bull *Cum hora jam undecima*, "As it is now in the eleventh hour", which had already been issued several times during the 13th century by earlier popes.[10] It was a strong exhortation to go to the East and convert all peoples and prepare for the second coming of Christ. Riccoldo left very shortly afterwards, after having applied from the Master of the Dominican Order permission to missionize and possibly to become a martyr. He set out for the Holy Land and reached Acre either in December 1288 or very early in 1289.

Riccoldo first visited the holy places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and later in 1289 continued his travels through Turkey and Armenia. In 1290 he was in Mosul. When Acre as the last Christian stronghold in the Holy Land fell to the Mamluks in 1291, Riccoldo went to Baghdad where he spent probably several years studying Arabic and the Qur'an. He claimed that his travel companions—of whom we know nothing—left him alone in the remotest part of the Orient: "Et relictus sum solus in Baldaco a sociis in profundis partibus orientis." In 1294 or 1295 the Mongol ruler, the ilkhan Ghaza, converted to Islam. For a short period, Christians began to be persecuted, and that might have led Riccoldo to leave Baghdad and travel through the desert in disguise as a camel driver.[11] On the other hand, he might also have stayed in Baghdad during the 1290s until he returned to the Italian Peninsula. We simply do not know.

Riccoldo was back in Florence by the end of 1299, recalled home "to explain some dubious points to the papal see."[12] He had the intention and the hope of returning to the East and therefore continued to grow a beard, but spent the remaining years of his life in the Italian Peninsula, mostly Florence, until his death on 31 October 1320. He taught, preached, and functioned for a short while as prior, and he was also a prolific writer. He wrote five letters to the Triumphant Church (*Epistole ad Ecclesiam triumphantem*), a travel description (*Liber peregrinationis*), a refutation of Islam (*Contra legem Sarracenorum*), and a treatise on the different peoples of the East, their beliefs and how to missionize among them (*Libellus ad naciones orientales*). From various internal criteria, Emilio Panella came to the conclusion that they were all written within a couple of years after Riccoldo had returned to Florence, i.e., between 1300 and 1301.[13] It is, however, possible that it took around ten years for Riccoldo to finish them all, as argued by Phillip Booth, so that the *Ad naciones orientales* was completed only in 1310. Booth also stresses that the composition of Riccoldo's works was not a linear process

10 Hautala 2020, pp. 40–41; Schmieder 2000.

11 Mérigoux 1986, pp. 26–27; cf. Mérigoux's chapter in this volume.

12 Orlandi 1955, p. xx "Demum pro quibusdam dubiis articulis per sedem apostolicam declarandis ad Ytalie partes remeans cum proposito redeundi, propter quod et barbam plurimo tempore nutriebat [...]."

13 Panella 1986, pp. xxxviii–xl.

in which the completion of one was followed by the inception of another. They all underwent revisions, and new information and comments were added by Riccoldo.[14]

Other works including sermons are known to have existed but are now lost. Some writings have been ascribed to Riccoldo erroneously, while others are still disputed. The *Tractatus seu disputacio contra Sarracenos et Alchoranum* was edited in 2017 by Daniel Pachurka who argues that it is Riccoldo's thorough reworking of a treatise by the Catalan Dominican Ramon Martí.[15] In the present volume, Pachurka analyses the *Tractatus* and its refutation of the prophethood of Mohammad and discusses how and why the original text by Ramon Martí has been changed.

The five letters to the Triumphant Church were written while Riccoldo was still in Baghdad, at least according to his own words: they were *scripta in Oriente.* They may have been edited and polished and only finalized when he was back at Santa Maria Novella, but they reflect Riccoldo's grave concern and spiritual anxiety after the fall of Acre in 1291 and the conversion of Baghdad's ruler to Islam in 1295. They are lamentations in the Old Testament tradition, meditations on the will of God and His plans for humanity, but also rhetorically high style, almost sermons, in order to comfort the believers: Persevere, in spite of troubles, in spite of what seems to be Muslim superiority. The letters have been preserved in only one manuscript (MS Vat. Lat. 7317),[16] but they have attracted much attention from modern scholars. Some have read them as revealing Riccoldo's inner feelings, others as a rhetorical exercise.[17] In this volume, Jean-Marie Mérigoux places the letters in context and provides translations of lengthy passages that allow us to get an impression of the style of the letters. Davide Scotto demonstrates through a close reading of the letters that Riccoldo was firm in faith in spite of Muslim success, and in spite of his strong questioning and accusations against God and the saints in Heaven.

