The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494-95

David Abulafia

THE FRENCH DESCENT INTO RENAISSANCE ITALY

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The French Descent into Renaissance Italy 1494-95

Antecedents and Effects

edited by

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Preface

Recent years have seen a proliferation of commemorative conferences marking the anniversary of the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the European discovery of America, all in 1492; or, more recently, the birth of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen at the end of 1194 has been celebrated by so many conferences and events throughout Sicily and the rest of Italy that the published collective programme is nearly an inch thick. It may thus seem surprising that an event in the history of southern Italy, indeed in the whole history of the peninsula and of Europe, as much debated as the French invasion of Italy in 1494-5 has bestirred little comment in 1994-5 and has given rise to no conferences on the scale of several of those concerned with the events of 1492. Perhaps, indeed, it is only wise not to allow the interests of historians to be guided by ephemeral commemorations. Such events (notably the anniversary of the end of the Second World War) have their significance in the public domain, but those concerned with more remote times may not reflect the predominant interest of historians in our own day.

Still, it is hard to forget the words of Francesco Guicciardini, who insisted on the contrast between the peace and prosperity, the 'desirable condition', 'happy state', 'tranquillity' of Italy around 1490 and the disastrous events of 1494, 'a most unhappy year for Italy, and truly the beginning of the years of wretchedness', marking the start of a lengthy series of invasions. The focus of this book is the first of the invasions, that of King Charles VIII of France, which culminated in the fall of Naples in February 1495 and the retreat out of Italy, itself marked by the much debated battle of Fornovo. Yet it will be seen from this book that Charles' invasion cannot simply be seen as the start of a cycle; it was also in many ways the end of another cycle, since the French king came into Italy as the heir to the claims of the house of Anjou-Provence, which had been persistently asserting its right to the throne of Naples, seized by the Aragonese in the 1440's. No excuse is thus needed for the presence in this volume of studies of the Angevin claim to Naples, nor of the reign of King Ferrante of Naples, even though he died a few months before Charles' invasion force began its long trek.

This book is the outcome of a feeling, in which I have been energetically supported by the contributors, that this would be a good moment to bring together a series of articles on aspects of the French invasion and its antecedents. The aim has quite deliberately been to combine survey articles, such as that on the links between the French crown and Italy before 1494, and more detailed studies of particular moments and issues. It is thus hoped that this book will be of value to those who are in need of an introduction to the intricate complexities of Italian diplomacy in the late fifteenth century, while it is also intended to satisfy those wishing to see some of the results of modern research in this arena. It has recently been observed by George Holmes that a particular strength of modern British historiography of Renaissance Italy has been the study of the political history of Quattrocento Italy, and this area is well represented; but at the same time efforts have been made to include contributions on the cultural and institutional history of the period, and a special welcome is also extended to several distinguished French, Italian and American contributors. Another aim has been to represent Milan, Naples and a few lesser centres rather more fully than has been the case in several collections of essays about Italy in this period, where an understandably heavy emphasis has been laid on Florence, Venice and the papacy, though these too are represented by important contributions. Fortunately, too, the appearance in 1994 of Riccardo Fubini's magisterial collection of essays on *Italia Quattrocentesca* (Milan: FrancoAngeli) has meant that a secure guide to the diplomatic position of Florence within late fifteenth-century Italy is now readily at hand.

With the intention of making this book into a research tool of permanent value, a lengthy appendix has been included containing an index to the remarkable collection of microfilms at the Sterling Library, Yale University. This collection was built up by Vincent Ilardi, whose name it rightly carries, and covers the materials for the history of Italian diplomacy in the archives of Italy and many other countries. It can be used not simply as an index to the Ilardi collection, but as a guide to the relevant archival material in Milan, Modena, Florence, the Vatican and many other places; it is a great pleasure to thank Professor Ilardi not merely for his kind permission (together with that of the Sterling Library) to use this material, but also for his enthusiasm from the earliest stages of the planning of this book, and for his many helpful suggestions. Sincere thanks are also due to Dr A.V. Antonovics and to the Society for Renaissance Studies for their role in the organisation of a colloquium in Cambridge devoted to the French invasion in March 1995; several of the contributors to this volume were present and spoke about either the work presented here or other themes. The colloquium and several expenses arising from the preparation of this book were supported financially by the Master and Fellows of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; and it was there that Mrs Edna Pilmer expertly prepared a complex manuscript for the press.

Sandra Smith translated Georges Peyronnet's article from the French; I am responsible for the translations from Italian of the articles by Giorgio Chittolini and Paolo Margaroli. The sketch maps of Italy in 1492 and of the Papal State were drawn by K.C. Jordan for *At the Court of the Borgia*, a selection from the diary of Johann Burchard edited and translated by Geoffrey Parker, and published by the Folio Society Ltd., London, to which I am very grateful for kind permission to reproduce copies here. John Smedley's level-headed support and advice as publisher has been invaluable throughout; without his help, this project could not have met the deadline of publication in the year that Naples fell to the French.

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List of abbreviations

Note: archival references, particularly those to material in Milan, reflect a variety of practices; some authors prefer to offer more detailed references than others. The aim here has been to ensure clarity rather than absolute consistency.

State archives

ASF	Archivio di Stato, Florence
ASFe	Archivio di Stato, Ferrara
ASMa	Archivio di Stato, Mantua
	AG Archivio Gonzaga
ASMi	Archivio di Stato, Milan
	SCI Sforzesco Carteggio Interno
	SPE Sforzesco Potenze Estere
ASMo	Archivio di Stato, Modena
	ASE Amb. Archivio Segreto Estense, Carteggio Ambasciatori
ASS	Archivio di Stato, Siena
ASV	Archivio di Stato, Venice

Other archives

AOrsini	Archivio Capitolino, Rome, Archivio Orsini

Maps and illustrations

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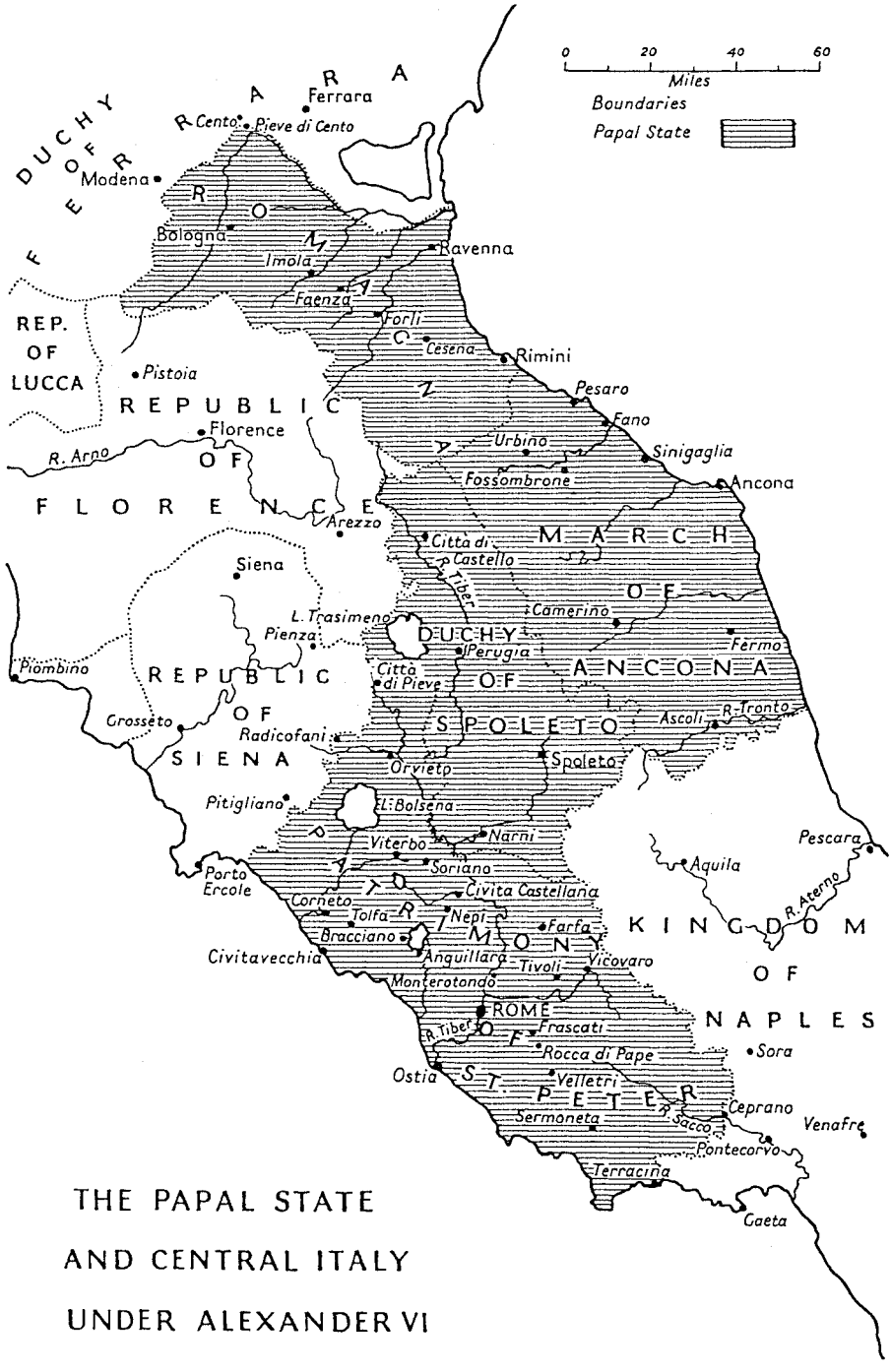
ITALY IN 1492
DUCHY OF SAVOY
DUCHY OF MILAN
Como
Milan
Monza
Vigevano
Casale
Tortona
Bormio
Mantua
Venice
REPUBLIC OF VENICE
DUCHY OF FERRARA
Ferrara
Fornova
Genoa
REP. OF GENOA
Sarzana
Pietrasanta
Pisa
Lucca
Bologna
Ravenna
Imola
Leghorn
Florence
REP. OF FLORENCE
Pesaro
Urbino
Ancona
Siena
REP. OF SIENA
Piombino
Elba
Perugia
Camerino
PAPAL STATE
Spoleto
Viterbo
Corsica (Genoese)
Civitavecchia
Rome
Ostia
Velletri
Aquila
Pescara
Sora
Venafre
Capua
Cajazzo
Aversa
Benevento (Papal)
Pozzuoli
Nola
Naples
Ischia
Atella
Bisceglia
Gravina
Altamura
Sardinia
KINGDOM OF NAPLES
Basilicata
Taranto
Calabria
Cosenza
Squillace
Palermo
Reggio
Sicily
Boundaries
Papal State
Spanish Possessions
Milanese Territory



THE PAPAL STATE
AND CENTRAL ITALY
UNDER ALEXANDER VI

Introduction: From Ferrante I to Charles VIII

David Abulafia

I

The French invasion of Italy under Charles VIII has acquired a special reputation as the start of a new era in Italian politics after the forty-year settlement that supposedly followed the Peace of Lodi in 1454.[1] The idea that this period was one of harmony and co-operation in the Italian peninsula has long been discounted; and yet the sense that Charles VIII's invasion was different in character and scale to previous French intervention in Italy has persisted, under the influence of Guicciardini's insistence that 1494 marked the beginning of an unending Italian tragedy, continuing through the reigns of Louis XII and Francis I of France and of Ferdinand II and Charles I of Spain. This collection of studies seeks to question such an assumption. It will be apparent that a clearer understanding of Charles' policies can only be gained by looking more closely at the intricate politics of the Italian states in the half century before the arrival of the French king. Particular emphasis has to be placed on the role of the kingdom of Naples and southern Italy (technically known as the *Regnum Sicilie citra Farum*, that is, the 'Kingdom of Sicily this side of the straits of Messina' or simply the *Regno*, the Kingdom par excellence); this kingdom, after all, was the first target of Charles VIII's armies, even though he aimed also to validate the traditional claim of the kings of Naples to Jerusalem by leading a crusade eastwards. Milan too, the source of an invitation to Charles VIII to enter Italy (as if any were needed), figures prominently in this volume; its relations with Naples are not merely particularly well documented, but they also were of signal importance in maintaining a rough balance within the peninsula in the late fifteenth century. These attempts to secure peace within Italy, though always to the best advantage of one's own state, were

[1] For the political condition of Italy in this period, see G. Pillinini, *Il sistema degli stati italiani 1454-1494* (Venice, 1970); P. Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali. Le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italica (1450-1455)* (Florence/Milan, 1992).

placed at risk by the intervention of outsiders. In particular, the career of the ruler of Anjou, Provence and Lorraine, *le bon roi* René, was punctuated by serious attempts to lay claim to the *Regno* and then to wrest it from its Aragonese rulers; René failed to understand that his own ambitions threatened to unsettle delicate power relations within Italy.[2] By stressing the antecedents, it becomes easier to answer the question why this invasion succeeded when earlier attempts by René's family to gain control of southern Italy failed.

