

Three Speeches by Venetian Ambassadors 1433–1486

Edited with Introduction and Commentary
by Jan Rothkamm



Harrassowitz Verlag



Gratia

Tübinger Schriften zur Renaissanceforschung
und Kulturwissenschaft. Band 54

Herausgegeben von Joachim Knappe,
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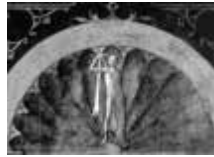
Begründet von Dieter Wuttke

2016

Harrassowitz Verlag • Wiesbaden

Three Speeches by Venetian Ambassadors 1433–1486

Francesco Barbaro, *Ad Sigismundum Caesarem*
Bernardo Giustinian, *Ad universitatem Parisiensem*
Ermolao Barbaro, *Ad Federicum imperatorem /*
Ad Maximilianum regem Romanorum



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Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Stiftung *Humanismus heute*
des Landes Baden-Württemberg.

Der Einband und die Titelseite zeigen Details aus
Vittore Carpaccio, *Commiato degli ambasciatori* (ca. 1490–1495)
© Gallerie dell'Accademia / Polo Museale Veneziano

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet
at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding: Memminger MedienCentrum AG
Printed in Germany
ISSN 0343-1258
ISBN 978-3-447-10597-2

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Abbreviations

<i>ADB</i>	Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie
<i>ASV</i>	Archivio di Stato di Venezia
<i>CC</i>	Corpus Christianorum (series Latina)
<i>DBI</i>	Dizionario biografico degli Italiani
<i>GW</i>	Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke
<i>IGI</i>	Indice generale degli incunaboli delle biblioteche d'Italia
<i>NDB</i>	Neue deutsche Biographie
<i>RTA</i>	Reichstagsakten (Ältere Reihe)
<i>TLL</i>	Thesaurus linguae Latinae
#	electronic file number
f.	simple folio, followed by Arabic numeral, and v for verso pages (no r for recto)
fol.	full folio, followed by Roman letter and Roman numeral (and v for verso pages)

Acknowledgements

Several institutions and individual people have contributed to the completion of the present project, and deserve being mentioned and thanked for their help and support: the *Centro tedesco di studi veneziani* for a five-month scholarship to study the manuscript holdings of the *Marciana* library in 2011/12; the *C. Arrius Nurus Foundation* in Leuven for funds to finance a visit to Flanders in 2013; the *École française de Rome* for providing hospitality in 2014; the *Stiftung Humanismus heute* for a grant to publish the results of the research in the present form. I would also like to thank the staff of libraries in Bologna, Ghent, Naples and Vienna for the courtesy and speed with which they sent digital copies of manuscripts seen or not seen by myself previously in situ. Special thanks to Dr. Paolo Vian of the *Biblioteca Apostolica* for taking the time to discuss the datation and provenance of Vaticanus Chigi J VI 215, and to Dr. Raffaele Santoro of the *Archivio di Stato* in Venice for some final verifications of Misc. codd. I 159. Professor Joachim Knape processed the typescript in a friendly and unbureaucratic way, and Professor Reinhold Glei very kindly offered to read all three speeches in proof. His scrutiny has led to a number of improvements, both of the layout and the text. I can merely hope that the many errors and shortcomings that remain – all are mine – are outweighed by the occasional insight and interesting suggestion for further research.

Paris, autumn 2015

J. R.

General Introduction

The diplomatic oration has been neglected by modern historians of the Renaissance. Burckhardt, in his cultured manner, contended himself with relegating «offizielle Empfangsreden» to the realm of «humanistische Schulrhetorik».¹ Later commentators were less forgiving: They openly criticised the speeches of Quattrocento ambassadors as stereotypical and unoriginal and largely irrelevant for the reconstruction of a specific political or cultural context.² These claims have been repeated time and again, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, and a polemical attitude towards the presumed verbosity of Renaissance diplomats has become a topos itself in the secondary literature.³

As is often the case with a cliché or prejudice, it is partially true. Not all individuals who acted as members of the so-called “extraordinary” (that is, non-permanent) embassies common at the time, were gifted enough to produce outstanding pieces for the courteous and often semi-public ceremonies that preceded the actual, secret negotiations. Many were tempted to rely on material either they

1 Burckhardt, *Cultur der Renaissance*, p. 98: «Es ist in dieser Zeit zumal von venezianischen Gesandten eine Kunst der politischen Ueberredung aufgewandt worden, von welcher man damals der Alpen erst durch die Italiener einen Begriff bekam, und welche ja nicht nach den officiellen Empfangsreden beurtheilt werden darf, denn diese gehören der humanistischen Schulrhetorik an».

