BETWEEN VENICE AND ISTANBUL: 
TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS AND CULTURAL MEDIATION 
IN THE EARLY MODERN MEDITERRANEAN

by

Ella-Natalie Rothman

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Diane Owen Hughes, Chair 
Professor Dena Goodman 
Professor E. Webb Keane, Jr. 
Associate Professor Patricia Simons 
Professor Ann Laura Stoler, The New School for Social Research
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<tr>
<td>ACPV</td>
<td>Archivio della Curia Patriarcale di Venezia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIRE</td>
<td>Archivio delle Istituzioni di Ricovero e di Educazione, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASV</td>
<td>Archivio di Stato di Venezia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>Museo Civico Correr, Venice</td>
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<tr>
<td>BNM</td>
<td>Biblioteca Marciana, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdC</td>
<td>Avvogaria di Comun</td>
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<tr>
<td>BdC</td>
<td>Battesimi dei Catecumeni</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>Santo Uffizio</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>busta, box/volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>carta, page</td>
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<tr>
<td>cod.</td>
<td>codice, codex</td>
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<tr>
<td>fasc.</td>
<td>fascicolo, fascicle</td>
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<td>fol.</td>
<td>folio</td>
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<tr>
<td>reg.</td>
<td>registro, register</td>
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All archival documents cited in this dissertation are located in the Venetian State Archives (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, ASV), unless otherwise noted.

**Note on dates.** The Venetian calendar year began on March 1. References in the footnotes maintain documents’ original dates and, when differing from the Gregorian calendar are marked by “m.v.” (“more “Veneto”). Thus February 25, 1599 m.v. corresponds to February 25, 1600 according to the Gregorian calendar. Dates in the body of the text have been modified to follow the Gregorian calendar.

**Note on place names.** All place names have been modernized, when possible, and given the name of the country in which they are currently situated in parentheses. Given the history of the Balkans, these do not always correspond to their administrative classification under Venetian and Ottoman rule. For example, the fortress of Clissa, the military headquarters of Ottoman Bosnia from 1600 until its reoccupation by Venice in 1648, is today the city of Klis in Croatia.
ABSTRACT

In recent years, the nature of cultural mediation in colonial and imperial settings has attracted renewed scholarly attention. This dissertation expands the chronological, geographical, and analytical framework for understanding mediation by focusing on trans-imperial subjects, men and women who straddled and brokered political, linguistic, and religious boundaries between the Venetian and Ottoman empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It explores how early modern Mediterranean trans-imperial subjects—colonial émigrés, redeemed slaves, converts, and Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects in Venetian service—articulated geopolitical and ethnolinguistic categories. By examining the links between changing notions of “East” and “West,” specific groups of trans-imperial intermediaries, and their institutional settings, this dissertation underscores intermediaries’ dynamic and active role in fixing the boundaries of the objects they purport to mediate, rather than simply bringing into contact pre-existing, immutable, and disparate civilizations. The dissertation thus contributes to the literature on the making of Europe and its Others. Moreover, it traces the genealogy of our own analytical vocabulary of mediation, “hybridity,” and “indigeneity” to early modern colonization, state formation and imperial rivalry in the Mediterranean.

The dissertation consists of four parts; the first three deal each with a specific trans-imperial group, while the fourth considers the interactions between them. Part I addresses the growing role of commercial brokers in institutionalizing ideas of brokering foreignness in Venice. Part II considers how different conversion narratives articulated the notion of transformation of Other into Self, as well as converts’ socialization in and lifelong ties with the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni (Holy House of the Catechumens). Part
III reconstructs the emergence of a highly endogamous and powerful group of dragomans (diplomatic interpreters) in Venetian service in Istanbul, and charts how they articulated for their patrons the relation between Ottomans and Venetians. Finally, Part IV focuses on several interactions between these various groups to highlight how trans-imperial life trajectories, social ties, and institutions were constitutive of notions of difference. By tracing the genealogy of categories such as “Turks” and “Levantines,” it demonstrates how the defining properties and prototypical centers of these categories shifted historically as cultural mediation became institutionalized.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social theorists have long been captivated by the figure of the “cultural intermediary.” From turn-of-the-century European administrators in Southeast Asia on the lookout for collaborators to help pacify the colonies, to 1930s’ Chicago-school sociologists seeking to understand the plight of the bi-cultural “marginal man,” to 1950s’ anthropologists hopeful about the propensity of village teachers in Latin America and Africa to mediate “local” and “national” cultures in the (post)colony, to 1970s’ economists and urban planners captivated by the phenomenon of “middleman minorities” operating successful small businesses in the otherwise collapsing American inner-city, social scientists have sought to explain what seemed like the special predisposition of ethnic minorities to act as cultural intermediaries.\(^1\) Despite important differences in method and scope, scholars identified the groups in question as “cultural intermediaries” because they either enjoyed inter-regional contacts or could be understood to be of “mixed blood.”