The travel description, *Liber peregrinationis,* was probably begun while Riccoldo was in the Orient and emended and updated when he was back in Florence.[18] It is a rich and interesting work with several diverse themes and descriptions of the peoples Riccoldo met. The chapters concern the Holy Land, including Bethlehem and Jerusalem; Turkey and the Turks; Mongols; Persia; Kurds; Mosul; Jacobites and Nestorians; Muslims and Islam; monsters in Baghdad; and Sabeans. Riccoldo's route from Jerusalem to Baghdad was not the most direct, but one that enabled him to visit some Dominican

14 Booth 2021, pp. 56–57.

15 Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Tractatus seu disputatio contra Saracenos et Alchoranum*.

16 Scotto 2023.

17 Panella 1989; Weltecke 2007; Shagrir 2012; Bauer 2021; Scotto 2021a.

18 Riccoldo later added references to his *Contra legem Sarracenorum* in the margin to *Liber peregrinationis*, cf. Kappler's edition, pp. 200–201.

convents on his way.[19] The travel description is known from seven manuscripts and was translated into French and Italian in the Middle Ages. The first part contains a relation of Riccoldo's visit to the sacred sites of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and follows the traditions of pilgrimage descriptions to the Holy Land, as discussed in the chapter by Susanna Fischer in this volume. She stresses the performative aspect, that Riccoldo should not only see sites with his own eyes, but also perform rituals or acts that made him and his fellow pilgrims actual participants in biblical events. Riccoldo was also innovative in appealing to emotions in order to actively involve the reader, by shedding more tears than was common in pilgrims of his time.

The *Liber peregrinationis* contains plentiful and often unique observations on the Turks, Mongols and Kurds which have only sporadically been explored by researchers, and referred to mainly in general surveys of Mongol history or of medieval Christian understandings of Mongols.[20] The penultimate chapter on monsters in Baghdad is both interesting and captivating but has apparently not been studied specifically. The last chapter on the Sabeans is the first mention by a Western European author of this "sect", but short and with little information.[21]

The longest part of the *Liber peregrinationis* concerns Muslims and Islam and is a description and reflection of Riccoldo's time in Baghdad. It is a dynamic juxtaposition of two interrelated but contradictory elements: Riccoldo felt at ease among Muslims and enjoyed their company, their sincerity in religious matters and their societal institutions such as the asylums for the mentally ill. Their religioius law, however, he considered confused, irrational, violent and leading to perdition. He wondered why Muslims living with a law of death could behave so well, while Christians with the law of life sinned. What Riccoldo actually meant has been much discussed. Did he have an universalist hope of religious dialogue, perhaps developed during his stay in Baghdad, or did he use the positive descriptions of Muslims as a rhetorical device to reproach Christians?[22]

The chapters in *Liber peregrinationis* describing Riccoldo's personal meetings and religious discussions with Eastern Christians have attracted only little attention:[23] maybe because they are short, maybe because they are not very sophisticated.[24] Most scholars have treated this part of the *Liber peregrinationis* together with the descrip-

19 George-Tvrtković 2012, pp. 11–12.
20 E.g., Jackson 2018. More detailed, Schiel 2011.
21 Puech 1949; Lupieri 2016.
22 Discussed in detail by George-Tvrtković 2012.
23 Richard 1977, pp. 107–113.
24 As argued by Teeuwen 2012.

tions of Eastern Christians in *Ad naciones orientales*.[25] Kurt Villads Jensen discusses Riccoldo's two very different working methods in these two works in his chapter in this volume. Jana Valtrová in her contribution compares the conversion strategies of Riccoldo to those of contemporary missionaries, not only among Eastern Christians but also Jews, Muslims and Mongols.

The work of Riccoldo that saw the widest distribution was his large refutation of Islam as a religion, his *Contra legem Sarracenorum*.[26] It has survived in *c*. 30 manuscripts from the Middle Ages, was translated, was printed, and has had an immense influence upon Western European understanding of Islam up to the 18th century and even later, and beyond Western Europe—we will come back to this point later in this introduction. Riccoldo studied the Qur'an in Arabic when he was in Baghdad, and had begun to translate it. A Qur'an manuscript with Riccoldo's annotations is today kept in Paris, but he never finished the translation (MS ar. 384, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France). *Contra legem Sarracenorum* was written when Riccoldo was back in the Italian Peninsula with access to several sources that he reformulated and incorporated into his own. Anthony Lappin in this volume shows how carefully Riccoldo studied the material about Islam collected by Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny in the 1140s, including the glosses to Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an.

