Balkan lords directly,<sup>36</sup> supplying, for instance in 1452, a “rescue” operation for Herzeg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, when

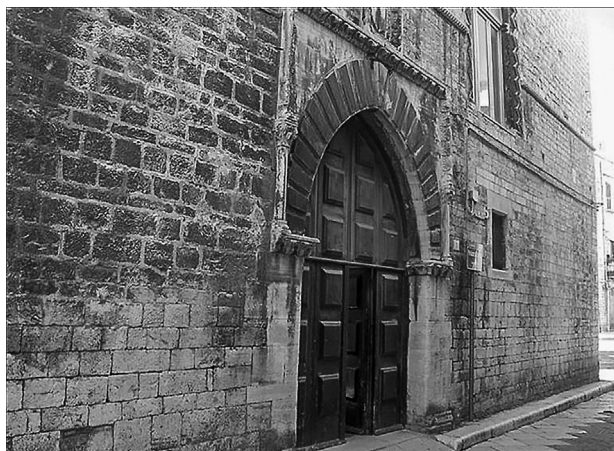


Figure 1. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c. (detail), as from <https://www.tranilive.it/news/cultura/674050/arnia-simone-caccetta-lamicizia-con-pietro-palagano-e-la-sua-ascesa-socio-politica>, n.c.

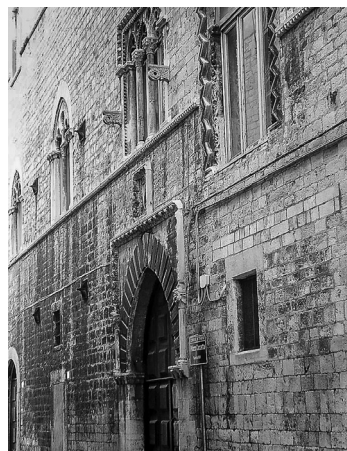


Figure 2. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c. (detail), as from downloaded from <https://mapio.net/pic/p-15052658/> (©Davide Salieva)

30 His origins in Trani cannot be traced back long in time, hence some assume that he may have possibly come from Calabria, cf. Pilato, “Simone Caccetta.”

31 Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 273–90.

32 Latanzio, and Varanini, *I centri minori italiani nel tardo medioevo*, 383.

33 *Il Libro Rosso della città di Trani*, 25.

34 “Frammenti di Cedole della Tesoreria di Alfonso I,” 108 (December 21, 1449).

35 Frammento del Registro Curie Summariae,” 143–44. For his activities during the early 1450s, see *Il Registro della Cancelleria di Alfonso d'Aragona*, 111–12; 238–39; 302–4; 311–12; 330; 336–37.

36 In 1452, he was mentioned as collecting the toll on silver and iron in Trani, cf. Ryder, *Alfonso*, 259, n. 4. Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 345 n. 143, discussing his first mention in this capacity on June 9, 1449.





Figure 3. Palazzo Cacceta, Trani, Italy – 15th c., as from <https://www.salentoacolory.it/trani-viaggio-nel-medioevo/> by Salentoacolory

Kosača claimed his town of Novi was isolated and called for help to reinforce its defenses.<sup>37</sup> In April 1453, Caccetta's finances backed his personal participation in Alfonso's diplomatic negotiations with Manuel Angellos, envoy of Despot Thomas Palaiologos (1428–1460) of the Peloponnese, when he was also in charge of providing the despot additional supplies.<sup>38</sup>

37 Thallóczy, *Studien* (November 10, 1452), 389–91; Ćirković, *Herceg*, 154–218.

38 Simone Caccetta was mentioned in documents for the first time on September 13, 1423, when he acted as a giudice upon a contract, replacing his colleague who had just died. On December 27, 1437 he received a hereditary 1/3 customs on taxed iron and steel in Trani, which seems to coincide with his participation in a local uprising (December 5) organized by the local noble Palagano, who favored Alfonso. In 1449, Caccetta was nominated *maestro portolano e secreto per la Puglia e Capitanata*, to receive the title of *miles* and *regius consiliaris* by 1450. His advancement is well-reflected in a palace and several houses he built in Trani and Molfetta, as well as in his daughters' marriages: Restituta to Palamede Pignatelli, Pascarella to Ettore Zurlo (later to Giovanello Caracciolo), and Angelella in 1452 to Giacomuccio Barille. In 1456, he took a feudum in Vieste in exchange for 10,000 ducats with Neapolitan banker Petro Lomaro, and he also received fiscal income from Trani. He helped the advancement of his brother *Baldassare*, who was the captain of Molfetta and custom officer in Giovinazzo. Balthazar was violent, and his office met with many complaints, which he seems to have evaded based of the fact that he financed the armament of one galleon dispatched to attack the Ottomans (*Guerra da corsa*). Caccetta had another brother, Angelo, whom he also employed in customs until 1456. Following Alfonso's death, he rebelled against King Ferrante, for which he was imprisoned. Eventually, he sought the protection of Giovanni Antonio Orsini, together with his son Nardò, and he was stationed in Bisceglia, where he organized partisan groups against Ferrante. By July 9, 1459, he was mentioned as dead. The still visible material assets of Caccetta's power are his palace (1456) in Trani's Via Ognisanti 5, facing the palace of the local knight Giovanello Sifola, and the town's piazza St. Marco. For more on him and the town's events in this period, see Giovanni Beltrani, *Cesare Lambertini e la società familiare in Puglia durante i secoli XV e XVI*, vol. 1 (documenti) (Napoli, etc.: Vecchi, 1884); Vito Vitale,