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\(^1\) On the theory of colonial “plural society” see Furnivall 1944; Kuper 1969; Schermerhorn 1970; on the concept of the “marginal man” see Park 1928; Stonequist 1961 [1937]; Goldberg 1941; Green 1947; Hughes 1952; Bargatzky 1981; on “middleman minorities” theory see Becker 1940; Blalock 1967; Bonacick 1973; Landa 1983; Zenner 1991; for ethnographic studies of “cultural brokers” see Fallers 1955; Wolf 1956; Geertz 1960; Press 1969.
In a somewhat different vein, recent work in both history and anthropology has highlighted the complex roles of indigenous intermediaries in colonial bureaucracies, as well as the complex dynamics of accommodation between the rulers and the ruled. In particular, many scholars now share the idea that cultural mediation has historically occurred in what the literary critic Mary Louise Pratt famously defined as “contact zones,” i.e. “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” While this formulation fruitfully calls attention to the inter-imperial and colonial conditions under which cultural boundary-making often takes place, it risks obscuring the inherent messiness of these conditions. Cultures do not simply “meet, clash, and grapple” on their own. Moreover, that two cultures are “disparate” is not a pre-given fact, but part of an ongoing process of “boundary maintenance” that is articulated in specific genres and institutions precisely by those who purport to mediate them. It is this role of intermediaries in articulating difference, rather than in bringing disparate cultures into contact, that my dissertation addresses.

This dissertation expands the chronological, geographical, and analytical framework for understanding cultural mediation by thematizing what I will call trans-imperial subjects, men and women who straddled and brokered political, linguistic, and religious boundaries between empires. It focuses on the contact zone between the

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2 The literature on colonial intermediaries is vast. For some suggestive examples, see Richter 1988; White 1991; Austen and Derrick 1999; Robinson 2000; Cohen 2003; Jasanoff 2005.
4 On boundary maintenance, see Barth 1969.
5 I intentionally avoid the fashionable term “transnational,” as the people I study and the polities and societies they traversed had very little to do with “nations,” except in the specific late medieval and early modern sense of diasporic communities of merchants, students, and so forth, whose homogeneity was not pre-given, but forged precisely through their mobility. See Ho 2004 and the references in chapter 9, p. 408,
Venetian and Ottoman empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In particular, it explores how early modern Mediterranean trans-imperial subjects—colonial émigrés in the Venetian metropole, redeemed slaves, converts, and Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects in Venetian service—articulated shifting geopolitical and ethnolinguistic categories. The dissertation highlights how cultural mediation operated within specific institutions, genres, and matrixes of competing interests, and thus addresses the dynamic and active role of intermediaries in fixing the boundaries of the objects they purport to mediate, rather than simply bringing into contact pre-existing, immutable, and disparate objects. By examining the links between changing notions of “East” and “West,” specific groups of trans-imperial intermediaries, and their institutional settings, this dissertation contributes to the literature on the making of Europe and its Others, and challenges prevalent discourses about a supposedly trans-historical “clash of civilizations.” Most importantly, it also traces the genealogy of our own analytical vocabulary of mediation, “hybridity,” and “indigeneity” to early modern colonization, state formation and imperial rivalry in the Mediterranean.