The last of Riccoldo's works was his *Libellus ad naciones orientales*, divided into chapters on the Eastern Christians (actually only Nestorians and Jacobites), Jews and Mongols. For the Saracens, Riccoldo simply referred to his *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, "where their religious law has been refuted by the law itself."[27] The part on Eastern Christians has, as mentioned, been analysed by only a few scholars recently. The chapter on the Mongols is partially lifted from Riccoldo's *Liber peregrinationis*, and has also in this context only been sporadically referred to.

The chapter on the Jews includes references to Petrus Comestor's *Glossa ordinaria* and other works, but it is primarily Riccoldo's discussion with his fellow Dominican Ramon Martí who wrote *Capistrum Judeorum* in 1267. Riccoldo incorporated, but also changed and sometimes directly argued against Ramon Martí in his chapter on the Jews. It has only been very sporadically explored by contemporary scholars.[28]

As a conclusion to this handbook, Riccoldo added five general rules for missionaries: not to rely on interpreters because they know too little of the correct theological terms; to argue from the Bible text and not rely on Latin exegetical works that are not

25 Rouxpetel 2015; 2016.

26 Mérigoux 1986.

27 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Libellus ad nationes orientales*, III, 184: "vbi per legem eorum confutatur lex ipsa."

28 Walker 2011.

considered authorities by non-Catholics; to know those you argue against and what their main dogmatic errors are; to begin missionizing among the élite and leaders and not among the commoners; and finally that all this is of no avail if the missionary himself is not of strong faith and firm in his devotion to the missionary task.[29] In his introduction to *Ad naciones orientales*, Riccoldo explained that those who are closest to Catholic Christianity, the Eastern Christians, are the most difficult to convert, and those furthest away, the pagan Mongols, are the easiest. This introductory hierarchical ordering of theologically non-Catholics and the five practical pieces of advice to missionaries have been noted and discussed by many. They can be considered a summary of Riccoldo's experience from his practical missionary life.

In the scholarship of the centuries-long history of Christian–Muslim relations, the multifaceted reception of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's literary works—his "intellectual afterlife"—has been far less investigated compared to his earthly experience as a missionary among the Muslims and his observations on a variety of religious denominations living in the Near East. Through the late medieval and the early modern times, Riccoldo was widely known, appreciated and later criticized primarily for his harsh polemic against the Qur'an, i.e., his pre-eminent *Contra legem Sarracenorum*. Evidence of its dissemination and extensive use dates to approximately half a century after Riccoldo's death and relates to both Latin and Greek Christendom. Sometime after 1385, the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaeologus read the Greek translation of the *Liber* made by the Greek theologian Demetrios Kydones, which was retranslated into Latin by Bartolomeo Piceno or Picerno, the former village of Monte Arduo, at the beginning of the 16th century, achieving great success in Europe. Around the end of the 14th century, Manuel II resorted to the Greek version of *Contra legem* to write his much-debated *Dialogues with a Learned Persian*, which became known worldwide after Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) quoted it in his controversial lecture on *Faith, Reason, and the University—Memories and Reflections*, held at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006.[30]

After his investigation of Riccoldo's annotations to an Arabic copy of the Qur'an (the above-mentioned MS ar. 384),[31] Thomas Burman has suggested that throughout the 14th century, *Contra legem* was known amongst a few Dominican friars based in

29 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Libellus ad naciones orientales*, V.

30 To our knowledge, no one among the historians and theologians reflecting on the role of Islam in Ratzinger's lecture has noticed that behind Manuel II's conception of Islam as a self-proclaimed religion based on violence and irrationality was the emperor's reading of Riccoldo's *Contra legem*. See, e.g., Wenzel 2007; Mazas & Palasciano 2017.

31 Burman 2007. The full text of the *marginalia* was later published by Martínez Gázquez & Déroche 2010.

Tuscany, having been allegedly employed for the education of missionaries.[32] Between the 14th and 15th centuries, the Italian Peninsula, the Kingdom of France and the southern part of the German-Roman Empire became the main settings of Riccoldo's dissemination. In this volume, Jacob Langeloh considers the previously unstudied case of the Croatian Dominican friar, John of Ragusa, who at the time of the Council of Basel extensively employed Riccoldo's polemic to draw a treatise against Islam and made two short writings (*cedule*) to stir a doctrinal debate among Muslims and hopefully convert them.[33] In his chapter, Ulli Roth in turn shows how the German humanist Nicholas of Cusa drew from Riccoldo's *Contra legem* and explicitly mentioned his name in the first prologue to his well-known *Cribratio Alkorani*, finished in Rome by early 1462, i.e., some months after Pope Pius II wrote his controversial letter to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, calling for his conversion to the Christian faith. Nicholas of Cusa quotes several Christian treatises against Islam claiming that in his opinion, Riccoldo's polemic provides the most refined contribution to the field among the writings he could collect between Rome and Byzantium.