2 Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy* II, p. 191: “we should err if we imagined the speeches pronounced upon solemn occasions ... were marked by any of the nobler qualities of eloquence. They consist of commonplaces freely interspersed with historical examples and voluminous quotations. Without charm, without originality, they survive as monuments of the enthusiasm of that age for classic erudition, and of the patience with which popes and princes lent their ears for two or three hours at a stretch to the self-complacent mouthings of a pompous pedant”.

3 See e. g. Sabbadini, *Metodo degli umanisti*, p. 66 («Dalle numerosissime orazioni umanistiche la storia ha ben poco da guadagnare ... frasi lisciate, periodi sonori. Parole parole parole»); Bertalot in a contribution originally published in *Quellen u. Forschungen* 21 (reprinted in: *Studien zum dt. u. italienischen Humanismus* II, p. 136 «nach Form und Inhalt gezwungen, konventionell und ohne sonderliche individuelle Prägung ... langweilige[s] Produkt»); Rossi, *Quattrocento*, p. 153 («suona il periodo, ma è muto il pensiero»); still Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 39 (“this first formal oration which, skirting delicately around the real business of the mission, was supposed to cover the emptiness of its subject matter with a profusion of resounding words”). Queller, *Office of Ambassador*, pp. 196 f. has a slightly more nuanced account, but again concludes with a warning not to make “of diplomatic oratory something more significant than it actually was”.

themselves or others had prepared for a similar occasion before.⁴ On the other hand, any serious humanist will have looked forward to a formal oration as a unique opportunity to display his mastery of ideas and words.

All three authors of the speeches presented here can count as serious humanists, at least by the standards of their own century.⁵ All three contributed – as members of one and the same family, or of families well acquainted with each other –⁶ to the emergence of a small group of enthusiasts for classical learning in Venice in the course of the fifteenth century, at a time when the former maritime republic arguably reached the acme of its economic outreach and political import. And all three were sent to leaders of territories situated across the Alps that would dominate European politics in the centuries to come, that is, the Holy Roman Emperor and the French king. Two of the speeches have been included in a list of “most famous orations of the epoch”.⁷

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- 4 The reuse of own material is illustrated in the speech of the Milanese colleague of Bernardo Giustinian in Tours, Tommaso Morroni, to Louis XI, see Boralevi in: *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria* 17, p. 577: «egli si esprima colle stesse identiche parole dell'orazione al principe di Milano ... ripetizioni dello stesso concetto e persino delle stesse parole!». For a curious case of importing foreign material see John of Ludzisko, who compiled various excerpts of Italian speeches, esp. by Guarino (preserved in one and the same ms., Cracow Bibl. Jag. 126, in a reverential two-column presentation on the first hundred pages), but did so without hiding the practice, cf. at the end of his «pro domino Kazymiro duce magno Lithwaniae» l. 150 «Hec oratio collecta est», and of the «pro susceptione Vincentii Koth» l. 130: «Ista oratio colecta est» pp. 66 and 73 Bojarski.
- 5 Francesco Barbaro can justly be regarded as a pioneer of humanistic themes with his early «de re uxoria», the «de origine urbis Venetiarum» by Bernardo Giustinian is usually considered as the first serious account of Venetian history, and Ermolao Barbaro's fame rests primarily on his numerous «Castigationes» of Pliny's «Naturalis historia», see Gnesotto, Graevius–Burman and Pozzi for (modern) editions.
- 6 Two of Francesco Barbaro's letters to Bernardo's father Leonardo Giustinian, ep. 77 of 1437 and ep. 153 of 1440 (Griggio), include a short «ornatissimo Bernardo salutem dic» (l. 23 and l. 19, respectively), the second one answered by Leonardo ibid. ep. 155, 53 with «Bernardus se tibi commendat plurimum», see for the uninterrupted relations between the two families after Leonardo's death in 1446 also a request by Guarino, the former Greek teacher of Francesco and Leonardo, to Francesco about the fate of a letter he had sent from Ferrara «ad virum patricium B. Iustinianum» ibid. ep. 361, 28. Repeated references to «el magnifico meser Bernardo Iustiniano», starting with a mention of the «dignissima» oration to pope Sixtus in Rome, can be found in the «Dispacci» sent by Ermolao Barbaro's father Zaccaria between December 1471 and March 1472 as ambassador to Naples (accompanied by his son) to Venice, see nos. 44, 48, 85, 97 (pp. 94, 105, 181, 205) Corazzol. Finally, Ermolao pays homage to the late Bernardo in a letter of March 1489 addressed to the son of Bernardo's daughter, Marco (di Andrea) Dandolo, ep. CXXXI (II, pp. 48 f.) Branca.
- 7 King, *Venetian Humanism*, p. 43: “Embassies to foreign rulers gave opportunity for some of the most famous orations of the epoch: those of Zaccaria Trevisan the Elder, for instance, to the ri-