A grounded history of boundary-making requires that we attend to the complex and often conflicting objectives of those social actors who engaged in it. To this end, the dissertation consists of four thematic parts: the first three deal each with a specific trans-imperial group—commercial brokers, religious converts, and dragomans (diplomatic interpreters)—while the fourth addresses the multiple interactions among the three. Throughout the dissertation I trace how trans-imperial subjects participated in Venetian institutions and genres, thus articulating competing claims about what are “East” and

note 35.
“West,” and how to tell them apart. Significantly, I study not only the elaboration and circulation of cultural categories, but the ways in which people occupied distinct institutional roles between two imperial states, how they practiced civic membership and localness.

Within both the Venetian and Ottoman empires, as in the modern world, imperial subjecthood was characterized by the importance of the intimate as “a social and cultural space where racial classifications were defined and defied, and where relations between colonizer and colonized could powerfully confound or confirm the strictures of governance and the categories of rule.”6 As feminist critics of the notion of separate “public” and “private” spheres have argued, this notion tends to obscure, rather than explain, the historical complexity and variety of understandings of both the public and the private.7

In this respect, recent scholarship on associational life in early modern Italy has made important contributions to debates about the origins of the modern public sphere, emphasizing the importance of the transformation of public gathering places, such as the piazza, or main thoroughfare, as a meeting ground for people of different estates in early modern Italy. As Christopher Black notes, Tomasso Garzoni’s Piazza Universale (1585), with its listings of all possible occupations and gradations of persons, is emblematic of this.8 Yet besides outdoor meeting places, interactions across social divides also occurred quite frequently in people’s homes.

Thus, this dissertation highlights the importance of composite households

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7 Davidoff and Hall 1987; Fraser 1991; Vickery 1998.
8 Black 2001: 79.
encompassing a variety of subjects across juridical, ethnolinguistic, religious, gender, and age divides, for producing the kinds of intimate ties on which trans-imperial networks were often based. The Venetian diplomatic and commercial spheres, which figure prominently in these pages, illustrate this point. As I show, diplomatic and commercial institutions were among the prime locations where trans-imperial subjects interacted with one another, with Venetian and Ottoman metropolitan elites, and with a broad cross-section of the Venetian population. The spaces and sites of the commercial sphere were residential homes, their attics and kitchens, as often as city squares and markets, such as the famous Rialto Bridge. Similarly, the house of the Venetian bailo in Istanbul functioned not only as a center for the circulation of political information but as the residence and site of socialization of a diverse group of Venetian and Ottoman men.9

By going beyond representations and juridical definitions of citizenship and subjecthood to study how people inhabited social categories in their everyday practices, I suggest how particular institutional sites served different trans-imperial groups to articulate distinctions in both the Venetian and Ottoman empires, and further show how these societies were inter-related. My focus throughout the dissertation on the domestic arrangements of trans-imperial subjects reveals how central the domestic was to the contestation and transformation of early modern notions of foreignness. Patrician officialdom (and many modern economic historians) understood commercial brokers and dragomans as agents of the state, operating in an anonymous marketplace composed of discrete, individual actors. Against such an understanding, I explore in part I of the

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9 The bailo was the resident Venetian commercial representative in the Byzantine (and later Ottoman) Empire and the consul of the Venetian merchants residing there. In practice, he often functioned as Venetian ambassador to the Porte. On the bailo and his household, see Bertelé 1932; Coco and Manzonetto 1985; Dursteler 2006.
dissertation how brokers and their clients often acted in concert, forging ties across religious, linguistic and political boundaries. Similarly, part II shows how in early modern Venice religious “conversion,” often understood by historians as a process of profound transformation of the self and as the utmost expression of modern individuality, operated rather as a highly public form of juridical subject-making, defined by the specific genres and institutions that produced converts as social types. Among other things, successful conversion was achieved by one’s willingness to be subjected to the ongoing regulation and surveillance of one’s domestic arrangements (first while confined to a special institution; later in their masters’ and patrons’ homes). Finally, part III attends to the domestic arrangements of dragomans in Istanbul, and their failure to conform to Venetian notions of safe homosociality within the bailo’s house. It thus underscores the extent to which political loyalty depended on the channeling of affect in the domestic sphere.

