MING CHINA IN VIETNAM AND VALOIS FRANCE IN ITALY:
POLITICAL ACTORS AND PUBLIC NARRATIVES
OF INVASION AND OCCUPATION
IN THE PREMODERN WORLD

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ABSTRACT

In 1406, the armies of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) invaded Dai Viet, or present-day Vietnam. Zhu Di, or the Yongle emperor (r. 1403-1424), ousted Ho Quy Ly (1336-1407?) of the Ho dynasty (1400-1407), leading to an occupation of twenty years. Nearly ninety years later in 1494, the French army invaded Naples in southern Italy. Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498) then ousted the Aragonese dynasty, all the while proposing to use Naples as a base from which to start a crusade against the Ottomans. Both conquests did not last long. The Vietnamese defeated their oppressors in 1427. A coalition of European powers forced the French regime back to France in 1495. The French continued to invade Italy until 1559.

Based on its comparison within a framework of narrative theory of the public narratives as presented by the Ming dynasty and French monarchy to justify their wars, this thesis shows that despite their geographical, contextual, political, and cultural differences, the Ming and French invasions possessed three major things in common and one disparity: (1) both the Ming emperor and the French kings utilized just war concepts rooted in ideological traditions in their public narratives; (2) these rulers relied on dubious historical claims to justify their wars; (3) internal and foreign ministers exerted tremendous influence on the creation of these wars; and (4) both narratives differed on the prevalence of prophecy, a recurring element in Italy, but not in China nor Vietnam.
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Finally, I thank my family and friends for encouraging and motivating me to finish this thesis. Particularly, I thank my parents who supported me financially. I could not have written this thesis without their help.
A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

On the periodization of this thesis, I follow some specific conventions. The timespan consists of the late fourteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. Historians and scholars refer to this era as the “late-medieval” to “renaissance” or “early modern” periods. However, these terms reflect European notions of history and apply poorly to Eastern conceptions of modernity. For example, while the early modern period for Europe may run from 1400-1800, the same developments associated with early modernity, such as global trade and technological achievements, occurred in different periods of Chinese history. Some scholars even propose an “early modern” history of China from 900-1912. Due to these inconsistencies, I discard “late-medieval,” “renaissance,” and “early modern” as labels for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

For those eras, I simply refer to a country’s dynastic era such as “X dynasty” or “X country name,” and characterize the period before 1800 as “premodern.” For example, I often refer to China as the “Ming dynasty” (1368-1644) or “Ming China,” France as “Valois France,” and Vietnam as “premodern Vietnam.” However, I preserve the terms of “ancient” and “medieval” to differentiate previous times from the fifteenth century on. I designate “ancient” China and Europe as everything before the ends of the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) and the Roman Empire (27 BCE-395 CE), respectively. On the other hand, when I use “medieval” or “Middle Ages,” I will only refer to Europe,
which ran approximately from 300-1300. In theory, the same term can apply to China from 220-900, but to keep clarity, I avoid this designation.

Geographical names remain a problem as well. “China” is a western or modern appellation. Chinese authors usually use the term zhongguo or middle kingdom. In imperial times, authors use dynastic names for China or “all under heaven” (tianxia). Nevertheless, “China” remains a useful term for the premodern territory consisting of modern-day China, so for the sake of simplification, “China,” “Chinese,” and “Ming” are interchangeable in this thesis. “Vietnam” and “Vietnamese” unfortunately are even more problematic than “China” or “Chinese.” These words are anachronistic because the polity known today as Vietnam adopted the term in the early nineteenth century. The Vietnamese actually referred to their state as Dai Viet (da yue), or Great Viet, but the Chinese called it “Annam” (annan), an ancient colonial designation meaning “pacified country.” To avoid political biases, I use both based on context. When I talk about a source from a Chinese point of view, I use “Annam.” When I address a Vietnamese source, I use “Dai Viet” or “Vietnam.” I apply the term “Vietnam” to talk about it generally whenever I refer to the premodern polity consisting of modern-day Vietnam and the word “Vietnamese” for its people.

I retain the concepts of France and French people to refer to the region of premodern France and its inhabitants from 1200-1600 in this thesis merely as a simplification. Although France’s borders were fluid at the time, it is easier just to use these labels to avoid confusion and stay consistent. Italy, on the other hand, requires some clarification. In the “renaissance” period, Italy was divided. As a result, I refer to different areas in Italy based on the city-state name, such as Florence or Milan. The most
difficulties come from southern Italy. From 1282-1816, a kingdom consisting of the Italian peninsula south of the Papal States possessed many different appellations such as Kingdom of Naples or the Kingdom of Sicily. Due to political divisions and reunifications in the past, I simply label this area as “Naples” or “Kingdom of Naples.”

Lastly, a few more concepts require some elucidation. This thesis considers Confucianism as a “religion” because of its role in East Asian history as a “system of beliefs.” For the terminology of territorial lands, this thesis normally uses “states” or “polities” for consistency and clarity. In regard to names of people, I adhere to a simple pattern: if X person belonged to Y modern “nationality,” then I call him or her by the name in that “nationality’s” language. For example, Vietnamese and Italian people retain Vietnamese and Italian names, respectively.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fifteenth century, two military occupations, one in Southeast Asia and the other in Western Europe, failed. In 1406, the armies of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) invaded Dai Viet or present-day Vietnam. Zhu Di, or the Yongle emperor (r. 1403-1424), ousted Ho Quy Ly (1336-1407?) of the Ho dynasty (1400-1407), leading to an occupation of twenty years. Nearly ninety years later in 1494, the French army of the Valois dynasty (1328-1589) invaded Naples in southern Italy. Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498) then ousted the Aragonese dynasty, all the while proposing to use Naples as a base from which to start a crusade against the Ottomans (1299-1922). Both conquests did not last long. The Vietnamese defeated their oppressors in 1427. A coalition of European powers forced the French regime back to France in 1495. The French continued to invade Italy until they signed the peace treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559 after suffering crushing defeats at the hands of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire (800-1806).

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1 Zhu Di was the personal name of the third Ming emperor, but the Chinese referred to him as the Yongle emperor. He also had several different imperial titles such as Ming Chengzu, Taizong, etc. Emperors tended to repeat previous reign period names, and books occasionally throw in a posthumous title as well, which gets confusing. To mitigate this problem, in this thesis well-known emperors such as Zhu Di retain their personal names, while lesser known emperors retain their reign period names. All emperors mentioned with reign period names get the definite article alongside them. Vietnamese emperors receive the same treatment.

On the surface, many differences existed between these events. For one, the Ming and French governments differed considerably in centralized authority, cultural backgrounds, and foreign relations. The Ming state possessed a full-fledged centralized state with a strong bureaucratic apparatus, while France had barely begun its path towards “absolutism.” Culturally, the Ming and French adhered to different ideologies in Confucianism and Christianity, respectively. On the global stage, the Ming dominated East Asia whereas the French contended with other strong powers. Neither regimes contacted each other yet via trade, diplomacy, or cultural exchange due to distant geographical constraints. Meaningful communication did not transpire until the Jesuit missions of the seventeenth century.3

However, these two invasions in the fifteenth century shared many striking similarities. Less than a hundred years separated the two events. Both the Ming and French invaded nearby lands, leading to occupations of territory for almost two decades (M: 1407-1428; F: 1499-1521). During these two occupations, a change of rulers occurred in China and France. The Chinese emperor and French kings never lived within their conquered territory. Finally, both occupations ended in exploitation and failure, with neither empires ever conquering these lands and converting them into provinces again.4 Aside from these historical parallels, even the historiographies of these two histories suggest more similarities.

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4 See Appendix A for a graphic on these parallels.
The literature on the Ming invasion of Vietnam focuses primarily on state formation. Particularly, historians and scholars such as John K. Whitmore, Li Tana, Sun Laichen, and Kenneth Swope argue that the occupation transferred centralizing tendencies to a Vietnamese government, allowing it to expand its territory. In particular, the Ming hastened the Vietnamese adoption of Neo-Confucian bureaucratic institutions and gunpowder technology, which led to rapid state building. Vietnam then conquered its neighbor Champa and became a major player in Southeast Asian politics.

Similarly, some of the literature on the Italian Wars also emphasizes the same themes. In regard to France, and Europe as a whole, historians such as Geoffrey Parker argue that the period from 1494-1559 marked a watershed in European state building. Drawing from social theorists such as Charles Tilly, scholars put forth the notion of a dialectical pattern where the state created wars that enhanced the government, which in turn led to more wars. During the French invasion of Italy, this process manifested in France’s handling of its fiscal situation. Expenses from war soared to a point where the French government began to create and sell offices as well as borrow heavily from

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merchants and banks to create revenue. The army and administration increased exponentially, which led to more venality and debt in order to manage the expanding bureaucracy. Thus, the French experienced the beginnings of modern state formation.

In addition, Parker and William McNeill assert that the proximity of European polities facilitated the spread of new military technologies, which promoted state building. They highlight the development of the *trace italienne*, an Italian “star” shaped fortress with walls that deflected cannonballs. This technology dialectically forced Europeans to develop better artillery and increase their armies, leading to stronger walls, and then into stronger firearms. As these states warred with each other using advanced gunpowder weaponry, their governments then grew more powerful as a result of the “war made states, states made war” dialectic.

These two historiographies show that these invasions represented times of momentous or evolutionary change. Something in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries indicated the occurrence of a transitional period. Both of these wars therefore deserve a comparative study since they resembled each other in so many different ways, even if the contexts remained dissimilar.

The Main Issues and Their Significance

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11 Historians disagree over whether this was actually a “revolution” or just a natural progression. Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe: Gunpowder, Technology, and Tactics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 158-64.
The central questions I ask here are, what compelled the Chinese and French to invade these lands and how did they justify it? What similarities or differences did these two invasions share? Answering these questions can help us understand better Chinese and French ideologies and motivations in empire building. By comparing Ming and Valois justifications, this study can reveal similar processes occurring in two different parts of the world in diachronic time.

This topic is important to the present day. How would the world look today if these two occupations had led to successful conversions of Vietnam and Italy into Chinese and French provinces, respectively? France never conquered Italy, and neither did China conquer Vietnam. Yet, France controls borderlands now such as Roussillon, Savoy, and Alsace-Lorraine. These once existed as independent polities, but when European countries vied bitterly for control over them, these states lost their autonomy and melded into France. Likewise, China today controls the contentious areas of Tibet and Xinjiang. While France has no border problems with its southern neighbor today, China still quarrels with hers over the South China Sea. Perhaps Italians would speak French today, or Vietnamese would speak Chinese if France and China remained in control of Italy and Vietnam, respectively. A comparison of these two premodern invasions can help us learn more about the historical precedents of Chinese and French current foreign policy.

Historiography of Global Comparisons

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This thesis is unique in the fact that nobody has ever compared these two invasions before. Few scholars have even compared Valois France and Ming China. Nevertheless, the trend in global history is moving towards a study such as this one, which started with the comparative histories of Europe and Asia. These studies proliferated over the last forty years based on the debate over the “Great Divergence,” or the moment when China declined and Europe became the primary mover in world history. Of the many thinkers who inspired this debate, the timeline of this historiography began with the assumptions of a great German sociologist: Max Weber (1864-1920).

Weber’s “Protestant work-ethic” thesis argued that Europeans were exceptional and advanced ahead of other civilizations due to a “spirit of capitalism,” a rational and efficient drive to accumulate wealth, a competitive factor China lacked. Therefore, Europe triumphed because of its unique culture, while China lagged behind due to dogmatic tradition. Weber’s thesis remains highly influential in modern scholarship on the Great Divergence. Many works still build upon the “Protestant work-ethic,” such as David Landes’ The Wealth and Poverty of Nations.

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From the 1980s to the 2010s, a new generation of global economic historians and scholars contested this Weberian paradigm. Their central question was how did the West pull away from the East, “winning” the geopolitical contest in the nineteenth century and proceeding to form the modern world order? A flurry of scholars conducted new research on this issue and found “surprising resemblances” in several aspects between China and Europe before the nineteenth century. Among these similarities included comparable patterns or processes of economic life such as same standards of living or pre-industrial production methods. Studies from Kenneth Pomeranz, Roy Bin Wong, Jack Goldstone, Jack Lee, Feng Wang, Dennis Flynn, and Andre Gunder Frank challenged the interpretation of social theorists who saw the moment of divergence occurring before the 1600s and instead argue that it happened from the 1750s to 1850s. Not all of these scholars agree with each other, but they all share one common theme: Europe suddenly and abruptly became the most dominant power in the nineteenth century, owing to fortune and contingency, such as possession of colonial resources.

Premodern Europe, therefore, seemed less culturally exceptional. It dominated the world because of luck, not unique qualities. Known as the “California School” of thought, so-named for its scholars who taught or researched at Californian universities at some point, this group drastically reoriented the debate towards finding similarities

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17 Pomeranz, The Great Divergence, 36-43.

between Europe and China. This methodology dispelled Eurocentric myths in global history and reinvigorated discussions about a dynamic East Asian world.

Although some scholars disagree with the “California School,” such as Peer Vries who criticizes the “Californians” for reducing European success down to luck and not addressing the differences in China’s administrative modalities with those of Europe, comparative historical research continued to focus on similarities. However, these studies still mainly concentrate on social science topics, such as Victor Lieberman’s influential *Strange Parallels*, which is concerned primarily with state formation, leaving out many other aspects of history.

Scholars ignore culture for two reasons. One, since these works came from social science historians, they generally were not interested in cultural approaches. Second, they deliberately reject cultural explanations for the “Great Divergence” to avoid any Eurocentric claim about something unique in European culture that allowed Europe to rise above other polities. A new trend developed therefore to tackle this gap in comparative history based on cultural history. Two innovative essays from Katherine Carlitz and Martin Powers attempt to conduct these studies based on approaches from literature and art scholarship.

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Carlitz compares England and China from 1500 to 1640 and analyzes discourses of chastity as they appeared in pornography during the printing boom. She finds that England and China, although not connected economically just yet, had “horizontal continuity,” or a distant connection between two societies that exhibit parallel phenomena.”23 Her article shows how England and China shared similar processes of patriarchal discourses and counter-discourses as modernizing societies eroded social boundaries. In the end, Carlitz urges for a shift from a focus on divergence and causality to thematic affinities, which allows us to understand distinct cultures better.24

Powers’ article, on the other hand, compares eleventh-century China with seventeenth-century England using a framework based on art history. After comparing a Chinese painting of an emperor greeting the common people and Thomas Hobbes’s (1588-1679) Leviathan frontispiece, which depicts a large monarchical figure composed of human beings, Powers finds a shared conceptualization of an autocratic ruler deriving his power from the “people.”25 By connecting these symbolic images to China and England’s periods of state breakdowns and civil wars, he locates analogous political processes in seemingly different places in diachronic eras.26 This ingenious usage of visuality as a framework reflects the current trend of comparative cultural history.

23 Carlitz, “Pornography, Chastity, and “Early Modernity,” 119. This concept was elaborated by Joseph Fletcher. See Beatrice Forbes Manz, ed., Fletcher, Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia (Aldershot: Variorium, 1995).


This thesis attempts to contribute to these comparative histories by offering a literary approach, which fits in line with the trend of global comparative history towards cultural history. It also rejects Weber’s Eurocentrism by analyzing China and Europe on their own terms. Rather than compare state formation, this thesis compares and contrasts an oft-neglected component of these wars, narratives. Specifically, it analyzes narratives as perpetuated by the conquering states, i.e., the Ming and French governments. In following with Carlitz’ suggestion, this thesis will not search for interconnections but rather attempts to find commonalities or disparities in these stories to help us learn more about Ming and French notions of conquest.

**Methodology**

The framework of this thesis is narrative theory. I derive this method from many different scholars, including Mona Baker, Margaret Somers, Gloria D. Gibson, Hayden White, Jerome Bruner, and Donald E. Polkinghorne. Narrative theory involves the analysis of “a concrete story with some aspect of the world complete [with] characters, settings, outcomes, or projected outcomes and plot.”27 This thesis defines “narrative” as the main story political actors want their audiences to believe. Political actors involve individuals who obtained a measure of political power that enable them to impact political movements and policies.

While many types of narratives exist, this thesis deals only with the public political narrative.28 Analyzing this kind of story allows us to draw out the motivations

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28 Three other ones include the personal, disciplinary, and meta-narrative. Personal narratives contain the stories of individuals and represent our feelings about how we relate to the world. Disciplinary
and worldview of a political actor and understand the consistency and constancy of a polity.\textsuperscript{29} Political actors perpetuate this type of narrative to a broad audience, which can increase support for a mission or boost public morale.\textsuperscript{30} However, rather than focus on the narrative’s impact on an audience, this thesis utilizes narrative theory to help us understand how the Ming and French rulers conceptualized their invasion and ideologies. Through this framework, we extract the tools of narrative creation and examine their role in legitimizing premodern wars.

To accomplish this, I rely on a framework based on four elements that exist in narrative theory: selective appropriation, causal emplotment, temporality, and relationality, all of which overlap and depend on each other. Narratives exclude or privilege specific events as needed to fit the narrator’s worldview. The plot or theme, such as stories of heroes or tragedies, guides the selection of events, individuals, and groups in the narrative.\textsuperscript{31} Causal emplotment assigns meaning to events by placing them in the context of a story and molding them into a plot. Until a narrator emplots an event into a narrative, it lacks any significance. Hence, two people may agree on a set of facts

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\textsuperscript{29} Edwin Bacon, “Public Political Narratives: Developing a Neglected Source through the Exploratory Case of Russia in the Putin-Medvedev Era,” \textit{Political Studies} 60, no. 4 (2012), 768-69.

\textsuperscript{30} Bacon, “Public Political Narratives,” 769.

\textsuperscript{31} Baker, “Narratives of Terrorism,” 352.
or events but disagree strongly on the interpretation of them if they see them in opposing narratives.\textsuperscript{32}

Temporality involves the sequencing of events in a chronology. In addition, it means that the time and space in which the narrative locates its events serve a purpose in giving them meaning. For example, the “narrative of sectarianism, which depicts Muslims as belonging to one of two warring sects (Shi’a or Sunni) that are unable to live together in peace,” was an unimportant matter until the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Before the war, the western media explained any individual incidents merely as “disagreements between neighbours or instances of personal revenge,” but now it interprets them as sectarian violence, a product of western narratives.\textsuperscript{33} Finally, relationality combines several events or stories into a coherent whole.

Since these four elements overlap, narrators employ them in a number of ways. As one scholar explains, one can perhaps combine events or narrative elements into a whole, setting them in a specific order, which then gains significance through causal emplotment and the selective appropriation of occurrences that do not fit the narrator’s desired storyline.\textsuperscript{34} With its adaptable applicability, narrative theory shall suffice as a framework with which to compare these two premodern invasions.

Roadmap and Argument

Ultimately, the organizational scheme of this thesis involves a text-by-text comparison with narrative theory serving as the frame of reference. Each analytical

\textsuperscript{32} Baker, \textit{Translation and Conflict}, 67.

\textsuperscript{33} Baker, “Narratives of Terrorism,” 352.

\textsuperscript{34} Bacon, “Public Political Narratives,” 771-72.
This thesis weighs the Ming and French narratives equally. This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapters two and three provide the context and detail the political events behind the Ming invasion of Vietnam and the French invasion of Italy. The next three chapters provide the analysis of the major public narratives. They focus on the concomitant range of narratives and ideologies generated by the Ming and French states in their efforts to justify their invasions of Vietnam and Italy, respectively. Chapter four compares the Ming and French religious ideologies in their justifications. Chapter five examines and contrasts the divergence in the appearance of prophecy in the Ming and French rationales since the Ming lacked the eschatology of the French narrative. Chapter Six compares the Ming and French usages of historical claims to justify their wars. Finally, the last chapter compares the influence of ministers on these invasions and the economic benefits they received for inducing war. This chapter’s methodology deviates from narrative theory but continues with the theme of narratives by concentrating on stories from the opposing sides.

While I wrote the first two chapters based mostly on secondary sources and some primary sources, the following chapters utilize a variety of documents from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, such as annals, chronicles, journals, memoirs, and poetry from French, Chinese, Italian, and Vietnamese perspectives.35 Within each chapter, I will explain and present the primary sources more fully for analysis.

35 My linguistic skills are limited to French and Chinese languages. Although I lack Vietnamese, Italian, and Latin, plenty of sources in these original languages are translated and available. Thus, I utilized a variety of both original and translated sources to conduct my work. In addition, I always check the original source with the translation to make sure nothing is missing.
Chronologically, this thesis addresses the entire Ming invasion, but for the Italian Wars, it will neglect the years from 1522 to 1559. Within this thirty-seven-year period, the French never recovered Italy and began focusing on its eastern frontiers. Consequently, this thesis primarily devotes its attention to the years from 1494-1521, when the French kept strongholds in Italy. This maintains a controlled variable of the twenty years or so of foreign occupation in Vietnam and Italy within the comparison.

With these things in mind, I offer my findings. Based on its comparison within a framework of narrative theory of the public narratives as presented by the Ming dynasty and French monarchy to justify their wars, this thesis shows that despite their geographical, contextual, political, and cultural differences, the Ming and French invasions possessed three major things in common and one disparity: (1) both the Ming emperor and the French kings utilized just war concepts rooted in ideological traditions in their public narratives; (2) these rulers relied on dubious historical claims to justify their wars; (3) internal and foreign ministers exerted tremendous influence on the creation of these wars; and (4) both narratives differed in the prevalence of prophecy, a recurring element in Italy, but not in China nor Vietnam.
CHAPTER 2
THE MING INVASION OF VIETNAM: THE BACKGROUND

Opening

This chapter recounts the context of the Ming invasion of Vietnam. To understand the Ming justifications for war, we must look at the broader history surrounding the invasion that began in 1406. The historical precedents of the invasion set up the causes for the war and the rationalization behind it. This chapter gives the background on the events leading up to the invasion of Vietnam and the proclamation of the “twenty crimes” of Ho Quy Ly. In addition, it explains how the Vietnamese elite requested the Ming to incorporate their lands into the empire. The twenty crimes and the Vietnamese request represented the foundations of Zhu Di’s rationales for war and annexation. Finally, the ending briefly addresses the Ming occupation and its demise.

Origins of Chinese-Vietnamese Connections

China and Vietnam shared a long and complicated historical relationship. The Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) under Qin Shi Huang (r. 220-210 BCE) unified all of China into one empire for the first time. Desiring the resources of Lingnan, an area consisting of northern Vietnam and the modern Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan, Qin conquered it in 214 BCE, creating a garrison to defend it.¹ After the

collapse of the dynasty in 204 BCE, the garrison became a kingdom called Nanyue (v. Nam Viet) (204 BCE-111 BCE). Although it behaved as a neighboring vassal to the newly established Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), it acted autonomously. In 113 BCE, certain royal family members in Nanyue proposed to unify with the Han, but an official refused to serve the Chinese and murdered the Pro-Han faction, including the king. Responding to this act, the Han invaded in 111 BCE, conquering the entire kingdom, renaming it to a provincial name, Jiaozhi or Jiaozhou.²

The Chinese regime in Vietnam endured through several dynasties from 111 BCE to 938 CE, notwithstanding the periodic and fleeting moments of autonomous rule, such as the Trung sisters (40-43 CE) and Early Ly dynasty (544-602). Between the Han and Tang (618-907) dynasties, division occurred many times in China with the Three Kingdoms (220-280), Jin (265-240), Northern and Southern (420-589), and Sui (581-618) dynasties, but China still managed to keep Vietnam within the empire.

The decisive break, however, occurred during the tenth century, when China underwent bitter civil war until reunification under the Song dynasty (960-1279). Taking advantage of the situation, the Vietnamese formed their own kingdom. After repelling several Chinese and Mongol expeditions during the Early Le (980-1009), Later Ly (1009-1225), and Tran (1225-1400) dynasties, the Vietnamese solidified their independent rule and named their land Dai Viet.³

² Holcombe, The Genesis of East Asia, 150.
This long domination left an imprint, as patterns of Chinese culture lingered irrevocably in Vietnam, most evident in the use of Chinese as a writing system and the influx of Chinese vocabulary into the modern Vietnamese language. These long historical and cultural ties never died in the minds of the Chinese elite. In the Ming dynasty, the Chinese literati still considered Vietnam as a lost province. As Kathlene Baldanza notes, Ming texts echoed this sentiment and often designated the Vietnamese people as Jiao (giao), a reference to the provincial name of Jiaozhi, which tied Vietnamese identity to a place name. These sentiments later found expression during the Ming invasion in 1406.

The Two Usurpers

The catalyst for the invasion began with the rise of Ho Quy Ly. Originally named Le Quy Ly, he served as a minister and general for the declining Tran dynasty in the late fourteenth century. In this period, the dynasty fell into stagnation and disintegration as the Tran aristocracy became an accumulation of private estates with considerable autonomy. Coupled with invasions from the Cham people to the south, the Tran faced severe threats to its existence. Quy Ly used the situation to strengthen his position and tied himself closer to the royal court through a marriage to a Tran princess. He led successful campaigns against the Chams and began to build a power base loyal only to himself. In 1398, Quy Ly set his plans to take over the government into motion. He

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persuaded Tran Ngung, or the Thuan Tong emperor (r. 1388-1399), to yield his throne to two-year-old Tran An, Quy Ly’s grandson. A year later, Quy Ly murdered Thuan Tong. He also uncovered a conspiracy among the Tran nobles to depose him, which he suppressed violently, as over 370 people died with hundreds more imprisoned. Quy Ly continued to subdue, kill, and imprison hundreds of Tran family members to quell any resistance. In 1400, Quy Ly took the throne and changed his name from Le to Ho. His kingdom became Dai Ngu, and he adopted a reign title, Thanh-nguyen, to mark a new era in Vietnamese history. He changed the Vietnamese calendar name from “Conforming to the Universal Regulations” to “Conforming to Heaven.” Finally, he deposed his grandson and placed his second son, Ho Han Thuong, as emperor, himself becoming senior emperor. Quy Ly hoped to present Han Thuong as a legitimate successor to the Tran throne due to his ancestry as a maternal grandson of Tran Manh, the Minh Tong emperor (r.1314-1357). Ultimately, Quy Ly usurped the throne because he saw the weaknesses in the Tran state and sought to bring order and power back to it. In his mind, he thought he was saving Dai Viet. Unbeknownst to him, however, the parallel rise of Zhu Di in China would spell the end for him and his ruthless surge to power.