The history of the French invasion is not merely one of French success. It is also one of the failure of the Aragonese dynasty in Naples.[3] Even when the French under Louis XII were finally expelled from southern Italy, this was achieved not by the Neapolitan branch of the house of Aragon, but by the Spanish branch under Ferdinand II, king of Aragon. The shifting loyalty of the south Italian barons and cities can be demonstrated throughout the fifteenth century. External interests, not least those of Venice, also sought to capitalise on troubles in the south to achieve advantage, a point made plain in Carol Kidwell's account of the continual attempts by the Venetians to gain lordship over the Apulian coastal towns. It is, indeed, essential to turn back to the long reign of Ferrante in order to explain Charles' ephemeral success in conquering Naples in 1495; even the moment of his accession contained the germ of his dynasty's defeat, as Milan, the papacy and other major powers deliberated on whether to sink or save the new king of Naples. Throughout the late fifteenth century, as studies in this volume by Vincent Ilardi, Giorgio Chittolini, David Chambers, Trevor Dean, Paolo Margaroli, Christine Shaw all make plain, the Milanese, the Mantuans, the Ferrarese, the Roman barons possessed their own specific agenda which determined whether, and for how long, they might be prepared to tolerate a French presence in Italy. The career of Ludovico il Moro as duke of Milan is clear testimony to the shifting interests and close calculation that underlay Italian support for Charles, when it was on offer.

This introductory chapter offers a short description of the invasion by Charles VIII, as a setting for more closely focussed studies of its antecedents and effects. However, to narrate the events of 1494-95 without paying attention to the career of the king of Naples who played so large a part in Italian politics and diplomacy before his death early in 1494 would mean making the familiar mistake of treating Charles VIII's invasion out of context: the fact that Ferrante I of Naples died early in 1494, and did not witness the tearing apart of his

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[2] The classic biography of René is that by A. Lecoy de la Marche, *Le roi René*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1875); it is not especially illuminating on his Italian expeditions, however. More recent lives include J. Levron, *Le bon roi René* (Paris, 1972); M. Miquel, *Quand le bon roi René chevauchait en Provence* (Paris, 1979), and many more popular studies which do not add anything of significance to Lecoy's work. There is clearly more to be done here.

[3] For an overview of this dynasty, see G. Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli*, vol. 1, *Il Mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese*, in the UTET Storia d'Italia (Turin, 1992).

kingdom, does not mean that he was an insignificant actor in the French-Aragonese confrontation that was looming at the end of his life.

II

King Ferrante or Ferdinand of Naples, whose long reign stretched from 1458 to 1494, early acquired a reputation for subtle diplomacy, duplicity and cruelty that has been vividly perpetuated in Jacob Burckhardt's characterisation of him in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*: 'it is certain that he was equalled in ferocity by none among the princes of his time', and yet he was 'recognised as one of the most powerful political minds of the day', who avoided all other vices in order to concentrate on the destruction of his political opponents. He enjoyed above all having his enemies near him, 'either in well-guarded prisons, or dead and embalmed, dressed in the costume which they wore in their lifetime. He would chuckle in talking of the captives with his friends, and made no secret whatever of his museum of mummies'.[4] It is essential therefore to stress that Burckhardt's presentation of Ferrante formed part of an argument concerning the legacy of Emperor Frederick II, whose imitation of oriental despotism was seen as a fundamental element in the creation of the state as a work of art; Ferrante thus emerges as his worthy successor in managing the economy, in restraining the feudal nobility and in setting a standard of royal cultural patronage.

This appalling reputation has its origins in the violent controversies that raged over the legitimacy of Ferrante's claim to the throne, and in the constant attempts of French princes to assert their own right to the kingdom of Naples. Yet the claim to rule of Ferrante could easily enough be faulted; as Alan Ryder shows in this book, the French king had a genuine claim to the throne of Naples which originated in the conquest of southern Italy, at papal behest, by Charles count of Anjou and Provence in 1266, and it was to Charles of Anjou that commentators such as Francesco Guicciardini, the great sixteenth-century Florentine historian, pointed when trying to explain what the French were doing in Italy. The discussion by Georges Peyronnet of French relations with Italy in this volume makes clear the exceptionally long history of French intervention in the peninsula, even if it was only with Charles VIII that a king of France actually led his own armies into Italy. The mid-fifteenth-century claimant René of Anjou-Provence was on more than one occasion widely accepted as ruler of the south Italian kingdom, and his chivalric order, the *Croissant*, became a haven for fugitive, dispossessed south Italian barons in search of a patron. Distinguished by its strict emphasis on the highest birth, the Order of the

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[4] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore, ed. P. Burke and P. Murray (Harmondsworth, 1990), 40-41.

Croissant stands in interesting comparison alongside Ferrante's Order of the Ermine, similarly an attempt to bond south Italian barons to their leader: an order in which there was understandably no such emphasis on unalloyed nobility of birth, since the king of Naples himself was a love-child.[5]

Ferrante was born in Valencia in about 1425, but raised in southern Italy and recognised as duke of Calabria, that is, royal heir, by the south Italian barons.[6] Ferrante's illegitimacy gave rise to hostile rumours that his real father was a Spanish Moor or a converted Jew; apart from anything else, the strong physical resemblance between Alfonso and Ferrante visible in their portraits gives the lie to this accusation, and his mother can almost certainly be identified as a Catalan gentlewoman, Gueraldona Carlina Reverdit.[7] Illegitimate birth was not an irremovable obstacle to political success in fifteenth-century Italy, as the career of any number of Italian *signori* will make plain. More problematic, however, was the suitability of a bastard as heir to a real throne. If there was one kingdom where precedents for kings of bastard origin existed, it was the *Regnum Sicilie*; in the late twelfth century the illegitimate Norman prince Tancred briefly ruled Sicily and southern Italy with papal approval, and the thirteenth-century bastard prince Manfred of Hohenstaufen was elected king in the face of stiff papal opposition.

Here salvation could be found in Rome. Not merely could the pope be invited to legitimise Ferrante, but the kingdom of Naples itself was a dependency of the Holy See: the crown of Naples was technically in the gift of the pope, despite a long history of refusal by the rulers of the south to countenance serious papal intervention in their succession plans; indeed, it was only because the pope chose him (and rejected Manfred) that Charles of Anjou had been invested with the kingdom that his fifteenth-century successors now also claimed.[8] This time such papal intervention would be crucial; yet the pope, Calixtus III Borgia, from Valencia, a close associate of Alfonso V, ignored his predecessors' acceptance of Ferrante as heir to the throne and obstinately refused to accept him as king of Naples, planning, so rumour insisted, to

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[5] M. Reynolds, 'René of Anjou, King of Sicily, and the Order of the *Croissant*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), 125-61 and, for the Ermine, D'A.J.D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown. The monarchical Orders of Knighthood in later medieval Europe, 1325-1520* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1987), 402-26, and also British Library Additional MS 28,628 for the statutes in Latin.

[6] There is no proper biography in any language of Ferrante, despite his agreed importance in Italian fifteenth-century politics, and despite the existence of biographies of his father, daughter, cousin, grandson, etc. A good introduction to the period is Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton, NJ, 1987). For the antecedents, see A. Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous* (Oxford, 1990).

[7] E. Pontieri, 'La giovinezza di Ferrante I d'Aragona', *Studi in onore di Riccardo Filangieri* (Naples, 1959), 531-601.

[8] Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers. A history of the Mediterranean world in the thirteenth century* (Cambridge, 1958).

proclaim one of his own nephews as ruler instead.[9] He seems to have gloried in the chance to act independently now that Alfonso was no longer alive, and he may, as a Valencian like Ferrante, have looked down on the king's mother and her family. It was only with the unexpected death of Calixtus late in 1458 and the election as pope of the great scholar Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini as Pope Pius II that Ferrante received the recognition he craved, largely because Pius was anxious to maintain the peace of Italy while planning a great crusade against the Turks, who had only recently seized Constantinople.[10] At the Council of Mantua in 1459 Pius was thus careful to keep open his channels of communication with the house of Anjou, since the pope's major interest at the Mantua meeting was the new crusade, which earned many promises but very little concrete help; however, he refused to bow to eloquent French demands at the congress for the recognition of René of Anjou's claim to Naples.[11] His dilemma was clear. If he promised support to the house of Anjou, he might expect greater assurances of aid from the French; but the price would surely be that disruption of Italy which would delay still further the crusade against the Turk.

In any case, Ferrante had effective replies to the French claim. In the first place, Ferrante had been nominated as king of Naples by his father Alfonso the Magnanimous, whose own rights to the south of Italy originated not simply in conquest but in the will of the profligate last Angevin ruler of Naples, Joanna II, who died in 1434. Duke René of Anjou saw the death of Alfonso as an opportunity simply to reassert the rights that had been denied him by the king of Aragon, and so the accession of Ferrante saw renewed assaults on Italy by Angevin armies.[12] Their first place of concentration was Genoa, which was fortunate for Ferrante since both the king of France and the duke of Milan possessed clashing claims to overlordship over Genoa, and there were justifiable fears that it could be used as a base from which a naval assault on the *Regno* would be launched. Thus Angevin interference in Genoa pushed Francesco

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[9] On Calixtus, see M. Mallett, *The Borgias. The rise and fall of a Renaissance dynasty* (2nd ed., London, 1971), 60-78, (3rd ed., Chicago, 1987), 67-89.

[10] The biographies of Ferrante by C.M. Ady, *Pius II* (London, 1913), and by R.J. Mitchell, *The laurels and the tiara* (London, 1962) both have rather little to say on Pius' relations with Ferrante, another example of the tendency to marginalise the history of southern Italy even when it is highly relevant to that of central and northern Italy as well. However, Pope Pius himself was more forthcoming: see his *Commentaries*, transl. F.A. Gragg, L.C. Gabel, *Smith College Studies in History*, vols. 22, 25, 30, 35, 43; abridged ed., *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope. The Commentaries of Pius II* (New York, 1959; London, 1960; new ed., with new pagination, as *Secret Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope, the Commentaries of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Pius II*, Folio Society, London, 1988).

[11] Joycelyne G. Russell, *Diplomats at Work. Three Renaissance Studies* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1992), 60-67.

[12] For a detailed study, see E. Nunziante, 'I primi anni di Ferrante I d'Aragona e l'invasione di Giovanni d'Angiò', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 17-23 (1892-98).

Sforza, duke of Milan, even more decisively into co-operation with Ferrante, who sent his own fleets (with all too little success) against Genoa and who tried to ensure that his cousin John (or Joan) II of Aragon would give him full naval support; it should be stressed that Francesco Sforza had earlier been well disposed to René of Anjou at the time of his own struggle with Alfonso V for Milan.[13] The danger that the French enemies of the house of Aragon would acquire an important naval base in northern Italy was one which remained a source of concern right up to the early sixteenth century.