IN A NO-MAN’S LAND?
INTERMEDIARIES, IN-BETWEENNESS, AND THE ATLANTIC

Since the mid 1980s, scholars’ interest in early modern cultural interaction has been driven by postcolonial reassessments of what was once euphemistically called “European discovery.”\(^{10}\) It is ironic that much of the debate about early modern alterity, though acknowledging its indebtedness to Edward Said’s pioneering *Orientalism* (see below), has tended to ignore the Mediterranean, and to focus—implicitly or explicitly—

\(^{10}\) The Caribbean historian Eric Williams’ pioneering *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) paved the way for much better-received studies by metropolitan scholars on the cultural dimensions of the colonialism/capitalism nexus in the Americas, including the historical forays of anthropologists Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, and others. See Williams 1994 [1944]; Wolf 1982; Mintz 1985.
on cultural encounters in the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{11} Scholars who studied early interactions between Europeans, Sub-Saharan Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to emphasize the brief and circumscribed nature of “first encounters” (as in raids, exploratory voyages, etc.), and the contrasting and presumably mutually unintelligible epistemologies of the peoples who came into contact through European conquest and colonial expansion.\textsuperscript{12}

Such a perspective on early encounters in the Atlantic was crucial for exposing the cultural specificity of European semiotic practices, “unnaturalizing” what earlier generations of scholars often took to be universal rationalism.\textsuperscript{13} Yet, the formulation of a sharp, pre-existing and absolute dichotomy between “European” and “non-European” epistemologies came at a cost. The metanarrative of “first encounters” it has produced is flawed on both empirical and conceptual grounds. Empirically, it ignores the centrality of the Mediterranean—where interaction has been multifaceted and ongoing for millennia—to early modern evolving discourses about cultural difference.\textsuperscript{14}

Conceptually, it risks obscuring the sustained nature of all cultural interaction, and the role of intermediaries in shaping the boundaries of the very units they purport to mediate, “Europe” and its “Others.” Even when seeking to address precisely the role of colonial cultural intermediaries, the adoption of the vocabulary of “hybridity” and “indigeneity” to describe cultural interaction often tainted much of this work with its own variety of

\textsuperscript{11} Margaret Hodgen’s classical survey of early modern anthropology has little to say about European encounters with the Ottoman Empire. More recent discussions of early articulations of alterity similarly neglect Mediterranean cultural contact. See Hodgen 1964; Todorov 1984; Bitterli 1989; Taussig 1986; Trouillot 1991; Mignolo 1995.

\textsuperscript{12} Todorov 1984; Bitterli 1989; Sahlins 1995.


\textsuperscript{14} For a brief discussion of how sustained contact affected Renaissance travel literature on the Levant, and mitigated the region’s alterity through the notion of “familiarity,” see Tinguely 2000: 13–14.
cultural essentialism. For example, in writing about intermediaries between West African princes and French traders of the Royal Africa Company in the seventeenth century, the historian Urs Bitterli has suggested that

If a relationship based on trade was to run smoothly, it required a group of Africans and half-castes to serve as negotiators, boatmen, interpreters or craftsmen. These intermediaries, who were midway between the cultures and employed a pidgin language, could sometimes assume such importance as to jeopardize the interests both of the white traders and of the local native government. Inhabiting the no-man’s-land between two social and cultural orders, these lançados, as the Portuguese called them, developed polished manners and great mercantile skill, along with an easy-going morality which often offended moralistic travelers and helped confirm the contemptuous stereotype, widespread on the African coast in the seventeenth century, of the lazy and cunning negro.15

Such an understanding of intermediaries as occupying a limbo, “inhabiting the no-man’s-land between two social and cultural orders,” is hard to sustain. In order to produce successful intermediaries, well-established, shared institutional structures (such as kinship) had to already have been in place.16 More than reflecting any actual historical conditions, the limbo metaphor stems from an imperialist optic, which views the marginal as extraneous, rather than as fundamental, to groups’ self-definition, and those who mediate as outsiders to the groups being mediated, rather than as engaging both. It is precisely this imperialist optic which, as Ann Laura Stoler shows, imagined those culturally in-between as racially half-cast, and aimed to control and contain métissage by constructing “interior frontiers.”17