To understand Zhu Di’s role and motivations in fighting Quy Ly, we must learn about the brutal ascendancy of the third Ming emperor as well. The origins of Zhu Di’s enthronement began with the administrative actions of his father, Zhu Yuanzhang.

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7 In the Tran dynasty, the emperors began a pattern of reigning for a few years before resigning in favor of the favorite son. The emperor would then become senior emperor.


9 Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly and the Ming, 52.
(r.1368-1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty. After overthrowing the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), the founder rebuilt his empire into a formidable state.\(^{10}\)

Aware of the limitations of garrisoning generals in remote areas of the borderlands who can gain power through loyal subjects, he implemented a direct form of governance. His system established his sons in the command of strategic peripheral locations, such as the north where the Mongols continuously threatened the border. This centralized system initially worked because these sons only possessed nominal authority within the army and retained little administrative power.

However, they held control of a small personal guard ranging from 3,000 to 19,000 men, with the northern princes commanding the most soldiers due to the presence of Mongols. Any of these princes could take control of the local army if they aspired to do so. Zhu Yuanzhang intended to limit any feelings of rebellion among frontier commanders by checking these very generals with his loyal sons, but this system immediately failed after his death when a major civil war broke out.\(^{11}\) In 1398, upon the passing of Zhu Yuanzhang, whose eldest son died before him, the throne passed onto the son of Zhu Yuanzhang’s son, Zhu Yunwen, the Jianwen emperor (r. 1398-1402). Once on the throne, Zhu Yunwen aimed to curb the power of the territorial princes partly due to a relative peace rendering superfluous the large garrisons and to his own desire to centralize his authority.


Unfortunately, his uncle, Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan and the fourth son of Zhu Yuanzhang, commanded a considerable force in the north, refused to let Zhu Yunwen diminish his power, and so raised a campaign against the throne. Zhu Di argued that Zhu Yunwen fell victim to the advice of evil advisors, justifying his war to depose him. After four years of bitter civil war, Zhu Di defeated his nephew and proclaimed himself the new emperor.12

The costs of war burdened the Ming Empire, as the wake of destruction left it in a condition of penury. Zhu Di ably rebuilt the state, all the while enforcing an image of his legitimacy to the populace. Because he was a usurper, officials questioned his status which led to occasional rebellions. Zhu Di not only put down these rebellions but also purged the seditious elements of his realm. He sent the disaffected to jail and executed many of them along with their entire families. Zhu Di then started a campaign to improve his image by perpetuating a narrative of himself as a benevolent ruler. He placed some of the ministers of the Jianwen regime in high positions if they pledged their loyalty to him and offered leniency to rebels who ended their activities. Sea voyages toward the outer states of China became a prerogative as well. Ostensibly started to receive tribute and resources to rebuild the economy, these voyages consisted of huge fleets outfitted to reach Southeast and South Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. These brought much-

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needed resources and prestige to Zhu Di and his empire.\textsuperscript{13} All of these precedents informed the events leading up to the Ming invasion of Vietnam.

**Tensions Build, Emperors Clash**

Initial relations between the Ming dynasty and Dai Viet remained calm and peaceful. Zhu Yuanzhang specifically forbade the invasion of China’s southern neighbor. He said to his officials, “As to the barbarians on the outside we should be prepared against them, but we should not burden our people by invading them on our own initiative.”\textsuperscript{14} Zhu Di followed his father’s example and maintained the same policy. In April 1403, Ho Quy Ly’s envoys arrived at the Ming capital, Nanjing, to seek recognition for his son Ho Han Thuong as the new ruler of Dai Viet. They made the case that although the Tran line died out, a grandson of a Tran king still existed, Han Thuong. He had been leading the state and needed a title to confirm his rule.\textsuperscript{15} The Ming investigated the matter, and after receiving evidence from Han Thuong’s men, Zhu Di verified his title as “king of Annam” (annan guo-wang). In exchange, the new ruler promised not to cause trouble and to continue good tributary relations with the Ming.\textsuperscript{16} However, peace never happened.

\textsuperscript{13} Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness*, 103-28.


\textsuperscript{15} Geoff Wade, trans., *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore), http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/ yong-le/year-1-month-4-day-3 (accessed Oct. 16, 2017). Further citations from Geoff Wade’s translated Ming annals will be shortened to *Ming Shi-lu*, followed by the entry site address.

\textsuperscript{16} Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming*, 79.
Borderland conflicts still nagged Zhu Di. The early Ming period bequeathed authority to native chieftains called *tusi* to maintain order on the frontiers. While this allowed the Ming to rule these lands indirectly, problems occurred when historical boundaries came into play. In 1396, the chieftain of Siming, in southwest Guangxi, appealed to the Ming court, claiming that Dai Viet seized five of his counties (all located in present-day northern Vietnam). The Vietnamese argued that the five counties have always paid regular taxes to Dai Viet. With the territory lost, the Ming lost some of their tax revenues. This situation also reflected the Vietnamese disregard of the historical “bronze pillar” border. Supposedly, Ma Yuan (14 BCE- 49 CE) of the Han dynasty erected this pillar to demarcate the southern border, but no one could find this structure. As a result, Chinese and Vietnamese settlers populated the borderland without prejudice for centuries. Conflicts in these borderlands therefore were highly complicated since both sides possessed legitimate rationales for their actions. Seeing the complexities of the situation, Zhu Yuanzhang neglected to send in military force and opted for diplomacy, but the conflicts never ended.\(^{17}\)

In 1404, the Siming chieftain complained again that he had lost more lands to Dai Viet. Following his father’s example, Zhu Di chastised Quy Ly, but avoided confrontation and ordered the ruler to return these areas, portions of which he did.\(^{18}\) Another border dispute occurred in Ningyuan, Yunnan in March 1405, when the *tusi* Dao Jihan accused Dai Viet of stealing seven hamlets and kidnapping many of their people.

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Vietnamese sources make no record of it, but this reflected widespread problems.\textsuperscript{19} Quy Ly’s incursions into Champa, Dai Viet’s southern neighbor in modern-day South Vietnam from 1400 to 1404, played a part as well. In 1400, the Cham king died, leaving his son, Ngauk Klaung Vijaya, or Indravarman VI (r.1400-1441), as king. After a serious defeat in 1402 and losing hundreds of elephants and several parcels of land, Indravarman sued for peace.\textsuperscript{20}

Yet, the hostilities did not stop. In 1404, Indravarman sent a memorial to Zhu Di, claiming that the Vietnamese attacked his envoys and stole the goods that came from the Ming court. He also alleged that Quy Ly forced him to hand over his headwear, robes, and seal, and stipulated that he accept Quy Ly’s suzerainty. The Cham king then pleaded for the Ming emperor to punish Dai Viet. Just as in the Siming case, Zhu Di only sent orders to Han Thuong to cease his actions.\textsuperscript{21}

The worst issue seemed to stem from Quy Ly’s dictatorial policies in Dai Viet. Any possible rebellion usually failed to materialize due to Quy Ly’s spy network. Unfortunately, this also resulted in occasional random killings of the innocent and excessive punishments, creating discontent among the populace. The regime levied heavy taxes on land and areas that carried merchandise, oppressive measures that burdened the people. When crises appeared, such as famines, the government often failed to reverse the


\textsuperscript{20} Whitmore, Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming, 74-75.

effects. In the words of K. W. Taylor, “Many people in the Red River plain viewed Ho Quy Ly with sullen disenchantment, being aggravated by his hard policies and nursing nostalgia for what they imagined to have been a better time under the Tran kings.” The conditions of the Ho regime led to calls for foreign arbitration.

On September 10, 1404, a Tran loyalist named Bui Ba Ky arrived at the Ming court. He recounted the devastations and killings Ho Quy Ly committed against the Tran family and his own brothers, wife, and children. Ba Ky and his kin served the Tran for generations, but when Quy Ly took over, they fell victim to his purges. After escaping execution himself, he fled to the mountains. Ba Ky told Zhu Di everything, including the usurpation, name change, and ill-treatment of the people. Finally, he urged the emperor to send an army down and restore order.

A month later, on October 2, a claimant of the Tran throne, Tran Thien Binh, arrived with Ba Ky’s endorsement. After mirroring Ba Ky’s story, he charged Quy Ly with attacking Champa and Siming and proposed for the restoration of the throne to himself, Thien Binh, the last survivor of the Tran family. Initially suspicious of the newcomer, Zhu Di and his ministers prudently waited for more evidence to arrive before making a decision. That day came on the Chinese New Year on January 25, 1405. When Vietnamese envoys appeared at the court to offer felicitations, they saw Thien Binh and

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22 In 1405, the Ho regime responded to a famine by forcing rich families to sell their rice to the poor. Although one segment benefited, this created discontent among the elite. Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming, 72, note. 27.


recognized him as the former king’s grandson. Remorseful, they dropped to their knees and received a lecture on right conduct from Ba Ky. Now convinced that the Ho family were usurpers, Zhu Di ordered an escort of five thousand men to accompany Thien Binh back to Vietnam and onto the throne as the rightful heir.

Zhu Di offered Quy Ly a place south of Vietnam to live out the rest of his days. He accepted the proposition and agreed to meet Thien Binh in the borderlands, promising not to break faith. However, Quy Ly faced a dire dilemma: if he allowed the claimant into Dai Viet, Quy Ly would lose his title, but if Quy Ly failed to follow orders, he would risk the wrath of the Ming emperor. Before he made a decision, Quy Ly preemptively strengthened his strongholds and set up defenses in all the harbors and maritime points around the Red River Delta. In late 1405, he consulted with his generals on the situation. Some argued for peace, while others called for war. Ultimately, Quy Ly chose war, perhaps believing he could repel the Ming as the Tran kings had done with the Mongols years ago.

In April 1406, Thien Binh and the Ming force crossed the border into Vietnam. As they made their way across a mountain pass and dense jungle under heavy rain, Quy Ly sprung an ambush on the troops. After a day of heavy fighting, the Vietnamese won and captured the claimant. The Vietnamese interrogated him about his identity but

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28 Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming, 84-85.
received no answer. They offered a reward to anyone who could identify Thien Binh, but no one could recognize him. After some deliberation, they executed Thien Binh and the envoy who “acknowledged” him in the Ming court for lying. According to the Vietnamese, Thien Binh’s real name was Nguyen Khang, a loyal retainer of the Tran household and merely a pretender to the throne. Vietnamese sources deny his claim to royalty, but Chinese sources accept him at face-value.

Not much consensus exists among historians on the real identity of the Tran claimant. For example, Yamamoto Tatsuro pointed out that the claimant presented a jumbled genealogy to the Ming court and some of his complaints about Ho Quy Ly seemed to relate only to Chinese borderland issues, not Vietnamese ones. While Yamamoto dismissed the entire situation as a Ming fabrication, other historians remain either ambivalent or take no stance on the pretender’s identity. In any case, the actions of both the Ming and Vietnamese do not lend themselves to an easy answer. Yamamoto correctly deduced Thien Binh’s false testimony since it left gaps in the family tree. As a result, it seemed likely that the Ming tried to establish a puppet regime in Vietnam that would favor the Chinese and quell border issues. Yet Ho Quy Ly accepted Thien Binh regardless and killed him when he arrived, muddling the situation. Quy Ly could have


30 Yamamoto Tatsuro, Annan shi kenkyu (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1950), 281-86; Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming, 82; Taylor, History of the Vietnamese, 173; Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam, 64.

31 He claimed that he was the grandson of Tran Thuyen (Anh Tong, r.1293-1320). His father was Tran Manh (Minh Tong, r.1314-1357), and his brother was Tran Hao (Du Tong, r.1341-1369), all former emperors of Dai Viet. Yet, no record of his relation to any of these emperors exists. In addition, his testimony confuses Nhat Le (r.1369-1370) with Du Tong and Tran Phu (Nghie Tong, r.1370-1372). One wonders whether Thien Binh mixed up events or the Ming writers left a gap in his testimony. Ming Shi-lu, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/year-2-month-8-day-28 (accessed Oct. 16, 2017).
evaded any international incidents by conducting a formal trial. In any case, whatever the truth, the Vietnamese braced themselves for war.

Anger stirred the mind of Zhu Di. After hearing the news of Thien Binh’s death, the annals recorded the emperor’s oft-quoted diatribe, saying, “The crimes of that contemptible, despicable wretch mount to Heaven. Yet still he has dared to plot this treacherous ambush and act recklessly and brutally like this. I promoted sincerity and tolerance and still he deceives me! If he is not to be punished, then what is the use of maintaining troops!”

Although he had to this point followed his father’s instructions in not attacking Annam, the situation became too dire to ignore. Zhu Yuanzhang shied away from the complexities of Vietnamese politics because he saw the Vietnamese as barbarians and unable to take on the “civilized” society of China. Zhu Di, on the other hand, believed he needed to civilize the “savages” who disrupted his peaceful world order.

Furthermore, since both rulers usurped the throne to gain power, Zhu Di believed he needed to punish Quy Ly to shift attention away from his own usurpation. In some ways, it seemed hypocritical for Zhu Di to indict Quy Ly when he committed the same “crime” only a few years ago. Yet, by showing his people that he would not tolerate illegitimate power grabs, he negated Quy Ly’s justification for regicide while upholding his own actions. In Zhu Di’s mind, only his narrative mattered.

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**The Invasion and Occupation of Vietnam, 1406-1428**

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33 Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly and the Ming*, 78.

With the death of Thien Binh, Zhu Di resolved to eradicate Ho Quy Ly. He started the engines of war and began preparing his troops and provisions in early 1406. Several months later, he called upon his generals for a full-frontal assault on Vietnam starting in November and December 1406. The annals record the army at an incredible 800,000 men, which modern historians reappraise as closer to 210,000 men. On Nov. 19, 1406, the army crossed the southern mountains into Vietnam, and one of its commanders, Lu Yi, sent an advance force to Chi-lang pass to scout the area. There, Lu found a garrison of 30,000 Vietnamese troops and easily swept through them, taking several captives and scattering the rest.

Once he secured the pass, Zhu Di ordered the army to spread news of the “twenty crimes” (zui) and transgressions of Ho Quy Ly to the Vietnamese locals and troops in the area. These twenty crimes consisted of Quy Ly’s murder of the Tran family, disrespect of Ming traditions, lies, and encroachment upon neighboring areas. According to the Vietnamese account, two Ming generals floated wooden placards inscribed with the injunctions down river, reaching Vietnamese troops who reportedly accepted them at face value and defected to the Ming. By early 1407, notable Vietnamese elites, including Mac Thuy, joined the Chinese cause, contributing significantly to the Ming’s success.

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36 Ming Shi-lu, http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-4-month-10-day-9 (accessed October 18, 2017); Ming Shi Lu (Veritable Records of the Ming) (Taipei: Zhongyang yenjiu yuan lishi yuwen yenjiu su, 1963), Taizong, 60:0866-71. Hereafter shortened to MSL.

37 According to John Whitmore, whether or not the Vietnamese actually took it to heart is questionable since this may have been the interpretation of “later, anti-Ho Vietnamese historians.” *Toan Thu* under November 1406; Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming*, 91.
After easily ousting Quy Ly’s forces and capturing the Ho family in 1407, Zhu Di ordered his general Zhang Fu (1375-1449) to locate any remaining Tran descendants and restore them to the throne. However, Zhang Fu’s Vietnamese search party ultimately came to naught. With no available kin, the Vietnamese approached Zhang Fu with a proposition. According to the Ming annals, on April 17, 1407, Mac Thuy gathered over 1100 local Vietnamese petitions and claimed that due to present circumstances they would like to have the Ming incorporate their lands into the empire.\textsuperscript{38} Zhang then sent the emperor this news. Convinced by Thuy’s appeal, Zhu Di promptly accepted the petition and subsequently began the reconstruction and administrative transformation of Vietnam. He also renamed it back to its provincial designation during the Han and Tang dynasties, Jiaozhi.\textsuperscript{39}

The occupation began in earnest. From 1407 to 1427, the Ming attempted to indoctrinate the Vietnamese with Chinese ideology, which came in the form of Confucian education, the enforcement of Chinese fashion, and the stealing and burning of Vietnamese books.\textsuperscript{40} However, the cruelty of Ming rule and heavy taxation of the populace caused widespread rebellions. Although the Ming brutally put down many of these insurrections, one of the rebel leaders emerged out of the fray to defeat China. Le

\textsuperscript{38} Ming Shi-lu, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-5-month-3-day-10 (accessed October 18, 2017).

\textsuperscript{39} Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming, 94.

\textsuperscript{40} Alexander Ong Eng Ann, “Contextualizing the Book-Burning Episode during the Ming Invasion and Occupation of Vietnam,” in Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor, 154-65.
Loi (1385-1433), a charismatic insurgent from Thanh Hoa, led a large contingent of loyal followers from the foothills and woodlands of Mount Lam to fight the Ming.\(^{41}\)

Although they suffered some defeats in the early 1420s, things began turning favorably for the insurrectionists. Zhu Di died on August 12, 1424, and after the death of his son, Zhu Gaochi, the Hongxi emperor (r.1424-1425), the Ming eased up their policies on Annam. With increasing ferocity from the rebel forces, the Ming could not withstand the high administrative and military costs needed to sustain the occupation. In 1425 and 1426, Le Loi and his skilled minister-scholar, Nguyen Trai (1380-1442), inflicted heavy casualties upon the Ming army, which finally forced Zhu Zhanji, the Xuande emperor (r.1425-1435), to withdraw his troops and administrative officials. After twenty years of suffering under Ming exploitation, the Vietnamese ousted their oppressors. Le Loi took over the throne and began the rule of the Le dynasty (1427-1789) in Dai Viet.\(^{42}\) The campaign ended Ming expansion in Southeast Asia.


\(^{42}\) Taylor, History of the Vietnamese, 174-86.
CHAPTER 3

THE FRENCH INVASION OF ITALY: THE BACKGROUND

Opening

This chapter gives the context of the events leading up to the invasion of Naples and Milan. In addition, it explains the transition of crusading agendas through the reigns of Charles VIII, Louis XII (r.1498-1515), and Francis I (r.1515-1547). This development involved the rise and decline of crusade and messianic expectations, which represented the foundations of the three French kings’ morale rationales for invading. After around 1525, Francis I began to lose his interests for crusading. The French invaded Italy multiple times between 1494 and 1559, but this chapter focuses mostly on the invasions of 1494, 1499, and 1515, which marked the strongest influence of religious ideas on the French justifications for war. I briefly address the Franco-Ottoman Alliance in 1536 and the end of the Italian Wars at the end.

Origins of French Intervention in Southern Italy

When Charles VIII crossed the Alps in September 1494, he ignited the flames that stoked nearly sixty years of continuous warfare in Italy. Yet, his invasion did not occur in a vacuum, as antecedents of French interests in Italy dated back to the thirteenth century. In this period, a unified Italian nation lay in the distant future. Rather, a multitude of competing states in the Italian peninsula existed alongside other fragmented states in Europe including Spain and France. The Italian Wars of the late fifteenth and sixteenth
centuries originated in the conflicts between these states in the Middle Ages. One can trace the roots of Charles VIII’s invasion to the relations between the French and southern Italians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the Normans of northern France conquered the island of Sicily and the mainland of Naples, seeking the riches of, as the chroniclers called it, “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

The main catalyst that eventually brought Charles VIII into Naples began with a cadet branch of the French royal house, the Capetian house of Anjou, or the Angevins. The nearly two-hundred-year rule of the Angevins in Naples (1266-1442) was very complex, as it witnessed the origins of an Aragonese-Angevin rivalry, the precursor to the Franco-Spanish one that dominated sixteenth-century politics. To summarize the most important events in Italian-Angevin history as it relates to Charles VIII’s invasion, we must begin with the rise of Charles I of Anjou (1227-1285).

He was the son of the king of France, Louis VIII (r.1223-1226), and brother to the current king, Louis IX (r.1226-1270), or Saint Louis. Due to politicking and strife between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy over the fiefdom of Naples and Sicily, successive popes sought different candidates to place on the throne. Two popes offered Charles the kingdom in exchange for an alliance. He entered Naples in 1266 and defeated several claimants, solidifying his control in 1268. Charles shared his brother’s enthusiasm

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1 Mallett and Shaw, The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State, and Society in Early Modern Europe, 2-3. Dates for the Middle Ages may be placed between fourth to fourteenth centuries.


3 A good introductory secondary source on the Angevins is Abulafia, The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms.
for a crusade and constantly tried to start one. He bought the title of “King of Jerusalem” from a claimant and tried, unsuccessfully, to recapture the Holy Land.⁴ His successors assumed his titles and rights to Naples and Jerusalem, which formed the basis for Charles VIII’s claim to these lands. On March 30, 1282, a rebellion occurred in Sicily, known as the War of the Sicilian Vespers (1282-1302), which resulted in Peter III of Aragon’s (r. 1276-1285) acquisition of the island as an heir to the throne. The Aragonese controlled Sicily, while the Angevins controlled Naples on the mainland, which began the long conflict between these two houses.⁵

After nearly two centuries of byzantine scheming and succession crises, the decisive dispute over the throne began in June 1442. The King of Aragon, Alfonso V (r.1416-1458) took advantage of a succession crisis concerning the barren Joanna II of Naples (r.1414-1435). After years of warfare, Alfonso ultimately took control of Naples, thereby politically rejoining Sicily to the mainland. He, however, failed to father a child with his wife Maria of Castille (1401-1458) but did father a bastard with a mistress. He legitimized his bastard son, Ferdinand, or Ferrante I (r.1458-1494), who became the king in 1458 upon Alfonso’s death.⁶ However, the pro-Angevin Pope Calixtus III (r.1455-1458) resented Ferrante’s illegitimacy and tried to drive Ferrante out until the pope’s sudden death in August 1458, allowing the pro-Aragonese Pius II (r.1458-1464) to legitimize Ferrante’s crown. Pius gained a rich marriage for his nephew through this

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⁴ Abulafia, The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 65.


investiture, and he hoped that by protecting Ferrante’s dominion, he could start a crusade against the rising tide of the Ottomans, who had recently conquered Constantinople.

The Angevins, under the Duke of Anjou-Provence, René of Anjou (1409-1480), assaulted southern Italy in an attempt to recover Naples, but to no avail. Due to the lack of strong leadership and nonexistent help from the royal house, the Angevins never invaded Naples again. The king of France’s refusal to aid the Angevins forced René of Anjou into relying on unscrupulous local leaders who were ineffective on the battlefield. This deficiency of support transpired because of the centralizing tendencies of Louis XI (r. 1461-1483). He possessed the famous nickname, “the Universal Spider,” (l’universelle araignée) for a reason. He sought to limit the power of his vassals, which meant that he would not support the Angevins in their pretensions to acquire more territory. In fact, Louis wanted Naples himself, and he schemed tirelessly to obtain the Provençal claim and all of the other rights passed down from Charles I of Anjou that came with it.

Hapless and weak, the last remaining Angevins passed on their inheritance of the county of Provence through successive heirless dukes until the last one, Charles of Maine, died in 1480 and willed it to his cousin, Louis XI. After Louis died in 1483, his son Charles VIII assumed these rights and pursued the inheritance of his “ancestors,” the original Angevins who began their reign in Naples with Charles I of Anjou. Although his connection to the Angevin bloodline was very distant, Charles VIII invaded Italy anyways as certain opportunities came to his attention that he could not ignore.

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8 Abulafia, “Intro,” in French Descent, 4-5.

The Call to Italy: Crusades, Prophecy, and Ministers

Many elements influenced the king in his decision to invade Naples. By far, the most notable involved the call for a crusade against the Turks. The crusades began in 1095 when Urban II (r.1088-1099) exhorted Christian knights to fight against the Muslims, or “infidels,” and promising them an incentive for it. As a penance, the Pope would remit all of their sins, as repayment for their sins to God. These crusaders tried to wrest away the Holy Land from the Muslims and vowed to protect Christian inhabitants there from harm. European rulers started multiple crusades, both against non-Christians and Christians, from 1095-1434, with each attempt at retaking the Holy Land failing worse than the previous one.10

However, despite these missteps, the fervor never died. By the late fifteenth century, the hopes for a crusade reached a level of frenzy as the Ottomans advanced into European lands. In 1453, the Ottoman Empire conquered the last remnant of the Byzantine Empire (330-1453) in Constantinople. Under the reigns of Mehmed II (r.1451-1481) and Bayezid II (r.1481-1512), the Ottomans pushed towards Eastern Europe, annexing the Balkans, Crimean lands, Greece, and even penetrated into Otranto, Italy in 1480. News of pillages, sacks, rape, and violence shocked the western powers at the time, including the popes, who called on Christendom to take action against the Turks. Humanist writers responded to this news with strong emotions and condemned the

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destructive nature of the Ottomans. These writers wrote letters and orations, compelling their princes and prelates to go on a crusade.

Charles VIII believed he could defeat the Ottomans. In his youth, he devoured tales of chivalry and heroic deeds, such as the stories of Saint Louis and Roland. When he reached adulthood, he envisioned himself as a savior of the Holy Land. Of course, tradition guided and constructed Charles’ beliefs. For example, the title of the French king as *Rex Christianissimus/ Roi Très-chrétien*, or the “Most Christian King,” reflected the king’s duty as a defender of Christianity. This responsibility developed over the centuries since the time of Clovis (466-511) but gained ground during the Western Schism (1378-1417), when the Papacy moved to Avignon, France for a brief period. During this time, the French considered their king as the *Roi Très-chrétien*, the protector of the Church, Christendom, and holy places such as Jerusalem. Charles VIII adhered to this mentality. He saw the conquest of Naples as a stepping-stone for a crusade against the Ottomans. Its location ran almost parallel to Greece and the Balkans, making it the perfect launching pad for a naval assault and a fulfillment of his role as a crusader.

Furthermore, prophecies bolstered the narrative of Charles’ mission. A tidal wave of apocalyptic thought swept Europe in the late fifteenth century, and many people

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responded to Charles VIII’s invasion with eschatological fervor. They believed that Charles was the second coming of the emperor Charlemagne (742-814). The prophecy proclaimed that Charles VIII, as Charlemagne’s namesake, would serve as the last ruler, return to Jerusalem, and defeat the Muslims. Prophets such as Francis of Paola (1416-1507) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) urged Charles to fulfill his destiny. Although Charles VIII came to Italy amidst an intense period of crusade and prophetic beliefs, non-spiritual forces influenced him as well.