*The diplomacy of Alfonso V of Aragon in the Balkans (1442–1458):  
The Uses of Human Resources*

The Aragon conflict with the Venetians in the early 1450s allowed Caccetta to enhance his personal status by developing some important private networks.<sup>39</sup> The first such network was his connection with the kingdom's most powerful administrators and nobility of the Neapolitan residential quarter (*seggio*) of Nido (1451–1452),<sup>40</sup> resulting in his knightly title of *miles*. This title eventually allowed him to attain the high post of a *regius consiliarius* and become part of the king's closest entourage, which, consequently, prompted further familial attachments to the core aristocracy of Naples' Nido quarter, such as the families Zurlo, Pignatelli, and Barille. Caccetta's other network was of a business character, stemming from his position as the master of the ports. Through this network, Caccetta kept under direct control all custom officers dealing with the commercial circulation and supplies going to and coming from the Balkans. He also controlled local traders of agricultural goods (cereals, salt, cheese) from the region's large farms (*massarie*) and those who handled the exchange of the strategic natural resources (metals such as steel and iron), all streaming through the kingdom's southern Italian ports to the Balkan lords,<sup>41</sup> thus turning his private strategic connections into a full-scale "customs' diplomacy."<sup>42</sup> Caccetta softly racketeered with many of the traders involved in this circulation by taking them under his "protection" while using their money to finance the supplies he

*Trani dagli Angioini agli Spagnoli: contributo alla storia civile e commerciale di Puglia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Bari: Vecchi, 1912), 109; 152; 175; 202–7; 601; 671–92; Gentile, "Lo Stato napoletano sotto Alfonso I d'Aragona," 36.

39 Other people from this network included the *castellanus* of Trani, Pietro Palagno (in 1436 maintaining 100 lances and 100 infantry troops in support of Alfonso) and Angelo Rocca, also from Trani, well-linked to various mercenary troops. See Vilia Speranza. "Edizione e studio di fonti per la storia della Puglia nel periodo di Alfonso Magnanimo." Ph.D. dissertation, Barcelona University, 2014, 221, cap. IX, 2,

40 Compared to all Aragon possessions, their importance did not exceed the measures of the bordering provinces to the south of the Apennines, yet for Alfonso's relations with the Balkan lords, he was certainly one of the crucial figures of the so called "doganal economy" and Alfonso's diplomacy.

41 The Custom house of Foggia was founded in 1447, largely coinciding with Alfonso's initiative to enforce diplomatic communications and exchange with the Balkans. Portulan masters were active also for the ports of Foggia, Trani, Manfredonia, Barletta, and Bari, all oriented around the traffic with the eastern side of the Adriatic. Sources for this period of the Dogana have not survived, hence these prosopographic data are highly important in the reconstruction of the first stages of the office. On the economy of the kingdom and modes of exchange, see Marino, *Pastoral Economics in the Kingdom of Naples*, and Sakellariou, *Southern Italy in the Late Middle Ages*.

42 This involved him in the control of the contributions for the ports and import-export taxes. See *Fonti Aragonesi*, vol. 1, 91–98, about traders who paid loans controlled by the creditors.