As well as facing an external enemy, Ferrante faced internal foes who were only too glad to seize the opportunity offered by the renewed Angevin challenge to the house of Aragon. Several key barons, such as the Orsini Prince of Taranto, were reluctant from the start to recognise Ferrante as king; René's son Jean arrived in Italy and fostered revolt among the south Italian barons. Ferrante worked hard to contain this first baronial revolt, building close ties to the most important Italian princes, such as Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, to whose daughter Ippolita his own son Alfonso was betrothed (for her subsequent role, see the study in this volume by Evelyn Welch); Ferrante's persistent message was that he had no ambitions within Italy beyond the maintenance of the peace of the peninsula. Ferrante keenly realised that his major task was simply that of imposing order in southern Italy; unlike his father, Alfonso, he possessed no great empire in Spain and the Mediterranean which could offer him the means to dominate all of Italy. Several times Ferrante was on the verge of being destroyed; the battle of Sarno in July 1460 resulted in devastating defeat not far from Naples, from which Ferrante only recovered because the Angevins failed to follow up their advantage. The Angevin forces tended to withdraw into the Abruzzi, where they possessed some loyal allies; but the northernmost region of the *Regno* was not an ideal base from which to organise the conquest of Naples and the entire south. Moreover, the great Albanian military commander Skanderbeg, who spent much of his career fighting the Turks in his homeland, at the start of Ferrante's reign, saved the king from almost certain defeat at the hands of Jean d'Anjou, using his Albanian *stradiot* soldiers to wear away the opposition by constant attrition.[14] Two years later the tables were turned at the battle of Troia in August 1462, but all the same Jean d'Anjou was not seen off until 1465, after a joint Neapolitan and Aragonese fleet destroyed the Angevin navy.

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[13] See the comments in the article in this volume on the inception of Ferrante's reign. For the duke of Milan, see F. Catalano, *Francesco Sforza* (Milan, 1983), C. Santoro, *Gli Sforza* (2nd ed., Milan, 1992), while it is still worth referring to C.M. Ady, *A History of Milan under the Sforza* (London, 1907).

[14] The lack of an up-to-date study of Skanderbeg is surprising, not least in view of the reputation that he still possesses in Albania. See meanwhile Fan Noli, *George Castrioti Skanderbeg* (New York, 1947).

Revolt spelled treachery, and Ferrante was merciless to those who had stabbed him in the back. His treatment of the great mercenary captain Jacopo Piccinino is a famous example of how, when Ferrante believed he was performing a service for the peace of all of Italy, he earned instead obloquy. Piccinino had been seeking to carve out a principality for himself around Assisi, in the papal state, a position perilously close not merely to the borders of the kingdom of Naples but to other influential lordships, such as that of Sigismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini and that of Federigo da Montefeltro, count of Urbino, a very close ally of King Ferrante.[15] Frustrated in his ambition (partly because Ferrante himself failed to lend support for fear of damaging relations with the papacy), Piccinino served with his mercenaries in the Angevin armies that were attempting to unseat Ferrante; a recommendation of papal support for Piccinino was an ill-considered clause in the presentation of the French case against Ferrante at the Congress of Mantua. At the end of the war, in 1465, the victorious Ferrante invited Piccinino to his court in what was assumed to be an act of magnanimity. Nearly a month of feasting in honour of Piccinino, who had just married an illegitimate daughter of Ferrante's ally the duke of Milan, ended abruptly with the arrest of Piccinino, who then fell in suspicious circumstances out of a high window and died of his injuries. It was also a message to those south Italian barons who contemplated further resistance; if a mercenary captain from outside the kingdom was dispensable, how much more so were they.

The ambition of maintaining the peace of Italy was more easily proclaimed than achieved. Ferrante's persistent professions of friendship towards the other major powers within Italy, Sforza Milan, Venice, Medicean Florence and the papacy, were thrown off balance in 1478 when the enemies of Lorenzo de' Medici sought by assassination to put to an end the ascendancy of the Medici within Florence. The Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici, from which Lorenzo himself escaped, culminated in a joint campaign by Ferrante's son Alfonso duke of Calabria and the forces of Ferrante's grudging ally Pope Sixtus IV against Florence; under pressure from the Neapolitan armies, the Florentine government allowed Lorenzo de' Medici to travel to see Ferrante in Naples and to negotiate a peace. This was portrayed at the time, in a letter from Lorenzo to the government of Florence, as a heroic gesture by a private citizen of Florence who was well aware how capricious the king of Naples could be, and who could easily find himself sharing the fate of Jacopo Piccinino: 'if our adversaries aim only at me, they will have me in their power'.[16] Indeed, Machiavelli recounts that some of Lorenzo's enemies within Florence were

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[15] C.H. Clough, 'Federico da Montefeltro and the kings of Naples: a study in fifteenth-century survival', *Renaissance Studies*, 6 (1992), 113-72.

[16] Cited by C.M. Ady, *Lorenzo dei Medici and Renaissance Florence* (London, 1955), 76.

hoping Ferrante would treat him like Piccinino. Yet it is also plain that Lorenzo and Ferrante knew the time had come for peace; Ferrante drew honour from his generous treatment of so famous a foe as Lorenzo, while Florence was granted an equitable peace which also confirmed the Medicean ascendancy in the city. Ferrante began to regard Lorenzo as one of the chief guarantors of stability within Italy, constantly protesting his friendship and admiration for Lorenzo, even elevating him to the high office of Grand Chamberlain of the kingdom in 1483; in 1492, the king prophetically recognised the dangers to all Italy that followed from the death of Lorenzo.[17]

Yet the price of friendship for Florence was open papal enmity after years of tension beneath the surface; this break culminated in an ugly war between Naples, Florence and Milan on the one hand and Venice and the papacy on the other over control of Ferrara (1482-84), a territory that had long been a focus of disagreement between the north Italian states.[18] The conflict further generated discord within the Neapolitan kingdom, resulting in the outbreak of a second baronial revolt in 1485-86, directed in large measure against royal attempts to rein in the power of the nobility.[19] Duke Alfonso of Calabria was credited with plans to break the nobility by establishing direct royal control over a great swathe of territory around Naples. Faced with dispossession of lands and with increasing limitations on their political freedom, the nobles conspired to replace Ferrante and more particularly his heir Alfonso; an offer of the crown to Ferrante's wise and experienced brother Federigo or Frederick was flatly rejected; there was no obvious source of support among the Angevin claimants to Naples, for Good King René was dead and had been predeceased by his son Jean, with the result that his lands had soon passed into the hands of the French king, Louis XI. Content to have acquired Provence at long last, the 'Universal Spider' was reluctant to draw the French into potentially limitless conflicts within Italy, showing a degree of statesmanship that, arguably, his son Charles VIII was not to share. Yet there were still Angevin shadows over the *Regno*:

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[17] There are several invaluable intersecting studies of these events: H. Butters, 'Lorenzo and Naples', in G.C. Garfagnani, ed., *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo. Convegno internazionale di studi (Firenze, 9-13 giugno 1992)* (Florence, 1994), 143-51; H. Butters, 'Florence, Milan and the Barons' War (1485-1486)', in G.C. Garfagnani, ed., *Lorenzo de' Medici. Studi* (Florence, 1992), 281-308; H. Butters, 'Politics and diplomacy in late Quattrocento Italy: the case of the Barons' War (1485-1486)', in P. Denley and C. Elam, eds., *Florence and Italy. Renaissance Studies in honour of Nicolai Rubinstein* (London, 1988), 13-31. Useful material on Ferrante and Florence can also be found in Paula C. Clarke, *The Soderini and the Medici. Power and patronage in fifteenth-century Florence* (Oxford, 1991).

[18] Recent studies of this war and its aftermath include M. Mallett, 'Venice and the War of Ferrara, 1482-1484' and T. Dean, 'After the War of Ferrara: relations between Venice and Ercole d'Este, 1484-1505' both in D.S. Chambers, C.H. Clough, M.E. Mallett, eds., *War, culture and society in Renaissance Venice. Essays in honour of John Hale* (London, 1994), 57-72, 73-98.

[19] For this, see C. Porzio, *La congiura dei Baroni*, in various editions: Naples, 1964, Milan, 1965, Venosa, 1989, etc.

the father of the new pope, Innocent VIII, had actually fought for René of Anjou against the Aragonese; Innocent now eagerly supported the rebels.[20] Ferrante had been right that the stability of his own lands depended on the wider stability of the Italian peninsula. It was the papacy that had sanctioned his succession to the throne; and disputes with the Holy See, over border territories and over the payment of annual tribute by the king of Naples, had particularly serious consequences in a kingdom whose barons were suspicious of attempts at royal centralisation and of the king's fiscal policy. Yet what is particularly striking about the revolt is that the ringleaders included new men who had risen to prominence from relatively modest backgrounds only as a result of royal favour: the millionnaire Francesco Coppola, count of Sarno, and Antonello Petrucci, who served as royal secretary.

Apart from the pope, then, the rebels lacked really decisive external support, and 'how many legions has the pope?', as Stalin's famous question goes. Unable to crack royal power, the rebels decided to come to terms. They hoped that they had taught the king a lesson, and that government policy would be tailored to their needs. Ferrante appeared compliant. But in time honoured fashion, he destroyed the opposition by inviting his leading foes, supposedly forgiven, to a conciliatory marriage feast in honour of the son of the leading rebel, the count of Sarno, and Ferrante's own grand-daughter. In the midst of the feasting he arrested the count and his allies, later also arresting many other powerful noblemen who had resisted him, and reputedly murdering them and their families.

Ferrante's wish for stabilisation within Italy reflected wider Mediterranean concerns; there was simply no time for the luxury of internal squabbles when a powerful external threat to all Italy existed in the east. A few years before the second baronial rebellion, the arrival of a Turkish fleet at Otranto in 1480-81 served as a bitter reminder that the kingdom of Naples now lay on the edge of the Ottoman world. The capture of Otranto was followed by the massacre of many of its inhabitants; twelve thousand out of its population of twenty thousand (including all the males in the town) were reportedly put to death, and on one occasion eight hundred Otrantines were marched up a hill and executed for refusing to become Muslims.[21] But the fall of Otranto also proved that the Turks were very nearly able to shut the vital sea lanes down the Adriatic. The death of the sultan meant that the Turks suddenly lost interest in their Italian campaign; they were chased away by Alfonso of Calabria with the naval help of Ferrante's cousin Ferdinand king of Aragon, and Italy (including

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[20] E. Pontieri, *Venezia e il conflitto tra Ferrante I d'Aragona e Innocenzo VIII* (Naples, 1969), reprinting material published in the *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* in 1966-67.

[21] F. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, ed. W.C. Hickman, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton, NJ, 1978), 390-92.

even the irate Pope Sixtus IV) united for once in support of Ferrante; but the strategic issue of control of the Adriatic ports of the kingdom of Naples remained an important one throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a worry in particular to the Venetians (a point well illustrated in Carol Kidwell's contribution to this book). Concern with the Turkish threat is also visible in Charles VIII's insistence that it was his aim to use Naples as a base for a grand crusade for the recovery of Constantinople and Jerusalem. Ferrante's close political and cultural links to Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, who married his daughter Beatrice, must also be seen as part of a far-sighted wider strategy of building a vast barrier against the Ottomans in the Balkans and the Adriatic.[22] His longstanding attempts to secure the crown of Cyprus for his family, and even to win the favour of the Mamluk sultans of Egypt, is all surely part of the same grand scheme.[23] In this sense Ferrante was not entirely forgetful of his claim to be king of Jerusalem, a claim reiterated every time the royal armns were raised, carrying the distinctive cross of the kingdom of Jerusalem.

It was natural that, as an Aragonese prince, Ferrante should seek good relations with his Spanish cousins, who in any case controlled the neighbouring island of Sicily, which might also suffer badly if the Turks gained a stranglehold on the southern Adriatic and the Ionian Sea. Relations with Aragon were generally smooth, and there was little sense that Ferrante was in any way subordinate to his father's successors in Spain. Ferrante counted on Aragonese assistance against Jean d'Anjou in Genoa and off Ischia. Yet Ferrante was immune to one major feature of Spanish policy in these years. In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews from all their lands in Spain and Italy; there was a massive influx of Sicilian and Spanish Jews into the kingdom of Naples which Ferrante openly welcomed.[24] He saw the Jews as a valuable source of artisan skills, for many Spanish and Sicilian Jews were active in such crafts as cloth production; he also reveals, in his public documents, a genuine desire to protect the Jews in southern Italy from increasing persecution at the hands of their Christian neighbours.