Italy provided an avenue for Charles to divert the attention of his barons from revolting against the crown to something else. During Charles’ regency as a teenager in the mid-1480s, his sister and brother-in-law ruled the kingdom in his stead as the Beaujeu regime, but Charles’ cousin, Louis of Orléans, conspired with querulous barons and revolted against the Beaujeus. Three years of war ensued over the main issues of increased taxes and the incorporation of Brittany (in northwestern France) into France. The Beaujeu regime quelled the revolt, and the result ended in Charles’ marriage to the heir of the rebellious duchy, Anne of Brittany (1477-1514), cementing the duchy’s absorption into France in 1491. Known as the “Mad War” (le guerre folle) or the Breton Wars, the conflict drained the treasury’s resources and heightened the disdain between


the nobles and the crown.\textsuperscript{17} Knowing that his noblemen itched for combat and glory, Charles sent them into Italy to keep them from rebelling.\textsuperscript{18}

Indeed, ministers of not only French, but also Italian origin, seized the chance to gain wealth, prestige, and power through frequent persuasive meetings with the king. Alessandro Benedetti (1450-1512), a Venetian physician and diarist, noted that squabbling and rivalries among the Italian rulers led to the French invasion, as a way for them to gain power for themselves.\textsuperscript{19} Another chronicler, Philippe de Commynes (1447-1511), provided the most insider information on these ministers. Commynes served under Louis XI and Charles VIII as an ambassador and witnessed other officials who spoke to Charles. He recorded his thought in his famous work, \textit{The Memoirs}, first published in 1524 with a second volume in 1528. Publishers reprinted the book in multiple languages for centuries due to its immense popularity.\textsuperscript{20} Commynes wrote his memoirs as a didactic tool for rulers, which explains why his work offered such a sobering and practical look into the politics of the time, anticipating the outlook of Niccolò Machiavelli’s (1469-1527) \textit{The Prince} in 1532.\textsuperscript{21} As a result, he saw past the rhetoric and wrote down the true motivations behind people’s actions, at least from his perspective. His work echoed

\textsuperscript{17} Knecht, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France}, 22-31.

\textsuperscript{18} Garrison, \textit{Sixteenth-Century France}, 121.

\textsuperscript{19} Benedetti, \textit{Diaria de bello carolino}, I, p 63.


Benedetti’s sentiment when Comynes acknowledged that high political figures plotted in France and Italy to gain wealth.\textsuperscript{22}

This scheming seemed to revolve around the dilemma of Ferrante’s reign. Ferrante’s authoritarian rule of the nobility created many problems. He and his son, Alfonso II (1448-1495), sought to limit the power of their barons by squelching their aspirations to local autonomy and establishing direct royal control over the many areas surrounding Naples. They increased taxes to fund the war over Ferrara (1482-4), which angered the barons to the point of revolt. Known as the Conspiracy of the Barons (\textit{la congiura dei baroni}) (1485-6), the Neapolitan elite rose against the Aragonese and sought an Angevin to rule Naples. They even allied with the pope Innocent VIII (r.1484-1492), who shared Angevin sympathies. Innocent’s father, Sixtus IV (r.1471-1484), resented Ferrante for not supporting a war against the Medicis and fought for René of Anjou against the Aragonese. Innocent initially followed his father’s example and called on Charles VIII to reclaim Naples.

However, the rebels lost the war and sued for peace. Instead of gaining a pardon as they assumed they would, they faced Ferrante’s duplicity. He invited them to a marriage feast where he arrested all of the noblemen and either tried and executed them in public, or murdered them in prison, along with their families.\textsuperscript{23} Although this seemed brutal, Ferrante and Alfonso II sought to unify his Italian subjects against the Ottomans by removing the dissidents. Between 1480 and 1481, the Turks invaded Otranto and

\textsuperscript{22} Comynes, \textit{The Memoirs}, VII.1, 437-40.

\textsuperscript{23} Abulafia, \textit{The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms}, 228-29.
massacred twelve thousand people, causing widespread fear in Italy. Although a coalition of powers had beaten back the Turks, the invasion taught Ferrante the lesson that internal squabbles meant nothing compared to the Ottoman threat.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, Innocent believed in the same message and concluded a peace treaty with Ferrante in June 1492. After Innocent's death, his successor, Rodrigo Borgia, or Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503), continued the same policy, but Alexander threatened Ferrante with a French intervention if the Neapolitan king continued to disrupt the nobility.\textsuperscript{25} Although papal recognition had secured Ferrante’s reign in 1458, subsequent popes regarded Ferrante as a nuisance and never failed to “play the French card” when they wanted Ferrante out.

With the papal alliance and the end of the barons’ revolt, disaffected Neapolitan exiles decided to play the “French card” as well. In June 1489, the prince of Salerno, Antonello di Sanseverino (1458-1499) and a group of his adherents arrived at the French court, hoping to reclaim Naples with the help of the king. They collaborated closely with Etienne de Vesc (1445-1501), France’s leading proponent for war. For two years, the prince discussed plans for operations with the king, but nothing much came out of these discussions. In the meantime, Charles and his ministers requested an investigation into the Angevin claims, and after some digging, lawyers from Provence provided the wills of the Angevins to Charles.\textsuperscript{26} These bequests provided the French with a legitimate cause

\textsuperscript{24} Abulafia, \textit{The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms}, 229-30.

\textsuperscript{25} Michael Mallett, “Personalities and Pressure: Italian Involvement in the French Invasion of 1494,” in \textit{The French Descent}, 153-54.

for war. As the plans for invasion started to come together, another Italian appeared on the scene.

Probably the most notorious of all the political actors, Ludovico Sforza (1452-1508), began collaborations with Charles, Vesc, and the exiles in 1493, feeding into their desires of great rewards they could obtain in Italy. Ludovico’s ambitions ran deep. As the uncle and regent of Giovan Galeazzo (r. 1476-1494), Ludovico wanted to rule the Duchy of Milan for himself. However, Alfonso II also competed for Milan and attempted to assassinate him multiple times. Feeling threatened, Sforza decided to appeal to Charles. Although some Frenchmen despised Ludovico, Charles remained allies with the duke since Ludovico helped fund the expedition. The situation soon improved for Charles, as news of Ferrante’s death spread all over Europe on January 28, 1494. Alfonso remained unpopular with the barons and Charles believed he could press his claim at this moment. More Neapolitans arrived in France in April 1494, such as the younger brother of Antonello, Galeazzo (1458-1525), who headed a contingent into the court as a trusted military commander of Milan. He talked with the king and offered him men, money, and support, on which the king deliberated for quite a while as negotiations ran for more than seven months. All of these men possessed different agendas, and Charles entertained their opinions carefully.

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28 Knecht, Rise and Fall, 37.

29 Mallett, “Personalities and Pressure,” 160.

“He Conquered before He even Saw:” The Invasion of Naples, 1494-1495

To prevent any outside forces from attacking his native domains, Charles concluded three treaties with England (Étaples, 1492), Aragon (Barcelona, 1493) and Maximillian I (r. 1486-1519) of the Holy Roman Empire (Senlis, 1493). These treaties offered territorial rights for the borders of France or political arrangements in exchange for peace.31 With backing from Milan and plans well underway, Charles headed into Italy with an army estimated around 18,000 men on August 22, 1494.32

From place to place, Charles enjoyed a triumphal march adorned with cheering Italians and lavish celebrations. Spectators reveled in the size of the French army and colorful costumes of the nobility. Of course, fear may have influenced the sycophancy as Italians wanted to avoid the possible damage that the French army might cause to them.

In any case, after making a stop at Asti, controlled by his cousin Louis, Charles continued onto Florence in November. News of his impending arrival shocked the Florentines and created disorder in the government. Piero de Medici (r. 1492-1494), the feeble son of the great Lorenzo the Magnificent (r.1469-1492), vacillated on whether to allow Charles entry. After letting him in, Piero left the city amidst backlash for his decision.33

31 Later historians saw these moves as detrimental to France’s interests, because its future was invested in expanding its natural borders, not in chasing foreign non-French speaking lands. The lands of Roussillon and Cerdagne on the Pyrenees frontier and Artois and Franche-Comté on the eastern border became the objects of French expansion in the later centuries. Labande-Malifert, Charles VIII, 117-34; David Potter, A History of France, 1460-1560: The Emergence of a Nation State (London: Macmillan, 1995), 252-60.

32 Historians give varying numbers on Charles VIII’s army, ranging from lows of around 16,000 to highs of 66,000. A reasonable number is probably under 20,000. See Ferdinand Lot, Recherches sur les effectifs des armées françaises des Guerres d’Italie aux Guerres de Religion, 1494-1562 (Paris: SEVPEN, 1962), 21.

33 Knecht, Rise and Fall, 39-40.
With no leader, the Florentines then turned to Girolamo Savonarola. He claimed he had visions of a flood and a new Cyrus who would come to reform the Church.\footnote{Savonarola, Selected Writings, Intro., xxi.} He saw Charles’ descent and Piero’s flight as the fulfillment of his prophecies. He helped the government grant Charles passage through Florence, and once Charles left, the Florentine people saw this as an act of God’s mercy. Savonarola became the \textit{de facto} leader of Florence for four years, but his popularity declined when the economy started to fail, and public discontent arose over his moral campaign to cleanse the city of its “sins.” A screaming mob attacked him, while Florentine authorities arrested and subsequently burned him alive in May 1498 for being a heretic and false prophet.\footnote{Historians consider Savonarola as an important Renaissance figure, with some viewing his role in history as the end of the Renaissance period, or as a reforming precursor to the Reformation. See Donald Weinstein, Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Lauro Martines, Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).}

Nevertheless, Savonarola’s influence was so great that writers of the time tried to match his prophetic thought in their poetry. French and Italian propagandists such as Guilloche de Bordeaux (15\textsuperscript{th} C.?) and Ugolino Verino (1438-1516) incorporated the Second Charlemagne Prophecy in their poems to ride the current trends. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), the great renaissance scholar, wrote an oration to Charles using the crusade theme.\footnote{Robert W. Scheller, “Imperial Themes in Art and Literature of the Early French Renaissance: The Period of Charles VIII,” Simiolus 12 (1981-82), 27.} These \textit{littérateurs} not only entertained and edified the court but also backed the
plans of the king and influenced the attitude of the French government.\textsuperscript{37} The prophetic fervor thus promoted an image of the French king as a liberator and crusader.

Once he gained passage and funds from the Florentines, Charles set his eyes on the Papal States next. On November 22, 1494, he published his mission as a message to all Christendom. Charles proclaimed his reasons for invading Naples, which included the Angevin claim and plans for a crusade. At the end of his manifesto, he made a direct message to Alexander VI and his officials, requesting victuals and free passage through the Church’s lands.\textsuperscript{38} As Charles steadily encroached upon Papal lands, Alexander had no choice but to meet with the French king. In late 1494, they discussed various issues including the crusade and the case of Cem (or Djem), the brother of Sultan Bayezid II. After a power struggle with his brother, Cem fled to Egypt and later to Rome, where he remained in the pope’s hands. European rulers wanted to use Cem as a fomenter of revolt in the Ottoman Empire as they invaded it, but plans fell through. When Charles arrived in Italy, discussion renewed over Cem. Charles desired Cem for his service, but Alexander refused. After much deliberation, the pope agreed to a deal where Charles could take Cem (although Cem would die in 1495 en route to Naples) and obtain free passage through Papal lands.\textsuperscript{39} In return, Charles would not call a council to reform the Church and would not receive an investiture from the pope for Naples.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{37} Scheller, “Imperial Themes,” 5-7.


\textsuperscript{39} For more on Cem, see Christine Isom-Verhaaren, \textit{Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century} (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 82-113.

\textsuperscript{40} Setton, \textit{The Papacy}, II, 476-77.
Once the rulers accepted each other’s deal, Charles left Rome for Naples. As his army came closer to its destination, the people of Naples revolted against Alfonso II. He left the kingdom and abdicated in favor of his son, Ferrandino, who put up a weak resistance. Charles entered Naples on February 19, 1495, among an adoring crowd and ousted the Aragonese regime.\textsuperscript{41}

Less than a month into his rule, an anti-French coalition formed in March 1495, known as the League of Venice, which became the basis for future alliances including the League of Cambrai, or the Holy League in 1508, and the League of Cognac in 1526.\textsuperscript{42} Consisting of Italian powers such as Venice and Milan, the pope, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire, the League threatened Charles with a blockade of Naples. Faced with no other choice, Charles scurried home to France.

However, on his way towards the Alps, Charles encountered a coalition army at the village of Fornovo near the Taro River. On July 6, 1495, the two armies clashed, and after heavy fighting, Charles’ army managed to push out of the brawl and return to France. While the League claimed the victory at the Battle of Fornovo, the battle came out to a stalemate, since the French left relatively unscathed and continued to invade Italy for the next sixty years.\textsuperscript{43} While some Frenchmen desired to cross the Alps again, others implored the king to abandon the mission. In any case, Charles never went back to Italy since he died on April 7, 1498, after bumping his head on a low doorway. Charles’ only

\textsuperscript{41} Knecht, \textit{Rise and Fall}, 42.

\textsuperscript{42} Mallett and Shaw, \textit{Italian Wars}, 28; 85-88; 103; 155.

\textsuperscript{43} Mallett and Shaw, \textit{Italian Wars}, 30-35.
son had died three years earlier, which allowed his cousin, Louis of Orléans, to ascend to the throne as Louis XII.  

The Invasion and Occupation of Milan, 1499-1521

Once Louis became king, he obtained the Angevin claim to go along with his own Orléanist claim to the Duchy of Milan. Similar to Charles VIII’s claim, Louis possessed dynastic rights to Milan based on his descent from his grandmother, Valentina Visconti (1371-1408), who married Louis I (1372-1407), Duke of Orléans. Valentina’s father, Gian Galeazzo (r.1378-1402), was the Duke of Milan. In 1447, after the death of the heirless Filippo Maria Visconti (r.1412-1447), the Milanese elite decided to switch to a representative government, a period known as the Ambrosian Republic (1447-1450). They completely skipped the rights of Valentina’s heirs. The experiment failed and a condottiere (mercenary captain), Francesco Sforza (r.1450-1466), came to power with the help of Venice. Despite the mishap, the Orléanist descendants never stopped pressing their claims to Milan.

In 1494, Ludovico Sforza took the throne for himself when his nephew suddenly died, raising suspicions of poisoning. Four years later, Ludovico’s popularity declined, and with the death of Charles VIII, Louis XII finally seized the opportunity to oust the Sforza regime. Louis hated Ludovico: the duke betrayed the French leading up to the Battle of Fornovo by joining the League of Venice, and he usurped the legitimate

45 Baumgartner, Louis XII, 40-41.  
46 Baumgartner, Louis XII, 40-41.
Orléanist claim from Louis. Anger and revenge drove the French king to pursue the Duchy of Milan. On October 1499, Louis successfully expelled the ruthless duke, but the latter returned the next year from exile and took over Milan again. Finally, in early April 1500, Louis captured Ludovico and established a foothold in northern Italy.

He then set his sights on Naples. Since the Spanish kept a garrison and fleet guarding southern Italy, Louis decided to negotiate with the king, Ferdinand the Catholic (r.1475-1516), who possessed a claim to Naples. At Granada, they signed a treaty on November 11, 1500, promising to split the kingdom among themselves. While Louis and Ferdinand prepared their expedition, Louis also took steps to start a crusade against the Turks, who had recently invaded Venetian-controlled lands.

Crusading sympathies endured into Louis’ reign. Writers continued to extol the French goals of a crusade, only this time, they assigned the Second Charlemagne Prophecy to Louis instead of Charles VIII. Of course, rhetoric reflected real fears of the time, as the Ottomans expanded deeper into European lands, warring with Hungary and taking over Lepanto, Modon, Koron, and a host of other lands in the Mediterranean. News of raids, killings, and enslavements of Christians aroused the European powers,

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48 Baumgartner, Louis XII, 113-18.

49 Baumgartner, Louis XII, 122.

50 Sherman, “The Selling of Louis XII,” 91-94.
prompting Alexander VI to issue a bull condemning the Turks for their various crimes and trying to invade Europe again.\(^{51}\)

Louis previously had sent some naval support to Venice to help defend Lepanto, but without success. In October 1501, a naval fleet consisting of twenty-one galleys led by Louis’ admiral, Philip de Cleves, Lord of Ravenstein (1459-1528), headed out for Mytilene on the southwest coast of Greece, joining a Venetian force. The fortress came under Ottoman occupation earlier and now faced an assault from a joint siege. Cleves’ expedition failed, however, and a vicious storm marred the return voyage, resulting in the deaths of over a thousand Frenchmen.\(^ {52}\) The expedition represented the last crusading attempt by the French against the Ottomans.

In August 1501, the French conquered Naples but held it for less than two years. They quarreled with the Spanish over territories and lost Naples to Spanish forces in 1503. The loss ended nearly two and a half centuries of Angevin disputes over Naples and resulted in the Spanish domination of southern Italy for more than two hundred years.\(^ {53}\) France also squandered northern Italy. After occupying Milan for a total of thirteen years, in 1512, a coalition of states ousted Louis, placing a puppet Sforza ruler onto the throne. Louis died in 1515, but his successor Francis I also claimed descent from the same grandmother and decided to reconquer the Duchy of Milan. Victorious after defeating the defending Swiss army, Francis established another French occupation that


\(^{53}\) Baumgartner, *Louis XII*, 129-34.
lasted for six more years. With another French king sitting firmly in Italy again, plans for a crusade picked up once more.

News of the blitzing Ottoman conquests of Syria and Egypt in 1516 and 1517 aroused public opinion and terrified Europe. In 1518, Pope Leo X (r.1513-1521) tried to organize a new crusade, setting up peace treaties throughout Christendom. One of the treaties, the Treaty of London between France and England, led to the famous Field of the Cloth of Gold event in June 1520, where both sides put away their hostilities for an extravagant party. After 1521, when France lost Milan for good to another coalition force, Francis locked himself into a geopolitical duel with his rival, the King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (r.1519-1556) for nearly forty years. In 1525, at the Battle of Pavia, Charles defeated and captured Francis in the field. Charles released Francis but forced him to sign the Treaty of Madrid in 1526, where both rulers agreed to peace on the condition of the captivity of Francis’ two sons and a common goal of the “repelling and ruin . . . of the infidels.” Crusading sympathies did not die in Francis’ mind but began to wane at this point.

Although the Ottoman threat seemed alarming to Francis, encirclement by his nemesis concerned him more. Not only had Charles humiliated Francis, but his territories surrounded France with Spain in the west, the Central European lands in the east, and Italy in the south. As the final break with the crusading ideal, Francis began negotiations with Suleyman I (r. 1520-1566) of the Ottoman Empire in 1535. From then on, France

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maintained a good friendship with the Ottomans, and both forces even conducted military operations together in 1537, 1543, and 1552.\textsuperscript{56} After decades of warfare between the Valois and the Habsburgs, descendants of the Angevins and the Aragonese, respectively, Francis’ son, Henry II (r.1547-1559) concluded a peace treaty at Cateau-Cambrésis on April 2-3, 1559 with Charles V’s son, Philip II (r.1556-1598) of Spain. Henry relinquished all of France’s claims to Italy and ended the long Italian Wars.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel*, 35-42.

CHAPTER 4

ZHU DI’S INJUNCTIONS AND CHARLES VIII’S MANIFESTO:
A COMPARISON OF TWO CONQUERORS’ NARRATIVES

Introduction

The previous two chapters recounted the major events and causes of the Ming-Ho and Italian Wars and briefly addressed their endings. Both the Ming and French invasions started off as “righteous” wars intended to “save the weak” from harm, whether from a despotic usurper or a foreign invader. In Dai Viet, Ho Quy Ly usurped the throne, terrorized his people, and encroached on Chinese borders. In Naples, the Neapolitans resented Ferrante I’s authoritarian rule and his questionable parentage, while the Ottoman invasions of Europe, which caused the deaths of thousands of Christians, led to papal calls for a crusade and attracted the attention of the French king. Exiled members from the usurped Tran dynasty in Dai Viet came to the Ming court and persuaded the emperor to invade their homeland to restore order. Neapolitan exiles from the Angevin camp arrived at the French court, achieving the same goal with the French monarch.

Although the Ming and French aggressors differed culturally and politically, they showed similar logic in justifying their invasions: they promoted an image of themselves as the saviors of the oppressed by perpetuating narratives of just war. For this chapter, we look at the official justifications for war from two narratives written from the conquerors’ perspectives, located in Zhu Di’s injunctions and Charles VIII’s manifesto.
Zhu Di issued his injunctions in late 1406, condemning Quy Ly for his twenty crimes. In late 1494, the French king Charles VIII published his manifesto, professing his goal of a crusade after conquering Naples. Both rulers structured their “announcements” as narratives and relied on concepts from religious just war traditions to legitimize their invasions. Historians and scholars have identified Confucian ideologies in the Ming justifications and crusade ideologies in the French justifications, but none of them has analyzed these rationales with a literary approach much less compared them or considered them as narratives.¹

This chapter attempts to compare the Ming and French legitimizing narratives of war through locating five concepts from Chinese and Christian just war theory within a framework of narrative theory involving causal emplotment, selective appropriation, temporality, and relationality. This approach will permit a better understanding of Ming and French ideologies by locating affinities and disparities in the way the conquerors justified their aggressions. As we shall see, these two narratives shared extensive similarities in their method and logic of rationalizing foreign invasion. The first section contextualizes the just war concepts, followed by a presentation of the two narratives, and ends with a comparison of the two.²

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Just War Concepts from China and Europe

Five concepts, “just cause,” “usurpation,” “social order,” “jus in bello,” and “authority” come from both ancient Chinese classics and medieval European texts before the writings of Grotius (1583-1645), who pushed just war theory towards a more definitive legal basis. Naturally, these texts constitute the Confucian and Christian just war traditions, respectively. Before I investigate the ways they appeared in the Ming and French public narratives as a means to justify military actions, I offer some background to these two traditions for a further explanation.

During the Spring and Autumn, and Warring States periods (771-221 BCE) in China, thinkers such as Confucius (551-479 BCE), Mencius (385?-312? BCE), Xunzi (310-219? BCE), and Mozi (470-391 BCE) contributed to the development of Confucian just war theory as a corrective to China’s ongoing conflicts. Their works comprise the corpus of literature that mentions “righteous war” (yi zhan).³

Confucian thinkers expounded on the idea of “just cause” as a primary reason for starting a war. If a ruler of another state manifests morally depraved actions, these actions can justify a punitive expedition (zhengfa) aimed at overthrowing him.⁴ Such unjust actions included mistreating one’s own people, usurping the throne, bullying weaker

³ David A. Graff, “The Chinese Concept of Righteous War,” in The Prism of Just War: Asian and Western Perspectives on the Legitimate Use of Military Force, ed., Howard M. Hensel (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 195-216. The Seven Military Classics are Wuzi (5th c. BCE), Sima Fa, Six Secret Teachings of Taigong (3rd c. BCE), The Art of War, Wei Liaozi (4th c. BCE), Three Strategies of Duke Yellowstone (?), and the Questions and Replies (10th c. CE?) along with three other classics in the Analects (3rd c. BCE?), Xunzi (3rd c. BCE), and The Rites of Zhou.

states (fan, qin), and rebelling against the international political and social order (pan).\(^5\)

Regarding “jus in bello,” or conduct in warfare, ancient Chinese texts disagree on it. Whereas the Sima Fa promotes restraint in warfare, the Art of War (5\(^{th}\) c. BCE) and even Mozi (5\(^{th}\) c. BCE), a non-military text, thoroughly reject jus in bello, claiming that the high moral stakes involved in the outcome of war necessitated unrestricted actions.\(^6\)

Ultimately, Chinese jus in bello involves the idea that the ends justify the means. Actions normally deemed iniquitous gain righteousness (yi) when the intent possesses a moral component. Thus, even when a ruler uses force, so long as he uses it benevolently (ren) to restore peace and withdraws his army after completing his task, he can rationalize his conduct.\(^7\)

The notions of a competent “authority” who can legitimize and wage war also appear prominently in ancient Chinese texts. In the Rites of Zhou (2\(^{nd}\) c. BCE), that figure wields the mandate of heaven since he is the purest, unselfish, and most ready to make a harmonious world, thus making him a “Son of Heaven.”\(^8\)

These concepts emerged in early European Christian thought on just war as well. One of the first major thinkers on the issue, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), developed four essential characteristics for his theory: a just cause; a mission to recover or defend rightful possessions; a war authorized by a legitimate authority; and participants motivated by the right intent. He argued that God’s internal law imposed on the world a

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natural order of peace, and if anyone disturbed it, then reestablishing the natural order became a necessary duty. Augustine concluded that war could help victims of injustice or it could lead to righteousness from sin. Christian just war theory continued to develop in the Middle Ages through great intellectuals such as St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), and Gratian (12th Century). In regard to *jus in bello*, Augustine commented briefly on it but placed constraints on the actions of soldiers because they serve the common well-being. Aquinas linked moderation in warfare with the ultimate goal of peace. He suggested that the intent of an action needed to match the act itself, and if one wanted to attain the prosperity of peace, then one’s actions should remain moderate, lest unintended and harmful consequences arise. Augustine and Aquinas argued that either God or secular rulers could authorize a just war, but disallowed individuals from using armed force unless in self-defense. Later thinkers built upon Augustine’s ideas and expanded them to the concept of holy war, which conferred the legitimacy of waging war only upon a divine authority or religious leader.

In the Middle Ages, the Papacy established the precedent of emphasizing its authority over secular rulers in waging war. Pope Gregory VII (r.1073-1085) developed this theory and practice with his loyal henchmen Bishop Anselm II of Lucca (1036-

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10 Tyerman, *God’s War*, 34-35.


1086), who coalesced Augustinian theories of just war together in his collection of canon law.\footnote{Tyerman, \textit{God's War}, 47.} In the mid-thirteenth century, Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243-1254) and papal canonist Hostiensis (1210-1271) stressed that the pope, as Vicar of Christ and heir to the Roman emperors, was the only authority who could wage just war.\footnote{Riley-Smith, \textit{The Crusades: A History}, 183.} Once a pope authorized a holy war or a crusade, recovering lands from both external and internal enemies of Christendom and stopping the injustices committed by the infidels against fellow Christians remained the ultimate goal.