organized for the Balkans, giving his protégées, in return, access to the lower positions in the customs' office.<sup>43</sup> One of his favorites was Catalan merchant Dalmatino Fenoles (*Dalmau Fenoses*),<sup>44</sup> who, in November 1453, Caccetta ordered be supplied with luxurious materials by Ragusan diplomat Junius Gradić, then in the service of the Serbian “Kralis” (Despot George Branković, 1427–1456).<sup>45</sup> Following a number of several other similar favors, Fenoles was granted a post in the local royal administration, ultimately ending up at the high position of the kingdom's treasurer.<sup>46</sup> The ascent of *Michael Freperios* and *Michael Caretefa* was similar. They were both required by Caccetta in 1451–1452 to supply ten galleys of the Neapolitan royal admiral, Bernardo Villamarin (*Bernat Villamari*), which went out on a “privateering campaign” against the Venetians and the Ottomans in the Adriatic and the Aegean.<sup>47</sup> One other merchant, a *Gaspare Fabricius*, likewise, dispatched two ships with grain to Constantinople in May 1450, to be later awarded, at Caccetta's intervention, with control of the kingdom's office of *rationum*.<sup>48</sup>

43 Ciuffreda, “Massari e mercanti di piazza,” 175–79.

44 As can be seen from Alfonso's letters to Constantine Palaiologos dated March 17, March 21, and April 2, 1453. Dalmau Fenoses was also recorded earlier (November 5, 1450) and just prior to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, for instance in Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3 (May 25, 1453), 573, for delivering grain supplies to the East. Usually, he seems to have operated with Gabriele Fabriquez and Gaspar Fabricius, who later became officers in charge with *officio rationis domus nostre* (“La politica,” XXVII: 3, 616). Del Treppo, *I mercanti catalani*. For Dalmau Fenoses, see *La calamità ambientali*, 371, n. 161. Fenoses' son Esteve seems to have remained on the Iberian Peninsula, taking care of the family's property there. Fenoses was mentioned by the Venetians as also trading in slaves from the East (Rhodes), Duran I Duelt, “De l'autonomia a la integració,” 80, n. 49.

45 On November 16, 1453, Alfonso was recorded as exchanging gifts with Junius Gradić, envoy of the Serbian *Kralis* (Despot George Branković, 1427–1456). Fenoles appeared in the position of treasurer since 1449, acting as an intermediary between tax collectors and the treasury, cf. Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 178, n. 149; on his visit to Flanders at the end of 1450 as the official of the treasury, carrying some secret correspondence with him, see Marinesco, “Les affaires commerciales en Flandre d'Alphonse V d'Aragon,” 33–48.

46 In 1453, May 24, p. 621, Fenoses and his companions, Gaspare Fabriquez were designaged as nobles.

47 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 305–7; 311. Villamarin was mentioned as the captain of the galleys as early as 1444. In campaigns like this one, the king was entitled to one fifth of the booty, *ibid.* 307, n. 96. In 1450, Villamarin established Aragon control over a small island of Castelorizo near Rhodes, from where the Aragon troops could raid the Syrian coast, watching, at the same time, the situation on Rhodes. In March 1453, Villamarin appeared again in the waters of the Ionian Sea, where he also had a diplomatic mission to accomplish and could contact Leonardo III Tocco, Zečević, *Tocco*, 114; 120, n. 154 For his service, he was later granted large farms (*massarie*) in southern Italy.

48 Cerone, “La politica,” XXVII: 3, 621. Similar activities were noted in Ciuffreda, “Massari e mercanti,” 171, for consul Dario di Florio, who indeed took part in the export of grain.

Following the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453 and Alfonso's plans to lead a crusading retaliation against the Ottomans, the circle of Alfonso's *homines novi* centred around Simone Caccetta was enlarged by some new members. Their background was in the military or the royal navy, and they had personal experience in challenging the Ottomans on the battlefield. For these services, like Caccetta's protégées, these men were granted privileges which allowed them to enter the royal administration. One of them, Johannes de Nava, a skilled ship patron, ended up as the supervisor of the royal chamber (camerlench); another, Comes of Molise Campobassa, regularly patrolled the waters around the Peloponnese in 1456, prompting Alfonso's idea of the "Ottoman antemurale," functioning in the Byzantine east to defend the Italian shores.<sup>49</sup> Another prominent favorite of the Aragon king was Alfonso's familiaris and creditor, *Bernal Vaquer*, who in May 1451 led an Aragon mission designed to install the Neapolitan troops in the Albanian capital Krujë.<sup>50</sup> Following this mission, he was granted the post of *portolano for Puglia* (subordinate to the *magister portulanus*), and he was put in charge and given immediate control of the ships circulating around the coast of the kingdom.<sup>51</sup> Vaquer originated from a military family which recruited its members for the Aragon missions in the east. Many of them were substantially rewarded for their services. One of them was Vaquer's brother Balthazar, captain of Molfetta, who commanded a galleon which patrolled the waters and remained ready to confront the Ottomans. He later received a post which controlled the customs' in Giovinazzo, which, following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, became one of the key entry posts for the Balkan refugees and news streaming to the realm from the East. In 1456, Vaquer's relative Angelo took over this post, and he later left it as part of his inheritance to his son Nardò, thus challenging the traditional practice according to which the control of these incomes belonged to the king. The positions of these Vaquers enabled them to establish direct links with the Greeks of the Aegean, and it is through these links that, following Alfonso's death in 1458 and the family's rebellion against the king's successor Ferrante, they arranged a refuge on Paphos for several of their kinsmen.