Certainly Ferrante was keen to establish manufacturing industries in southern Italy, notably the silk industry; and he aimed to fit out a royal fleet whose galleys could reach as far afield as England, entering into a treaty with Edward IV in 1468. He attempted to limit the sale of the Catalan and Majorcan

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[22] On Beatrice, see the rather old-fashioned biography by Berzeviczy, of which an abridged Italian translation, Beatrice d'Aragona, is available in two editions (Milan, 1931 and 1974) which leave out most of the section on the Neapolitan background.

[23] M. Jacoviello, *Venezia e Napoli nel Quattrocento* (Naples, 1992); D. and I. Hunt, eds., *Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus* (London, 1989), 80-81, 92-3, 99, 106-7, 112, 119, 128-9.

[24] The literature on the expulsion of Spain is vast; as a brief starting point, see David Abulafia, *Spain and 1492. Unity and uniformity under Ferdinand and Isabella* (Headstart History Papers, Bangor, 1992).

cloths which were flooding into southern Italy, to give breathing space to local producers. Peace with Florence in 1479 brought with it handsome privileges for Florentine merchants, who offered invaluable financial help in the struggle against the Turks encamped at Otranto. There may be some validity in the suggestion that Ferrante was conducting an 'anti-feudal policy', that he saw the cities and their potential wealth as a powerful counterweight against the barons; he was, in a sense, a *roi bourgeois* anxious to create an alternative power base that did not depend on noble approval, a policy that would mark a break from his father's ready acceptance of the nobles as partners in government. Ferrante's close adviser Diomede Carafa (himself a great Neapolitan nobleman) wrote a tract on economic policy advising Ferrante to moderate taxes so that business could flourish unhampered, 'for a king cannot be poor to whose power wealthy men are subject'; Carafa insisted that 'where one just rule flourishes, there the cities flower and the riches of the citizens grow'. Moreover, 'money is struck not for the profit of the prince, but for ease of buying and selling, and for the advantage of the people'. Carafa thus moves beyond the straightforward fiscalism of earlier south Italian governments towards the enunciation of a liberal economic policy based on the principle that the crown will reap more benefits the less it intervenes through heavy taxation in the economic life of the kingdom. There are indeed signs that Carafa's ideals were put into practice under Ferrante, who also had the chance to benefit from growing population, expansion of the massive sheep flocks (a major source of revenue to the crown), and commercial recovery in the western Mediterranean. The fair of Salerno in 1478 is particularly well documented; there, north Italian businessmen congregated in sizeable numbers, and, although few southerners could compete with them in scale of business (except for Francesco Coppola, future count of Sarno), the fair provided a base for over two hundred south Italian merchants, and was a centre of exchange for cloths from Majorca, Languedoc, Florence and elsewhere; the impression is of a lively market, even though Ferrante's hopes of reviving manufactures within the *Regno* proved more difficult to achieve. In economic terms, the reign of Ferrante does not deserve the bad press it has traditionally received.[25]

Diomede Carafa was one of a group of distinguished men of letters who gathered at Ferrante's court. Alfonso the Magnanimous had already established a lively court in Naples, and under Ferrante the emphasis shifted slightly; Ferrante himself had been trained to a high pitch in law, and there was a shift towards what might be called more practical learning and away from the patronage of lyric poetry and the fine arts. But this was a movement of degree

[25] David Abulafia, 'The Crown and the economy under Ferrante I of Naples (1458-1494)', in T. Dean, C. Wickham, eds., *City and Countryside in late medieval and Renaissance Italy. Essays presented to Philip Jones* (London, 1990), 125-46.

only; Naples continued to attract artists of the stature of the painter Antonello da Messina and the sculptor Guido Mazzoni, whose life-size terracotta depiction of the entombment of Christ in the church of Monteoliveto in Naples incorporates portraits of the royal family. As Simon Pepper points out in his contribution to this volume, the participation of the Catalan Sagrera family of architects in Neapolitan building projects was particularly notable; it was Guillem Sagrera who built the extraordinary Exchange (*llonja* or *llotja*) in Palma de Mallorca, and the evidence this provides for Neapolitan cultural links to the Catalan world is of some interest. The sculptured triumphal gateway to the Castelnuovo in Naples was completed under Ferrante, who commisioned portrayals in this complex of his own escape from the rebellious barons and of his coronation; Duke Alfonso of Calabria initiated plans for the rebuilding of Naples which promised to make the town into a model city, furnished with fountains, streams and straight streets, which 'would, besides giving the city beautiful proportions, have turned it into the cleanest and most elegant in Europe', to cite the Neapolitan humanist Summonte, a figure who gave the Aragonese kings of Naples an unusually good press.[26] Important innovations in court music resulted from the arrival in Naples of Flemish composers such as the royal cantor Johannes Tinctoris, who spent twenty years at Ferrante's court, and whose influence lay not merely in his compositions and his performances, but also in his treatises on the art of music. Tinctoris, according to the major authority on Neapolitan Renaissance music, 'put Naples in the centre of the musical mainstream'; he was 'one of the seminal figures in Renaissance music theory'. Ferrante's policy was to offer salaries to the best musicians he could find in Europe. The humanist Raffaelle Brandolini wrote in about 1513 that

> Ferdinand pursued musical science with such affection that not only did he cultivate it himself most frequently in his private leisure but also attracted from all over Europe by means of most excellent rewards men most learned in this discipline.

Brandolini singles out for special praise the international team of singers, drawn from France, England, Germany and Spain, in the royal chapel, which contained two organs. Dance was much cultivated, under the eye of Giovanni Ambrosio da Pesaro, a converted Jew (also called Guglielmo Ebreo), who trained the royal princesses. Secular music also flourished, stimulated by the vigorous Italian poetry of Sannazaro and others.[27]

Distinguished literary figures at court included the eminent poet and administrator Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, who was active in the literary circle that still persists as the Accademia Pontaniana of Naples; Antonio Beccadelli, or Panormita, a reformed pornographer, wrote an elegant history of Ferrante's life

[26] On art, see G.L. Hersey, *The Aragonese arch at Naples* (New Haven, 1973), G.L. Hersey, *Alfonso II and the artistic renewal of Naples* (New Haven, 1969).

[27] A. Atlas, *Music at the Aragonese court of Naples* (Cambridge, 1985).

up to his assumption of the crown; the royal librarian Giovanni Brancati built up a splendid collection of books, and was himself the author of several political tracts and translations of key classical works. Ferrante took an interest in the new craft of printing, extending his protection to such figures as the immigrant German printer Sixtus Riessinger, and Naples became one of the major centres not merely for the printing of Latin and Italian works, but also for Hebrew printing. Given his legal interests, it is not surprsing that Ferrante stimulated the dormant university of Naples into new life, a policy which had a knock-on effect on demand for printed books. One of the early printed books to survive from Naples is Riessinger's edition, dated 1475, of the famous law-book of 1231 composed for Ferrante's predecessor as ruler and as patron of Naples University, Emperor Frederick II. In intellectual circles considerable thought was given to the problem how to adapt the predominantly civic republican ideals expressed in the political tracts of early fifteenth-century Florentine humanists to the political structure of a large Italian kingdom. Indeed, Naples became a magnet for Florentine intellectuals, with Ferrante himself earning elegant praise from Francesco Bandini in the 1470's on the grounds that he had brought justice, stability and prosperity to his kingdom at a time when Florence was lacking all three.[28]

Ferrante I died early in 1494 as the sound of French war drums began to be heard from across the Alps. The history of the French invasion and of the fall of the Neapolitan house of Aragon will be examined in a moment. What needs to be asserted here is that the destruction of the Aragonese dynasty resulted in a propaganda victory for Ferrante's enemies. He was illegitimate by birth; but so were many contemporary Italian rulers, and he had the benefit of papal sanction as they generally did not. He was duplicitous and cruel; but his enemies gave in equal kind; he was, after all, a contemporary of Louis XI and Richard III. Yet he also had ideals which were not simply self-centred: the preservation of peace within Italy, which only occasionally proved achievable; the stabilisation of his kingdom in the face of baronial power; the prosperity of his subjects. He was conscious enough of the precarious nature of south Italian politics not to allow himself, in imitation of his father, to be bewitched by vainglory and grandiose ambition; as has been seen, at the start of his reign he insisted in his letters to Francesco Sforza that he had one aim only: to exercise power within his south Italian inheritance, for unlike his father he was not, and had no real claim to be, a Mediterranean emperor controlling half a dozen kingdoms. His barons gave him little pause in which to dream of acquiring further lands, whether in Cyprus or within Italy itself. It was enough to manage to stay on the throne, which, after all, he did for nearly thirty-six years.

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[28] Bentley, *Politics and culture in Renaissance Naples*; Carol Kidwell, *Pontano. Poet and Prime Minister* (London, 1991), and other studies by the same author.

III

It has been seen that Ferrante's son Alfonso, duke of Calabria, was already exceedingly unpopular with some of the barons in the 1480's, so that he rather than his father appears to have been the primary focus of complaint during the Second Barons' War. His accession in 1494 was therefore less smooth than appearances suggested: the papal chronicler Burchard offers a glittering description of Alfonso's coronation in May (though Ferrante had died in January), at the hands of Cardinal Giovanni Borgia, whose uncle was Pope Alexander VI.[29] The alliance between the papacy and Naples seemed still to have some meaning; marriage alliances linked the Borgia family with the house of Aragon, and attached to them were assignments of grand titles and lands in the deep south of Italy. In reality, however, Pope Alexander VI was constantly wavering between the desirability of showing some friendship to France and the advantages of maintaining close influence over his vassal and neighbour the king of Naples.

So too in recent years other props of the Italian League had been seriously weakened. It has been seen that the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492 had already been recognised by Ferrante as a blow to the peace of Italy, for, despite Lorenzo's lack of a permanent official position at the head of Florence's government, his counsel had been crucial since 1479 in maintaining peace with Naples, and (as far as it was possible to do so) within Italy. More serious still was the erosion of Neapolitan influence at the court of Milan, first under Duke Galeazzo Maria (d. 1476), and eventually under Ludovico Sforza. The young duke Giangaleazzo Sforza was the husband to Ferrante's grand-daughter Isabella, and the ratification of their betrothal had at first restored the warmth of relations between Milan and Naples.[30] The reality was, however, that power in Milan was exercised by Giangaleazzo's uncle, Lodovico 'il Moro', 'the Moor', supposedly so called because of his swarthy complexion.[31] The Neapolitans were aware of his standing at the Milanese court, and recognised his succession to the Sforza duchy of Bari; and he took as wife Beatrice d'Este, a much loved grand-daughter of Ferrante, who had been brought up at the Neapolitan court (though she was not actually Ludovico's first choice).[32] It hardly seemed likely, though, that Ludovico would turn into an enemy of the house of Aragon, and

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[29] G. Parker, trans., *At the Court of the Borgia being an account of the reign of Pope Alexander VI written by his Master of Ceremonies Johann Burchard* (Folio Society, London, 1963), 70-81; original ed. Johanni Burchardi, *Liber Notarum ab anno 1483 usque ad anno 1506*, ed. E. Celani, *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, ser. 2 (Città di Castello, 1906), 2 vols.

[30] Ady. *History of Milan*, 126.

[31] F. Catalano, *Ludovico il Moro* (Milan, 1985).