In regard to the concept of usurpation in Christian just war theory, a notable writer, Christine de Pizan (1364-1430), in \textit{The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry} (1410), argued that recovering lands or lordships from a usurper constitutes one of the three main criteria for a just war, along with enforcing laws and punishing evildoers who oppress the innocent.\footnote{Christine de Pizan, \textit{The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry}, trans. Sumner Willard, eds., Charity Cannon Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 16.} Robert of Courçon (1160/70-1219) applied this concept to his holy war theory, which claimed that the infidels in the Holy Land usurped the rightful inheritance of Christians, whom God designated as His latter-day chosen people and heirs of the ancient Israelites.\footnote{F. H. Russell, \textit{The Just War in the Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 253.}

The Ming and French regimes in the fifteenth century utilized these concepts in their narratives. I will now show the ideological process to legitimate these two invasions by singling out significant excerpts from Ming and French primary sources published
around the start of each invasion, locating their narrative elements, and analyzing them. With Ming China, we will see that not only did the Ming employ Confucian just war concepts, but they also formulated a story that villainized Ho Quy Ly and heroized themselves in order to justify the invasion.

**Zhu Di’s Public Narrative**

The best articulation of the Ming narrative comes from Zhu Di’s injunctions as recorded in the Ming annals (*Ming shi-lu*), which betray a certain bias. Due to political rivalries within the Ming court, compilers and editors of the annals often manipulated the text to fit their own agendas. Confucian scholars edited the content to portray the government as a benevolent instrument because Confucian doctrine emphasized the righteousness, fairness, and kindness of the emperor as the state incarnate. The cultivation of benevolence (*ren*) and virtue (*de*) required the avoidance of war as much as possible. When war occurred, however, editors of the annals distorted any references to these events to reflect the ideology of the Chinese world order, rather than what actually happened. Therefore, Confucian ideology dominated both propaganda writing and imperial action, which informed Zhu Di’s injunctions.

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18 The *Ming Shi-lu*, or the “veritable records” of each Ming (1368-1644) emperor, comprised by Ming scholars from the Ming until the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), is an immense source of information on the Ming occupation of Vietnam. I use an online database of every single Southeast Asian reference in the *Ming shi-lu* translated by Geoff Wade. I also cross-check this translation with the Classical Chinese edition as well. Geoff Wade, “The *Ming Shi-lu* as a Source for Southeast Asian History” (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore), http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl (accessed Apr 17, 2016); Wade, trans. *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl (accessed Nov. 4, 2017).

19 Wade, “The *Ming Shi-lu* as a Source,” 16-17.

20 Wade, “The *Ming Shi-lu* as a Source,” 18-34.
Two particular entries in the annals, one from July 18, 1406, and the other from Nov. 19, 1406, record these injunctions. Both share the same tone and content but differ in length and specifics. The entry on July 18th, first given to the Ming generals on the eve of the invasion, does not contain the twenty crimes of Ho Quy Ly, while the Nov. 19th one expands upon the first one and does contain the crimes. Zhu Di wanted his message spread throughout Annam to garner support for his invasion, and his injunctions served this purpose by perpetuating a narrative of “good vs. evil.” Consider the more concise version of the opening section of the earlier entry:

Previously, in the time of the Emperor Tai-zu [Zhu Yuanzhang], Tran Du Tong (r.1341-1369), the king of Annam, took the lead in pledging allegiance and respectfully carried out the tribute duties. From beginning to end he was loyal, our country treated him very well and the people of Annam all shared in his fortune. [However, decades after Du Tong’s death, the last] three succeeding kings were killed by the bandit minister Ho Quy Ly and his son. They grabbed the throne, changed their names, usurped a dynastic title and killed nearly all the sons and grandsons of the Tran family. They then unleashed soldiers to rob and harm the innocent, invaded Champa and encroached across our border. Thien Binh, a grandson of the Trans [sic], was driven off by Ho and subsequently he came and pledged his allegiance to the Court. The bandit then falsely admitted guilt and requested that Thien Bihn be returned so that he could serve him as his lord. I treated him with sincerity and was not suspicious, and thus sent Thien Bihn back to his country with an escort. But that person there concealed an evil heart and he duped and killed Thien Bihn, made a fool of the Imperial envoy and killed and injured the Imperial troops. He has imposed cruel and severe punishments and levied harsh and exorbitant taxes. He has oppressed the people of the country and the people hate him to the marrow of his bones. The spirits of Heaven and Earth are unable to tolerate this. I have respectfully taken on the mandate of Heaven and treat the people on all sides as my children. I dare not fail to correct this situation.  


22 Ming Shi-lu http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-4-month-7-day-4 (accessed April 21, 2017); MSL, Taizong, 56:0822-25.
As a microcosm of the entire narrative, this opening section contained the key features of a public political narrative, with a temporally sequential account, establishing a story with definitive characters, a plot, settings, and selectivity in terms of the events and facts appropriated to conceive the desired narrative. First, the narrative set up the beginning, which in this case, referred to the obeisance the Tran king paid to the founder of the Ming dynasty. This began the decades-long friendly relationship between the Ming and the Tran. By placing Quy Ly’s crimes within this context, Zhu Di stipulated that Quy Ly violated these peaceful relations. From the Ming’s viewpoint, all of Quy Ly’s crimes constituted moral depravity and fringed upon the honor of the emperor’s benevolence. Zhu Di established the Ming as the protagonists, Quy Ly and his son, Ho Han Thuong, as the antagonists, and the supporting characters as all those who suffered under the Ho regime. A clear conflict existed between two competing forces, thus creating a plot.

To further illustrate this narrative, some of the twenty crimes (zui) not mentioned in the excerpt above deserve some description. In the Nov. 19th entry, the first eight crimes reiterated Quy Ly’s murder of the Tran family, ill-treatment of the people, and lies about accepting Thien Binh, but the third crime included the disrespect of the Chinese calendar. This gained significance as a violation of the Ming “social order” and implied that Quy Ly’s disregard of Chinese tradition constituted a major affront to Zhu Di’s authority. Crimes nine to thirteen related to Quy Ly’s taking of territories in Yunnan and Guangxi, while crimes fourteen to eighteen repeated the invasion of Champa. Finally,
crimes nineteen and twenty mentioned two incidents surrounding envoys. In addition, one thing not referenced in the earlier entry, but pointed out in the later one, involved a statement about the Ming unwillingly accepted Han Thuong’s enthronement and later found out that Han Thuong lied about the Tran murders. The Ming causally emplotted all of these crimes to fit within a narrative of just war.

The emplotment of these crimes required the usage of the concepts of just cause, usurpation, social order, *jus in bello*, and authority. I will dissect this emplotment to show how these five concepts manifested in the narrative. To justify his war, Zhu Di used the punishment of Quy Ly for the deaths of the Tran family and the rescue of the Vietnamese as his just causes, which informed the entire narrative. This began with the causal emplotment of Quy Ly’s crimes as the actions of an “evildoer.” Particularly, Zhu Di marked Quy Ly’s seizure of the throne and denying culpability to the Ming court as the prominent elements of a villainous ruler. The injunctions portray him as a bandit (*ze*) rather than a king (*wang*) and constantly refer to his “concealment of his crimes” (*xie jian*) and “evil hearts” (*bao cang huo xin*). This depiction damaged Quy Ly’s reputation.

The concept of “usurpation” took on a different meaning depending on its usage in opposing narratives. Quy Ly’s murder of the Tran claimant, Thien Binh, became a

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significantly emplotted event in the narrative with both sides interpreting this action antithetically. Whereas Quy Ly might justify it in the name of state building, Zhu Di condemned it as a crime against the social order. Quy Ly viewed Thien Binh as a pretender, but Zhu Di did not see it that way.

In addition, the suffering of the Vietnamese, when amalgamated with the events of Quy Ly’s other transgressions, enhanced the facet of tragedy in the story. The Ming constantly stressed Quy Ly’s harsh authoritarian rule and the people who hate their ruler “to the marrow of his bones.”25 They referred to the Vietnamese as a nameless victim because it served the story to exaggerate the number of people harmed by the Ho regime. By handling the narrative this way, the Ming made the Vietnamese sympathetic figures. Zhu Di vowed that he would save them from Quy Ly’s harmful actions, thus promoting his invasion as a just war.

This emphasis on the mission to save innocent people recalled the concept of *jus in bello*. In the injunctions, Zhu Di ordered his generals and troops not to harm anyone in Annam. Zhu Di’s injunctions provide valuable details about his decrees to his generals and the Vietnamese people:

I am especially sending you [my generals] to lead troops to console the people and to punish those who have been rebellious...Do not create disorder . . . do not damage houses or graves; do not harm the fields; do not recklessly take goods or valuables; do not carry off men's wives or daughters; and do not kill those who surrender. If there are any actions of this kind, then even if the persons involved have realized achievements, they will not be pardoned. You must be cautious . . . When the criminals have been captured, select a worthy male descendant of the

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Tran family to place on the throne, ensure that the region is being governed peacefully and then withdraw the army.\textsuperscript{26}

These orders claim that the Ming would not harm anyone or anything and only sought the restitution of the rightful heir, who never materialized. The production of this story reinforced the Ming’s claim to the just cause of its war through the idea of restraint in warfare. This type of rhetoric played a significant role in legitimizing the campaign, as it served to underscore the Ming’s heroic narrative.\textsuperscript{27}

In regard to social order, the Ming sought an end to Quy Ly’s constant incursions into Yunnan, Guangxi, and Champa. Zhu Di reproved Quy Ly for bullying weaker states \textit{(fan, qin)} because he considered these lands along with Annam as his vassals \textit{(fanzhen)} and any conflict between them a threat to China’s peaceful world order \textit{(pan)}. The relational positioning of Quy Ly’s invasions within a sequence of other infringements depicted Annam as an overaggressive state. These events compelled Zhu Di to launch a “righteous war,” a logic that fitted well with the rest of the narrative. Interestingly, Zhu Di’s father, Zhu Yuanzhang, did not intervene in Vietnam even when Quy Ly began his transgressions because he regarded the Vietnamese as barbarians and unable to accept

\textsuperscript{26} Ming Shi-lu http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-4-month-7-day-4 (accessed Nov. 4, 2017); MSL, Taizong, 56:0822-25.

\textsuperscript{27} One wonders whether the Ming actually followed through with Zhu Di’s rules, considering Vietnamese evidence stating otherwise. Answering this question may help us learn more about the historical memory of the Vietnamese and its impact on their identity. Vietnamese records charge the Chinese with immediately seizing women, children, and property as well as sending workers and boys back to the capital. Whitmore, \textit{Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)}, 92, note 33. In addition, these sources claim that the Ming brutally coerced the population, with the general Zhang Fu as the most ruthless and bloodthirsty killer. We also know that, based on Alexander Ong Eng Ann’s research, the Ming distorted details in the annals about taking and burning Vietnamese books, so there is a possibility that they left out details about those other criminal actions as well. Ong Eng Ann, “Contextualizing the Book-Burning Episode,” in \textit{Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor}, 154-65.
Chinese culture. Since this fact would weaken the Ming narrative, Zhu Di excluded his father’s “inactions” from the context of his story. By downplaying an event that went against his chosen storyline, he bolstered a dominant narrative that conformed to his agenda, a model example of selective appropriation.

Finally, the Confucian just war concept of “authority” legitimized Zhu Di’s narrative as well. At the end of the excerpt from the earlier entry above, Zhu Di assumed the role of Son of Heaven when he took on the mandate of heaven. This event would seem meaningless in isolation but set in the narrative of punishing Quy Ly, it emplaced the emperor as an upright authority figure and Quy Ly an immoral crook. As a result, Zhu Di’s role as a “heavenly peacemaker” reinforced China’s claim to the righteousness of its war and morally bankrupted Quy Ly.

Overall, in the timeline of events laid out in the injunctions, the Ming presented the ruthless rise of Quy Ly and their own inability to eliminate him as the start of all of the injustices committed against the Vietnamese and borderlanders. This combination of all of the events of Quy Ly’s crimes constituted a progression of lewdness worthy of foreign intervention. The same logic of legitimizing war through religious just war concepts existed in the French invasion of Italy as well.

**Charles VIII’s Public Narrative**

Charles VIII’s manifesto, as published on November 22, 1494, serves as the highlighted primary source here. This document contains Charles’ rationale for war and

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29 The manifesto was published in the journal of Johann Burchard (1450-1506), a *cérémoniare* who worked for the pope and kept an official record of events that occurred in the Vatican. I used mainly the French translation of the Latin original, while consulting the Latin version as well. A recent French
his request for Pope Alexander VI to grant him entry into the Vatican for provisions as he marched south onto Naples. He published it in several languages, ostensibly to gain as wide a readership as possible, which helped facilitate his arrival in various Italian cities, such as Siena, where the citizens greeted him with adulation. Most historians say little about the document, other than to take it at face value, but I believe the rhetorical language deserves some analytical and comparative attention. It provides an apropos French equivalent to the earlier Chinese texts because it constitutes the official narrative from the conqueror’s perspective.

Its central theme involved the piety of the French and their mission. With the expanding Ottoman Empire at the doorstep of Europe, the mentality and idea of the crusade reached a fever pitch in the late fifteenth century. Charles issued his manifesto within this cultural milieu. He argued that since Naples belonged to him by hereditary right and offered a convenient port in Valona to launch a fleet, he proposed to take over Naples as a stepping stone with which to fight the Ottomans. He then ended the document requesting passage into the Papal territories, by force if necessary.


32 Bisaha, Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks, 1-6.

33 "Le Manifeste,” II, 196-98; Burchard, Journal, 130-33.
Charles’ manifesto contained a definite plot with settings and events in a specific sequence. The selective appropriation, temporal sequencing, and emplotment of certain elements served the purpose of promoting the just war aspects of Charles’ invasion. Consider his opening statement where he discussed his motivations for fighting the Turks:

We have attentively considered and reflected deep into our souls on the innumerable wrongdoings, damages, murders, carnage, and devastations committed by the vile Turks in the last fifty years, as well as the desolation that these enemies of the Christian blood have spread in numerous cities and among Christian peoples. All of the horrible crimes of which they are guilty were made known to us by our forefathers’ reliable accounts. We wished, as in the example of our predecessors, the most Christian kings of France, to put an end to the crimes against Christianity, which these perfidious Turks continuously threaten, and to suppress their insatiable rage by any means necessary. After we have established peace and tranquility in our kingdom and domains, which pleased the Most High, we decided to spare neither our own person nor our efforts or goods to expel the enraged fury of the Turks and to recover the Holy Land and other states they took from Christian peoples.34

To establish his just cause, Charles vowed to protect Christians from the Turks, whom the text identified as “vile” (infâmes), “perfidious” (perfides), and “enraged” (rage insatiable; (L. sitibundam rabiem)). They disturbed the social order by spilling the blood of other Christians and taking over the Holy Land (Terre-Sainte). Charles thus promised to recover Jerusalem and save the suffering in the name of God. This element of safeguarding Christian values and serving God featured prominently in the narrative.

The salutation opened with, “Charles, king of the French by the grace of God, to all the faithful of Christ, devoted to the Catholic faith and eternal salvation in the Lord, who will read the present letter . . . ” Later in the text, he claimed the expedition as “a

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34 “Le Manifeste,” II, 196; Burchard, Journal, 130.
very saintly work with the help of God, whose cause we defend,” and a “saintly project . . . placed in our hearts (a été déposé dans notre cœur) by divine inspiration.” He assured his audience that he never intended to conquer any other states or cities, but only to magnify God’s glory and work.35 By addressing his fellow Christians in this manner, Charles relied on familiar religious language to appeal to Christendom. If everyone believed that Charles only “served God,” then less opposition would arise, supporting Charles’ claim to be the “most Christian king of France” (le rois très-chrétien de France). These narrative flourishes played to the expectations of a Christian audience.

After professing his faith, Charles then addressed his inheritance of Naples. The manifesto claimed that Charles’ ancestors, the Angevins, ripped away the Kingdom of Naples “from the hands of the infidels and other enemies of the Roman Church.” These historical predecessors received twenty-four investitures from several popes, solidifying their claim to Naples. However, the crime happened when Pius II “unjustly took the kingdom from us, to bestow it on a Ferrante of Aragon.” Supposedly, the pope wanted to raise his own family from plebeian to princely status.36 Although not addressed further in the manifesto, the mention of Ferrante was a reference to his bastardy and cruel treatment of the Neapolitan people.

Ferrante grew up as an illegitimate child and received naturalization when his father crowned him as king of Naples. Philippe de Commynes, in his Memoirs, declared that while Ferrante’s son, Alfonso II, was extremely cruel, vicious, and greedy, “the


father was more dangerous, for no one could ever recognize his wrath. It was said that he
seized, betrayed, and murdered anyone who would dare cross him,” and that “there was
never any grace or mercy in him . . . he had no compassion for the people.”\(^{37}\) The French
used these details of Ferrante’s authoritarian rule, “usurpation,” and disruption as
propaganda to justify the invasion.\(^{38}\)

In terms of “authority,” Charles viewed himself as a defender of all Christians.
Although he mentioned his mission as a project “under the auspices of the Pontiff” and
other princes, he projected an image of himself as a potential authority who could
legitimize a just war. French propaganda writers openly conveyed this position and even
placed the king’s role above that of the pope. One of them, André de La Vigne (1470-
1526), offered the idea that crusading became a princely duty, and while popes may agree
to a crusade, only princes can decide to conduct them.\(^{39}\) Even though papal crusade
tradition might emphasize the \textit{de jure} official role of the pope, the French king chose not
to follow this idea strictly. However, if he challenged the pope’s authority, then he would
lose the latter’s support. Hence, Charles heightened his authority but in an attenuated
tone.

Finally, despite the prevalence of \textit{jus in bello} in Christian just war theory, the
French failed to mention it in their narrative. In the manifesto, Charles claimed that he
would not harm the Church or its lands, but he made a veiled threat of violence if the

\(^{37}\) Commynes, \textit{The Memoirs of Philippe de Commynes}, trans. Cazeaux, VII.13, 476; Commynes,
\textit{Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes}, vol. 2, VII.13, 178-79.

\(^{38}\) Abulafia, “Intro,” in \textit{The French Descent}, 17.

\(^{39}\) Pascale Barthe, \textit{French Encounters with the Ottomans, 1510-1560} (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016),
15.
pope refused him access into Rome.\textsuperscript{40} Furthermore, Commynes recorded the French army’s plundering of several towns and expressed his displeasure over it.\textsuperscript{41} Commynes advocated for \textit{jus in bello}, but his king neglected it, perhaps due to the nature of mercenaries, who made it harder to control their behavior in the battlefield, thus rendering the mention of \textit{jus in bello} a fruitless endeavor. However, the most plausible reason was that under the command of Charles’ generals, the French used the deliberate slaughter of resistance forces to dishearten defenders in other places.\textsuperscript{42} Quickly defeating opposing armies and restoring peace became more important than restraint in warfare, meaning that the ends justified the means for the French. Of course, Charles’ manifesto excluded this information lest he incur the hatred of those he conquered.

As part of narrative creation, the selective appropriation of events followed a pattern of pushing the moral rationale of the mission into the foreground and political motives into the background as much as possible. For example, Charles omitted any information that would damage the French narrative. If Charles had included the fact that Ferdinand the Catholic also held a claim to the Neapolitan throne as Ferrante’s relative, or that Réné of Anjou refused to pass on the Angevin claim to Charles’ father, Louis XI, then Charles would have weakened his narrative because these events formed a part of

\textsuperscript{40} “Le Manifeste,” II, 197; Burchard, \textit{Journal}, 132-33.


opposing narratives. By lessening the political motivations of the mission, Charles could place more emphasis on the Christian elements of his war.

To push his crusade agenda, Charles placed four events into a particular order: 1) the crusade proposal, 2) inspiration from God, 3) the claim to Naples, and 4) the request for entry into Rome. When placed in isolation or out of context, each act meant very little, but positioned in this order and combination of events, they became causally emplotted. The relationality of every event in the narrative needed a specific sequential order in a particular time and space. By starting with crusade and Christian themes, Charles’ manifesto underlined the Turks, rather than Ferrante, as the main enemy. In addition, Charles connected the holy war with the recovery of Naples when he declared that he would use naval bases in southern Italy to attack Ottoman-controlled Greece. Thus, Charles emplotted the invasion of Naples into the narrative because it would support the crusade. The same goes for the request for entry into Rome, as it served the Christian mission by providing Charles with victuals to supply the army.

The religious angle built on Christian fears of an Ottoman invasion and appealed to a greater audience, as opposed to just the enemies of Ferrante. The villainization of the Turks invoked the memory of the historical conflicts that pitted Christians against the “infidels” in the eleventh century. In this case, the Turks attacked the Christians of Constantinople, southern Italy, and the Balkans, which constituted a major injustice in the eyes of Christendom. Of course, Christians fought each other relentlessly in the Middle Ages, but the establishment of a common enemy elided this fact to support the

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narrative. By emphasizing the crusade and the piety of the French king and downplaying political rationales, the narrative heroized the French as pious protagonists fighting against the “evil” Muslims. In summation, the French usage of crusade and just war concepts in their narrative legitimized the invasion of Italy.

Comparison of the Two Narratives

From a comparison of the Ming and French narratives, we can see that their similarities are remarkable. Even though the cultural milieus and historical contexts differed in many ways, comparing the narratives contained in the Ming annals and Charles VIII’s manifesto yield good results in similar styles, rhetorical language, and religious just war concepts. In terms of narrative creation, both the Ming and French adhered to a similar logic in following the styles of selective appropriation, causal emplotment, temporal sequencing, and relationality. In addition, ideologies of Confucianism and Christianity affected the language of these invasion narratives, since both the Chinese and French alluded to long-established traditions, rooted in religious beliefs. Out of the five just war concepts of “just cause,” “usurpation,” “social order,” “jus in bello” and “authority,” the two narratives shared similarities in four of them, only differing in “jus in bello.”

In terms of emplotment, both the Ming and French interpreted the “facts” or events in the manner of “just cause” and centralized their stories around a conflict between “good and evil.” Their narratives selectively appropriated certain events and details in a way that established and villainized a common enemy (Ho family; Ottomans;

\[44\text{ Just as an example in the context of this thesis, see Abulafia, The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200-1500: The Struggle for Dominion, just for the conflicts alone in southern Italy.}\]
Ferrante’s family), while underscoring the liberation of an oppressed group (Vietnamese: Christians; Neapolitans). Both narratives participated fully in the idea that a just cause in war meant the prevention of tyranny, disorder, the removal of evils, and the rescue of those who cannot protect themselves. Therefore, the Ming and French invasions functioned as pre-modern forms of humanitarian intervention.45

In addition, both narratives referenced the concept of “usurpation,” when they proposed the recovery of certain lands. In the Vietnamese case, the Ming aimed to take back Vietnam from the usurper Ho Quy Ly, while in the Italian case, the French sought to reclaim both Naples from the usurper Ferrante and the Holy Land from the “usurping” Turks. This concept played an important rhetorical role in justifying these wars.

Furthermore, the Ming and French narratives reflected the Christian and Confucian just war traditions of acknowledging the importance of upholding or maintaining the social or natural order. The Ming accused Quy Ly of disrupting (pan) the Chinese social order. Similarly, the French condemned Ferrante and the Ottomans for fracturing the peace in Europe.46 Zhu Di viewed himself as a protector of his various peoples and Charles similarly considered himself as a defender of all Christians. By seeking to clear out the “evildoers” in the name of restoring peace, these rulers justified their wars.

45 The crusades were a form of medieval humanitarian military intervention, in the sense that it was a defense of the defenseless. Ryden, Just War and Pacifism, 54.

46 Interestingly, the Ming and French sought to reassert their international authority by bringing peace on their own terms. Zhu Di tried to improve Ming China’s status as the central force in Asian politics, while Charles VIII (and later his two successors) attempted the same goal in European politics. They attempted to maintain their jurisdictions in a world before the creation of international laws.
These narratives also depended on the idea of “authority.” Someone with legitimacy must authorize a “righteous war,” and both the Ming and French asserted their abilities to declare one. These notions of grandeur gave them tremendous power and influence in deciding what constituted “evil actions” and “just wars.” In this sense, the pretensions to authorize a just war differed very little between the Ming emperor and French king.

The only concept where the narratives diverged is *jus in bello*. Whereas the Ming openly professed their commitment to restraint in warfare, the French failed to mention it. Zhu Di tried to preserve his image as a “sage-king,” so he emphasized benevolence (*ren*) and virtue (*de*) through *jus in bello*, but Charles VIII cared little for righteous conduct and believed that the ends justified the means. In an ironic twist, Zhu Di adhered to the philosophies of the Sima Fa, Augustine, and Aquinas, while Charles VIII displayed secular tendencies more akin to the philosophies of the *Art of War*.

**Concluding Remarks**

This phenomenon of justifying war through older traditions reflects a surprising similarity in the Ming and French invasions. Both political regimes differed in aspects of government, culture, language, and times. As this chapter has shown, Confucianism and Christianity played an important role in influencing the narratives of the Ming and French invasions. As we will see, other elements influenced these narratives as well. For the next chapter, we actually focus on one of these features that differed between the Ming and French narratives: prophecy.
CHAPTER 5

THE SECOND COMING OF CHARLEMAGNE AND MAITREYA: 
A DIVERGENCE IN THE PRESENCE OF PROPHECY IN 
FRENCH AND MING PUBLIC NARRATIVES

Introduction

In Religion and the Decline of Magic, Keith Thomas argues that prophecies in 
seventeenth-century England functioned not simply as morale-boosters, but as “validating 
charters” for “new enterprises undertaken in the face of strong contemporary 
prohibitions.” By persuading people that their ancestors foresaw the coming of these 
events, prophets disguised prognostications under “the sanction of past approval.” 
Prophecies “justified wars or rebellions and they made periods of unprecedented change 
emotionally acceptable to those who lived in them.”¹

This peculiar phenomenon remains the subject of this chapter. As we have seen 
previously, religious ideologies pervaded the justifications of the conquerors. Continuing 
this trend, poets and writers in France and Italy infused their propaganda writings with 
religious elements based on Christianity and eschatology. Along with the prophesizing of 
Girolamo Savonarola, this millenarian fervor gave substantial impetus to the invasions of 
the French monarchy by making the French king into a messianic figure.

