

This paper focuses on Pope Leo X, and how he was enmeshed in the early Portuguese conquest of Morocco. I want to tell a different story and to do so, I examine the reception of the conquest by both the Portuguese and the pope in rhetorical and in rituals, especially in the religious celebrations and the religious language surrounding the capture of Azenmour in 1513. By focusing on the religious perception of the conquest, I am not trying to resurrect the papacy as a benevolent and magnanimous figure, but to show patterns of interaction. This paper assesses how the role of the papacy in this venture provides a better grasp of how premodern empires worked through their larger pan-Mediterranean connections. I have chosen to examine the relation between Muslims and Christians through the religious rituals of conquest of Azenmour both in Lisbon and in Rome. My analysis underscores that there was a deliberate turn to antiquity not only to justify the conquest of Christians but also to give it more momentum. For the public witnessing these rituals, the weight of antiquity carried the weight of history, of empire, of memory. Seen as a period of splendor, of righteousness, of the heydays of civilizations in the Mediterranean, the turn to ancient Greek gods and Roman heroes was a judicious one. It left no one indifferent to the accomplishments of the Portuguese and by extension of the Catholic Church.