[32] With characteristic aplomb, Maria Bellonci describes her life in 'Beatrice and Isabella d'Este', in J.H. Plumb, ed., *Renaissance profiles* (New York, 1965), 139-56.

yet all this was insufficient inducement for the retention of his loyalty in the 1490's.[33] It was Ludovico who saw in the arrival of French armies a chance to bolster his position in Milan, to counter Neapolitan influence in the peninsula, and, no less urgently, to fend off Venice's attempts to secure its influence in the cities of the Lombard plain. In sum, Italy was the object of competition between two ruthless princes, the king of Naples and Ludovico, and the solution adopted by the latter was to call in as arbiter of Italian affairs an outside agency, France.

The moment was a propitious one. The death of King Louis XI (1461-83) marked the end of a reign in which a firm emphasis had been placed on the consolidation of royal authority within France and along its immediate borders: the ending of the hundred year long conflict with England, the resolution of difficulties with the Valois dukes of Burgundy, past arbiters of Anglo-French relations, the assertion of French interests in Provence and Roussillon, all were sizeable objectives in themselves, whether or not Louis 'always loathed everything Italian', as the great sixteenth-century Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini tendentiously asserted.[34] Louis did, however, mediate when appropriate in the affairs of Italy, helping to broker peace between Naples, Florence and Milan in 1479.[35] Despite shocking Italians with his earthy allusions to the doubtful parentage of King Ferrante, and supporting Florence when it was threatened by Ferrante, Louis had the political acuteness to realise that he would gain nothing from further instability in the peninsula. He was even prepared to lease the city of Genoa to Milan, putting an end by an imaginative compromise to the bitter dispute, itself largely fuelled by factionalism within Genoa, that had soured relations between Milan and France at the start of his reign, and that had offered the Angevins a jumping-off point for an invasion of the south of Italy. Louis was certainly not prepared to let René of Anjou mould his Italian policies, though he seized the opportunity on René's death to incorporate Provence into the French realm for the first time in the county's history.[36]

By contrast, Louis' son Charles VIII has generally been portrayed as an enthusiastic devourer of historical romances, who shared with his father a direct and passionate piety, but who looked beyond France to redeem Christendom as

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[33] The Sforza duchy of Bari has long attracted attention. See L. Pepe, *Storia della successione degli Sforzeschi negli stati di Puglia e Calabria* (Bari, 1900); N. Ferorelli, 'Il ducato di Bari sotto Sforza Maria Sforza e Ludovico il Moro', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 41 (1914), 389-468; cf. the review of Pepe's book by L. Rollone in the same journal, 29 (1902), 412-22. Vito A. Melchiorre, *Il ducato sforzesco di Bari* (Bari, 1990), is stronger on the sixteenth century.

[34] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 4. (Citations in this chapter are from the translation by C. Grayson, ed. J.R. Hale, *History of Italy and History of Florence* (Chalfont St Giles, 1964).)

[35] P.M. Kendall, *Louis XI* (London, 1971), 417-18.

[36] R. Duchêne, *La Provence devient française* (Marseilles, 1986).

the new Charlemagne; dreaming of the recovery of Constantinople and Jerusalem, Charles VIII well knew that Naples was traditionally seen as the base from which a massive eastern crusade could best be launched.[37] Though mocked by his foes in his own lifetime for his dwarfish stature and his large head with its massive nose atop a skinny body, Charles was not in fact the idiot king who is often portrayed; his concerns were well established ones that had occupied generations of Capetian kings of France and of Angevin kings of Naples, and which seemed to have gained rather than lessened in urgency now that the Turk was knocking on the gates of western Europe, having, indeed, overwhelmed Otranto in 1480-81. The absorption of most of René of Anjou's claims brought Charles the title to Jerusalem and Sicily (i.e. Naples), and so his plans for the conquest of southern Italy were not an end in themselves, but part of a fantastic strategy aiming to wrest the Mediterranean from the Turks and the Mamluks. Lord already of Brittany, through his marriage to the heiress to this previously autonomous territory, Charles seemed to have all France in his grasp. His father had created a French realm that stretched across the whole landmass between the Atlantic, the Pyrenees, the Alps and the western Rhineland; it was to be his task to create a French empire that stretched across all Christendom. As Guicciardini says:

> Charles was not at all unwilling to attempt to acquire by force the Kingdom of Naples as his own rightful property. The idea had been with him almost instinctively since childhood, and had been nourished by the encouragement of certain people who were very close to him. They filled him up with vain ideas and made him believe this was an opportunity to surpass the glory of his predecessors, as, once he had conquered the kingdom of Naples, he could easily defeat the empire of the Turks.[38]

It was on these sentiments that Ludovico Sforza could play, in trying to defend himself against the imagined threat to his authority posed by the Aragonese in Naples. Yet it is a moot point whether Ludovico had in mind the massive expedition that actually reached Italy in 1494. Attuned to subtle diplomatic bargaining, Ludovico was in the first place seeking to use Charles as a mighty counterweight against his enemies in Italy, to secure his dubious claims to authority over Milan, and to enable Milan to withstand regional threats. There is no reason to suppose that he sought to make France the true master of Italy. Perhaps it was the threat of French aid, rather than its reality, which he proposed to use against his enemies.

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[37] The authoritative study of Charles VIII is Y. Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII. La jeunesse au pouvoir (1470-1495)* (Paris, 1975); a further, shorter biography by the same author is Y. Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII. Le vouloir et la destiné* (Paris, 1986); see also I. Cloulas, *Charles VIII et le mirage italien* (Paris, 1986); A. Denis, *Charles VIII et les italiens: histoire et mythe* (Geneva, 1979).

[38] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 4.

There is some reflection of these priorities in a grandiloquent speech that Guicciardini put into the mouth of Ludovico's ambassador to Charles; all the emphasis is placed on the glory that will accrue to Charles from a war against Naples, which will surely be far easier to accomplish than the wars of René of Anjou and Jean de Calabre, who had lacked resources and yet always came perilously near to destroying the Aragonese dynasty in Naples. But now 'it is God who leads you with such wonderful opportunities', while it is a matter of law that the house of France, as successor to that of Anjou, has a just claim to Naples, and a duty to remove from it the Catalan tyrants who oppress Charles' south Italian subjects.[39] This is thus a just war of liberation, whether of the victims of despotism in southern Italy or of the Church itself which has lost control of the holy places in the East. Yet the sub-text is plain: 'Ludovico would gain nothing but a just revenge against the intrigues and offences of the Catalans'. By insisting how little direct benefit this campaign would supposedly bring the master of Milan, Ludovico's ambassador was attempting to by-pass Ludovico's real concern to establish himself more securely in Milan. And not surprisingly opinion at the French court was sharply divided. The longstanding presence of south Italian exiles at court helped stimulate belief in the justice of the enterprise. Was Ludovico any more to be trusted than the other Italian princes? The reality was that the rulers of Milan had shifted back and forth in and out of friendship with Naples, while the expedition would undoubtedly cost a vast fortune. How would the conquered area be secured in the long term? To opponents of the scheme, the risks were over-riding.

Nor were Ludovico's protestations of friendship towards France fully supported by his actions. In his dealings with Ferrante or Alfonso and with Piero de' Medici, Ludovico tried to present himself as yet another potential victim of French aggression, arguing that he had little choice but to appear to co-operate with Charles VIII, in the light of the ancient alliance binding France and Milan, and in view of his wish to hold on to Genoa:

> Sforza, in his usual way, ingeniously fed Alfonso with various hopes, but gave him to understand that he was forced to proceed with the greatest skill and care so that the war planned against others should not begin against himself.[40]

At this time Ludovico's primary aim seems to have been to secure his investiture as duke of Milan, setting Giangaleazzo to one side, and this meant careful negotiation not with the French king but with the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. In other words, Ludovico's aims were not the resolution of an Italian issue, the claim to Naples, but of his own status as lord of Milan.

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[39] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 4.
[40] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 6.

The pope too sought to play off the different sides, negotiating with France and Naples, offering tentative promises, though agreeing in secret that he would defend Naples if Ferrante would defend the papal states. It has been seen that after Ferrante's death the coronation of Alfonso did not take place at once; yet it did occur, and with considerable splendour, while Alexander insisted that he would not grant the kingdom of Naples to Charles until the legal rights of the French king and his rivals had been properly investigated, which was a neat way of evading the whole issue: since Charles claimed the kingdom by right of inheritance, and Alexander claimed the right to dispose of the kingdom as its overlord, the pope had clearly resolved to wait and see what the outcome of a French invasion would be. What made the complex diplomatic exchanges more urgent was a growing awareness that Charles VIII was finalising his plans. The potential trouble spot in the south-west of his realm was Roussillon, Catalan territory occupied by Louis XI but now returned to the king of Aragon without tangible benefit to the French; this act has traditionally been seen as an attempt to ensure that Ferdinand the Catholic would not interfere in Charles' Italian plans.[41] So too there were overtures to the Holy Roman Emperor, who had ancient rights in northern Italy, and with whom there were substantial past differences over control of the remnants of the former Valois duchy of Burgundy after the death in battle of Charles the Bold at Nancy (1477).

These developments, especially in the highly influential interpretation of Guicciardini, should not be allowed to mask the similarity between what was happening in 1492-94 and what had happened on many an occasion earlier in the fifteenth century: Italy once again faced a French army, though this time it was to be a royal army backed by substantially greater resources than the Angevins had ever been able to mobilise. At the time of the accession of Ferrante, a constant issue had been the presence in Italy, whether at Genoa or in the south, of *li franzisi*, the French; the need to expel them for the sake of the peace of Italy was a constant refrain of Ferrante's own letters to Francesco Sforza in Milan, and the Angevins were with some justice seen as the agents of Charles VII.

For Guicciardini, the arrival of French armies was the start of a series of calamities that transformed Italy from its 'happy state' of peace under Lorenzo and his contemporaries, into a battleground of foreign armies:

> Italy had never known such prosperity or such a desirable condition as that which it enjoyed in all tranquillity in the year 1490 and the years immediately before and after. For, all at peace and quietness, cultivated no less in the mountainous and sterile places than in the fertile regions and plains, knowing no other rule than that of its own people, Italy was not only rich in population, merchandise and wealth, but she was adorned to the highest degree by the magnificence of many princes, by the splendour of innumerable noble and beautiful cities, by the throne and majesty of religion; full

[41] J. Calmette, *La question des Pyrénées et la Marche d'Espagne au Moyen Age* (9th ed.,

> of men most able in the administration of public affairs, and of noble minds learned in every branch of study and versed in every worthy art and skill.[42]

This is the image of Renaissance Italy which has been handed down since his day, of a Laurentian peace fostered by Florence ('no little credit was due to the industry and virtue of Lorenzo de' Medici', Guicciardini insists); since Ferrante, the duke of Milan and Lorenzo concurred in seeking peace, the internal stability of Italy was to all intents secured. The breakdown of this peace made 1494 'a most unhappy year for Italy, and truly the beginning of years of wretchedness, because it opened the way for innumerable horrible calamities which later for various reasons affected a great part of the rest of the world'.[43] Most dramatically, new forms of warfare and new attitudes to the fighting of war reached the peninsula; whereas in past times wars had cost little in blood, and had mainly consisted of tactical manoeuvres by condottiere captains, now horrible instruments arrived in Italy for the extermination of whole armies (the article in this volume by Simon Pepper expertly addresses this whole question).[44] Guicciardini romanticises the nature of combat before 1494, just as he exaggerates the degree of peace achieved in the aftermath of the Peace of Lodi of 1454; the War of Ferrara is ample testimony to the tensions that persisted within Italy in the 1480's. Yet a delicate balance had been achieved; it was also under new strains on the eve of the French invasion. Thus Pope Alexander and Ferrante fell out on the eve of the king's death over control of several castles in the Roman countryside, and factionalism within the College of Cardinals threatened to disrupt papal-Neapolitan relations; the decision by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, bitterest rival to the Borgias, to join the French court further complicated the pope's reactions.[45] News of French invasion plans posed a quandary for Florence; Piero de' Medici, whose hand was much less firm than that of Lorenzo, had to balance the interests of Florentine trade in France against Neapolitan demands for active support against the French. Venice too had to think hard about its stance, and, not untypically, refused to take sides despite being bombarded with pleading messages from both France and Naples; the argument for neutrality was the unsurprising one that the Turk was so serious a threat in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean (raiding, in fact, as far as Venetian territories in north-eastern Italy) that Venice could not allow herself to be sucked into peninsular rivalries.