¹ Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and 
In contrast, nothing of the sort occurred in early fifteenth-century China or Vietnam. Despite this incongruity, we can still achieve a more nuanced understanding of the ideologies of premodern China and France by analyzing this disparity in depth. For this chapter, we shall examine the French and Ming public political narratives in regard to eschatology. By applying a “lens” comparative methodology, which uses the French-Italian case as a lens through which to view the Chinese-Vietnamese one, this chapter finds that although prophecy played no role in the Ming invasion of Vietnam due to the suppression of eschatology in the early 1400s, similar instances of millenarianism based on Buddhist ideology happened quite frequently in the history of China and Vietnam. For our comparison, I employ the method of narrative theory with the French example and then use it as a framework to understand the situation in Ming China and Dai Viet. Before our analysis, I present the concepts of millenarian prophecy in Europe and China leading up to the fifteenth century.

**Christian and Buddhist Concepts of Messianism**

The eschatology that permeated the cultural atmosphere surrounding the French invasion appealed to an older Christian tradition dating back to Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202). Hailing from Calabria, Italy, Joachim was a theologian and eschatological thinker in the Middle Ages. He garnered a well-regarded reputation for his theological works and inspired the later development of western apocalyptic thought. His most influential contribution stemmed from his theory on the division of history into three parts, or eras, based on the Trinity. The time of the Father corresponded to the Old Testament, while the time of the Son, represented by the New Testament, referred to Joachim’s period between the birth of Christ and 1260. Joachim believed that a third era, correlating with the Holy
Spirit, must await, which would occur after the crisis of the Antichrist. In this final battle for the souls of all Christendom, an Angelic Pope would arrive and save the world, creating a utopian society. After Joachim’s death, his thought melded and transformed into various apocalyptic prophecies, all built upon his millenarianism. We refer to this strand of intellectual ideas collectively as Joachimism.  

The most relevant strand for the discussion of our topic revolves around the Second Charlemagne Prophecy. Its origins began with the millenarian belief in the Last World (or Roman) Emperor. Popularized by the seventh-century work called the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (falsely credited to Methodius, a fourth-century Christian thinker), this prophecy predicted the coming of a final emperor who would reestablish a new heavenly empire, return to Jerusalem, and bring about the ultimate confrontation between Christ and the Antichrist. In the fourteenth century, prophets and intellectuals associated the Last World Emperor with Charlemagne, who obtained heroic status in popular and mythical literature.

This prophecy, as it evolved since Joachim’s time, had the Second Charlemagne reconquering the Holy Land and defeating the Antichrist. For example, in the works of Jean de Roquetaillade (1310-1366/70) and Telesphorus (14th C.?), there appeared themes of the Antichrist arising in a pope or German emperor, who faces defeat at the hands of a French king possibly named *Karolus*. Although European writers often switched the association from one king to another when it suited them to do so (ex. Charles VII;

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2 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 1-133.


4 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 324-27.
Charles V), the link between the French king and the Last World Emperor hardened in the late fifteenth century with the rise of the Turks and a French monarch named Charles.

In Asia, there existed a similar type of premodern eschatology. The main source of millenarian political activity in China and Vietnam stemmed from a concept based on Buddhism. A portent from Buddhist texts foretold the coming of a future Buddha named Maitreya (Ch. Mile). According to this prophecy, Maitreya will come to Earth, achieve enlightenment, and succeed the present Buddha, Gautama Buddha (563/480 BCE – 483/400 BCE). Supernatural events will accompany his arrival, and after attaining Buddhahood, he will enact a new dharma, or bring about a new era in the world.⁵

Followers of Buddhism and important figures in premodern China often attached the name of Maitreya to their political agendas. Sometimes, it served the purpose of motivating a local rebellion or increased the prestige of a ruler. For example, the female Tang emperor, Wu Zetian (684-704), appropriated the prophecy for herself when she claimed to be the incarnation of Maitreya, which legitimized her rule.⁶ From the sixth to the eleventh centuries, various rebellions occurred in the name of Maitreya that led to thousands of deaths. These usually succumbed to the forces of the imperial government, however.⁷ Nevertheless, beliefs in Maitreya never died out entirely and continued to make an impact on local religious groups.

Since the Ming did not experience the Maitreyan phenomenon in their invasion of Vietnam, I give more attention to the French invasion and the ideological process

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employed to legitimize it than to the Ming invasion. Just as in the previous chapter, significant excerpts from French and Italian primary sources provide the main evidence here. Afterwards, I will explore the reasoning behind the lack of a prophetic phenomenon in Ming China and Vietnam.

Supernaturalism and Millenarianism in France and Italy, 1494-1495

Supernatural episodes manifested quite frequently in the European sources of the late fifteenth century. Venetian doctor Alessandro Benedetti, who served on the battlefields of Italy in 1495, wrote a diary that provides us a glimpse into these events. Based on his book, astrologers began predicting “that a mighty calamity would befall Italy at that time and that King Ferrante I would lose his realm without bloodshed and through public opinion alone.”8 In 1493, “there were swollen rivers and floods that tumbled bridges and created a portent that large masses of foreign people would likewise pour into Italy in the same way.” After experiencing peace in the last fifty years, Italians now feared for the end of the world and the rupture of their livelihoods.

Benedetti recalled, “A certain religious man in Novara [in northwest Italy], preaching during the Lenten period in 1494, predicted that a calamity was coming to the Italians, with all sort of foreigners including Swiss, Swabians, Teutons, Dalmatians, Spaniards, Macedonians, Greeks, Turks, and French coming.”9 Much of this prognostication accompanied the news of the encroachment of the Ottomans and French upon Italian soil, armed with armies composed of foreign mercenaries. These prophetic events lent an air of supernaturalism to the French invaders, which equaled the spread of

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apocalyptic thought. Benedetti’s reports symbolized the underlying mentality of popular beliefs in late-fifteenth-century Europe: a Christian-based tradition influenced the creation of these prophecies and their inclusion into the main public narrative as perpetuated by the French state. As Charles VIII prepared his expedition to take over Naples, this prophetic fervor fed the French and Italians with material to create propagandistic stories to support the invasion.10

This occurred most dramatically in the Savonarolan moment from 1494 to 1495. On January 13, 1495, Savonarola delivered his renovation sermon that detailed his prophetic thoughts and his mission of reform to a concerned Florentine audience. This sermon best represented Savonarola’s discourse of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, thus serving as a useful primary source. His most famous quote in the opening reflected nearly all of his past predictions: “Behold, the sword of the Lord [will be] over the earth soon and swiftly.” (Ecce gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter).11 Paralleling his other visions, this prophecy of the scourge referred to a great calamity arriving upon the Earth. He recalled a vision where he once saw a hanging sword over Italy quivering, pointing downward, and thrusting down with tempest, afflicting all of the sinners.12 Savonarola associated this sword with Charles VIII and interpreted his arrival as a signal of the reform of the Church, the conversion of the infidels, and a new world in Italy.

To legitimize his authority, he constantly referred to his impeccable skill for soothsaying. Four years ago, Savonarola predicted that a wind would come and that it

10 Bisaha, Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks, 39-40.
12 Savonarola, Selected Writings, 69.
would shake the mountains. Savonarola interpreted the mountains as the “trembling” princes of Italy, vacillating between “believing and not believing that this king would come. And, behold, he has come, [although] you were saying, “he will not come; he has . . .” In addition to correctly predicting the coming of Charles VIII, Savonarola also chastised those who refused to believe in him when he predicted the deaths of Lorenzo de Medici and Pope Innocent VIII. Now that his predictions kept coming true, the Florentines took him more seriously.

Many of the ideas contained in the renovation sermon derived from Savonarola’s variant of Joachimist prophecies. As tradition, these variations remained well-established in the popular Florentine augury of the day. For example, Savonarola’s prediction of a new pontificate echoed Joachim’s Angelic Pope, while his usages of *cito et velociter* recalled earlier Florentine expressions such as *cito et breviter* (very soon and shortly). His concept of *flagellum Dei*, the sword of God’s wrath, paralleled the prophecies of Daniel, St. John, St. Bridge, and other prophets that circulated in popular Italian literature. In a manner corresponding to the crusade narrative, Savonarola justified Charles’ war by alluding to long-established traditions, rooted in religious beliefs. He supported the French narrative through the inclusion of his own prophecies.

French writers matched Savonarola’s Joachimism. To illustrate this concept, I shall go over some of the pro-French propaganda writings that incorporated crusade and

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13 Savonarola, *Selected Writings*, 71.

14 The Florentines even burned their books and cultural works of arts because they took him so seriously. Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence*, Ch. 9.

millenarian themes. Just like Savonarola, writers attributed the Second Charlemagne
Prophecy to the French king, which imbued the invasion narrative with an aura of
messianism that suited the political and cultural climate of the time. They responded to
the court’s political agenda and tried to woo it by transforming Charles VIII into a
legend.

Charles’ physician, Jean Michel (1435?-1495?), reportedly experienced a
prophetic vision and wrote a treatise about it called De la nouvelle reformation du siècle
et de la récupération de Jérusalem (On the new reformation of the century and the
recovery of Jerusalem). He prophesied that Charles, as the heralded reformer, would
rectify the world, retake Jerusalem from the infidels, and become the sole ruler of the
world.16 Another poet, Guilloche de Bordeaux, “unearthed the very Second Charlemagne
prophecy once written for Charles VI [1368-1422], and expanded it in vernacular verse.”
Echoing Jean Michel, Bordeaux wrote that Charles would venture into Italy, subdue
Rome and Greece, become king of the Romans and Greeks, and go into Jerusalem after
defeating all of the barbarians and heathens, where he would put down his crown on the
Mount of Olives in favor of Christ.17 Michel and Bordeaux obviously drew inspiration
from the current prophetic trend.

Their contemporary, André de La Vigne, dreamed of Christianity in the form of a
woman, who called upon Charles to save her from the infidels. La Vigne adapted this

16 Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy, 355-56.

17 “Il fera de si grant batailles/ Qu’il subiuguera les Ytailles,/ Espaigneulz et Aragonnoys,/ Lombarde, aussi bien Yrlandoys,/ Et d’autres gens subiuguera,/ Et puis après conquestera/ Vaillament la
cité de Romme/ Et obtiendra double couronne,/Nommé sera roy des Rommains.” As quoted in Reeves, The
Influence of Prophecy, 355-56.
dream into one of his poems, where one of the characters (Bon Conseil) admonished a war skeptic (Je ne sçay qui) and urged everyone to consider the exploits and great deeds of Charlemagne. By going to war, Bon Conseil argued, the French would rescue the Christian lady (Dame Crestienté) from the damned Turks (les Turcs maulditz). La Vigne’s story marked the Ottomans as a grave threat and depicted them as the villains in a chivalric narrative. He presented his poem to Charles while the French army crossed the Alps, ostensibly to inspire Charles on his way to becoming a crusader and contribute to the heroic narrative.

In addition to these French writers, Italian poets produced some of this propaganda literature with equal flair. Ugolino Verino, a Florentine humanist, wrote an epic in Latin about Charlemagne’s deeds called the Charliad and hoped to present it to Charles VIII. In his dedication to Charles, Verino glorified the French king “not only because you derive name and bloodline from him [Charlemagne]. You truly emulate his ways and deeds. Thus we foresee in you the founder, having driven out again and thoroughly removed the stench of Muhammad from Jerusalem as well as every region, to be clothed in the sacred truth and imperial dignity of Christ a second time . . . ”

The connection between Verino’s subject matter, dedication, and the Second Charlemagne

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18 Barthe, French Encounters with the Ottomans, 1510-1560, 15; André de La Vigne, La resource de la chrestienté, ed., Cynthia J. Brown (Montreal: CERES, 1989).

19 Barthe, French Encounters, 14-16.


21 As quoted in Bisaha, “Creating East and West,” 40.
Prophecy remains quite clear. As a way to motivate Charles to emulate his ancestors and to gain patronage, Verino relied on the familiar literary trends involving prophecy.

In a similar example, Marsilio Ficino’s Latin oration to Charles VIII in November 1494 delivered the same type of fawning language present in Verino’s work. He referred to Charles as magnus, a homage to Charlemagne, and hoped that once Charles had captured Naples, he would battle the Turks and save Jerusalem. For example, in one section, he writes, “... the exalted Charles appears to have been sent by God to subdue the Turks and to recapture holy Jerusalem from the visible enemies, just as almighty God himself has freed the human race from the invisible fiends.” Ficino portrayed Florence as a chosen city (or in Savonarolan terms, as New Jerusalem) and depicted Charles’ investing it with that title.\(^{22}\) Certainly, all of these writers drew inspiration from the prophetic themes of Telesforus and Roquetaillade, who in turn derived their ideas from Joachimism.\(^{23}\) By evoking Joachimist ideas, these propaganda writings appealed to Christian and eschatological sensibilities and contributed to the French narrative by perpetuating images of Charles VIII as a messiah.

**Various Prophetic Literature in the French Invasion of Milan, 1499-1525**

This narrative infusion of prophecies and crusading themes lasted into the reigns of Louis XII and Francis I as well. Hopes for a crusade and a Second Charlemagne never died out after Charles’ failed expedition in 1495.\(^{24}\) In fact, the production of literary

\(^{22}\) Scheller, “Imperial Themes,” 5-7. Robert Scheller argues that even though these kinds of orations were quickly forgotten just as they were quickly written, these texts played to the propagandistic nature of them and the development of growing absolutism of French kings.

\(^{23}\) Scheller, “Imperial Themes,” 29.

\(^{24}\) In addition, historian John Gagne has expounded on other preachers who were active during the French invasion of Milan. During the occupation of Milan, a female preacher named Arcangela Panigarola
works based on messianism more or less matched the level of crusading fervor throughout the sixteenth century and even after the Franco-Ottoman alliance in 1536, albeit in an attenuated form.\(^{25}\) During Louis XII’s invasion and occupation of Milan from 1499-1512, panegyrists and \textit{rhétoriquers} extolled the French king’s crusade duties. They accommodated the new king by merely changing the designation of the Second Charlemagne from Charles to Louis. As Guy Le Thiec’s and Robert Scheller’s articles show, several Latin works from Italian authors, Giovanni Armonio Marso (1479?-1550?), Alberto Cattaneo (mid-15th?–16th C.?), and Michele Nagonio (1450?-1510?), all continued to lend credence to the notion that the French would beat the Turks and recover the holy land.\(^{26}\)

French authors such as Pierre Gringore (1475?-1538) never ceased to generate propaganda literature. In his “Le grant jubilé de millan” (The great jubilation of Milan), written in 1500, the poet announced the embarkation of the French fleet for the Holy Land after conquering the refractory Milanese, thus reviving the motif of a crusade.\(^{27}\)


Similarly, in “La Complainte de Constantinople à Rome” (The lamentation from Constantinople to Rome), written in 1501, the poet celebrated the French victory and issued a challenge to any who would defy the French. In one section, the poem exhorts the king to

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\text{Viens prendre le couronne double (come take the two crowns)} \\
\text{Comme fist le roy Charlemagne (as the king Charlemagne had done)} \\
\text{Pour nous mettre tous hors du peine. (to keep us all out of hardship.)}^{28}
\]

As a reference to the twin crowns of Jerusalem and Rome, Gringore alluded to older Joachimist themes that existed in the propaganda of Charles’ reign.\(^{29}\) He just changed the designation from Charles to Louis.

The production of this prophecy lived on even after the ousting of Louis XII and his successor Francis I from northern Italy. In 1522, there appeared in Paris a Joachimite anthology entitled the \textit{Mirabilis liber}, which contained the familiar Last World Emperor prophecy and its association with the French.\(^{30}\) As the book stated, in time, “There shall come forth a monarch of the illustrious lily [France] who shall have a lofty brow, prominent eyebrows, large eyes, and an aquiline nose,” which alluded directly to the similar facial qualities between Francis I and Charlemagne.\(^{31}\) After subjugating various Christian peoples, such as the English, Spaniards, and Italians, the king of France would go on a crusade:

\(^{28}\) As quoted in Sherman, “The Selling of Louis XII,” 93-94. The English translation is mine.

\(^{29}\) Scheller, “Imperial Themes,” 32.

\(^{30}\) Heath, \textit{Crusading Commonplaces}, 51-52; Reeves, \textit{The Influence of Prophecy}, 379-80.

He shall gain a double crown; then, crossing the sea at the head of a great army, he shall enter Greece and shall be named king of the Greeks. He shall subjugate the Turks and Barbarians [i.e. Muslims], and shall publish an edict whereby whoever will not worship the cross shall be put to death . . . [Upon his ascension] up to Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, he shall pray to the Lord and, baring his crowned head and giving thanks to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he shall surrender his soul at this place, together with the crown; and the land shall quake, and miracles shall be seen.\textsuperscript{32}

The prevalence of these obvious Joachimist ideas in the \textit{Mirabilis liber} not only reflected the popularity of these prophecies but also their function in the narrative as a way to bolster flagging military endeavors in Italy. In fact, after the capture of Francis in the Battle of Pavia in 1525, another edition of the book appeared soon after to raise French spirits.\textsuperscript{33} By the time of this publication, France had already suffered many defeats and would never occupy Italy again. Prophecies obviously remained popular enough at least with public literary tastes to gain publication and rally up support for another French invasion.

\textbf{Narrative Creation in French and Italian Prophecies}

From all of these examples, we can see that prophecies and poems from both French and Italian political actors buttressed the crusade narrative. Indeed, the apocalyptic rhetoric that pervaded these texts reflected two key components of a narrative: causal emplotment and temporality. The emplotment of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy within a narrative of the French invasion of Italy transformed the role of the French king from a simple heroic figure to an almost Christ-like character. As I showed in the previous chapter, the king already set out to make himself the protagonist

\textsuperscript{32} Mirabilis Liber, number 15, “Second Charlemagne Prophecy.”

\textsuperscript{33} Heath, \textit{Crusading Commonplaces}, 51-52
of a story. The inclusion of supernatural elements only further legitimized him as the hero.

Consider the Savonarola phenomenon. Historians have pointed out that Savonarola’s prophecies appeared right when the political changes of Florence occurred. This made it easy, with hindsight, to interpret Savonarola’s early prophecies as concomitant with the latest political developments. He emplotted the crises of the present as an apocalyptic story in which a new ruler would emerge to relieve the suffering of the people. This interpretation of the governmental transformations happening in Italy facilitated the arrival of someone who could match Savonarola’s visions of a “hanging sword” over Florence. That person, of course, was Charles VIII.

All of the writers mentioned above made similar narrative choices. Their method and logic causally emplotted the crusade to fit within the narrative of invading Italy because it served the current climate of apocalyptic attitudes. As Pascale Barthe argues, the poems of rhétoriquers such as André de La Vigne sought to “exalt the expansionist” policies of the French king. Since “the crusade had become more a façade than a reality by the late fifteenth century . . . [it] was used as a parade and a deflector for the French; early modern readers . . . would have understood as much.” These writers knew that the rhetoric of crusades and prophecies supported the narrative of invasion and appealed to the masses. As a result, they emplotted these ideologically charged motifs into the state’s narrative.

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34 Savonarola, *Selected Writings*, Intro., xxii.


We can clearly see this tendency in the temporal shifts of their writings. Millenarian thought tended to adapt itself to the next generation of personages. In different temporal settings, Joachimist prophecies offered legitimization for rulers who wanted to go on a crusade. For example, during Louis XII and Francis I’s reigns, writers simply changed the messianic protagonist to fit the current king. This also applied to rulers who shared the name of “Charles” or Carolus. Thus, we see European crusade expectations fall on Charles V of Spain when the French failed to conquer Italy.  

Charles V possessed the same name, and he acquired a considerable number of territories in the world, making him a prime candidate for receiving millenarian publicity from propaganda writers. Narratively speaking, these prophecies acquired different meanings by association. In the context of Charles VIII’s reign, they helped justify the invasion of Naples, but emplotted in Charles V’s reign, they magnified the power of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. As a result, the Second Charlemagne Prophecy illustrated an effective narrative tool in the hands of conquerors.

Buddhist Millenarianism in Premodern China and Vietnam, 1000-1450

In the Ming invasion of Vietnam, one finds nothing resembling the European experience. Many of the major secondary sources I consulted do not mention messianism or millenarianism in any capacity. Intriguingly enough, with some further research into the histories of premodern China and Vietnam, one can see that millenarian activity occurred quite frequently and often achieved the same level of political influence as the

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38 Although I have mainly relied on secondary sources in western languages, as well as one early Japanese source by Yamamoto Tatsuro, I have a firm belief that no reference would exist in Chinese sources either. I will explain in more detail below.
fifteenth-century Joachimist phenomenon had. In fact, the prophecies that accompanied these instances mirrored the Last World Emperor prophecy nearly perfectly. The Red Turban Rebellion (1351-1368) that overthrew the Mongols and the Hoa Hao movement in mid-twentieth-century Vietnam come to mind as examples of this usage of prognostication. To understand why prophecy failed to materialize during the Ming invasion of Vietnam, we shall first go over the historical background of eschatology as it appeared in premodern Asian politics in relation to the early fifteenth century. As we will see, ideologies based on religion continued to play a significant role in justifying war.

The most noteworthy rebellion based on Maitreyan apocalyptic fervor revolved around the downfall of the Yuan dynasty. In the mid-fourteenth century, the Mongol regime in China faced serious threats to its authority. Flooding of the Yellow River in 1344 led to droughts and epidemics, which generated an atmosphere of omens and prophecies among the populace. This in turn sprouted a powerful movement that overthrew an empire.

It began with the growth of the White Lotus, or White Lotus Society (bailian she). This secret group combined beliefs from Buddhism and Manichaeism, the latter a dualistic religion from Sasanian Persia (224-651). Through the group’s religious hybridity, some of the leaders of the society believed in the Manichaean conflict between light (good) and dark (evil), and the coming of Maitreya as the reincarnation of the

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Manichean Prince of Light.\footnote{For more on the White Lotus, see Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}.} This society burst onto the political scene with the rise of Han Shantong (?-1351), one of the early leaders of the Red Turban rebellion. He proclaimed that “the empire was in great disorder, Maitreya Buddha shall descend to be reborn and the King of Light (mingwang) shall appear in this world.” He designated his son, Han Lin’er (1340-1366), as the King of Light, and as a descendant of a Song dynasty emperor, Huizong (r.1100-1126).\footnote{Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 116.} Han’s rise also coincided with the ascendancy of Zhu Yuanzhang. The future dynastic founder remained in a subordinate position in the society at first because of the strong, charismatic support associated with Maitreyan prophecies in the Han camp.

The rebellion ultimately succeeded in expelling the Mongols, but shortly after, a civil war ensued within the Red Turban group. After facing off with other claimants from the White Lotus society, Zhu Yuanzhang prevailed and took over the throne. As the Hongwu emperor, he named his dynasty Ming, or bright, as a reference to Han Shantong’s King of Light (mingwang).\footnote{Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 117-18; Hok-Lam Chan, “The "Song" Dynasty Legacy: Symbolism and Legitimation from Han Liner to Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming Dynasty,” \textit{Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies} 68, no. 1 (June, 2008), 91-133.} Once firmly settled as emperor, however, he wanted to regulate all aspects of Chinese life to restore the empire’s glory after the “dark days” of Yuan rule. The Ming founder attempted to revert China to an agricultural society and confine religious worship to a limited number of cults. As part of his overall policy, he prohibited the White Lotus society, the very movement that brought him his throne. Fundamentally, Zhu Yuanzhang’s structural transformation of Chinese society
derived from Confucian ideology, which provided him the tools to enforce a policy that emphasized the cohesiveness of the state.\textsuperscript{44} Any seditious forces brewing in China would therefore suffer the consequences if they stirred up any trouble. These restrictions only tightened under Zhu Di’s reign, especially since he sought to legitimize his claim to the throne after usurping it from his nephew.

Because of these policies, any Maitreya based political movements were snuffed out in the early Ming. White Lotus references disappear mostly out of sight in the sources from 1368 to 1450.\textsuperscript{45} Nevertheless, around the time of invasion and occupation of Vietnam, some sources mention several Maitreya inspired moments that occurred in mainland China. These events showed that messianism never completely vanished in the early 1400s.

During Zhu Di’s rehabilitation of the empire after the civil war, poverty and punitive taxes on the population revitalized millenarian movements. Rumors told of the imminent coming of a Buddhist messiah who would punish Zhu Di for his terror against his people. Soon enough, dissident rebels emerged. In Shaanxi, a man named Gao Fuxing referred to himself as Maitreya and organized an anti-taxation group formed of poor peasants. In 1409, as the Ming regime consolidated its rule in Vietnam, another insurrection appeared elsewhere in China. A religious leader, Li Faliang, also proclaimed himself as Maitreya in Tanxiang County, Huguang, where his movement spread to neighboring counties and created much disorder. Similarly, in 1418, Liu Hua imitated

\textsuperscript{44} Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 123-24.

\textsuperscript{45} Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 114.
these insurrectionists and told his followers he was the real Buddhist messiah, ready to save the world.\footnote{Tsai, \textit{Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle}, 108; Wang Jing, “Mingdai minjian zhongjiao fazhengfu huodong di zhidong biaoxian yu tezeng,” \textit{Nankai xuebao}, no. 2 (March 1987), 28.} Zhu Di swiftly extinguished these rebellions and killed the leaders’ family members.

Perhaps the most fascinating of these messianic cases stemmed from a female leader, Tang Saier. Two years after Liu Hua’s demise, a native daughter of Putai in Shandong province led a major uprising and assembled a large following of nearly ten thousand rebels, including both men and women. Tang Saier, a widow who supposedly deluded her believers with magic, scored some military successes against Ming forces early on. However, Zhu Di’s army quashed her rebellion in three months. She escaped from the authorities and vanished from the public eye. No one knew where she went. Tang’s unique appearance in early Ming history as a local woman who rose up against the patriarchal regime garnered serious attention in later literature where writers would endow her with incredible superpowers and make her into a literary folk hero.\footnote{Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 138-39; Pi-ching Hsu, “Tang Saier and Yongle: Contested Images of a Rebel Woman and a Monarch in Ming-Qing Narratives,” \textit{Ming Studies} 56, no. 1 (2007): 6-36; Tsai, \textit{Perpetual Happiness}, 108.} All of these instances drew inspiration from the Maitreyan prophecies and betrayed an ideological influence based on Buddhism.