The participation of Alfonso's men in arms in the local customs and offices of rationals was closely surveyed by Caccetta. His control extended to officers

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49 In 1455, de Nava was ordered to do a similar thing as from Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 58, n. 17, to be entitled with the honorary title of a warrior-chamberlain.

50 Cerone, "La politica," XXVIII, 179–80 (May 31, 1450). The Vaquers, although ancestrally linked to the Iberian Peninsula, were in fact, from Cagliari.

51 Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples*, 189.

of a lesser rank, whom the king also directed to the East to perform confidential military observations and preparations. Among them was *Nunyo Mexia*, a soldier sent in winter 1455 to observe and estimate the defense resources of the Peloponnese and Albania.<sup>52</sup> Another one, *Rinaldo del Duca*, had to train and incite Albanians to launch an uprising in January 1456, for which task Caccetta provided him with 300 ducats from the royal treasury. Caccetta also surveyed the engagement of condottieri, foreign mercenaries who entered the royal army from all over Europe. The sources reveal among them an Italian named *Giovanni de Giotto*, German head of the ballisters *Gisert Rasfon*, and an Englishman, John of Newport. In August 1455, two of them, *Leonardo Besutoso* of Naples and *Jean Calala*, found themselves in Albania as the king's deputies, waiting to receive supplies from the kingdom. The supplies consisted of food and weapons, and they were delivered through Trani, as had already become usual practice. A galleon which reached these soldiers was fully loaded with fish, vegetables, water, and candles, all amounting to 830 ducats worth of cargo, thus marking the beginning of Alfonso's "crusade" on the sea. As usual, the supplies for the kingdom's forces on this occasion were arranged and closely monitored by Simone Caccetta, this time with finances coming from a new type of a rising favorite, Calabrian merchant Sirilo Gallinaro—not the Catalan, but, like him, originating from the local milieu.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

What do these prosopographic details tell us about the human resources which managed and sustained the king's relations with the Balkan lords? Most importantly, they show that the king's diplomacy did not rely on emissaries who were occasionally sent or received. Among the people on whom he depended, his secretaries and members of the nobility and clergy were the most apparent,

52 Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 185.

53 Cerone, "La politica," XXVIII: 1, 181–82 (September 25, 1455), mentioning gifts which *mesire xerillo gailinaro* had to carry with him and two other envoys to Albania (*John Claver* and *Miguel de Bellprato*). Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 206–206 (June–July 1456), also mentions him as working with *leonart bezutzzo* and *Sullo battifulla*, also sometimes involving a Thomas Atani, a Florentine trader, while paying taxes to Jean Calala. As noted in Cerone, "La politica," XVIII: 1, 200–201, and n. 1, since 1455, Gallinaro supplied Nava and Campobasso with arms (December 12, 1455–February 3, 1456), and he was also involved in supporting one other Albanian mission which appeared in Naples (April 23, 1457) asking for help. The Gallinaros were tied to Calabria; at the end of the eighteenth century, they were mentioned there as the supporters of the Sanfedisti movement against the Parthenopaeian Republic.

as it a characteristic element of medieval diplomatic practice. The king's diplomatic apparatus, instead, involved a far wider and more elaborate local network operating within the kingdom (most apparently in Puglia, which had immediate trading and navigation connections across the Adriatic), a group consisting primarily of his personal favorites, who traded wealth for political power—skillful banking Catalan entrepreneurs, but also some loyal commoners originating from southern Italy. By winning the favor of the king or his closest entourage through the funds they invested in his relations with the Balkan lords, these entrepreneuring *homines novi* basically entered the royal bureaucracy through a special form of corruption which converted their investments of capital to direct control of the kingdom's provincial resources, taxes, and customs, all directly used in the king's diplomatic activities and the related trade across the Adriatic. Coordinated and structured in detail by Simone Caccetta, the king's most prominent official involved in his Balkan affairs, this group also operated as a parallel structure which nominally controlled diplomatic exchange across the Adriatic for the king, directly augmenting Caccetta's interests and private funds, as well as the resources of other involved bankers, lower-ranked local traders, and military involved in this group through Caccetta, who thus used the king's aspirations in the Balkans for their own positioning in the royal administration of Puglia and the courtly society of Aragon Naples.

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