The obvious first step in resistance against the French had to be a naval victory off Genoa which would block French access into the peninsula and

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Paris, 1947).

[42] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 1.

[43] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 6.

[44] See the classic study by F.L. Taylor, *The art of war in Italy 1494-1529* (Cambridge, 1921, repr. London, 1993).

[45] See for this figure Christine Shaw, *Julius II. The warrior pope* (Oxford, 1993).

prevent the French from landing their field and siege artillery, much of it reportedly of types as yet unknown in Italy. Two attempts by Alfonso's brother Federigo to gain a foothold on the Genoese coast met with failure. The way was thus clear for a French army to move south; the French were at Asti in early September 1494, and nothing seemed to stand in their way as they steadily progressed southwards. It was a large army, containing many of the feared Swiss infantrymen, as well as impressive machines, and yet 'it was not the number but the calibre' of the troops that made the army so fearsome, according to Guicciardini.[46] Close discipline and effective battle tactics compounded the threat, whereas Italian troops led by mercenary captains were famed rather for their fickleness and lack of commitment to a great cause. Military might was bolstered by political successes: the French king made a courtesy call on Duke Giangaleazzo of Milan who was lying grievously ill at Pavia, either (it was said) because of immoderate sexual intercourse or because his dear uncle was poisoning him. There is in fact no reason to suppose he was murdered. In Pavia, Giangaleazzo's wife, the Neapolitan princess Isabella, threw herself in tears at the French king's feet, imploring him to show mercy to the house of Aragon; Charles was apparently much moved by the young princess' pleas, but insisted that work begun must be brought to an end.[47] In the next few days, news came that Giangaleazzo had died, leaving a small son as heir; it was not too difficult for Ludovico to persuade the ducal council to recognise himself as duke in view of the current emergency. So Ludovico had secured what he sought. In a sense, he now had little need of the French king, though his investiture by Charles with the lordship of Genoa a few weeks later was a welcome boost to his power, even if it had to be paid for handsomely in cash. Ludovico began to fall out with Charles over small territorial questions arising from control of the minor coastal towns of southern Liguria and northern Tuscany, and this growing unease, or rather sense that Charles was not an agent of Milan but a power in his own right, made Ludovico well aware that he had unleashed in Italy forces that were beyond his own control. So too in Florence Piero de' Medici was thrown into panic, and there were some skirmishes with French troops; Piero seems to have dreamed of repeating his father's success by hurrying to Naples and reinforcing the pact with the Aragonese, but he softened completely once brought into Charles' presence. As a result of exposure to Charles' potent charm, he found himself pledging 200,000 ducats as a loan towards French war expenses. Despite Florentine support for Charles, the citizens of the republic experienced a shock on discovering that Pisa, under their control for ninety years, had been regranted its liberty by the king. It was plain both that Piero de' Medici was unable to withstand Charles and that the price

[46] *History of Italy*, Book 1, cap. 11.
[47] On these events see, e.g., Cloulas, *Charles VIII*, 68-71.

paid for abandoning the Italian League was the danger that others would act as supreme arbiters of Florentine affairs. Piero was unable to hold on to power, and the Florentines managed to renegotiate terms with Charles without him, so that Pisa was simply held in gage by Charles until the end of the Neapolitan campaign. The political troubles that convulsed Florence as the Medici régime fell to pieces were to culminate in the radical reforms of Fra Girolamo Savonarola in the coming years.

Unable to hold the French away from Rome, Alfonso's son Ferrante duke of Calabria (generally known as Ferrandino) fell back with his troops, while Alexander VI also recognised that he could not withstand Charles' might. When the French king entered Rome, Alexander had to promise that the crown of Naples would eventually be his; he also handed over to him the Ottoman prince Jem, long held in detention in the west, thereby signifying that Charles must pursue the war against the Turk as soon as the affair of Naples had been settled.[48] Once the depths of winter had passed, all was ready for the final assault on Naples. Indeed, Alfonso II of Naples seemed to recognise the futility of resistance; obsessed with his past sins, he abdicated the crown, passing it on to Ferrandino (Ferrante II), and hurried in despair to Sicily, where his lived out his few remaining days behind the walls of a convent. This once famous military commander, whose experience of government stretched far back to his teens, when his father had appointed him his lieutenant during the war against Jean de Calabre, threw himself with pious passion into a life of deep religious devotion. He was well aware that he commanded fear rather than respect, and in abdicating he did not seek to hand his kingdom over to Charles but to grant his able and vigorous son a chance to win back the goodwill of his subjects, barons and townspeople alike.

Ferrandino's influence was whittled away by the mile as the French worked their way into the kingdom of Naples during February 1494. The Aragonese king proved unable to hold Capua, abandoned by the commander to whom he had entrusted this gateway into the kingdom. Retreating to Naples, Ferrandino recognised that he had no hope of withstanding the French, not just because of their might, but because of the defections which occurred day by day. He and his family, including his uncle Federigo, took ship for Ischia, hoping only that the Neapolitans would recognise before long that 'the natural arrogance of the French' (the words are Guicciardini's) would lead them some day to recall the house of Aragon.

So on 24 February 1495 Charles VIII solemnly entered Naples, having been greeted by the famed orator Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, long time adviser to the Aragonese rulers, who, like everyone else, had changed sides now that

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[48] *At the Court of the Borgia*, 90-120. The editor comments that his promise to crown Charles king of Naples 'without bringing harm to Alfonso' was hardly achievable.

French victory seemed inevitable.[49] Violence was largely contained, with an significant exception: the Jews became the scapegoats for the misfortunes of the *Regno*, and even before the French reached Naples the Jewish quarter was sacked by local Christians. The library of the famous Jewish refugee from the court of Spain, Don Isaac Abravanel, was one sad casualty of the disorders. Indeed, as royal power weakened, it was the Jews who found themselves most exposed, since they lived in southern Italy under the willing patronage of the crown. The arrival of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 and from Sicily in 1492-3 had exacerbated tensions, while complaints about rates of interest charged by Jewish (or indeed any other) moneylenders were legion. Charles VIII had enough understanding of the need for stability and public order to continue to protect the Jews, even though he had little experience of a people who were largely absent from France.[50] Overall, to judge from his surviving administrative acts, Charles tried to ensure that local methods of government, which had been so successful in ensuring both central control and the collection of handsome revenues, were perpetuated without major changes.[51] Guicciardini is surely very unfair when he says that Charles was content to leave the government of the south of Italy entirely to his advisers, 'who partly out of inability and partly out of avarice made a muddle of everything'.[52]

At the time of the conquest, at any rate, such problems were not yet visible. With Charles in Naples and Ferrandino in Ischia, most of the country fell away from the house of Aragon, though some coastal towns held out against the French: Tropea in Calabria and Otranto in Apulia appear to have declared for and then against the French king, though both were a long distance from Naples. Yet Charles' position was not as secure as his triumphal entry into Naples perhaps suggested; this was by far the biggest Italian state, and control of its further reaches had eluded many of his predecessors. A long stay would be necessary were the king to bond his new kingdom to the house of France. Attempts to persuade Ferrandino and his uncle (and heir apparent) Federigo to resign their claims to royal status and to hand over their extensive estates, in return for vast tracts of land in France, were met with firm but polite refusal: if God and the people of the kingdom had handed their kingdom to Charles, it was not for Ferrandino to stand in the way.[53] Charles assumed that he could solve the problems of his new kingdom by appointing a lieutenant (Gilbert de Montpensier), granting lands and office to faithful Italian allies, and then taking

[49] Kidwell, *Pontano*, 12-14 for the timing of Pontano's speech.

[50] N. Ferorelli, *Gli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana al secolo XVIII*, ed. F. Patroni Griffi (Napoli, 1990).

[51] O. Mastrojanni, 'Sommario degli atti della cancelleria di Carlo VIII a Napoli', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 20 (1895).

[52] *History of Italy*, Book 2, cap. 4.

[53] *History of Italy*, Book 2, cap. 3. This statement may, rather, reflect Guicciardini's views on the ability of men to alter their fate.

his leave. This was to underestimate first of all the residual if localised loyalty to Ferrandino, and second the growing concern of the north Italian powers that Charles' presence was generating more trouble than peace. Florence was appealing for help against the rebellious Pisans, who with some justice could complain that they had been promised liberty, and then denied it. The pope was strangely forgetful of his declared willingness to confer the kingdom of Naples on Charles; but, after all, he had said Charles could have Naples when he was Charles' somewhat unwilling host in Rome. The fall of Naples had not after all won Charles a vast number of powerful friends.

On May 20, shortly after a formal coronation in Naples and more eloquent speeches by Pontano, Charles left the *Regno* never to return. The return journey was to prove more dangerous than his descent into Italy. Old allies ganged up against him; the result of his victory had been to regenerate the Italian league, with Venice, Milan and minor Italian powers attempting to block the king's passage out of Italy. Whether this was entirely wise is a moot point. Some were then of the opinion that it was best simply to let him go over a 'silver bridge' out of Italy. When confronted by the Italian confederates at Fornovo close to the Appenines, on 6 July 1495, Charles' army acquitted itself well, and general opinion gives the French victory; but it was not so clear-cut a victory that the Italians could not claim it for themselves, nor did it change the new political reality, the abandonment by Sforza Milan of its French ally. Indeed, this was the signal for a return by the Aragonese to their south Italian lands, and Ferrandino was able to win some support from his relative and namesake Ferdinand the Catholic, king of Aragon, who supplied him with a few ships and men under the redoutable Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (though Ferdinand had his own ambitions in the region, and hoped at least to obtain Calabria for himself, if necessary from the French). Out of loyal bases in Calabria and Apulia, Aragonese-Neapolitan power began to expand northwards through the kingdom once again. Several Apulian towns were drawn under Venetian rule after Ferrandino pledged Trani, Brindisi, Otranto and Gallipoli to Venice in return for aid; Polignano, Mola and Monopoli were also acquired directly by Venice at this time, for the Most Serene Republic saw its chance to consolidate its hold over the shores of the Adriatic at a time when instability in southern Italy and Turkish advances in Albania and the Balkans generally threatened Venetian sea routes into the Mediterranean proper. Such concessions were worthwhile if the result was an Aragonese restoration. Ferrandino himself won praise for his energy and his bravery, though he was seen as a rash commander in the field, a criticism which was endorsed by a puzzled Gonzalo Fernández: 'he will make a decsion and later change from it, though it is good and advisable'. Nevertheless Ferrandino's career peaked in 1496 with his victorious return to Naples, after which he died still young; as with Giangaleazzo Sforza,

impish observers ascribed his death to excessive sexual activity. He was succeeded by Alfonso's brother, Federigo, who counts as the last Aragonese king of Naples.

Like Ferrandino, Charles VIII only lived a few more years, dying prematurely in 1498 when he cracked his large head against a low door jamb in one of his palaces. And, like Ferrandino, he had no direct male heir, and was succeeded instead by the duke of Orléans, as King Louis XII; Louis XI had done all he could to marginalise the house of Orléans, recognising in the future Louis XII a potential challenger to royal power.[54] Louis XII in fact enlarged the conflict in Italy as a result of his claims in northern as well as southern Italy; in many ways, it was with the succession of Louis, rather than with the invasion by Charles VIII, that the fortunes of Italy began to change decisively. In some respects, though not of course its massive scale, Charles VIII's invasion bears closer comparison with those of René of Anjou than historians have allowed for; the ephemeral nature of the conquest and the lack of long-term impact on the institutional, social and economic structure of southern Italy distinguish Charles VIII's brief period of rule from the long-lasting Spanish domination of the south that began in 1502. In particular, historians have laid too much emphasis on the first French invasion of 1494-95, too little on the second which began with Louis XII's attack on Milan in 1499, in vindication of claims by the house of Orléans to the duchy which Ludovico (by 1500 a captive in French hands) had earlier won for himself by means of his subtle political skills. It has been seen that these skills were in a sense so subtle that he nearly brought disaster on himself in 1494-95. Events from 1499 onwards followed a grander pattern than those a few years before: Ferdinand the Catholic entered into the secret Treaty of Granada of November 1500, partitioning the south of Italy between the French and the Spaniards, only to abandon it when it became obvious that he could have the whole of southern Italy for himself if he confronted the French; Federigo of Naples was pensioned off, and went to live in France; the last Aragonese claimant, Cardinal Louis of Aragon, was still insisting on his suitability as ruler of Naples in the mid-sixteenth century, but events had long ago left him and his family stranded.[55] In fact, after the death of Queen Isabella of Castile in 1504, Ferdinand of Aragon diverted much of his energy into rebuilding Aragonese fortunes in the western Mediterranean.