These Ming cases would not signal the end of premodern Chinese rebellions, as White Lotus-inspired movements from 1796-1804, and again in the later nineteenth century, caused severe trouble for the Qing dynasty.\footnote{Ter Haar, \textit{White Lotus Teachings}, 247-86.} Clearly, political events based on
Buddhist messianism took place quite frequently in Chinese history, especially in the late Yuan-early Ming period. Similar events also happened in Vietnamese history.

Historically, omens and prophecies formed an integral component of Vietnamese political culture. Supernatural manifestations frequently appeared in official and non-official texts and often marked a change in leadership. Some of these phenomena emanated from Buddhism, which influenced premodern Vietnamese culture very early on in the second century. Buddhist ideology reached its apogee during the Ly dynasty. It remained so prevalent that Emperor Ly Cao Tong (1173-1210) mandated that all of his officials call him “Buddha” (phat).

However, the waning of the Tran dynasty in the late fourteenth century paralleled the decline of Buddhism. By then, Confucianism began to usurp Buddhism as the dominant ideology of Dai Viet. When Ho Quy Ly took over the throne, he implemented anti-Buddhist measures that paved the way for Confucianism to spread into Vietnamese political philosophy. Once the Ming annexed Vietnam, they brought over the prohibition of Maitreya beliefs and the institutionalization of Confucianism into the policies of their conquered territory. After Le Loi defeated the Ming, he and his successors maintained the “Confucianization” of Dai Viet, which all but eliminated

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beliefs in Maitreya. Despite these actions, evidence of omens leading up to the Ming invasion appeared in Vietnamese sources.

Two bizarre moments during the fortification of Quy Ly’s defenses in preparation for a Ming assault in 1404 and 1406 give us a glimpse into the type of portents during this time. In 1404, during the construction of Da Bang fortress, someone destroyed the shrine of a local spirit and reportedly, the spirit appeared in a dream to the official overseeing the fortress. The spirit requested that he repair the shrine, but the official instead responded with a poem, writing that “It is too bad, but there comes a time when old trees must suffer axes.” Supposedly, “knowledgeable people” read this poem and predicted that Ho Quy Ly would perish due to his neglect of tradition. The other event in 1406 eerily mirrored the previous one. When the tip of the four-hundred-year-old Bao-thien (Buddhist) Tower fell off, Quy Ly dreamed of an encounter with a spirit. According to the Vietnamese annals, the spirit recited a cryptic poem to Quy Ly that seemingly predicted the end of his life.

Stories of these portents even continued into the early fifteenth century. For example, legends about the ascendancy of Le Loi onto the throne circulated among the common folk. Supposedly, before Nguyen Trai met Le Loi, a spirit appeared to one of Trai’s cousins and informed him that Loi would become the emperor and Nguyen Trai

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53 Taylor, A History of the Vietnamese, 173

54 Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421), 171-72, note. 24.
would serve Loi as a minister.\textsuperscript{55} Since historians wrote the annals several generations after these events, the records of these omens served the purpose of portraying the change of leadership from the Ho and Ming regimes to the Le dynasty, rather than actual occurrences.\textsuperscript{56} They also show that superstition remained quite prevalent in late fourteenth to early fifteenth century Vietnamese political culture.

Comparison of the Two Case Studies and Concluding Remarks

After comparing and contrasting the French-Italian case study of prophecy during the invasion with the Chinese-Vietnamese one, an interesting conclusion becomes apparent. Both the French and Ming narratives shared similarities in incorporating religious just war concepts into their narratives, but they diverged on the issue of prophecy. As shown earlier, by viewing the situation in Ming China and Dai Viet from the lens of the French and Italian one, we find moments of messianism similar to the European experience that existed in both the decades before the Ming invasion and decades-long after the end of the occupation in 1427. In Europe, the eschatological ideas of Savonarola and the French-Italian writers derived from an older Christian tradition. Likewise, ideologies of Buddhism influenced the political rebellions of early Ming China. Some unmistakable commonalities included the reincarnation of the Song emperor and the arrival of Maitreya with the Second Charlemagne Prophecy and the

\textsuperscript{55} Ungar, “Vietnamese Leadership and Order: Dai Viet under the Le Dynasty (1428-1459),” 53-54.

appearance of omens before the two invasions in the accounts of Benedetti and the Vietnamese annals.

If there existed such striking similarities in the way religious ideologies affected the narratives of these conquering states, how do we explain the lack of prophecies in the Ming invasion? Obviously, the strict enforcement of Confucian values and the national curbing of Buddhism under the Hongwu, Yongle, Ho, and Le reigns in China and Vietnam stifled the activities of Maitreya followers. Even minor uprisings such as the revolt of Tang Saier occurred elsewhere in China and bore no relation to the invasion of Vietnam in any way. While the French incorporated prophecies in their narratives to justify war, the Chinese censored any millenarian beliefs, causing them to disappear before the Ming invasion even commenced. If the Ming allowed White Lotus teachings to flourish, then perhaps prophecies could have appeared during the Ming invasion to justify its cause.\(^\text{57}\) For the next chapter, we shall examine the final feature of these public political narratives: the usage of historical claims. These constituted a compelling part of these narratives and served as the secondary core of the Ming and French rationales.

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\(^{57}\) Due to my limitations in terms of certain languages, I could not conduct further investigation into the primary sources for evidence of prophetic behavior. A study of this kind would require knowledge of Chinese, Classical Chinese, and perhaps Vietnamese. Since I have found so many similarities between these two foreign invasions in many different aspects, perhaps it is possible to find more in terms of millenarianism. I argue that this study could be important for understanding social and local religious behavior during the Ming invasion of Vietnam. For future researchers, I would caution that this research may ultimately come to naught, but one could and should explore this further if he or she has the languages.
CHAPTER 6
JIAOZHI AND CISALPINE GAUL: COMPARISON OF THE RATIONALES OF TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

Introduction

The final component of these public political narratives involved dubious historical claims. How did the Ming and French exploit the past to legitimize their conquests? To justify the occupation of Vietnam, leaders of the Ming dynasty emphasized China’s long domination of its southern neighbor from 111 BCE to 938 CE. In Naples and Milan, leaders of the French monarchy utilized the same rhetoric by alluding to the ancient connection between Italy and France. Although these claims legitimized the conquests of these lands, they rested on shaky foundations. For one, the time between the previous annexations and the current occupations were more than centuries old. The languages and cultures of the conquerors and the conquered already diverged significantly.¹

Nevertheless, the Ming and French narratives incorporated these linkages into their public narratives to boost local appeal for their invasions. As shown in chapter four, the two aggressors shared similar logic in justifying their wars through just war concepts and narrative techniques. In chapter five, the French utilized prophecy to contribute to the narrative, whereas the Ming did not. For this chapter, we shall advance the discussion of

similarities in the narratives by taking a look at the dominant narratives and rationales that referred to historical claims.

By applying narrative theory involving the four elements of causal emplotment, selective appropriation, temporality, and relationality to the official documentation from the conquerors’ perspectives, this chapter finds that Ming China and Valois France justified their invasions through the perpetuation of the ideas of historically territorial bonds and the “civilizing mission.” Though the contexts surrounding their claims differed in many ways, the general discourses remained similar.

After contextualizing the concept of historical claims as they relate to these two invasions, the chapter presents the two narratives, then compares and contrasts the two at the end. For Ming China, I will provide the background to the “lost province” mentality, while for France, I will explain the issue of royal lineage and the propaganda concept of “Gallia Cisalpina.” These ideas featured prominently in Chinese and French state-issued public narratives, and as we will later see, paralleled each other very well.

**Concepts of Historical Claims in Premodern China and France**

As stated in chapter two, the ancient Chinese domination of Vietnam left a trace of Chinese culture in Vietnamese language, ideology, and identity. This propinquity never escaped the minds of Chinese literati, who viewed their neighbor as a former province. Their appellations for Vietnam inherently reflected a colonial mentality. The Chinese called it Annam (annan) or “pacified south,” a name that revealed how the Chinese viewed Vietnam not as an autonomous state but a former colony. The literati also often called the Vietnamese people by the term yi, or barbarian, which referred to

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their “degraded” culture as opposed to a “superior” Chinese one. These concepts reflected the Chinese mentality that considered Vietnam “rebellious” and “barbarian.” The Vietnamese, of course, viewed themselves more positively. For example, during the mid-Han dynasty in the first century CE, two daughters of a local lord led a rebellion that overthrew the Chinese regime for two years, until a military force arrived and apprehended the sisters. The famous Trung sisters became heroines in Vietnamese history and national figures for Vietnamese identity, but the literati viewed them as mere aberrations and products of barbarism. The thought of restoring the borders of the powerful Han and Tang dynasties and civilizing the refractory Vietnamese appealed to many Chinese leaders and officials in the past. This notion of “reclaiming the lost province” persisted into the early Ming dynasty, where it exerted the most influence in the invasion of Vietnam.

On the French side, the historical contexts remained different from the Ming situation but participated in the idea of territorial claims. The Angevins and Orléanists, who emerged from a cadet branch of the Capetians dynasty (987-1328), inherited a decentralized political system that revolved around fiefdoms and fiefdoms. Inheritance of lands passed down through the male line, but dynastic marriages complicated things when a certain male claimant passed away, and no other surviving male relative existed (e.g., a brother or son). Multiple members of the bloodline would then fight over his

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4 Baldanza, “De-Civilizing Ming China’s Southern Border: Vietnam as Lost Province or Barbarian Culture,” in *Chinese History in Geographical Perspective*, 55-57.

5 Baldanza, “De-Civilizing Ming China’s Southern Border,” 57.
lands, which resulted in numerous issues involving family claims and rivalries. Georges Peyronnet notes that “dynastic claims were symptomatic of a traditional mentality, which regarded family lineage as an important legal consideration.” As opposed to the Chinese claims of vague “historical boundaries,” the Angevin rights to Naples and the Orléanist claims to Milan were legalistic in the sense that they followed the customs of primogeniture (succession by firstborn son only) and Salic Law (exclusion of women in the succession). These birthrights formed an integral part of European justifications for war.

Although the Ming and French differed in this particular aspect, they actually shared a similarity in the concept of the “lost province.” During the French invasion of Milan, propaganda writing linked the history of northern Italy with France through the concept of Gallia Cisalpina, an old Roman provincial designation for the area between the Padus (now the Po River) and the Alps. As a rhetorical device, French writers claimed that the Lombards or Milanese descended from ancient Gauls in present-day France. This mythical concept reflected the historical connection between France and Italy. Intellectuals in the fifteenth century were well-aware of these fundamentally

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8 Scheller, “Gallia Cisalpina: Louis XII and Italy, 1499-1508,” 6, fn. 6.

9 Charmaine Lee, “Writing History in Angevin Naples,” Italian Studies 72, no. 2 (May, 2017), 148-56; Kleinhenz, Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia, vol. 1, 386-87. For example, just as in China, similar language roots took hold in France and Italy. Whereas the Chinese writing system unified the written language of scholars and administrators in distant areas from Beijing to the Red River Delta, Latin played a somewhat similar role in creating cohesion in communications from Paris to Rome in premodern times. Furthermore, the French language also made an impact, due to centuries-long cross-cultural interaction.
Roman origins, which contributed to a “lost province” mentality mirroring the Chinese one. Some of them portrayed the northern Italians as a rebellious group who always faced the punishment of its overlords. Thus, they often alluded to historical events, such as Charlemagne defeating the king of Lombardy, Desiderius (r.756-774), in works of literature or art. These notions of Gallia Cisalpina and dynastic claims later appeared in the public political narratives of the French invasion of Italy.

With these discourses in mind, the next section shall examine specific excerpts from official documents of the Ming and French regimes and locate their narrative elements. After presenting both sides, this chapter compares them at the end. By exploring how these conquering states used historical claims and the civilizing mission to justify these two invasions, this thesis finds that they paralleled each other in many ways: they both perpetuated a narrative of reclaiming lost territory and “civilizing” its inhabitants.

**Ming China’s Narrative of the Reclamation of Vietnam**

With Ming China, we begin with the Vietnamese petition as recorded in the Ming annals and the memorial from Zhang Fu in mid-1407. These two texts comprised the narrative as a whole, building off of each other in terms of narrative structure and support. As mentioned in chapter two, after the Ming army penetrated into Dai Viet and captured Ho Quy Ly, Zhu Di ordered his general Zhang Fu to find a Tran descendant to place on the throne. After failing to find one, Zhang received a request from the

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Beginning with the Norman encounter in the eleventh century, French became an administrative language in southern Italy. Once the Angevins came into power, French attained a prestige status. Moreover, a Neapolitan-inflected French literature even began to emerge alongside a Franco-Italian literature in northeastern Italy, where a hybrid of the language existed in chansons de geste (songs of heroic deeds).

10 Scheller, "Gallia Cisalpina,” 6.
Vietnamese for the emperor. A Ming supporter, Mac Thuy, gathered over 1100 petitions from local elders and proposed that Vietnam should reunite with China. According to the entry on April 17, 1407, in the annals, he claimed that,

In ancient times, Annam was Chinese territory, but later when it was lost, we sank into yi ways and did not know of propriety and righteousness (liyi). Fortunately, the Imperial Court has wiped away the cruel and evil spawn, and the troops and the people, the old and the young, are now able to gaze on the excellence of Chinese culture [and headwear]. They are exceedingly jubilant and all wish that the ancient prefectures and counties be re-established. We will thus be able to gradually rid ourselves of yi ways and will long receive the benefits of the Sage. I, Thuy, and the elders respectfully present a memorial and request that it be forwarded to the Court to notify it of the feelings of [the] people.11

This petition betrayed a “lost province” mentality. In the beginning, Thuy stated that China once possessed Vietnam. He praised the Ming for expelling Ho Quy Ly and showing the superiority of Chinese culture to Vietnam. Finally, the idea that the Vietnamese wanted to “clean” their barbarian culture by adopting Chinese “propriety” seemed to reflect a Sinocentric viewpoint.

Zhang Fu continued this narrative by sending a memorial to the emperor in support of the petition. After looking through the imperial archives, Zhang Fu argued for reclaiming Annam as a lost territory since Annam always acted rebelliously and needed some form of cultural rehabilitation.12 In his report in June 1407, he wrote:

Your servant Zhang Fu has reviewed the annals. Annan was once Jiaozhou. In the Han and Tang it could only be loosely reined, and in the Song and Yuan it was


12 Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia, 68.
again raided and humiliated. Exceeding their rightful place, [the Vietnamese] are set in their evil ways of usurpation and revolt. Although we sent troops to punish them, they alternately rebel and come to allegiance.\textsuperscript{13}

Zhang Fu stereotypically labeled the Vietnamese as uncivilized and tattooed people, who speak with a bird-like squawk. He emphasized their treacherous character and argued for domesticating their recalcitrant behavior. With the conquest of Annam at hand, he proclaimed at the end of his report that “We have recovered our ancient territory and propagated China's system of propriety.”\textsuperscript{14}

Zhang Fu based his statement on the current situation. With the Ho family gone, the Ming had completed their mission according to Confucian ideals, but there remained the issue of the extinction of the Tran family. Seeing as no descendant could ascend to the throne, Zhang Fu suggested a return to the past. After heeding his general’s advice, Zhu Di accepted the petition and annexed Vietnam. This marked a change in the discourse, where the narrative shifted from a just war to a restoration of borders and a colonizing mission. Confucian “righteous war” (\textit{yizhan}) gave way to historical precedents.\textsuperscript{15} We can see this mentality in Zhang and Thuy’s documents. By ignoring Confucian just war theory and claiming Annam as a “lost province,” they justified the occupation as a “reunification” of both lands and cultures.

The Composition of a Narrative: Mac Thuy’s Petition and Zhang Fu’s Report

\textsuperscript{13} As quoted in Baldanza, \textit{Ming China and Vietnam}, 68-69. The Chinese source is from Yan Congjian, \textit{Shouyu zhouzi lu} (Record on extensive inquiries into distant places) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1993), 184-85.


\textsuperscript{15} Wang, \textit{Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics}, 145.
We shall now analyze the overarching themes of historical claims, barbarism, and fractious behaviors. The narrative contained three common events: sequentially, it began with the fact that China occupied Vietnam in the past, with the latter separating from the empire, followed by the idea that Vietnam’s culture had degraded and must be “re-culturalized.” All of these elements combined to create a “lost province” narrative. The Ming causally emplotted the notion of Annam as a historical part of China to justify its occupation of Vietnam. This historical fact served the narrative by making it seem as if Vietnam had always belonged to China, which logically made sense to the older mentalities of the literati. The other two emplotments of the breakaway and cultural degradation of the “rebellious” land created a teleological story where Vietnam was destined to come back to China.

We see this component in the structure of the narrative. The sequencing and relational positioning of these events depicted a resolution to a story. The Vietnamese, as the supporting characters, pleaded for the Ming, the protagonists, to alleviate their woes by taking over their land. The appropriate “happy ending” then would conclude with a change of leadership. Mac Thuy and others considered a return to the “motherland” as this ending since it would improve their culture and lives after the oppressive rule of the antagonist Ho regime.

In terms of selective appropriation, Mac Thuy and Zhang Fu excluded specific events that did not support the annexation. Case in point, the Chinese domination of Vietnam, while factual, remained highly problematic as a justification. China last controlled its neighbor nearly four hundred years before 1407. Two native dynasties had already reigned in Dai Viet and cultivated a divergent culture before the Chinese invaded.
In many ways, this historical claim seemed dubious and without legal precedents. Nevertheless, the Ming regime buttressed its rationale with the idea that the Vietnamese willingly requested the Chinese to take over their lands. Thuy and Zhang Fu incorporated this petition into the narrative to promote their rhetoric of justifying the occupation. Of course, this raises a question. Only eleven hundred locals petitioned the government. What did the other millions of people think? Nobody recorded their opinions or gave their voices a spotlight. Not everyone desired the Ming to rule Vietnam.\textsuperscript{16} Mac Thuy and Zhang Fu selectively omitted this fact since any dissenting views might compromise the narrative. With the opposing sides’ opinions excluded from the narrative, the Ming could perpetuate their dominant one.

Another emplotted element involved the “rectifying of the \textit{yi}.” As Mac Thuy and Zhang Fu stated in their texts, the Vietnamese separated from China long ago due to rebellions, which led to a corruption of their previously “Chinese” culture. Zhang Fu implied that with Annam pacified, China must civilize the Vietnamese to prevent any more “rebellions.” As the “\textit{mission civilisatrice},” the Ming annexation involved the cleansing of “depraved” behavior, just as a father would punish his bratty child through grounding. Thus, the Ming justified its war by exerting a patriarchal discourse.

For Zhang Fu and Mac Thuy, Annam as a Chinese territory never really “splintered off” in China’s nearly 1149 years of control of Annam. Zhang Fu recalled that China often violently crushed independence movements such as the Trung sisters or the

\textsuperscript{16} Obviously, rebellions occurred right after 1407. Taylor, \textit{History of the Vietnamese}, 176.
early Ly in 602. These successes of the Han and Tang dynasties, as China’s two golden ages of Chinese history, informed Zhang Fu’s interpretations of these facts. He considered any periods of revolt as mere aberrations and a result of the Vietnamese people’s “barbarian” attitudes. Hence, Zhang believed in a sense of causality between the separation of Vietnam and the debasement of its culture.

The temporal nature of these emplotments worked in the early fifteenth century because Dai Viet was weak. Zhang Fu argued that “in the Song and Yuan, [Annam] was again raided and humiliated,” which emplotted these events in a way that downplayed them as victories for Annam. This interpretation perpetuated the idea that the Vietnamese rebelled and suffered punishment for it, when in fact, they fought to keep their independence. In both periods, the Vietnamese repelled multiple invasions by the Song Chinese and the Mongols. They celebrated these events as great national victories and certainly not as simple rebellions. Zhang Fu’s narrative did not align with historical fact because, during the Ly and Tran dynasties, those regimes succeeded against foreign invasion and kept their autonomy. Thus, the story that Annam was once “Jiaozhou” or Chinese territory gained meaning only during the Ho-Ming war after the Vietnamese failed to back their counter-narrative with military successes.

French Narratives of Historical Claims to Italy

17 For more background on the Sui-Early Ly War, see Taylor, History of the Vietnamese, 36-37.


19 Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam, 68-69.

20 Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam, 68-69; Yan, Shouyu, 184-85.

This logic of legitimizing war through historical claims existed in the French invasion of Italy as well. For our analysis of the French sources, we begin first with Charles VIII’s manifesto. As examined in chapter four, the manifesto proclaimed Charles’ crusading mission. To justify the conquest of Naples, the king emplotted it to fit within a narrative of a crusade against the Ottomans.\footnote{"Le Manifeste de Charles VIII (The manifesto of Charles VIII),” in Burchard, \textit{Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanarum Commentarii (1483-1506)}, II, 196-98; Burchard, \textit{Dans le secret des Borgia. Journal du cérémoniaire du Vatican (1492-1503)}, 130-33.}

The manifesto also succinctly detailed Charles VIII’s rights to Naples. Charles’ ancestors, the Angevins, conquered the kingdom for the pope, who in turn invested it upon the Angevins for their service to the Papacy. Unfortunately, they lost it when Pius II “unjustly” bestowed it on Ferrante I of Aragon in 1458, who secured a rich marriage for the pope’s nephew.\footnote{“Le Manifeste,” II, 196-98; Burchard, \textit{Journal}, 131-33.} In the late fifteenth century, Charles sought to recover this “lost territory.” As Philippe de Commynes wrote, Charles VIII and his lawyers from Province “advanced certain wills of King Charles I [of Anjou], brother of Saint Louis [IX], and of other kings of [Naples and] Sicily who were from the house of France,” stating that the lands of Naples belonged to the French king by rights of inheritance.\footnote{Commynes, \textit{The Memoirs of Philippe de Commynes}, trans. Cazeaux VII.1, 439; Commynes, \textit{Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes}, vol. 2, VII.I, 295.} Although Charles VIII was only distantly related to the Angevin family, he possessed their royal claim, which still gave his invasion a form of legitimacy.

As an emplotment, it worked as an allusion to historical memory since the Neapolitans favored Charles’ arrival over the unpopular rule of Ferrante. Many Italian
families remembered the Angevin reign almost with nostalgia and hated the Spanish rulers. When Charles entered Naples in February 1495, the Neapolitans showered him with adulation. As Commynes reported in his memoirs, “Never had people shown so much affection to the king or to a nation as they did to the king [of France]. It seemed to them that they were free from all tyranny and that they were conquering themselves, for in Calabria, where [our officers] were sent without any men-at-arms, everyone passed over [to the king’s side].” These writings boosted morale for the invasion and highlighted the positivity of the French mission. Coupled with the Angevin claims, these elements formed an essential part of the narrative.

Yet, the French excluded some historical facts that would damage their story and harm their reputation. First, early on in the two-hundred-year reign of the Angevins, Sicily broke away from Naples in a rebellion called the War of the Sicilian Vespers. Native unrest over Charles I of Anjou’s authoritarian rule led to massacres of Frenchmen and ended in a change of rule to the Aragonese. The French omitted these negative parts of their history to avoid any public criticism of their invasion. In addition, Pius II was not the only pope who invested Ferrante; Alexander VI invested him as well. Charles sidestepped this fact because he needed the Vatican’s victuals to supply his men. Thus, he only implicated Pius as a criminal and not the current pope, for fear of losing Alexander’s

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support. This selective appropriation of events in the French narrative reflected a careful and intellectual consideration of past precedents.

Similarly, Charles’ successor, Louis XII, publicized his royal claims to legitimize the conquest of the Duchy of Milan. For example, the first pages of Jean d’Auton’s (1466-1528) chronicle began with Louis’ “right and title” with a “little genealogy.”

Since Louis commissioned Auton to promote France’s imperial aspirations by writing a pro-French work, the chronicle belied an interpretation of events skewing towards the state’s perspective. Auton wrote that “after the death of Duke Filippo [Maria Visconti],” Francisco Sforza, “by subtle usurpation and with hostile agendas,” took Milan over. He then stipulated that “Sforza could not succeed to the Duchy of Milan directly. Only the Duke of Orléans could succeed [due to] his relation to Madame Valentina, daughter of Duke Gian Galeazzo.” Auton emplotted this interpretation of the Orléanist rights into the narrative to justify Louis’ invasion.

However, Louis’ claims appeared weaker than Charles’ claims since the Orléans never directly ruled Milan, whereas the Angevins did in Milan. Between 1395 and 1499, either a Visconti or Sforza duke came to power. The Orléans possessed a legal claim,

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31 Auton, *Chroniques*, I, 5-6.


but no experience with ruling the duchy. In fact, the main French dynasty actually allied with the Sforzas in the mid-1450s instead of fighting them. As a result, Louis never pressed his claim due to family pressure; Charles VIII essentially suppressed Louis’ narrative. Once Louis XII became king, and Italy remained divided, only then could Louis promote his territorial rights. The temporal setting of the narrative suited the current political situation, which favored the Orléans, and therefore justified the French agenda.

The Tonso-Rizzo Dialogues, April 17, 1500

A model example of French propaganda writing came from a compelling moment at the beginning of the occupation of Milan. Despite the French conquest of the duchy in late 1499, a few months later, Ludovico Sforza proclaimed his return from exile and laid siege to the nearby town of Como. Upon hearing this news, the Milanese cried out for him and revolted against the French military governor. Despite the insurrection’s initial success, the French regrouped, defeated, and captured Ludovico, quelling the rebellion. On April 17, 1500, Good Friday, Louis XII’s new governor, Cardinal George d’Amboise (1460-1510), met with a Milanese delegation alongside a large group of the menu peuple (common people). They sued for royal pity and hoped to get a pardon. Amboise’s ministers furiously scolded them for betraying the French, but Amboise ultimately relented and remitted a portion of a large écu fine as well as pardoned the menu peuple.


The Milanese people cheered at the news, with children crying out, “France, France! France and mercy!36

A dialogue from this event appeared in print. An exchange between a Milanese lawyer, Michele Tonso, and the French representative, Neapolitan Michele Rizzo, served as a propaganda piece that helped justify the occupation. The two ministers originally carried out the dialogue in Italian, but no transcription of it survived. However, a legal document (procès-verbal) of the dialogue recorded by Giasone del Maino (1435–1519) in Latin circulated in the press.37 This version then found expression in a verbatim French translation.38 Ostensibly, the reason for its existence in French media was to reach a wider audience in the French public.39 As a result, the state propagated the Tonso-Rizzo dialogues as a public political narrative to garner support for the Italian campaign.