15 Bitterli 1989: 43.
16 On the importance of kinship and household arrangements for colonial mediation, see Taylor 1983; Stoler 2002.
More recently, scholars have placed greater emphasis on the multi-faceted, ongoing, and reciprocal nature of cultural interaction in the early modern Atlantic. Still, the process by which intermediaries articulate both the boundaries and the prototypical centers of the very categories they purport to mediate is only infrequently thematized. Instead, most still emphasize the objects (whether tangible or metaphorical) being transacted. The literary historian Manfred Pfister has recently argued that intermediaries either mediate objects (“at least… two frames of reference, two languages and local knowledges”) or “play them off against each other.” Similarly, the sociologist Tanya Cassidy glosses Georg Simmel’s famous ideal type of “the Stranger” as “someone who crosses boundaries and therefore defines and defies boundaries, or builds bridges over them.” Yet Simmel himself insisted that “the stranger… is an element of the group itself… His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it… In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group.” Rather than argue about the appropriate terminology for describing that which intermediaries broker, it is worth paying attention to how intermediaries operate as organic members of the groups they purport to mediate, and how they themselves describe this position.

**ORIENTALISM, OCCIDENTALISM, AND THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Edward Said’s pathbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) gave rise to numerous studies of European discourses about “the East.” In the quarter century since *Orientalism* was first

19 Pfister 2005: 34.
20 Cassidy 2000: 15.
21 Simmel 1950: 402, 408.
published, a deluge of works have argued the merits and applicability of Said’s paradigm to different disciplines, periods, or objects of study. This has produced challenges, refinements, and even refutations of many of the book’s claims. In the thirty years since its publication, *Orientalism* has set a new agenda for early modern history, triggering renewed emphasis on the intense, diverse and multifaceted nature of cultural interaction in the early modern Mediterranean.\(^{22}\)

Said’s work left much to be desired from the perspective of scholars seeking to understand the social formations in which Orientalist discourses were grounded. It also glossed over the question of how Orientalism transformed earlier discourses and representational systems. Medievalists and early modernists in particular have highlighted both the value of Said’s questions and the need for greater analytical precision in studying the nature of Europeans’ power-laden engagements with other societies and cultures.\(^{23}\)

Given his understanding of Orientalism as a discursive formation closely tied to modern imperialism, Said nonchalantly left out all pre-Enlightenment encounters, and instead focused on the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt as a foundational moment.\(^{24}\) As a result, we have a growing literature on the coalescence of Orientalist discourses in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, and some suggestive discussions of their emergence in Enlightenment Europe.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{22}\) See, for example, Brotton 2002; Jardine and Brotton 2000; Mack 2002; MacLean 2005. These works have emphasized the extensive movement of people, objects and signifying practices across political and religious boundaries. They have also alerted us to the fact that early modern knowledge of other societies came in many forms, and was by no means the purview of elite representations.

\(^{23}\) For a medievalist’s critique of Said’s implicit teleology, see Biddick 2000.

\(^{24}\) For an historically-grounded elaboration, see Mitchell 1988; for critiques, see Tavakoli-Targhi 2001; Ze’evi 2004.

In contrast to these studies of the nexus of colonialism and modernity in Islamicate societies, efforts to locate the emergence of Europe, at least in part, in encounters with Muslim societies still await a similarly grounded history. The late medieval and early modern transition from “Christendom” to “Europe” is still little understood, and has been for the most part the purview of intellectual historians. Peter Burke’s claim in 1980 that “despite the excellent books on the idea of Europe, the social history of the consciousness of Europe remains to be written” remains as true a quarter century later.

Possibly due to their reliance on a conceptual framework developed in an Atlantic context, studies of Mediterranean cultural interaction have often succumbed to a version of Orientalism themselves. Many fail to distinguish between and properly historicize the categories of “Islam” “Arabs” “Turks” and “the Ottoman Empire,” and treat these supposedly interchangeable categories merely as disembodied figments of (elite) European imagination. Such works thus risk not only a monological account of cultural interaction, but an overly-unified, “Occidentalist” view of European representational practices as well. Even works aiming to evaluate whether some of the discourses (if not the discipline) of Orientalism pre-date the eighteenth century often fail to address the social formations in which such discourses were articulated. Many, though by no means all, either treat Orientalist “representations” of Otherness as immutable ideas, dissociated