None of the speeches has so far appeared in what could be called a normal, critical edition.⁸ The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editors of Francesco Barbaro's speech relied on a single copy, executed in a haste in the sixteenth century.⁹ Bernardo's speech as printed for the first time in the 1490s was mistaken as late as 1969 for the original version, which was never published, but widely circulated in manuscript.¹⁰ Similarly, the twentieth-century editor of Ermolao Barbaro's speech, Vittore Branca, decided to print a revised and very likely censored text in full and to append the original version only in the form of variants, as if the latter could be judged on the basis of the former and not the other way around.¹¹ The present edition aims to follow the chronology of events and to start from the earliest available draft, in order to get as close as possible to the speech as it was actually delivered or at least intended for delivery.

Short introductions are designed to situate the speeches within their immediate and wider historical context and to inform the reader about the stylistic ambitions and educational background of each humanist. The spelling of the Latin has

val popes; of Bernardo Giustiniani to the king of France and the University of Paris; of Ermolao Barbaro to the Emperor Frederick III and imperial heir Maximilian".

- 8 A critical edition of Francesco's speech as part of the «Epistolario» has been announced for a long time on the website of the *Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti* («uscirà prevedibilmente nel 2006»), but Professor Griggio appears to have been either deferred a continuation of his major editorial project to a later date or altogether abandoned it, as the volume in question (the third one, of the so-called «Extravaganti» and the speech as no. 655*) is still expected at the time of printing.
- 9 Codex 280 of the library of Marco Foscarini (1696–1763), now in Vienna as Lat. 5667; see the final paragraph of the Introduction to Francesco's speech, as well as the first one of the Commentary.
- 10 See Labalme, *Bernardo Giustiniani*, pp. 168–174. The previous director of the Marciana library, Pietro Zorzanella († 1951), was still aware of the existence of a different version, as shown by his remark on Marc. Zan. Lat. 458 in *Catalogo I*, p. 58: «indipendente della stampa». Labalme's intellectual biography (originally her Harvard dissertation) remains nonetheless the most important contribution to modern studies about Bernardo Giustinian. Labalme will have discovered her error within a year of the publication, when she consulted Marc. Lat. XI. 9 on June 24, 1970 (annotation in her own hand in the scheda accompanying the ms.).
- 11 See Branca in: *Epistolae II*, pp. 117–120 «Varianti della I^a redazione», and Masai in: *Scriptorium* 3, p. 84: «V. Branca s'est trop aisément persuadé qu'il tenait dans l'incunable vénitien le seul texte autorisé», also p. 86 n. 12: «Les philologues classiques ... ont de bonnes raisons ... pour numéroter les lignes des textes qu'ils éditent ... Il fallait en tout cas ... éviter la double série de notes de l'édition du Discours». Apart from the layout, the edition by Branca also suffers from a number of errors, e. g. fantasy names such as «Nenupiiis» or «Moravicum» (II, p. 119, 22 and l. 21 from the bottom) due to a confusion of a corrected with an initial reading, perhaps explained by the difficulties of working from b/w copies in the early 1940s, see n. 1 in t. I, p. XIV. Ermolao, indefatigable «urbanus exactor» as he was (Poliziano), would have been the first to correct them.