At that juncture, the popularity of *Contra legem* had already reached the papacy in Rome, included in a first group of manuscripts that joined the newly built Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, conceived by Pope Nicholas V and later inaugurated by Pope Sixtus IV. The manuscripts would later form the Latin section of the papal library. The descriptions of the manuscripts listed in the papal inventories show that a copy of *Contra legem*, today unfortunately lost, was among the books owned by the Italian humanist Tommaso Parentucelli, who from 1447 was Pope Nicholas V, a strenuous promoter of the crusade against the Nasrid Muslims of Granada and the Ottoman Turks. Among the books related to Islam kept in Pope Nicholas V's library, Riccoldo's treatise lay alongside manuscript copies of John of Damascus's *Liber de heresibus*, Peter the Venerable's *Corpus Cluniacense*, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* and *Declaracio quorundam articulorum contra Grecos, Armenos et Sarracenos*, and Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*,[34] which in turn conveys a number of observations on the early history and beliefs of the "sect of the Saracens" that have proved extremely influential upon both Latin and French readerships.[35] Considering the previously unknown annotations to the Latin Qur'an by Nicholas of Cusa, which José Martínez

32 Burman 2015; 2018.

33 The texts underlying Ragusa's interest in Islam have been published in Langeloh 2019.

34 See Manfredi 1994 *ad indicem*, respectively No. 776; Nos 545, 555, 754; No. 775, i.e., the present Vat. Lat. 4071, handing down a copy of Robert of Ketton's Latin Qur'an annotated by Nicholas of Cusa; Nos 220, 222, 229, 235; Nos 344–346 (three volumes).

35 See Ninitte 2017.

Gázquez has brought to light,[36] it would not be surprising that some others of the pope's manuscripts—including Riccoldo's *Contra legem*—were read by Cusa when he was in Rome as a cardinal and actively participated in Pius II's crusade campaign against the Ottoman Turks.

In addition to his acclaim as a polemicist, Riccoldo was known as an authoritative source of information on religious beliefs and anthropological features of various, and sometimes barely known, religious denominations in the Near East. It is no coincidence that his name was and is often correlated—whether coherently or not is a matter of debate—to other well-known medieval authors of travel literature such as Marco Polo, John Mendeville or William of Rubruck. In this volume, Marco Robecchi shows that, throughout the 14th century, Riccoldo's book of travel, known as *Liber peregrinationis* or *Itinerarium*, circulated between the Italian Peninsula, the Kingdom of France, and the German Empire, having been translated from Latin at least twice into Italian and once into French by the Benedictine monk Jean le Long d'Ypres.[37]

At the end of the Middle Ages, the setting for Riccoldo's afterlife broadened from the Italian Peninsula and French regions to the rest of Western Europe, with literary trajectories and theological implications that are worthy of investigation. At the dawn of the 16th century, a Castilian translation of *Contra legem* was made in the Iberian Peninsula by two anonymous Hieronymite monks. According to the colophon of MS R/4037 kept at the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid, this full translation was printed in Seville in 1501 by well-known German typographers and, as its engraved frontispiece shows, it was allegedly used to preach against the Moriscos soon after the first wave of forced conversions in Granada (February 1502). Considering the religious afilliation of the two anonymous translators, Cándida Ferrero has recently suggested that the promotion of this Castilian version of *Contra legem* must be related to the ecclesiastical entourage of the powerful archbishop of Granada, Hernando de Talavera, himself a Hieronymite monk, the confessor of Queen Isabel of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon, and most importantly, an alleged supporter of the peaceful evangelization of Muslims in Castile.[38]

A few years later, the Catholic monarch Ferdinand of Aragon ordered a second Latin translation of Riccoldo's *Contra legem* from the above-mentioned Bartolomeo Picerno, who based his work on Kydones's translation of *Contra legem* into Greek. The translation was printed in 1506.[39] Two decades later, Riccoldo's *Contra legem* was

36 Martínez Gázquez 2016.

37 Robecchi ed. 2020.

38 Ferrero Hernández 2021. For a reconsideration of Talavera's "tolerant" attitude towards Muslims and Jewish converts, see most recently Scotto 2021b.