In a sense, then, it was Ferdinand II, rather than the Aragonese house of Naples, who was the political heir to Alfonso the Magnanimous, aiming to recreate a dominion stretching from the Pyrenees across the seas and islands to the straits of Otranto. Ferdinand of Aragon differed, too, from the Aragonese

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[54] F.J. Baumgartner, *Louis XII* (Stroud, Gloucestershire/New York, 1994) is the most recent life of this king; but see also B. Quilliet, *Louis XII père du peuple* (Paris, 1986).

[55] André Chastel, *Le cardinal Louis d'Aragon* (Paris, 1986).

kings of Naples in his resolve to purge southern Italy, as he had already purged Spain and Sicily, of Jews, though with the death of Isabella the fire sems to have gone out of his Jewish policy, and the last Jews only left Naples in 1541, long after his death. As with Alfonso, the lack of a direct heir compromised Ferdinand's many ambitions, yet the Italian and Mediterranean policies of Charles V (Carlos I of Spain) or of Francis I of France are incomprehensible without an awareness of the battle for southern Italy which had engaged princes of the house of Aragon and of the house of France since the thirteenth century.

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Part I
Antecedents of the French invasion of 1494-95

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The distant origins of the Italian wars: political relations between France and Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

Georges Peyronnet

Traditional historiography presents Charles VIII's expedition to Italy as the whim of a young King with rather vague ideas, haunted by the chivalrous visions inherited from the Middle Ages, intoxicated by the temptations of the Italian Renaissance, but incapable of understanding the true interests of France, which lay on her north-eastern borders. Such an interpretation is clearly anachronistic, dominated by the struggle which France had to sustain, first against the House of Habsburg, then against Germany, from the sixteenth century onwards. But the power of the Habsburgs was not so threatening during the reign of Charles VIII. As for the Mediterranean, it remained an important element, not only culturally and politically desirable, but also as the source of economic rivalry, even though the Portuguese were determined to find a new route to the Indies via the Atlantic, and the recent discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus aroused only the vaguest interest.[1]

On the other hand, the attention of the French princes was always focused on Italy, ever since the Crown Lands had acquired the Mediterranean through the incorporation of Languedoc, and since the younger brother of St Louis, Charles I of Anjou, had become count of Provence through marriage in 1246. From that point onwards, Italy was often to be a theatre for French intervention.

1. The first French interventions (from the end of the thirteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth century)

Although St Louis was at first reluctant to offer full support to the papacy in its struggle against Frederick II, the south Italian threat to the papal lands refused

[1] For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see G. Peyronnet's 'Aux Origines des Guerres d'Italie: la lutte entre la Couronne de France et d'Aragon pour la maîtrise de la Méditerranée occidentale', *Les Cahiers de Montpellier. Forces armées et politiques de défense*, 11 (1985).

to go away after the emperor's death in 1250. Thus when two French popes offered Charles of Anjou the opportunity of conquering the Kingdom of Sicily, St Louis allowed his brother to carry out this conquest in 1266-68. Charles was authoritarian, pragmatic and ambitious. He initiated an eastern policy by buying the crown of the kingdom of Jerusalem: Frederick II had possessed it earlier, but the kingdom was destroyed by the Egyptian Mamluks in 1291. Charles was more active in the Balkans, where he prepared an expedition with the aim of re-establishing his influence in the Latin Empire of Constantinople, founded in 1204, but reconquered in 1261 by the Greeks - the Greek Orthodox, schismatics in the eyes of the Westerners.

Southern Italy thus became the French bridgehead in the Mediterranean: St Louis had died in 1270, and his son Philip III allowed himself, in effect, to be dominated by his uncle Charles. Such a situation was worrying to the Crown of Aragon, which had already conquered the Balearic Islands in 1229, and whose merchants from Barcelona were extending their interests towards North Africa and Sicily. Peter III of Aragon, known as Peter 'the Great' - and rightly so - wished to cement this Catalan East-West axis: through marriage he acquired the rights of the Hohenstaufen over the kingdom of Sicily, gaining support among the Sicilians who had suffered from the authoritarianism of Charles of Anjou; the uprising of the Sicilian Vespers (1282) chased the Angevins out of Sicily, replacing them with Aragonese rule. The house of Anjou was never able to retake the island; it had lost an important strategic position and a source of grain supply, while the Aragonese took possession of Sardinia in 1323-4. Thus the long conflict between the house of Anjou and the house of Aragon had its roots far back in the thirteenth century.

2. *French intervention takes shape in northern Italy (first half of the fourteenth century)*[2]

At first, the French monarchy only supported the house of Anjou from afar. Philip III had been defeated in the attack he had launched against Catalonia and Peter III of Aragon in the hope of helping Charles of Anjou after the Sicilian Vespers. Philip the Fair was enmeshed in his battle against Pope Boniface VIII and his dispute with the king of England. He left it to his brother, Charles of Valois, who had a rather more adventurous outlook, to reply to Boniface VIII's call for help against the Ghibellines, supporters of the empire, and to wage war in Tuscany and Sicily, but without great results. Charles' son, Philip of Valois - the future Philip VI - was again called upon for help by Pope John XXII against

[2] For more details on what follows, see G. Peyronnet, 'Les relations politiques entre la France et l'Italie, principalement au XIVème et dans la première moitié du XVème s.', *Le Moyen Age*, 55 (1949), 301-42 and 56 (1950), 85-113.

the Ghibellines of Lombardy: he moved into Italy, but the plots of the Visconti, lords of Milan, led him to be recalled to France. These royal interventions were facilitated by the fact that the counts of Savoy, lords of Piedmont, played an important role at the French court, and so allowed the French troops to pass through their lands.

Once he had become King, Philip VI revealed himself to be much more audacious than his predecessors with regard to Italy. He negotiated with Pope John XXII for the right to occupy Parma, Modena and Reggio Emilia, which allowed the pontiff to guarantee his domination over these cities by placing French contingents there from 1322-30. And Philip VI bought the seigneury of Lucca in 1332; for him, this was the beginning of a more far-reaching enterprise in the Italian arena, since these events took place in the same year. But he was obliged to renounce both this seigneury and his future plans, for the Hundred Years War was under way by 1340. However, he had already acquired the allegiance of the republic of Genoa against England, and he bought the Dauphiné in 1349.[3]

The Valois dynasty's attraction to Italy was even stronger after the popes had settled in Avignon in 1309, though they still sought to maintain their authority in Italy, thanks to the support of the kings of France and Naples. John the Good, son and heir to Philip VI, continued to hold back the Ghibellines, having reached an agreement with Galeazzo Visconti, lord of Milan in 1360: it was Galeazzo who advanced the ransom money for John the Good, who had been held prisoner in England since his defeat at Poitiers (1356); and Galeazzo even obtained the hand of John the Good's daughter Isabella for his son, Giangaleazzo.

Charles V, son of John the Good, concentrated his efforts on reconquering the French provinces that had been won by the English. Yet at the same time, he supported the papacy, which had returned to Rome from Avignon in 1377. Moreover, Pope Gregory XI, a native Frenchman, wished to check the ambitions of Giangaleazzo Visconti, who had become duke of Milan: in 1375, the pope called for the aid of Duke Louis I of Anjou, brother of Charles V and founder of a second House of Anjou. Louis accepted, but on condition that the pope obtain for him the title of king of Lombardy from the emperor. This plan was never carried out, as Louis I preferred to attempt to acquire Provence and the kingdom of Naples - which was under the power of the first House of Anjou - through various matrimonial negotiations which threatened the king of

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[3] R. Cazelles, *La Société politique et la crise de la royauté sous Philippe de Valois* (Paris, 1958), 120.

Aragon, Peter IV, and which ended in an alliance with the Sardinian rebels (1377). But the rebels never enforced this agreement.[4]

3. Problems during the Great Western Schism (1378-1417)

At the end of his life, Charles V made a decision which had a great impact on relations between France and Italy. In April 1378, an Italian pope was elected, Urban VI. But his authoritarianism led a group of cardinals, a good number of whom were French, to elect another pope outside Rome in September 1378: Clement VII, who was related to the counts of Geneva. Charles V chose to recognise Clement VII.

This schism upset the whole of Europe: all of Italy recognised Urban VI, except the count of Savoy. Clement VII, quite naturally, turned towards the French monarchy, by again calling upon Louis I of Anjou, while continuing to respect the first house of Anjou which ruled in Naples. In addition, Clement VII tried to push Louis I back to northern Italy: the new pope, in 1379, promised Louis a 'Kingdom on the Adriatic' which would be carved out of the northern Church States, but which could not be joined to the kingdom of Naples.

These plans were spoiled by the fact that Clement VII had to take refuge in Avignon after being forced out of Italy. From that point on, he pressured the queen of Naples, Joanna I, to adopt Louis of Anjou, as she had no children: and she did so in 1380. The pope had been suzerain of the Kingdom 'of Sicily' since its foundation in 1130: following the death of Joanna I in 1382, Clement VII put her kingdom under the control of Louis of Anjou, but on condition that he would have no rights over any other territories belonging to the papacy. In 1381 in Rome, Urban VI had reacted by rejecting Joanna I. He placed a member of the younger branch of the house of Anjou on the throne - Charles III of Durazzo - as king 'of Sicily'. Charles seized Naples and subjugated the greater part of the kingdom: he was suspected of having Joanna I assassinated. Louis I assembled his powerful forces and went to Italy: certain Italian states gave him free passage; he waged war in the kingdom of Naples until his death in 1384.[5]

Clement VII had supported Louis of Anjou financially: but faced with the difficulties encountered by Louis, the Avignon pope turned towards northern Italy, where he had found another champion of the French. In 1387, the brother of Charles VI, Louis of Touraine (who was to become duke of Orléans in 1392), married Valentina Visconti, the daughter of Giangaleazzo, lord of Milan. One month after this marriage, Clement VII placed a large part of Romagna under

[4] C.-E. Labande, 'La politique méditerranéenne de Louis Ier d'Anjou et le rôle qu'y joua la Sardaigne' in *Atti del VI° Congresso Internazionale di Studi Sardi* (Cagliari, 1957), 10-23; repr. in C.-E. Labande, *Histoire de l'Europe occidentale, XIème-XIVème s.* (London, 1973).

[5] For more details, see G. Peyronnet, 'I Durazzeschi e Renato d'Angiò (1381-1442)', in *Storia di Napoli* (Naples, 1969), vol. 3, 335-436.

Louis' control. All that remained to be done was to conquer it. Moving the army by land proved to be more difficult than for Louis of Anjou, for Visconti's ambitions threatened the north of the Papal States. The sea route was safer; but the port of Genoa had to be secured.