been – somewhat against the main current of recent Renaissance scholarship – standardised and modernised, partly for the sake of clarity, partly also to differentiate the classically inspired humanistic prose from other, more strictly speaking historical sources.¹² No translation has been provided, as a literal rendering would have run the risk of sounding pompous and ridiculous, a free one led away rather than into the text. The primary aim of the commentary is to enquire about the ideas and images a specific formulation must have evoked with a contemporary audience. Of course, the search for parallels and potential sources remains an open-ended and ultimately speculative enterprise. Occasionally, a conjecture about the political implications of a remark has been made, but the task of carrying out this analysis systematically has been left to the historian proper.

12 I have tried to take the modernisation not too far, preserving e. g. «quotidie» against «cotidie» (as in *Z*) or «cottidie» (the main *TLL* lemma) in § 21 of Bernardo's speech (and § 15 *b*), or adopting «inclitus» as a sufficient correction of «inclytus» without resorting to «includus» in § 12 and § 1 of Ermolao's speeches. If a name called for a correction, the 'authentic' spelling of the mss. is normally reported in the apparatus, sometimes also where the modern form could already be found in a less important ms. (as e. g. in the case of the particularly erratic «Pytha-» of «Pythagoras» § 12 of Bernardo's speech). Note also that the punctuation reflects neither that of the sources (very fragmented units, often misleading), nor what a modern reader could probably expect in terms of fluency or grouping of similar elements, single decisions in this field having being justified or discussed only very exceptionally, e. g. in § 6 of Francesco's speech (in the apparatus) or in § 13 of the speech by Bernardo (in the Commentary).

I

Francesco Barbaro's speech to Emperor Sigismund
(Ferrara 1433)

Introduction

The speech was most likely presented on September 10. Sigismund had arrived on the day before, on his journey from Rome to Basel.¹ Strained relations with Milan and Florence, and an invitation by the Venetians, who had already financed part of his coronation in Rome, had caused him to return via Perugia and Ravenna rather than along a route more to the West, as originally planned.² Venice sent twelve ambassadors, led by Andrea Mocenigo, to congratulate Sigismund to his new title, and to accompany him through Venetian territory.³ Apart from the d'Este, who hosted the meeting, several other Italian delegations were present in Ferrara, including the Milanese. But hopes to find a long-term solution for Italian affairs soon vanished due to unrest in Florence and the absence of the delegates from that city. After the initial encounter, several members of the Venetian embassy left, some in order to proceed to Florence, some because they had to report

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- 1 See in the «Diario Ferrarese»: «Adì IX. di Settembre. Venne a Ferrara lo Imperadore Sigismondo» XXIV, col. 186 E Muratori, as also cited by Beckmann, *RTA* XI, p. 4, 8: «über Ravenna wurde am 9 Sept. abends 5 Uhr Ferrara erreicht». Ambrogio Traversari, in his «Hodoeporicon», has for some reasons «x. Septembris», but can confirm the relative chronology: «vespereque pervenimus Ferrariam, dimidia ferè hora, postquam Imperator advenerat. ... Sequenti die ... Imperatorem adivimus humaniterque accepti, cum diutius eum alloquendi copiam Legati Venetorum, qui eodem ferè momento supervenerant, ademissent» p. 39 Bartolini.
 - 2 For the main stations of Sigismund's return journey see Bruni «de temporibus suis»: «Roma abiens per tudertinum et perusinum agrum profectus, Ariminum petiit. Inde per Ravennatem ac Ferrariensem et Mantuanum trans Alpes abiit» p. 451, 19–21 di Pierro (= § 88 Hankins). For the generosity of the Venetians cf. Windecke, «Denkwürdigkeiten» § 381 («da doten die Venediger dem keiser groß ere und bezalten alle zerung für in zu Rome und uf dem wege biß zu Dútschen landen» p. 347 Altmann); Setton, *Papacy & the Levant* II, p. 50 b (2,000 ducats sent to Rome “to help [Eugene] meet the heavy costs of maintaining the imperial guest”), § 3 of the mandata of September 28 for Andrea Donà and Giovan Francesco Capodilista (the Venetian ambassadors who finally replaced Francesco and his colleagues) (a further 3,000 ducats to finance the final stretch of the journey to Basel: *RTA* XI no. 72, p. 144, 19–25 Beckmann with n. 2); Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigismund's* IV, p. 129 (for a total of «zehntausend Ducaten» as «Reisekosten von Rom bis Deutschland»).
 - 3 Mocenigo was probably the nephew of Tommaso Mocenigo (*d.* 1414–1423), who had helped Sigismund to escape after the defeat at Nicopolis 1396 and had been sent as ambassador to Hungary in 1410, see Štefáňik in: *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 163–167, and Gullino's entry in: *DBI* 75, pp. 151 f. For a full list of the names of the ambassadors, known as early as August 3, see Beckmann, *RTA* XI, p. 137 n. 1.