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26 Hay 1957; Pocock 1997; Pagden 2002.
28 For a selection of works on the representations of “Islam,” “the Turks,” and “the Ottomans” in late medieval and early modern Europe, see Rouillard 1941; Vovard 1959; Daniel 1960; Mas 1967; Schwoebel 1967; Sénac 2000 [1983]; Kleinlogel 1989; Neumann and Welsh 1997; Petkov 1997; Matar 1998; Blanks and Frassetto 1999; Sénac 2000; Soykut 2001; Çırakman 2002; Merle 2003; Bisaha 2004; Dimmock 2005; Harper 2005. Far fewer works have explored the operation and transformation of geo-political categories within specific institutional contexts. For such notable exceptions, see Valensi 1993; Höfert 2003.
29 For a critique of Occidentalism, see Coronil 1996.
from their specific historical moments of production and consumption, or present the
history of Europeans’ engagements with other peoples as a linear, teleological
progression from relatively “benign” to increasingly Orientalist. Few works have sought
to understand, for example, how European representations were engaged in dialogue with
non-European semiotic practices of representing otherness. Indeed, it is only recently
that scholars have emphasized the anachronism of ascribing an imperialist will-to-power
to early modern European relations with the Ottoman Empire.30 Unfortunately, it is
precisely this recognition of the relative weakness of Europeans in the early modern
Mediterranean balance of power that has led an otherwise careful literary scholar to state
that

Mediterranean Islam was self-sustained and self-representing because it was
militarily formidable and did not consist of lands and peoples—as in the
Americas—that could be possessed.31

Clearly, to speak of a unified “Mediterranean Islam” in the early modern (or any other)
period risks colluding with an essentialist view of clashing “civilizations.” Such a
discourse takes into account neither the huge diversity and historical transformation of
Muslim religious practices, nor the complexity of social and political formations in this
vast region, which never fully overlapped with religious boundaries. It not only ascribes
historical agency to religion as such, but hypostatizes religious and political boundaries in
ways that may have been “natural” to Europeans of the age of confessionalization, but
that obfuscate rather than clarify the analytical issues at hand.

30 By and large, it is almost exclusively Ottomanists who have emphasized the extent to which the
Ottomans were part and parcel of the early modern state system. See Necipoğlu 1991; Kafadar 1996;
Murphey 2001; Goffman 2002.
Like Matar, much of the work on the “pre-history” of Orientalism has tended to adopt uncritically pre-modern European “native categories,” which conflated “Muslim,” “Turk,” and “Ottoman.” Thus, rather than point to critical moments of rupture in the history of cultural interaction in the Mediterranean, much of the extant scholarship on early modern representations of “the East” reifies the category as if it truly had a substantive and immutable content. From there it is but a short step to drawing a linear, direct, and causal connection between pre-modern cultural categories and modern Orientalism. For example, one historian has recently suggested that

The myth of East and West as polar opposites was introduced over two thousand years ago by the Greeks and adapted by the Romans. From about the eleventh century on, Europeans used the terms “Christian” and “Infidel” to articulate this renewed sense of cultural division. By the modern colonial period Western European powers had come to view themselves as superior to Eastern peoples both militarily and culturally. Today, of course, the question of East and West is receiving renewed attention.32

Thus, in a few short lines, the author undermines her own project of recovering the specificity of humanist representations of the Ottomans, by suggesting a trans-historical continuity of the binary opposition between “East” and “West” and by implying that these terms refer to actual objects in the world. Instead of considering the significance of the dramatic changes undergone by the categories used in different periods and in different settings, she collapses the classical Greek dichotomy between civilized and Barbarian, the medieval crusaders’ distinction between Christian and Infidel, and late modern conceptions of Western vs. Eastern Civilization into a unified, seamless trajectory.

32 Bisaha 2004: 2.
VENETIANS, OTTOMANS, AND MEDITERRANEANISTS

The recent resurgence of interest in the Mediterranean as a historical subject was sparked by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s magisterial *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), where they define the Mediterranean as a “mediator and boundary, [a] zone of transition and agent of comparison and differentiation.” The Mediterraneanists’ debate has productively re-focused on the shared elements and continuity between different imperial formations in the region, while also insisting on its highly fragmented nature, making it hard to speak of a unified, all-encompassing cultural frontier. Yet, although “contact,” “circulation,” and “exchange” have retained their popularity among Mediterranean historians ever since Braudel’s classical study, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, first published in 1949, mediation and intermediaries have rarely been addressed. To the extent that they have been noticed at all, intermediaries have been celebrated primarily for “importing” a set of rarefied intellectual or artistic “objects” (texts, artworks, styles, techniques) from “East” to “West.” Several major conferences organized in Venice in the late 1960s and 1970s under the aegis of the “Venice and the East” Center at the Cini Foundation have given wide purchase to the notion of Venice as a “center of mediation between East and West”. However, the field of cultural mediation they treated was rather circumscribed, largely focused on how Byzantine scholars who settled in Venice in the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 sustained humanists’ interest in Hellenic