The main crux of the dialogue involved a contrite supplication by Tonso and an almost lecture-like response and censure by Rizzo. To save his people from the fury of the French, Tonso tried to coax his new rulers. At the beginning of his speech, Tonso told Amboise that his people would not rebel anymore, owing to their loyal disposition. He reaffirmed the kindness of their French overlords and vowed to remain faithful to them.

36 Auton, Chroniques, I, 270-74.


In the end, he requested the king to reconsider the original punishment of paying 800,000 écus; to prevent French troops from harming the countryside, to return officers to their posts, and to punish the principal instigators of the rebellion.\textsuperscript{40} His elocution emphasized the supreme dignity of the French ruler.

In this effort, Tonso also alluded to an old myth, asserting,

\begin{quote}
It may be said, that he [Louis XII] had reintegrated the citizens to their country, and their country to the founder; for the French had founded and built (\textit{edifié et fondé}) the city of Milan, and the country, to this day, retains the name of Gallia Cisalpina (\textit{jusques à aujourd’huy reticent le nom de Gaule deça les Monts}). But, alas! We have sadly displayed the instability of our tempers, and committed the crimes of treason and rebellion without any reason for so doing; for neither the king our lord nor the deputies he sent to govern us, have done any things that ought to have displeased us, or make us discontented.”\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

This rhetorical embellishment perpetuated an ancient mythical bond between France and Milan. The latter’s “reunification with the fatherland” provided Tonso an opportunity to lessen their historical differences, thus placating the anger of the French occupying forces.

Rizzo reiterated with, “It is as you say; you have French origins and beginnings” (\textit{vous avez origé, principe et commencement des François}), but that did not excuse their crimes. The French king, as Milan’s “true, indisputable, and natural lord” (\textit{vostre vray, indubitat, et naturel Seigneur}), treated his people with respect and deserved the same from them.\textsuperscript{42} Since they decided to reject Louis’ kindness, “They are deserving of a

\textsuperscript{40} Monstrelet, \textit{Chroniques}, 100-101; Monstrelet, \textit{Chronicles}, 487-88.

\textsuperscript{41} Monstrelet, \textit{Chroniques}, 100; Monstrelet, \textit{Chronicles}, 487.

\textsuperscript{42} Monstrelet, \textit{Chroniques}, 101; Monstrelet, \textit{Chronicles}, 487-88.
similar punishment from the king as the Romans inflicted upon the Samians [of Greece]” or as Attila (r.434-453) came down on Rome, or “what Alexander (356-323 BCE) did to the Thebans.” He completely decried them for a history of treachery. Rizzo continued with ancient examples, such as Charlemagne’s and Frederick I’s (r.1155-1190) incursions into northern Italy in the Middle Ages. In the end, despite Rizzo’s sharp tone, it was Good Friday, and the menu peuple had apologized sincerely, so he pardoned the Milanese on behalf of the king and agreed to their demands.43

The Tonso-Rizzo dialogues, as a propaganda tool, emplotted the Gallia Cisalpina myth and the “treachery” of the Milanese to justify Louis’ invasion. This myth promoted the narrative by making the Milanese revolt seem like a child disobeying her parents. The story portrayed France as the patriarchal ruler and Milan as the rebellious offspring. To back this narrative up, Michel Rizzo selectively included moments of Milanese “barbarism.” He argued that Milan constantly “revolted” several times in the past, leading to harsh punishments by foreign powers. Therefore, the Milanese must coexist peacefully with French authorities lest they suffer the consequences as their ancestors had. This appeal to the memory of antiquity provided the French with much legitimacy. Their “civilizing mission” aimed to correct the refractory behavior of the northern Italians and transform them back to the Gauls of Gallia Cisalpina. Narratively speaking, the emplotment of these elements turned these events into evidence for justifying the occupation of Milan.

In theory, by establishing a tangible historical link between France and Milan, the French strengthened their rationale for occupying Milan. In practice, the idea remained

43 Monstrelet, Chroniques, 101; Monstrelet, Chronicles, 488.
vague because *Gallia Cisalpina* existed more than a thousand years before 1500. The French monarchy never controlled northern Italy for any meaningful length of time, especially when compared to the Angevins in Naples. Ultimately, the French utilized this myth right when Louis XII conquered Milan. It conveniently worked because Louis established a firm stronghold in Italy and could preserve his narrative without backlash from opposing ones.

**Comparison of the Two Case Studies and Concluding Remarks**

What similarities existed between the Ming and French narratives? Clearly, both of them enforced the idea that Vietnam and Italy used to belong to China and France, respectively. On the Ming invasion, the “lost province” syndrome manifested itself in Mac Thuy’s petition and Zhang Fu’s report. Both political actors brought up the ancient Chinese domination of Vietnam to justify the Ming’s conquest. On the French side, Charles VIII and Louis XII professed their commitments to pursue their royal claims to Naples and Milan. Their ancestral rights that passed down from the Angevins and Viscontis appeared in the kings’ public narratives to legitimize their invasions of Italy. In addition, the Milanese case mirrored the Ming justifications by perpetuating the notion that Milan once belonged to Gaul or France. This narrative appeared in print, as represented by the Tonso-Rizzo dialogues, which spread as propaganda to the French public. In both cases, an allusion to historical or semi-historical ties legitimized the invasions. Their justifications paralleled the French-German arguments over Alsace-Lorraine in World War I (1914-1918).

Comparatively, the Vietnamese and Milanese requests along with the Ming and French responses were uncanny. For example, Mac Thuy recalled how the sight of the
Chinese made his people happy. In Naples, when Charles VIII arrived in the kingdom, Commynes noted the joy of the people who laid eyes on the king. Similarly, in Milan, Michele Tonso spoke for the Milanese who constantly reiterated their respect for the French. These stories fed the Ming and French propaganda machines and furthered the conquerors’ claims to these lands.

Not surprisingly, both regimes reduced the Vietnamese and Italian characters, respectively, to “barbarous” and “treacherous” peoples, which rendered them as inferior human beings. Knowledge of the “rebellious nature” of the conquered inhabitants became part of a discourse designed to perpetuate an image of them as “uncivilized.” Therefore, the conquerors wanted to “re-civilize” and “reincorporate” them back into their original condition as French or Chinese people, legitimizing their invasions as “civilizing missions.”

This phenomenon of appropriating historical claims as a rationale for war occurred in very analogous ways in the Ming and French invasions. The narratives empowered and gave the two conquering states paternalistic authority that justified their invasions and occupations. Evidently, the Ming and French relied on traditional modes of thought for propaganda when it came to premodern rationales for war. Now that I addressed the thought processes of the Ming and the French, in the next section, we shall focus on the opposing sides’ viewpoints. As we shall see, anti-Ming and anti-French forces completely denounced their foreign invaders’ rationales as lies in their counter-narratives.
CHAPTER 7
AMBITIOUS AND GREEDY POLITICAL
ACTORS IN COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Introduction

This chapter now moves on to the subject of money. One cannot ignore the material ambitions of the Ming and French in invading foreign lands. Although ideological concerns exerted a great deal of pressure on the mentalities of the Chinese emperors and French kings, other elements came into play as well. Multiple ministers possessed a multitude of agendas and often influenced the creation of wars. They pushed the Ming and French rulers to invade Vietnam and Italy, respectively, for selfish reasons. For this final section, I shall focus on the economic and political incentives of Ming China and Valois France. In the separate historiographies of these two invasions, some historians flatly argue that these invaders sought only material gains\(^1\) and lied about religious motivations.\(^2\) What were these fiscal concerns? Were there any similarities or


\(^2\) There is no consensus among historians on whether the French intention for a crusade was genuine or not. Contemporary chroniclers such as Philippe de Commynes and Alessandro Benedetti categorically denounced the crusade intentions as lies. Some historians, such as Antonio Marongiu, follow their sentiments and argue that Charles never seriously wanted an eastern expedition. However, many
differences between the interests of the political actors involved? Answering these questions may help us learn more about the genases of these wars. In addition, comparing the Asian and European situations and finding affinities among them could help pinpoint patterns common in geographically separate events.

To find comparable case studies, I scoured the available documentation for references to ministers and their relationships to the invasions. This chapter shall only address the most influential and relevant political actors in these two invasions, rather than try for an exhaustive study. For primary sources of the Ming invasion, this chapter employs the Ming annals, which provide qualitative and quantitative data on ministers, and a Vietnamese document called the Binh Ngo Dai Cao, or “proclamation of victory.” The proclamation is a unique source. Written by Le Loi’s trusted minister Nguyen Trai after the war, the document detailed several grievances against the Ming and summarized Le Loi’s successful revolt. One of its most famous statements appeared in the opening, where Trai declared that borders and customs long separated Ming and Dai Viet. The Vietnamese regard the proclamation today as a nationalistic piece akin to America’s Declaration of Independence. This document serves as the counter-narrative to the Ming narrative.

For the French invasion, this chapter employs qualitative and quantitative data on ministers as found in a variety of sources such as chronicles and memoirs. For counter-narratives, the works of Alessandro Benedetti and Philippe de Commynes provide perspectives that went against the mainstream French one. The latter, in particular, exposed the selfish motives of French ministers. Hence, these sources are invaluable for this chapter. After I present both case studies, I then compare both at the end.

While this section deviates from the previous focus on narrative theory, it continues to analyze narratives by looking at stories from the perspectives of the conquered. I designed this approach to dissect how the Vietnamese and Italians felt about the motivations of the conquerors, allowing us to glimpse the economic incentives of political actors. By looking beyond the discourses of the main narratives, we obtain a clearer picture of the truth, whatever that may be. Through this comparison, this chapter finds that despite the different contexts in which the invasions occurred, the ministers who supported and influenced the invasions sought similar economic and political advancements such as wealth, lands, titles, and prestige.

The Economic Background of Premodern Vietnam

Beginning with Vietnam, we see clear signs of economic motivations. What made this land so valuable for the Ming? One answer revolved around geopolitics. In premodern East Asia, the geographical importance of Vietnam was considerable. It shared its northern border with southern China, situated at the nexus of overland trade routes of Yunnan, Guangxi, and other areas. More importantly, it controlled the sea lanes in the South China Sea, which led to the Malacca Strait and other parts of Southeast Asia as far west as the Indian Ocean. Therefore, supremacy over the coasts of Vietnam would
give an empire tremendous power in Asia and access to distant markets in India, Persia, and even Europe.⁴

The lucrative Indian Ocean trade appealed to the Ming. As stated in chapter two, the long civil war in China from 1398 to 1402 may have forced the Ming to find new infusions of resources.⁵ Thus, Zhu Di sent incredible treasure voyages out to neighboring polities to collect tribute and re-establish commercial relations.⁶ However, this may not have sufficed, as the Ming economy still needed higher flows of revenue. The occupation of Vietnam perhaps might have satisfied this pursuit. Alexander Woodside and Stephen O’Harrow argue that funds from tribute missions could not compare to the direct colonial control of Vietnam’s economy.⁷ Since Zhu Di prioritized the rebuilding of the Ming state, perhaps he looked towards Vietnam to expedite this process.

The Vietnamese indeed saw past Confucian rhetoric and viewed the invasion negatively. As I showed in chapters four and six, the Ming invaded Vietnam to oust Ho Quy Ly in accordance with just war theory and justified the annexation by appealing to historical claims. The Le dynasty counter-narrative categorically denied this story. Right at the beginning of the proclamation of victory, Nguyen Trai wrote,

As to Dai Viet, a country of great culture with a long tradition, its mountains and rivers are lawfully delineated. In addition, our customs are different from those in the North. For hundreds of years, the dynasties of Trieu [Nanyue], Dinh [968-980], Ly and Tran had firmly established their independence. Like the Han, Tang,

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⁵ Tsai, Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle, 104.

⁶ Dreyer, Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405-1433.

Song and Yuan of China they proudly governed their lands . . . These were irrefutable facts that were clearly recorded in history.\(^8\)

Evidently, the Vietnamese viewed past events differently from the Ming. In a complete refutation of the Chinese claim to Vietnam, Trai reaffirmed the political freedom of his lands. He interpreted the separation of China and Vietnam for four hundred years as an “irrefutable fact” that would annul the Ming justifications for annexation. As for the just war rationale, although Trai acknowledged that Quy Ly’s “corrupt policies spurred anger and resentment among the populace,” he ultimately condemned the “barbaric” Ming for “taking advantage of this opportunity” and invading his country, therefore dismissing the rationale as a pretext.\(^9\) Trai essentially assumed that the Ming thought they possessed enough political backing to invade Vietnam and take its resources due to the unpopularity of Ho Quy Ly.

**The Quest for Wealth: Exiles, Ministers, and Collaborators in Ming China and Vietnam**

Initial endorsement for the invasion came from outsiders. Vietnamese exiles, who arrived in China in 1404, wanted to salvage their ancestral homes. To oust the Ho regime, they relied on the Ming to help them. Men such as Bui Ba Ky and Tran Thien Binh played a role in convincing the Ming to restore the Tran dynasty. Their instigation of the matter netted them important political posts that could advance their careers. For example, after the annexation of Annam, Zhu Di appointed Ba Ky as assistant

\(^8\) Nguyen, “Proclamation (BNDC),” 6-7.

\(^9\) Nguyen, “Proclamation (BNDC),” 7.
administration commissioner in the newly designated province.\(^{10}\) By helping incite the war, Ba Ky gained a nice reward. Thien Binh, on the other hand, would have received a profitable position as well if he had survived the ambush in April 1406. If we assume that the Vietnamese would have accepted him as emperor, then he could have become the next ruler. Although he would have had to align with Ming interests, reducing Thien Binh to a puppet, it would still have been a lucrative position.

Another political actor who goaded the Ming was the Cham ruler Indravarman IV. Since Ho Quy Ly invaded many of his lands, the Cham king requested foreign intervention. As early as August 9, 1403, he sent memorials to Zhu Di, who approved his message.\(^{11}\) After the Ming annexed Vietnam, Indravarman regained most of his lands and avoided further conflict with the Vietnamese.\(^{12}\) Thus, the Cham benefitted much from the invasion. Indubitably, many other political actors influenced the outcome as well.

Military and civil officials such as Zhang Fu and Mac Thuy arguably carried the most influence in convincing Zhu Di to occupy Vietnam.\(^{13}\) As I have shown in chapter six, Zhang and Thuy presented reports and petitions of the Vietnamese desire to become a part of China again. Some historians believe that Zhang faked the petitions. John K. Whitmore argues that although the Ming wanted to retire their army, Zhang refused to


\(^{11}\) MSL, Taizong, 21:400.


give up his hard-earned conquest so easily and possibly conspired with Mac Thuy to obtain the petition’s signatures, whether by force or some other means.\textsuperscript{14} However, as Kathlene Baldanza notes, the Ming invasion would not have succeeded without local support, which means that the pleas could have possessed some truth to them.\textsuperscript{15} Even if the petition was real, there remained the possibility that Zhang Fu and Mac Thuy sought economic and political advancement from the invasion. Evidence shows that they profited greatly from the entire expedition.

On July 5, 1408, after pacifying Annam, Zhang Fu received a glowing message from Zhu Di: "Your contribution to the state will be recorded in the histories and will long be known. Even the achievements of Ma Fu-po [Ma Yuan] of the Han Dynasty do not exceed yours."\textsuperscript{16} Such effusive praise paralleling Zhang’s deeds with those of Ma Yuan, another conqueror of Annam, surely raised Zhang’s prestige. In fact, later in the same month, Zhu Di promoted him to China’s highest military position (1a) for his valiant service and awarded him “a grain salary of 3,000 shi and his male descendants are to inherit the title for successive generations. Headwear and clothing are to be conferred upon him and he is to be rewarded with 400 liang of silver, 1,000 ding of paper money and 40 biao-li of variegated silks.”\textsuperscript{17} As the regional commander of Annam, he enjoyed the duties of overseeing the military and all the power that came with it. For example, on

\textsuperscript{14} Whitmore, Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421), 97-98.

\textsuperscript{15} Baldanza, Ming China and Vietnam, 68.


\textsuperscript{17} Ming Shi-lu, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-6-month-7-day-7 (accessed, Feb. 2, 2018); MSL, Taizong, 81:1079-80.
March 31, 1415, he received “500 liang of silver, 20,000 ding of paper money and 50 biao-li of variegated silks” for ably subduing some Vietnamese rebels. No doubt, these accolades and payments motivated Zhang to reap more.

A similar pattern existed in the case of Vietnamese ministers. In the proclamation, Nguyen Trai decried “the traitors who sold out the country for their personal gain,” which, although biased because he hated the Ming, carried some truth to it. Right from the beginning, countless collaborators offered to work with the Ming and benefitted immensely from the endeavors. The Ming annals recorded several individuals from Annam who received promotion or awards in 1408 as the first people who submitted to Ming authority. On May 28, the Ming promoted Vuong Nhu Tuong and Vuong A-Lo, both native Vietnamese, as officers in their respective provinces. Then on September 27, the court conferred jobs and gifts upon over twenty-six other native officials. Nearly all of these ministers previously had served the Tran, so they happily accepted Ming enfeoffment if it meant that Ho Quy Ly would no longer rule.


19 Nguyen, “Proclamation (BNDC),” 7.

20 The names in Chinese were Wang Ru-Xiang and Wang Alu.


In addition, the two most successful collaborators, Mac Thuy and Nguyen Huan, or Mac Huan, joined these ministers in receiving rewards. Hailing from Lang-giang, the two close associates opted to subordinate themselves to the Ming, gaining much prestige and wealth along the way. Thuy acquired a high administrative position, “50 liang of silver, 500 guan of paper money and five biao-li of variegated silks,” while Huan achieved one-fifth of Thuy’s reward.\textsuperscript{24} As the Ming’s most trusted collaborator, Thuy served the Ming and continued to earn riches until 1412, when he died fighting a rebellion in Lang-son.

Thuy’s counterpart, Huan, also continued to profit from the occupation, such as in 1411 when he received five biao-li of silks, a set of gold threaded silks, and a thousand guan of paper money.\textsuperscript{25} Huan’s finest hour, however, came on July 4, 1416, when he reached the highest position held by a Vietnamese under the Ming regime as right (junior) administrative commissioner, theoretically second only to the top Chinese administrator (“left:”senior).\textsuperscript{26} To celebrate him, the Ming threw a lavish banquet. He traveled over 2272 kilometers from Annam to the capital in Nanjing. Huan brought over 139 other native officials, and the Ming promoted them all up one grade and rewarded them with silks. Ten years later, the emperor enfeoffed Huan’s grandparents, parents, and

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\textsuperscript{26} Ming Shi-lu, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-14-month-6-day-10 (accessed, Feb. 2, 2018); MSL, Taizong, 177:1932-33.
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wife and extolled him with lofty praise. As Huan’s case showed, some collaborators rose high in administration.

These ministers benefitted in part from the venture of plundering Vietnam’s economy. Both Vietnamese and Chinese sources note the incredible amount of wealth and resources flowing from the periphery to the center. For example, official records reported that

after [China] took possession of Annam, people could pay rents and taxes with silk fabric, oil paint, wood, blue jade, fans, and the like . . . The empire’s grain taxes totaled more than thirty million piculs and taxes in silks and paper money exceeded twenty million. At that time, the empire within the four corners was rich and prosperous, and the government enjoyed abundant and surplus revenues.

These riches rebuilt and magnified the Ming economy, at the cost of the suffering of the Vietnamese. In the proclamation of victory, Nguyen Trai completely impugned the Ming for their abuses:

Without mercy and justice, they plundered the land and robbed our resources. They levied heavy taxes to impoverish the whole nation. Miners were led into forested mountains to sieve sand for gold, risked being infected with debilitating diseases. Divers were forced to dive deep to look for pearls amidst danger of attack by sharks and alligators. With forced labor, they cast nets everywhere to catch kingfishers and set up snares to trap black deer . . . They bared their teeth,

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29 As quoted in Tsai, Perpetual Happiness, 123.

30 Back then, the metallic blue feathers of kingfisher birds were valuable in China. Nguyen, “Proclamation (BNDC),” 7.
opened wide their mouths to [suck the blood of the people, satisfying] their insatiable thirst.  

Trai’s diatribe reflected the Le dynasty’s attitude towards corrupt Ming policies. In fact, the revenue and prestige gained from the colony were so valuable that even Zhang Fu refused to give up his prize as late as 1427 when the Ming experienced setback after setback in the face of Le Loi’s assaults. On November 16, 1427, as the emperor Xuande contemplated his next move, few ministers in his court wished for the occupation to continue. Zhang Fu, on the other hand, insisted on it, arguing that “our officers and men have endured years of hardship to conquer [Vietnam] . . . we should send more troops to wipe out the rebels.”

Zhang, as one of the principal supporters behind the occupation, desired the glory of the riches of Vietnam so much that he fought to maintain the dying enterprise. The same phenomenon of influential ministers occurred in the French invasion of Italy.

The Economic Background of Premodern Italy

Italy remained a tempting prize for many a conqueror. Southern Italy’s strategic and economic importance enticed Charles VIII in several ways. Along with Sicily, Naples situated itself at a strategic position in the Mediterranean, where one could launch crusades to the east. Control of the south also granted a French ruler the ability to ward off Spanish ambitions in the peninsula. In addition, the Neapolitan throne presided over a healthy economy, as evident in the successful fur trade with the Levant. French officials

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31 Nguyen, “Proclamation (BNDC),” 7.

32 As quoted in Wang, Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics, 144.
evaluated the revenues of Neapolitan rulers at 1,500,000 million or 1,600,000 million ducats in 1494.\textsuperscript{33} Like the Normans of the eleventh century, Charles VIII sought “the land of milk and honey.”

In northern Italy, Milan possessed one of the most densely populated regions in all of Europe with a strong agriculture and excellent arms industry. In addition, its northern frontier of mountains led to the rich cities of southern Germany; its eastern border led to the middle Po Valley; and its southern border to Genoa, where Milan had access to its banking facilities and Mediterranean trade routes.\textsuperscript{34} With all of these enticements, some observers instinctively understood that the French sought more than just religious ideals.

“No Chaos and Ladders:” Exiles and Ministers in the French Invasion of Naples

Counter-narratives certainly insinuated that Charles wanted nothing but power. In the previous section, I showed that the French justified their war through just war concepts, prophecy, and dynastic claims. The Italian powers dismissed Charles’ rationales as a pretext. For example, Alessandro Benedetti, right from the beginning of his diary, stated that Charles VIII, “was seized in the twenty-fourth year of his life with a desire for power, and to lend credence to the affair he feigned religious (\textit{simulata religione}) motives and let it be known everywhere that he was preparing a war against the Turks.”\textsuperscript{35} As a loyal Venetian, Benedetti probably stated a common opinion at the

\textsuperscript{33} Labande-Malifert, \textit{Charles VIII}, 200.

\textsuperscript{34} Knecht, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France}, 49.

\textsuperscript{35} Benedetti, \textit{Diaria de bello carolino}, I, 60-61.
time. In regard to prophecies, he seemed to believe that they carried the beneficial cloak of religion, which concealed blatant “cupidity.” Thus, Benedetti implied that prophecies helped rationalize war.

Obviously, the anti-French Italian narrative would disparage Charles since the Italians wanted him gone, but it seemed damning that his own trusted advisor, Philippe de Commynes, would also outright say that Charles’ crusade mission was a chimera. In his memoirs, Commynes stated that although the king invaded Italy with the full intention for a crusade, “it was all an evil invention (meschante invention), a lie (car c’estoit mensonge) which even from God one cannot conceal, let alone a king.” With the religious motivations discarded, the counter-narrative perpetuated a different interpretation of Charles’ motives.

Many anti-French powers believed that Charles possessed imperial pretensions. Benedetti claimed that when Charles requested an investiture of the Neapolitan crown from the pope, who denied him, Charles supposedly “stopped thinking about Jerusalem and began to turn over in his mind the transformation of the entire realm of Italy and the papal position.” During the creation of the League of Venice in 1495, the coalition powers echoed Benedetti’s statement. They disliked Charles’ occupation of Papal territory and Pisa, and they argued that Charles never wanted a crusade, but only the complete subjugation of Italy. Although the crusade aspects of Charles’ mission might

36 Benedetti, Diaria de bello carolino, I, 63.
38 Benedetti, Diaria de bello carolino, I, 75.
seem fraudulent to someone who subscribed to the Italian counter-narrative, the truth lay somewhere in between honest intentions and greedy ambitions.

To dive further into the issue, we must examine the ministers who most influenced the launching of this war. In France, Commynes pointed to two culprits: Etienne de Vesc and Guillaume Briçonnet (1445-1514). The first Frenchman came from Languedoc, the second from the bishopric of St. Malo. As ministers to Charles VIII, these men consulted with the king on many different matters and became his most trusted advisors. Commynes believed that Vesc sought lands and titles, while Briçonnet wanted a cardinal’s hat. In Commynes’ words, Vesc, as a man “of petty lineage with little knowledge of war,” and Briçonnet, “a coward,” (à qui le cœur faillit) convinced the king to invade because they just wanted honor and glory. Since few people commended these two men, and the enterprise lacked money, good leaders, and a strong king, Commynes put all of the blame on Vesc and Briçonnet as the main instigators for the war.40

As to the Italian side, Neapolitan exiles and Ludovico Sforza stood out as the most incendiary political actors. As mentioned in chapter three, the prince of Salerno, Antonello di Sanseverino and his brother Galeazzo, along with several other exiles, came to the French court, asking for help. Disaffected with the Aragonese regime, they sought to recover their lands and political positions from Ferrante.41 The invasion of Naples interested these exiles and clearly would benefit them. One actor, in particular, Ludovico Sforza, worked together with the exiles to organize invasion plans. He wanted to take

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40 Commynes, Mémoires, vol. 2, VII.1, 97-99.

control of Milan, but Ferrante threatened him with assassinations. Thus, Ludovico tried to create chaos in southern Italy by inviting the French army as a stepping stone to his goal. To persuade the French, he promised Charles the prospect of the crusade, Vesc a duchy, and Briçonnet a cardinal’s hat.\textsuperscript{42} These incentives motivated them to cross the Alps.