39 George-Tvrtković 2007, p. 66.

copied and translated into Italian in Venice and disseminated together with other religious texts aiming at Church reform. In his chapter for this volume, Eduardo Fernández Guerrero, who has identified and examined this previously unstudied translation and compendium, elaborated upon the literary role of Riccoldo's treatise within a broader corpus of writings by the religious writer Paolo Angelo—mainly known for his "Life of Scanderbeg" (1539)—all of which is connected to the relation between Venice and the Ottomans as well as to the Catholic reaction to both Lutheran and Islamic doctrines.

In the early years of the Reformation, a copy of Riccoldo's polemic was obsessively underlined and carefully read by Martin Luther, who annotated the margins of a printed edition of it issued in Basel in 1507, now kept at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (MS. Dresd.A.130.a). As showed by Johannes Ehmann in his chapter, in 1542 Luther translated the full Latin text of *Contra legem* into German and later drew from its most biting arguments to write his politically motivated pamphlets against the Turks, whom he regarded as the Antichrist, deeming them as wicked as the Roman pope. While translating from Latin, he introduced into the German text reshaped expressions, in fact distortions, which would be worth investigating systematically as a further episode of the creative implementation of Riccoldo's thinking in an inter-theological and inter-faith context.

The same Latin version stemming from the Greek translation by Kydones, together with Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an into Latin, became part of the popular collection of writings on Islam published in 1543 by the Swiss humanist Theodor Bibliander. This collection of writings, mainly based on Peter the Venerable's *Corpus Cluniacense*, was extensively referenced in Europe by 16th- and 17th-century humanists, theologians and polemicists. The case of the French orientalist and cabbalist Guillaume Postel, who provided a universalistic and so to speak constructive interpretation of Riccoldo's treatise, is carefully examined in this volume by Rita George-Tvrtković. As Hartmut Bobzin has claimed, the influence of Riccoldo's reading of the Qur'an lasted until the late 17th century, when the French orientalist Adrian Reland (1676–1718) wrote his informative treatise on the Islamic religion, *De religione Mohammedica* (Utrecht 1705), wherein he convincingly criticizes what Christian theologians up to his time had stated on Islamic doctrine and ideas, calling for a non-mediated study of Arabic sources on Islam.[40]

Monsieur Reland did not know that, two centuries before him, a colleague from the Iberian Peninsula had already criticized polemical Christian literature on Islam, especially theological writings produced by Dominican authors. Juan de Segovia

40 Bobzin 1993, pp. 196, 203.

(1393–1458), an esteemed Castilian theologian at the University of Salamanca and an eminent member of the Council of Basel, later isolated in the Duchy of Savoy, had addressed the same claim to the Western Church in the mid-15th century. Stating that Muslims' view of Christian doctrines had been distorted by the Crusades and that Christians' view of Muslims had been misunderstood by Christian polemics, Segovia had avoided quoting explicitly from Riccoldo in his writings on Islam and instead had promoted a trilingual edition of the Qur'an drawn together with the help of a Muslim scholar, which is today unfortunately lost. In his chapter in this book, Roth considers the case of Segovia as well as that of Nicholas of Cusa. Segovia's efforts in translating the Qur'an and writing on the peaceful conversion of the Muslims, however, were not enough to diminish Riccoldo's influence.[41] Seen for long as the crown jewel of the medieval practice of *refutatio*, *Contra legem* was replaced, at least amongst learned Western readers, by Ludovico Marracci's monumental translation of the Qur'an issued in 1698, a philologically refined text that was extensively based on Islamic sources, tafsīr collections in particular.[42]

As a mediator between religions and geographies, the name of Riccoldo was destined to travel beyond preconceived borders, both physical and symbolic. Latin Christendom and Western Europe represent just one part of his intellectual afterlife. As demonstrated in the well-documented chapter by Stefan Schreiner, an abridged Polish translation of Riccoldo's *Contra legem* was made by the Jesuit missionary Teofil Rutka in the mid-17th century as means to preach against the Ottoman Turks, who exerted a persisting influence in terms of cultural habits (dress code, food practices, arts) upon the nobility and the learned élite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[43] Moreover, Schreiner shows how besides a Polish version of *Contra legem* included in what can be defined as "a Polish Bibliander", Riccoldo's works were translated into Russian; and how in the modern Russian theological literature and historiography, Riccoldo's intellectual legacy followed, with respect to Western Europe, a parallel and in many respects previously unknown path.

41 On Segovia's attempt at converting Muslims "by peace and doctrine" (*via pacis et doctrine*), see Scotto 2022.

42 Felici 2007; Glei & Tottoli 2016.

43 Schreiner 2015.

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