From the twelfth century onwards, the Genoese republic had been torn apart by social factions and family feuds. This did not prevent this 'la Superba' from dominating the Mediterranean by eliminating Pisa and rivalling the Catalans. The republic had built a rich colonial empire with Corsica, several important islands in the Aegean Sea, trading posts on the western coast of Asia Minor, several islands in the Black Sea, as well as Constantinople. Such a coalition, which was economically powerful but without real political influence, aroused much envy, especially in the lord of Milan, for Genoa was the natural outlet to the sea for Lombardy. Giangaleazzo Visconti was plotting in Genoa, but a group of Genoese opponents asked for the protection of Charles VI, King of France, who reached his majority in 1392 but who went mad the very same year. The fact that the king was mad made him susceptible to contradictory influences: his wife, Isabella of Bavaria, pressured him to accept the Genoese proposals, for she was the granddaughter of the former lord of Milan, Bernabò Visconti, whom her nephew, Giangaleazzo, had had poisoned. Giangaleazzo now found the road from Milan to Genoa had been blocked. But it was still essential that the French conquer Genoa. Charles VII entrusted the military campaign to his brother Louis, who had become the duke of Orléans, since he considered Genoa the starting point in his conquest of the future Kingdom of Adria.

Giangaleazzo Visconti, brother-in-law of Louis d'Orléans, had just bought the title of duke of Milan from the Emperor (1395). And Louis had received the county of Asti as a dowry: lying between Piedmont and Lombardy, it was a good base for military operations in northern Italy. Giangaleazzo would have preferred to see Genoa governed by his son-in-law than by a representative of the king of France. However, in order to pursue his schemes in Genoa, Giangaleazzo might have perhaps preferred Louis to be satisfied with Savona, which Louis' troops had just captured in 1394: this port to the west of Genoa is the outlet of Piedmont to the sea, and had been under Genoese rule since the twelfth century. But the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, uncle of Charles VI, had taken the upper hand in the government of France, with the agreement of Queen Isabella. Louis d'Orléans had to abandon Savona and Genoa (1395). The Commune of Genoa then recognised the sovereignty of Charles VI (1396). In 1401, the King sent Marshal Boucicaut to govern Genoa: he was an experienced knight, a companion of du Guesclin, and he remained governor until 1409. His administration was harsh, but by appeasing the factions his severity promoted economic prosperity in Genoa, which was then able to

establish the Bank of St George, one of the most important such institutions in Italy. Thus France saw her influence in the Mediterranean become considerably extended; though she did not yet own Marseilles, she now dominated the Riviera, from Monaco to the isle of Elba, plus Corsica and the Genoese possessions in the East; Boucicaut waged war against Venice, Genoa's great rival in Cyprus, and even as far afield as Syria.

In the meantime, however, the second house of Anjou still had designs on the kingdom of Naples. Louis II of Anjou, son of Louis I, was only seven when his father died, but his lieutenants still opposed the Durazzeschi in the southern region, and ended up occupying Naples in 1387. Clement VII, in Avignon, crowned Louis king of Sicily (1389). Louis went to Naples in 1390, but the Durazzeschi continued their resistance, supported by the Roman pope, Boniface IX. And Louis saw the French deserting him more and more, as they were anxious to end the Great Schism by withdrawing their support from the pope of Avignon. Ladislas of Anjou-Durazzo, who had succeeded his father Charles III in 1386, recovered Naples in 1399. Louis II had to take refuge in Provence. Another of his attempts to gain power in central Italy, from 1409-11, was equally unsuccessful, for Louis was short of supplies and money; he returned to France where he died at Angers in 1417.

The French government then turned its attention once more towards northern Italy. It had two objectives: to thwart the ambitions of Giangaleazzo Visconti, whose dream was to found a kingdom of Italy, and to end the Great Schism. But these two goals were hindered by the rivalry between the duke of Burgundy and the duke of Orléans. Through his marriage, the former had inherited the county of Flanders, whose inhabitants supported the Roman pope; in addition, Duke Philip was pressing for another meeting of a General Council, along with the queen and the University of Paris. On the other side, Louis d'Orléans found himself alone in supporting the Avignon pope, Benedict XIII, a Spaniard and the successor of Clement VII, who had died in 1394. In 1398 Charles VI's government convinced the French Church to 'withdraw obedience' from Benedict XIII; deprived of the revenues owed to him by the French clergy, Benedict XIII was unable to support either Louis d'Orléans or Louis of Anjou.

During this time, Giangaleazzo Visconti continued to plot against France from Genoa. In addition, Charles VI's council met favourably the proposals of Florence for a treaty of alliance; in fact, Florence had just formed a coalition including several lords and cities from the Po Valley in order to prevent Giangaleazzo from gaining access to central Italy (1396). After several military reverses, a truce was agreed in 1398, but without the participation of the government of Charles VII, who was still under the influence of the queen and duke of Burgundy, both of whom were hostile to Milan. The death of Giangaleazzo in 1402 stabilised the conflict; but this was followed by a civil

war in Lombardy, stirred up by the conflicting desires of the three sons of Giangaleazzo and those of the condottieri.[6]

The evolution of the Great Schism continued to influence the course of French policy in Italy. Louis d'Orléans and Louis II of Anjou continued to support Benedict XIII, the pope of Avignon. After the French clergy withdrew obedience from Benedict XIII, he found himself blockaded in Avignon by the troops of Charles VI; in 1403, the two dukes Louis helped him to escape to Provence. Benedict XIII's supporters in the French Court managed to influence the French clergy to restore allegiance to him; so Benedict returned to Avignon. War then resumed in Lombardy between Louis d'Orléans, whose troops were based in Asti, and Filippo Maria Visconti, youngest son of Giangaleazzo, who had recently prevented his rivals from succeeding to the duchy of Milan. But once again the Burgundian faction pressed Charles VI to lean towards Milan: Boucicaut was sent to Genoa to aid Visconti (1404), who was thus able to hold his ground against his adversaries; at the same time, the governor of Genoa was occupying Pisa and Livorno, which the third son of Giangaleazzo had put up for sale. Boucicaut thus kept one step ahead of the Florentines by preventing them from reaching the sea; and even though the port of Pisa was beginning to silt up, the port of Livorno constituted a potential base for France. Nevertheless, Florence succeeded in buying Pisa in 1405; but Boucicaut retained Livorno.

In Lombardy, the war continued between the the rebel condottieri and the first two sons of Giangaleazzo - the third one had died. To prevent them from carving up the duchy of Milan which he considered his birthright, Louis d'Orléans applied pressure to the Visconti through the Count of Savoy and Boucicaut (1409). But the Genoese took advantage of the departure of their governor for Lombardy to stage an uprising: Boucicaut was unable to repress this revolt and was forced to return to France in 1410. French influence in Italy was therefore diminished. Louis d'Orléans had died in 1407, assassinated by the henchmen of John the Fearless, who had been duke of Burgundy since the death of his father Philip in 1404. Louis' son Charles was then nine years old. In 1412, the elder son of Giangaleazzo was also assassinated in Milan by conspirators who recognised his younger brother Filippo Maria as duke.

French influence became weaker and weaker as the Great Schism reached its end. John the Fearless, who was then in power in France, had wanted to follow his father's policy by declaring a new withdrawal of obedience from Benedict XIII (1408). After some final diplomatic reversals, the Great Schism was resolved by the Ecumenical Council of Constance in 1414, which deposed the pretenders in 1417, and elected an Italian as pope: Martin V, who was

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[6] For more precise details on these events, see N. Valeri, *I Capitani di ventura,* vol. 1, *Facino Cane* (Turin, s.d.), 55, and *L'Italie de la Renaissance*, ed. I. Cloulas (Paris, 1990), 29.

recognised by all of Christendom. The government of Charles VI now found itself paralysed by the civil war between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs - supporters of Charles d'Orléans, who had become the son-in-law of the High Constable Bernard d'Armagnac in 1410. The war began in 1411 and was aggravated by the Hundred Years' War in 1415: the king of England, Henry V, invaded France, destroyed Charles VI's army at Agincourt, near Calais, then took hold of Normandy. Charles d'Orléans, who had been taken prisoner at Agincourt, was not freed until 1440: his county of Asti had been disarmed. Burgundy then took sides with England after the assassination of John the Fearless by loyal supporters of the house of Orléans in 1419.

This complex period in the relations between France and Italy has disconcerted a good number of historians; one of them, who knows his subject extremely well, claims that French forays into Italy during the second half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century were nothing but an expression of 'blind rivalry', lacking in foresight, between the opposing clans.[7] However, more careful researchers had already distinguished several guiding principles amid the confusion.[8] Following the adventurous policies of Philip VI of Valois, whose dream was to continue the Crusades in the East, the French monarchy supported the Avignon popes, who were also obsessed by plans for Crusades. But the vicissitudes of the Hundred Years' War hindered the action of the royal government in Italy more and more. The madness of Charles VI increased these difficulties, for the King was subject to contradictory influences. But it was the combined effort of the queen and the dukes of Burgundy which prevailed; this helped the French princes' ventures in Italy - those of Anjou, Orléans - but by controlling them and assuring a hold on Genoa and its colonies, thus thwarting a Catalan thalassocracy. In this way, the French monarchy was led to institute a policy of equilibrium towards its Italian partners; its efforts to conclude the Great Schism, by distancing itself from the Avignon popes, reinforced this tendency towards a balanced commitment.

Circumstances were different for the less interested royal princes in northern Europe than for the house of Burgundy; Charles de Valois, Louis I and Louis II of Anjou, who had a stronger hold in Italy, dreamed of founding a principality there. And when the support of the French royalty and the papacy were removed, towards the beginning of the fifteenth century, the house of

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[7] M. De Boüard, *Les Origines des guerres d'Italie. La France et l'Italie au temps du Grand Schisme d'Occident* (Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 139, Paris, 1936), 17; this statement is based on A. Coville, *Les Cabochiens et l'Ordonnance de 1413* (Paris, 1888), 27 and 143.

[8] E. Jarry, *La Vie politique de Louis de France, duc d'Orléans (1372-1407)* (Paris, 1889), passim, and M. Thibaut, *Isabeau de Bavière, reine de France, la jeunesse, 1370-1405* (Paris, 1903), 39.

Anjou and the house of Orléans nevertheless continued to maintain their claims on Italy.

4. *Political relations between France and Italy during the reign of Charles VII (1422-61)*

a) The house of Anjou loses the kingdom of Naples

With regard to Italy, the new king was at first paralysed by the worsening of the Hundred Years' War: the Treaty of Troyes (1420) had awarded his crown to the king of England, and it was not until the intervention of Joan of Arc in 1429 that he was able to reverse the situation. During this time France lost Livorno, the only possession she had kept in Italy: Genoa sold it to Florence in 1421. In the same year, Genoa itself was conquered by the duke of Milan, who took advantage of the fact that Charles d'Orléans was in captivity to occupy the county of Asti in 1422: Charles VII, far from opposing this Milanese expansion, formed a defensive alliance with the Visconti in 1424, which allowed Charles to recruit mercenaries in Lombardy, where he purchased horses for combat whose quality was acknowledged throughout Europe.[9]

The Franco-Milanese alliance was formed for another reason: an important newcomer had arrived on the Italian scene - the king of Aragon, Alfonso V, called the Magnanimous owing to his taste for public acts of generosity. Of Castilian origin, he had inherited the crown of Aragon in 1416 after a succession crisis. Intelligent and ambitious, he understood that in order to dominate the Mediterranean his navy had to take Genoa, so he attacked Corsica in 1420. But just at that very moment, he was offered a more interesting proposition. The queen of Naples, Joanna II, sister of Ladislas of Anjou-Durazzo whom she had succeeded in 1414, moved from one favourite to another, but remained childless, and the kingdom was divided by innumerable rivalries. The French house of Anjou watched and waited: Louis II had died in 1417, but his elder son, Louis III, who was then 14 years old, took up his father's claims. In 1419 he sent emissaries to Pope Martin V, who convinced the Pope, suzerain of the kingdom of Naples, to excommunicate Joanna II by declaring that in the absence of heirs her Crown would return to Louis III. Louis III prepared an expedition to force Joanna II to accept this declaration. The queen saw no way out but to obtain the help of the king of Aragon by adopting him.

Alfonso V acted quickly: Genoa, which was still independent, supported Louis III, who had disembarked near Naples in 1420. Alfonso sent ships with

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[9] Du Fresne de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII* (Paris, 1881-84), vol. 1, 342 and vol. 2, 341-2.