back to the Senate, others due to illness.⁴ Sigismund and his chancellor Kaspar Schlick continued their journey to Mantua with the remaining seven ambassadors. In Trento, they separated, and Francesco Barbaro and two of his colleagues were knighted by Sigismund on that occasion. Venice urged the emperor once again to accelerate his journey in order to meet the deadline set by the conciliarists.⁵ Sigismund would arrive in Basel on October 11.⁶

The unexpected understanding between Sigismund and Venice meant the end of over two decades of open warfare and hostilities in secret.⁷ Several reasons appear to have contributed to a change: Sigismund must have realised that his idea of diverting the Orient trade from Venice to Genua was economically not viable and that his political priorities lay north, not south of the Alps.⁸ Peace with Venice in Dalmatia and Italy would free forces he needed to gain a hold over the kingdom of Bohemia. For Venice, full legal recognition of the recently conquered

4 Michiel and Storlato, Mocenigo himself, and Donà and Gradenigo, it seems, see Coggiola, *Concilium Basiliense* V, p. xlix n. 1 and pp. 430, 43–431, 2.

5 For the urgency see the mandata for Donà and Capodilista of September 28 (*RTA* XI no. 72) § 6: «totis sensibus sollicitabit, ut acceleret iter suum Basileam quam plus possibile sit» p. 145, 4 Beckmann. The main actors of the farewell ceremony of October 3 are mentioned in Gatari's «Diario»: «Venere ij ottobre ... andasemo a Trento ... El sabado sequente ... l'Imperador fe' l'infrascritti chavalieri. P°. misier Francesco Barbaro, misier Zuan Contarin, misier Antonio Veniero» pp. 378, 30–379, 33 Coggiola.

6 See again Gatari's «Diario»: «La domenega maitina che fo adì xj hotobre ... rivasemo a Baxilea a ore xx.» p. 382, 28–36 Coggiola, and Beckmann, *RTA* XI, pp. 6, 33–7, 2: «am 11 Oktober um 1 Uhr Mittags, gerade an dem Tage, an dem die Frist für den Papst zu Ende ging, traf Sigismund zum Erstaunen aller, Freunden und Feinden noch unerwartet, in Basel ein».

7 For the famous attempts to poison Sigismund, as described in detail by Lamansky in: *Revue historique* 7, pp. 105 ff., see now Štefánik in: *Kaiser Sigmund*, pp. 161–173. The attacks, including one proposed by a cleric from Piacenza in December 1419, seem to have met primarily with technical difficulties due to the requirement of absolute secrecy. As Štefánik points out (p. 172), the Venetian Senate was very much interested in quietly shelving the shameful solution of the conflict after the victories of 1420. The more open confrontation on the battlefield is recalled by Francesco Barbaro himself in ep. 136 of 1439, 48–50: «cum Cesar Sigismundus cum maximis copiis barbarum nationum quodammodo Venetorum imperium funditus delere posse videretur» Griggio. Note that the aggression was not limited to the Hungarian side: The hurry with which the Venetians had returned to the arms in 1418, without paying heed to Pope Martin's efforts to renew an expiring peace-treaty, had irritated Sigismund in particular, see Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's* II, pp. 355 f.