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33 Horden and Purcell 2000: 460.
34 Ibid., 25. This debate has fruitfully involved not only early modernists, but classicists and anthropologists as well. For a sampling of the various positions in this debate, see Marino 2002; Purcell 2003; Harris 2005.
35 See, for example, Pertusi 1966; Pertusi 1973; Beck et al. 1977; Graciotti 2006.
and Byzantine letters. Another early attempt was William McNeill’s essay of 1974, *Venice, the Hinge of Europe*. In his dense synthesis, McNeill celebrated Venice as the quintessential center of economic, technological, intellectual and artistic mediation between “East” and “West,” particularly in the period 1481–1669. Yet, while McNeill points to the important role played by Venice as a “cultural metropolis,” for instance the centrality of Paduan scholarship in the Post-Byzantine Hellenic revival, human agents are largely missing from his account.

Despite the promise of these early forays into questions of Mediterranean cultural mediation, their scope has hardly expanded in later years to include either Ottoman, or non-elite semiotic practices. More recent scholarship, while rich in its analysis of the formal aspects of its objects, still tends to focus on specific canonical artworks, and to bracket the interactive aspects of all cultural contact, ultimately producing more or less mechanistic accounts of artistic, intellectual, economic, or technological “influence” as the brainchild of individual geniuses.

One consequence of the growing interest in Mediterranean cultural mediation has been the reappraisal of the role of colonial ventures in the emergence of early modern Italian regional states. Yet, despite important recent interventions, a strong division of labor still obtains in the historiography of Mediterranean empires such as the Genoese, Pisan, and, of course, Venetian, between those who study colonies and those who study metropoles. The economic, military, diplomatic and administrative aspects of specific

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36 For a less romantic view of Venice’s relationship with Byzantine scholars and scholarship, see Cutler 1995.
38 For a critique of this model of unidirectional importation of passive objects from East to West, see Grabar 2003.
colonies have been charted out in great detail, particularly for the Crusading period and its aftermath. But medieval and, even more so, early modern Mediterranean history is still written for the most part in the form of localized case studies of specific colonies, in which metropolitan society, if it figures at all, is but a distant force. This compartmentalization has much to do with the modern history of the region, where dozens of nation states have sought to resurrect “their” early modern histories. As Benjamin Arbel recently noted, the long neglect of Mediterranean colonial history may also have much to do with Italy’s fascist legacy. The imperialist scholarship fostered by Mussolini endured well after his demise. As a result, later generations tended to avoid the study of empire as potentially imperialistic itself. Be that as it may, a more integrative account of the place of Mediterranean colonies within processes of early modern state formation is yet to be written.

Beyond important political and economic ramification, the Mediterranean colonial enterprise shaped early modern metropolitan societies in fundamental ways. Not only did conquest place Catholic colonizers in control of large Eastern Christian and Jewish populations, but it also brought them into direct and sustained contact with Mamluk and Ottoman frontier societies, whose methods of managing religious and ethnolinguistic differences diverged in many ways from those of Catholic Europe.

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39 Reference to works on specific Venetian colonies are scattered throughout the dissertation. See also the specific contributions in Fernández-Amesto 1987; Balard 1989; Abulafia 1993; Balard and Ducellier 2002; Vatin and Veinstein 2004.
40 A notable exception is the pioneering lifework of the French Byzantinist Freddy Thiriet (1921–1986) on the medieval Venetian maritime empire. See also Balard 1978; Arbel 1996.
42 Even as late as 1996, a comprehensive historiographical collection of essays on “The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300–1600,” authored by the leading Italian and American scholars in the field, left out entirely the role of Mediterranean colonies in the rise of the state. See Kirshner 1996.
Before their Atlantic counterparts, the medieval and early modern Mediterranean colonies served as laboratories for the elaboration of ethnic difference. The noted continuities between Venetian and Ottoman regimes in colonies like Cyprus and Crete also raise new questions about the nature of these two empires and their connections.