As Benedetti argues, squabbling among Italian rulers such as Ludovico, dukes of Ferrara and Florence, and others, led to calls for French intervention. Their agendas included ousting Alexander VI and Ferrante, whom everyone hated.\textsuperscript{43} All of these ministers essentially played a game of chess and moved their pieces into place to further their own goals; everyone possessed an agenda.

Most of these political actors ultimately gained something out of the expedition. During Charles’ stay at Rome in January 1495, the pope granted Briçonnet a cardinal’s hat, making him cardinal of St. Malo.\textsuperscript{44} After Charles successfully conquered Naples (albeit for a short period) in February 1495, several ministers obtained great rewards. The majority of political positions and lands went to Frenchmen.\textsuperscript{45} One of them, Etienne de Vesc, acquired precisely what he wanted: the king distributed the principalities of Nola and Ascoli to the minister and made him the chamberlain of Naples. Vesc also took command of the fortress of Gaeta and regulated the finances of the entire kingdom, skimming much of the money in the process.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Commynes, \textit{Mémoires}, vol. 2, VII.2, 107-14; VII.7, 144.

\textsuperscript{43} Benedetti, \textit{Diaria de bello carolino}, I, 63.

\textsuperscript{44} Commynes, \textit{Mémoires}, vol. 2, VII.15, 189.

\textsuperscript{45} Commynes, \textit{Mémoires}, vol. 2, VII.17, 199.

\textsuperscript{46} Commynes, \textit{Mémoires}, vol. 2, VII.17, 200; VIII.1, 233.
Likewise, the Neapolitan exiles profited as well. The two Sanseverinos, Antonello and Bernardino (1470-1517), and Giacomo Caracciolo recovered all of their former offices and lands since “they served [the king] as faithfully as they possibly could.” Many other families such as the Colonna received rewards as well. Ludovico, of course, became the Duke of Milan after removing his nephew from the picture and rejoiced at the news of the end of the Aragonese dynasty. However, Ludovico later double-crossed the French. He collaborated with other powers in the League of Venice to oust Charles VIII, for fear that the French might take over Milan. Therefore, he took advantage of invasion, benefitted from it, and then eliminated his benefactor.

Patterns of Material Ambitions in the Invasion and Occupation of Milan, 1499-1521

This cycle of invasion and ministers reaping the benefits from war continued into the reigns of Louis XII and Francis I. Niccolò Machiavelli provided some interesting information on Louis’ actions in *The Prince*. During the French invasions of Milan, the Venetians flipped allegiances quite often with different powers to obtain their objectives. Machiavelli, who famously criticized Louis, actually praised the alliance between Venice and France. As stated in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, in 1499, “King Louis was brought into Italy by the ambitions of the Venetians, who wanted to gain half of the state of Lombardy [Milan] through his coming.” Machiavelli saw that in this instance, France

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correctly collaborated with a weaker state to avoid power balance issues. France and Venice divided Milan amongst themselves and thus mutually benefitted each other.

However, in Naples, France decided to partition the lands with Ferdinand the Catholic through the secret treaty of Granada (1500). Here, Machiavelli severely derided Louis’ actions for bringing in a stronger power that could rival his own.\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Prince}’s astute observations belied an underlying fact in the French invasion: political actors seeking to benefit from the invasion in material terms, not religious ideals. We find this phenomenon regularly occurring during the occupation of Milan from 1499-1521.

French and Italian ministers profited immediately upon arrival in the duchy. At the time, the French estimated Milan’s income to be 1,686,000 livres.\textsuperscript{51} When Louis entered the duchy on October 6, 1499, he bestowed lands on several noble families and rewarded many northern Italians such as the Marquis of Mantua, who received Louis’ protection, the command of one hundred lances, and a pension, and the Duke of Ferrara, who also received royal protection.\textsuperscript{52} Most notably, one may point to Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (1440-1518) as one of these prime beneficiaries. As a native Milanese exile, he began serving the French in the mid-1490s under Charles VIII and later attached himself to Louis and Francis’s retinue.\textsuperscript{53} He rose high in the French court and became marshal of

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\textsuperscript{50} Machiavelli, \textit{The Prince}, chp 3, 49.
\textsuperscript{51} Baumgartner, \textit{Louis XII}, 118.
\textsuperscript{53} The best in-depth study of Trivulzio comes from an Italian work. Letizia Arcangeli, "Gian Giacomo Trivulzio Marchese di Vigezone il governo francese nello stato di Milano (1499-1518)," in \textit{eadem}, \textit{Gentiluomini di Lombardia: ricerche sull’aristocrazia padana nel Rinascimento} (Milan: Unicopli, 2003), 3-70.
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France on September 29, 1499. Less than a month later, Louis showered his general with lands and titles after the conquest and installed him as governor of Milan.

However, the joy of ruling his homeland turned to sorrow as Trivulzio soon lost control due to his unpopular and despotic policies. Ludovico Sforza later returned from exile in 1500 and ousted the general. Once the French reconquered Milan, Louis reassigned Trivulzio’s job to Georges d’Amboise, but kept Trivulzio as a military commander for the French and continued to grant him patronage. Amboise, on the other hand, as Louis’ most trusted advisor, benefitted from the invasion of Milan as well. He reinstated French administration in Milan and became the de facto ruler for three years. Amboise distributed some of the duchy’s revenue to different political actors, including himself. He also received the title of Count of Lomellina (near Alessandria). Like Trivulzio, as a loyal minister to Louis, he prospered much from the war.

After the revolt ended, the new government produced a long list of exiles and their estates. This precise catalog of their whereabouts was quite impressive and reflected the flow of goods and money from Milan to French coffers. The French administration redistributed these belongings and revenues to both French and Italian adherents. A document titled the États des Rebelles du Milanais (Estates of the Milanese Rebels), published some time in 1503, survived in Jean d’Auton’s chronicle and detailed the

54 Baumgartner, *Louis XII*, 118.


allotments.\textsuperscript{58} Among the extensive list of goods, the majority of them went to French officials, while ten northern Italians obtained the rest of the revenue from the rebels’ estates.

Some mentions include Cavazzo della Somaglia, one of the leading actors of the rebellion, whom the French forgave and granted 2000 ducats per year along with his feudal property (\textit{biens feudaulx}); Ercole Rusca, a Milanese resident who on two occasions received two annual revenues of 593 and 10 ducats and a whole estate from two different rebels; and Gabriel Scanagata, to whom the French gave a total of 200 ducats from three different rebels.\textsuperscript{59} Most notably, the government granted Bernardino Gasco from Piedmont (then part of Milan), a combined 319.5 ducats per year from eleven different rebels.\textsuperscript{60} This amount dwarfed the other rewards of the Italians. Finally, Trivulzio, for his unwavering loyalty, received a pension of ten thousand livres from Louis XII, while his wife received one of the rebel’s holdings and allod, or freehold estate in land, in Suardi (near Vigevano).\textsuperscript{61} Other members of the Trivulzio clan including Agostino, Catellan, and Erasmo all earned annual revenues taken from rebels.\textsuperscript{62} Just from these examples, we can see that the share of wealth in Milan trickled down nicely to certain ministers who promoted the French cause.

\textsuperscript{58} Auton, \textit{Chroniques de Louis XII}, II, 328-47.

\textsuperscript{59} Auton, \textit{Chroniques}, II, 331, 335, 338, 339.

\textsuperscript{60} Auton, \textit{Chroniques}, II, 344.

\textsuperscript{61} Auton, \textit{Chroniques}, I, 10-11, (BN, Fonds francais 2928, fol 12); II, 333.

\textsuperscript{62} Auton, \textit{Chroniques}, II, 334, 335.
The first French regime in Milan, however, lasted for thirteen years. In mid-1510 to 1511, Louis XII began to encroach upon papal territory, which prompted the creation of a coalition force. On October 4, 1511, the Papacy, Spain, Venice, and England formed the Holy League to expel the French. According to their counter-narrative, the alliance’s purpose aimed to prevent Louis from conquering more territories, a repeat of the first coalition’s narrative against Charles VIII in 1494. As part of a program to “deliver Italy from barbarians,” the counter-narrative plainly implied that the French intended to conquer all of Italy. Although the League successfully ousted Louis, its carving up of territories fell short of Venetian expectations. Once again, Venice allied with the new French king, Francis I, to reconquer Milan and take more lands in 1515.

Foreign observers perpetuated similar counter-narratives against Francis to sway public opinion. For example, the English king, Henry VIII (1509-1547), considered the young French ruler his rival and aimed to prevent his power-grabbing. Ambassadors noted Henry’s adverse reaction towards the French invasion and recorded his opinions. In a letter on July 3, 1515, to the Venetian government, Henry argued against the French alliance, saying that,

If your sole hope is based on the favours of the King of France, you will be deceived, for when he has recovered the Milanese he will seize the rest likewise. He is fresh to the war and young, and has money at his disposal; you, on the contrary, have expended considerable sums. On his arrival in Italy he will be at liberty to act as he pleases . . . I know that King [Louis], although my brother-in-

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64 Knecht, *Rise and Fall*, 80.
law, was a bad man; I do not know what this youth may be, but, at any rate, he is a Frenchman, nor do I know how far you can trust him.

Henry’s statement towards France reflected a common counter-discourse that disparaged the French rationale of Christian duty and emphasized political and economic motivations. Clearly, foreign observers knew that Francis only desired lands and cared little for a crusade. As Henry suggested, Francis intended to control a significant portion of Italy.

Outside of the Venetians, Francis entered into a secret agreement with the Genoese doge, Ottaviano Fregoso (1470-1524). Fearful of other powers in Italy attempting to devour his duchy, Fregoso negotiated with Francis to protect his lands. In exchange for dominion over Genoa, Fregoso would continue to rule, but only as a governor, and obtained one hundred lances as well as the Order of St. Michael from France. Francis also promised that he would restore the covenants and privileges that Genoa once enjoyed before Louis XII’s invasion and “assign a certain portion of ecclesiastic revenues” to Fregoso’s brother. After Francis’ successful reconquest of Milan on October 11, 1515, he honored his agreements with Fregoso and the Venetians,

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65 Louis XII married Henry VIII’s younger sister, Mary Tudor (1496-1533) in 1514.


68 Guicciardini, History, vol. 6, XII, 309.
whom he supported militarily in their invasions of nearby Brescia.\textsuperscript{69} Thus, the two Italian powers profited from the French invasion.

This second occupation lasted six more years until 1521. During this period, ministers prospered once more from the war. Consider the example of Odet de Foix, Viscount of Lautrec (1485-1528). Francis appointed him as governor of Milan in the king’s stead from 1516 to the end of the domination.\textsuperscript{70} Although Lautrec grew up wealthy, evidence showed that he multiplied his money from serving in Milan. Before Francis’ reign, Louis XII rewarded Lautrec a pension of 1000 livres for his military actions.\textsuperscript{71} During the second occupation, in 1518, Francis I provided Lautrec with 12,000 livres in addition to his French salaries.\textsuperscript{72} Lautrec’s brother, Thomas, seigneur of Lescun, received “3000 livres tournois further to that which he receives in France.” In addition, pensions distributed to various retainers increased under Lautrec’s administration in Milan.\textsuperscript{73} As one Italian observed, Lautrec was once a “poor gentleman,” but now “he lived like a demi-king.”\textsuperscript{74} Although Lautrec thrived in Milan, the Milanese enterprise ultimately ended in 1522 after imperial armies defeated the French army and entered the city on May 30.

\textsuperscript{69} Mallett and Shaw, \textit{The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State, and Society in Early Modern Europe}, 131.

\textsuperscript{70} Two studies on Odet de Foix include Bertrand de Chanterac, \textit{Odet de Foix, vicomte de Lautrec, maréchal de France (1483-1528)} (Paris: A. Margraff, 1930) and Woodcock, “Living Like a King?” 1-24.

\textsuperscript{71} Auton, \textit{Chroniques}, IV, 234.


\textsuperscript{73} Di Tullio and Fois, \textit{Stati di Guerra}, 72; Woodcock, “Living Like a King?” 14.

\textsuperscript{74} Woodcock, “Living Like a King?” 4.
Comparison of the Two Case Studies and Concluding Remarks

As I have shown in this chapter, Ming and French political actors influenced and benefitted from their invasions and occupations in many ways. Highly ambitious men sought material rewards such as lands and titles in Vietnam and Italy. Some of them sought revenge, others a return from exile. Attaining political positions became a prerogative for most of these ministers, which drove them to create war. In this study, I analyzed multiple cases to obtain a sense of the profitability of war.

Just to name a few, in Vietnam, we have Bui Ba Ky, Zhang Fu, Mac Thuy, Nguyen Huan, while in Italy, Etienne de Vesc, Guillaume Briçonnet, Antonello di Sanseverino, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, Ottaviano Fregoso, and Odet de Foix stood out as clear beneficiaries. All of these actors either instigated their wars or profited significantly from them. Exiles influenced these wars in the beginning. Ba Ky, Sanseverino, and Trivulzio all wanted to reclaim their homelands, thus forcing them to collaborate with foreign forces. Others plainly desired political or territorial gains, such as Zhang Fu and Etienne de Vesc. They acquired honors and titles at the expense of the deaths of thousands on the battlefields of Vietnam and Italy. External forces influenced the creation of these wars as well. The Cham king, Indravarman IV, wanted to eliminate the threat of the Vietnamese invading his lands. Similarly, Ludovico Sforza pushed Charles VIII to invade Naples to stop Ferrante from attempting to assassinate him. These actors hid their agendas, which affected the outcomes of these wars.

Another affinity involved the counter-narratives. The value of Vietnam and Italy as economic and strategic provinces weighed heavily on the minds of foreign rulers. While religious ideology motivated some people such as Zhu Di and Charles VIII,
material considerations mattered to them too. The opposition certainly emphasized the
greediness of the political actors involved. In Vietnam, Nguyen Trai saw past the
Confucian rhetoric and chided the Ming for exploiting his land. Equivalently, Venetians
exposed Charles VIII’s Christian just war rhetoric and charged him with starting an
empire. Even Charles’ loyal minister, Commynes, said the crusade was just a lie. These
accusations were damning and reflected a shared affinity between the political actors of
these two invasions who yearned for materialistic aggrandizement.

However, we should keep in mind that some of these ministers acted out of
pragmatism. Whereas Mac Thuy or Ottaviano Fregoso may have only sought personal
profit from foreign invasions, others collaborated because they had no choice. One good
representation of this phenomenon came from a native Milanese, Girolamo Morone
(1470-1529). In a letter dating to October 23, 1499, when the French arrived in Milan,
Morone told his friend that no matter how long French rule should last, “I want to be such
a fine magistrate, to do such good for the city, to keep such faith with these French lords
that their successor – whoever that may be – should only think highly of me and value
my service.” Morone later helped Charles V topple the French regime in 1521, which
showed that even if he despised the French, he kept quiet and went on with his duties as a
good servant.

Moreover, not all of the political actors acted selfishly or ambitiously. A Chinese
official, Huang Fu (1362-1440), tirelessly accommodated the Vietnamese and contributed

75 As quoted in John Gagne, “Crisis Redux: The Views from Milan, 1499,” in After Civic
Humanism: Learning and Politics in Renaissance Italy, ed., Nicholas Scott Baker, Brian Jeffery Maxson
(Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015), 229-30.
to their well-being. Both Chinese and Vietnamese praised Huang for his wisdom and talent in ruling people. Similarly, in Europe, there existed an extraordinary noble figure in Pierre Terrail, seigneur de Bayard (1473-1524), also known as the *le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche* (the knight without fear and beyond reproach). He fought for all three kings in Italy and garnered a reputation for honor, kindness, and bravery, a distinction that solidified him as one of the last chivalric figures. Although chivalry had declined by then, his undying commitment to his duty as a knight among ubiquitous mercenaries of questionable loyalties created a romantic literary hero, inspiring future young men. As these examples show, worldly ambitions only reveal a slice of the picture.

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76 Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming*, 117.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

豈欲窮兵究武而貪土地人民之富哉 (Why would I act in a warlike manner in order to obtain some land and people?)

Zhu Di, 1408.

Mais je dis encore cecy affin que mieulx on entende que tout cedict voyage fut vray mystere de Dieu (But I repeat this so that one can best understand that this entire expedition was a real mystery of God’s).

Philippe de Commynes, 1495.

What compelled the Ming and French to invade their neighbors and how did they justify it? To answer the questions I outlined in the introduction, I shall recount my findings and connect some common themes.

Both the Ming and the French tried to justify their conduct with religious just war concepts. Zhu Di sought to punish Ho Quy Ly, save the Vietnamese people, and reinstall the rightful ruler. On the other hand, Charles VIII wanted to oust Ferrante I, rescue the Neapolitans, and launch a crusade against the Ottomans. Confucian just war theory permeated the Chinese narrative, while Christian just war theory influenced the language of the French narrative. Their justifications utilized the same concepts from similar

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theories from disparate ideological backgrounds within a story that portrayed themselves as heroes and created villains out of the Ho family, Aragonese dynasty, and Ottomans.

The French went further with the Christian theme and applied millenarian thought to their rationale. Political actors such as Girolamo Savonarola and French propaganda writers proclaimed the coming of a savior who will right the wrongs of the “infidels.” These actors aligned this savior with the French king, which supplied a supernatural morale to the invasion. The Ming clearly diverged on this point. No evidence of eschatological fervor exists during the Ming invasion of Vietnam in the same way as the Savonarolan moment. Nevertheless, we learn that parallel prophecies appeared in premodern Christian and Buddhist traditions. Historical circumstances such as the Confucian prohibition of Maitreyism prevented a stream of Buddhist millenarianism from appearing in the early fifteenth century. This disparity between the two invasions merely reflected a historical contingency: if the Ming had never banned prophecies then perhaps we would see Maitreyism in China or Vietnam during their war.

The Ming and French also justified their wars using the memory of past conquests. In Vietnam, the Ming alluded to the ancient 1000-year dominance of the Vietnamese. Once they failed to find a Tran descendant to put on the throne, political actors in Vietnam requested the Ming to “reincorporate” their lands into China. The memory of past relations therefore rationalized the occupation of Vietnam. Similarly, the French utilized dynastic claims and antiquity to legitimize their invasion. Charles VIII relied on his royal claim to Naples, which stemmed from the Angevin family, while Louis XII and Francis I laid claim to Milan via their Visconti parentage. Moreover, the French perpetuated a myth that alleged that Italians were descended from Frenchmen or
Gauls. The French kings based these discourses on historical facts or traditional legends. Clearly, the Ming and French narratives paralleled each other on using history as evidence, which formed an integral part of their rationales and vindicated their claims to these lands.

However, counter-narratives arose to challenge the Ming and French stories and provided an impetus for ousting these foreign invaders. In Vietnam, the victorious Le dynasty proclaimed that China and Vietnam were always separate and utterly denounced the Ming for exploiting their economy. The Le uncovered the fact that some ministers, both Chinese and Vietnamese, supported the occupation to receive prestige and money through the endeavor. The French invasion of Italy mirrored this aspect. Frenchmen such as Etienne de Vesc and Italians such as Ludovico Sforza pushed the French to war and obtained titles, lands, and political power for their actions. Counter-narratives from anti-French Europeans and even Charles VIII’s own trusted advisor, Philippe de Commynes, alleged that the French only wanted to create an empire and facilitated the spread of Italy’s wealth to greedy ministers.

The Impact of Traditional Ideology on Premodern Foreign Invasions

What can we make of these parallels? Ming China and Valois France differed in culture, geography, and governance, but their justifications for war seemed to mirror each other very well. Here I follow Katherine Carlitz’s approach in her comparative cultural history article. She offers two ways one can approach these similarities. Based on the methodology of world historians, one might attempt a search for influence and causality.

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However, this “obscures the phenomena, encouraging us to concentrate on the gross shape rather than the fine grain.”\(^4\) Carlitz suggests a different angle. Rather than look for cause and effect, we should concentrate on thematic affinities to better understand their resemblances and disparities in detail.

Via this method, I extract some results from this study’s comparison. Regarding legitimizing war through just war concepts and historical claims, many parallels existed even if the historical contexts had diverged considerably in China and France. The only difference was prophecy, but that owed more to situational factors, and the outcome could very well have been different if the Zhu and Ho families had never banned millenarian thought. Part of the problem is that when we look at the differences, we find stark dissemblance in state formations. As a result, historical events in China and France would seem extremely different. Yet, while their contexts and ideologies appeared dissimilar, their motivations and approaches for rationalizing war remained constant. The fact that both regimes used reciprocal rhetorical techniques to justify their wars unveils strikingly parallel ideologies.

Religion and ministers played equal roles in influencing the emperor of China and the king of France. These rulers thought about taking over their neighbors to help rebuild their states after civil wars, while ambitious and opportunistic political actors seized the chance to elevate their governmental positions and wealth. Of course, these factors only formed a part of the equation. Ideological processes that imparted the limitations and conducts under which the Ming emperor and French king should operate tempered their

\(^4\) Carlitz, “Pornography, Chastity,” 119.
public narratives. Knowledge of a “benevolent sage-king” or “Most Christian King” imprinted the mentalities of these rulers, which forced them to act in a certain way, rooted in historical customs. As a result, the Ming and French relied on dynastic claims and ideological just war theory to legitimize war because these discourses remained very prevalent in this period. Viewed in this manner, the Ming and Valois French were not so different when it came to justifying war in the fifteenth century. They exhibited a familiar pattern to premodern rationales for war.

Suggestions of a Pattern

In fact, this similarity seems to suggest a possible connection between the imperial natures of Ming China and Valois France. For this study, perhaps one can frame it within a “Liebermanian paradigm.” If we adopt Victor Lieberman’s model, we may be able to explain why these two invasions occurred in such similar fashions. Lieberman argues that the fifteenth century marked a period of consolidation after a turbulent fourteenth century characterized by disease and warfare. States such as China and France rebounded with economic/demographic expansion and political integration.

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6 Further studies could generate more questions and answers, opening up avenues for finding more similarities. This topic is ripe for new theoretical and methodological frameworks, from economic, social, and gender to new military, memory, and identity history. If future scholars want to explore my study of narratives further, then they can find more case studies as evidenced in the sources. There are more chronicles, memoirs, gazetteers, annals, letters, and other documents out there for people to interpret. The main difficulty lies in the knowledge of languages since an in-depth study would require Chinese, Italian, French, Vietnamese, and Latin. However, I would argue this endeavor is well-worth the effort for its illumination on the nature of foreign invasions.

One may argue then that although the two invasions occurred diachronically within the span of a hundred years, Lieberman would have us believe that they transpired thanks to a state formation period reversing the effects of climate change in the 1300s and capitalizing on population increases in the 1400s. Thus, the Ming and French merely expanded their territories as their governments grew more powerful in the fifteenth century. Chinese and French usage of ideological justifications during the Ming-Ho and Italian wars reflected the expanding military and administrative capabilities of the Ming and Valois states: Confucian and Christian just war theory provided China and France the legitimacy to undertake state-building activities.

The possibility of a causal relation between these two wars indicates the potential of comparative studies. Via my thesis, we already learn that by comparing two seemingly disparate moments in world history, we find interesting and unique similarities that do not appear readily apparent to us. Such fascinating conclusions lead me to believe that comparative history has much to offer to historians of both Europe and Asia and the Ming-Ho and Italian wars. It is only by viewing historical moments through the lenses of different world perspectives that we can obtain a clearer picture of global history.
APPENDIX A

SOME PARALLELS BETWEEN THE MING INVASION OF VIETNAM AND THE FRENCH INVASION OF ITALY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ming Invasion of Vietnam</th>
<th>French Invasion of Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started in Early Fifteenth Century</td>
<td>Started in Late Fifteenth Century and ended mid-Sixteenth Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation: 1407-1427 (Total 20 years)</td>
<td>Occupation (Milan): 1499-1512, 1515-1521 (Total 19 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of Rulers: Zhu Di, 1406-1424; Zhu Gaochi, 1424; Zhu Zhanji, 1424-1428</td>
<td>Change of Rulers: Charles VIII, 1494-1498, Louis XII, 1498-1515; Francis I, 1515-1547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam at the Margins/Borders of the Ming state</td>
<td>Italy at the Margins/Borders of the French State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emperor Never Lived Within the Territory</td>
<td>The King Never Lived Within the Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation: Heavy Taxes, Heavy Labor, Redistribution of Land to Adherents, Cultural hegemony</td>
<td>Exploitation: Heavy Taxes, Redistribution of Land to Adherents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ended in Failure: Ming Repelled by Vietnamese Rebellion</td>
<td>Ended in Failure: French Repelled by a Coalition of European Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Does Not Possess Vietnam Today</td>
<td>France Does Not Possess Italy Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentous Period of Change: Vietnamese Secondary State Formation</td>
<td>Momentous Period of Change: European State Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Use of Gunpowder Weapons</td>
<td>Significant Use of Gunpowder Weapons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table represents some of the parallels between the Ming invasion of Vietnam and the French invasion of Italy. As we can see, some of these seem coincidental, such as the time of foreign control and change of rulers. Others reflected connected processes such as state formation. What this table shows is that these two invasions possessed very similar historical affinities. These similarities represent controlled variables which lend themselves to a good comparison. We can examine the affinities and disparities in greater details by finding causal relations and common patterns. See Whitmore’s *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming* and Mallett and Shaw’s *Italian Wars* for all background information.
APPENDIX B

FAMILY TREES

The following family trees provide the connections between dynastic claimants in Dai Viet and Italy. I created all of these trees. For background information, see chapters 2 and 3.

Figure 1. Family Tree of the Late Tran Dynasty

Figure 2. Family Tree of Ho Quy Ly in Relation to the Tran
Figure 3. Family Tree of Angevins in Italy in Relation to Charles VIII

Figure 4. Tree of Orléanist Claim to Milan in Relation to the Visconti Family
APPENDIX C

FIGURES

Figure 1. The Ming Empire’s Domination of Vietnam, 1407-1427. (The Title of the Above Map is “Lam Son Uprising.”) Photo Credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E8%97%8D%E5%B1%B1%E8%B5%B7%E7%BE%A9%E5%9C%96.png.
Figure 2. Famous Portrait of the Third Ming Emperor, Zhu Di, or the Yongle (t. perpetual happiness) Emperor. Photo Credit: http://www.dazhongguo.org.cn/Info/enterURL/1/info Detail.jsp?infoID=9714666.
Figure 3: Italy and the Northern Mediterranean, 1494. Source: http://go.grolier.com/atlas?id=mh00080&tn=/atlas/ada/atlas.html
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