8 For the economic sanctions cf. Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's* II, pp. 356 f. and 409 f., and Székely in: *Venezia e Ungheria*, pp. 48 f.: «les projets échouèrent à cause de l'augmentation du prix des épices dans les années 1430. Il devint évident que les possibilités cherchées en Orient ne pouvaient remplacer la route de Venise. Sigismund fit encore une tentative contre Venise, notamment de faire fabriquer du papier en Allemagne. Mais en fin de compte tous ces projets n'aboutirent à aucun changement décisif».

territory in Lombardy and Friaul looked attractive as well, given that the military campaigns of the last two years had yielded no victory on land.⁹ Apart from these strategic considerations, Sigismund's encounter with the duke of Milan on entering Italy had proved a disaster and merely revealed that his innate idealism was ill-suited to the 'hotter' political climate.¹⁰ In turn, the Venetian Senate will have concluded that it was better to keep Filippo Maria Visconti and the King of the Romans apart, if the policy of expansion on the *terrafirma* was to continue. The third and perhaps most important factor was the election of a Venetian, Gabriele Condulmer, as Pope Eugene in 1431. Suddenly, Venice shared an interest in Sigismund's efforts to prevent a break-up of the Western church and to rein in the rebellious Hussites. As pontiff, Eugene was ideally placed to propose peace to Sigismund: He had the imperial crown to offer, and could also subscribe more easily than the Venetians themselves to the Luxembourg's lofty goal of expelling the Turks from Europe. Among the members of the Venetian élite, the Ottomans were regarded above all as a valuable business partner.¹¹

Although the speech originally formed part of Francesco Barbaro's letters, both modern editors, degli Agostini in the mid-eighteenth and Cicogna in the early nineteenth century, expressed doubts about the authorship and attribution.¹²

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- 9 Cf. Windecke, «Denkwürdigkeiten» § 340a: «Dise Venediger sint nidergelegen von dem von Meiglon also der Römisch konig Sigmont zu Sennez was» pp. 318 f. Altmann. The information provided in § 355 «und also zugen die Janauwer uf sie und gewonnen in uf dem mere an 28 galeren und schiff», on the other hand, is certainly wrong, as the Venetians remained always victorious over the Genuese at sea in 1431–1432, see Gullino's entry on «Pietro Loredan» in: *DBI* 65, p. 778, and Altmann's caveat p. 330 n. 1 «Die Richtigkeit dieser Nachricht kann ich nicht feststellen».
- 10 On Sigismund's «Selbstvertrauen, ohne große Schwierigkeit die größten politischen Verwicklungen lösen zu können» see Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's* II, p. 376. Quidde in: *RTA* XI, p. xxi analyses the misunderstanding in Milan as follows: «Der Herzog erwartete vom König, er werde mit einem starken Heere erscheinen, das ihm bei seinen Plänen zustatten kommen sollte. Der König hatte umgekehrt gemeint, der Herzog werde ihm den Weg nach Rom bahnen. Als beide sich betrogen sahen, schlug die Freundschaft in Feindschaft um».
- 11 The pragmatic attitude of the trading republic towards the 'infidels' would surface during the debates in Basel, cf. Quidde in: *RTA* XI, pp. xxvi: «Man [= Venice] machte Sigmund in außerordentlich scharfer Form darauf aufmerksam, daß der Gedanke [of a blockade of the Orient trade] undurchführbar sei». Note in this context that Venice had never been exposed in the same way as Sigismund in Hungary to the Turkish incursions into mainland Europe, even after the conquest of Friaul in 1420 (Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's* II, p. 406; Setton, *Papacy & the Levant* II, p. 50 n. 30).
- 12 See degli Agostini, *Notizie storico-critiche* II, p. 124: «Vero è che lo stile ... sembra molto diverso da quello delle altre sue, come ognuno può sincerarsi» – words followed almost literally by Cicogna in the preface to his own edition p. [4]: «sebbene lo stile ne sia diverso da quello dell' altre del Barbaro».