Indeed, economic historians of Venice were among the first to explore the complexity of early modern Venetian-Ottoman relations. Following Braudel’s lead, they emphasized from early on Venice’s centrality to the trade system of the eastern Mediterranean. If Braudel and his followers have sometimes been accused of separating Venice too neatly from transalpine Europe, much of Venice’s earlier socio-cultural historiography has suffered from even greater insularity. Until fairly recently, socio-cultural historians have focused on metropolitan Venice to the almost complete neglect not only of its Mediterranean colonies, but of its Italian hinterland as well. This metropolitan focus was guided by historiographical fashions that privileged the study of urban economies to the neglect of rural areas. It was also prompted by a republican impetus, a constitutive element of the “myth of Venice,” which identified the city’s glory with its formidable civic institutions and rigid social hierarchies.

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43 Thiriet 1959: 258; Arbel 1989b; Karapidakis 1992; Arbel 1995b; McKee 2000; O’Connell 2004. The idea is implicit already in the pioneering work of Charles Verlinden, although not theorized as such. See, for example, Verlinden 1954; Verlinden 1970.
44 For Crete, see Greene 2000. For Cyprus, see Kyrris 1989; Jennings 1993; Costantini 2004.
46 For a sustained, critical elaboration of Braudel’s notion of Mediterranean unity, see Horden and Purcell 2000.
47 Even the most recent general survey of Venetian history, Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan’s Venise triomphante: Les horizons d’un mythe, although decrying the insularity of Venetian historiography and aiming to “explain Venice on the basis of the places where it became Venice,” devotes only four pages specifically to the Venetian overseas empire. See Crouzet-Pavan 2002: xi, 9, 86–89. For a historiographical reflection on the relationship between metropolitan Venice and its mainland territories, see Casini 2002.
48 Cochrane and Kirshner 1975; Grubb 1986: 73 and passim; Martin and Romano 2000. On the “myth of Venice,” see also below, p. 34.
geopolitical alignment with transalpine Europe to as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While acknowledging Venice’s cultural and institutional continuities with Byzantium, standard histories of Venice well into the 1980s still implicitly took it to have always been part of a fully-conscious, historically stable, homogenous, and well-bounded “West,” a frontline against a threatening, alien “East.” In such narratives, Venice’s Catholicism and Europeanness were presupposed, making its wavering alliances between Rome and Istanbul, as well as its well-documented Lutheran sympathies, historiographical “problems” that begged explanation.

More recent scholarship, however, has problematized Venice’s relationship to early modern transalpine Europe. A growing consensus among historians, art historians, and historical geographers now suggests that it was not until the seventeenth (and some would argue: the eighteenth) century that Venice’s “turn westward” took its final, decisive shape. Several different arguments have been marshaled to support this revision: Venice’s lingering attachment to and affinities with Byzantium and interest in the aesthetics and intellectual traditions of Medieval Islam; its notoriously undecided political and military stance toward the Ottoman Empire; the permeability of religious and social boundaries between Venetian and Ottoman colonial subjects, and Venetian merchants’ involvement in kinship and commercial networks that extended throughout

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50 The examples are too numerous to cite here, and in general reproduce some version of the “clash of civilizations” narrative. See, for example, Fondazione “Giorgio Cini” 1971: 86
51 See, for example, Grendler 1977.
54 Libby 1978; Valensi 1993.
the eastern Mediterranean. Of great significance also is the belated recognition of the Ottomans’ centrality to the sixteenth-century European intellectual and artistic marketplace. Even a cursory look at sixteenth-century Venetian political theorists reveals the extent to which the Ottoman state was sometimes invoked as a positive model for Venetian statecraft.

Recent Ottoman historiography has also productively underscored the embeddedness of the early modern Ottoman state in a broader inter-imperial system. Instead of simply “comparing” early modern Ottoman and Western European states, as if these were self-contained universes, Ottomanists now emphasize convergences, and seek to understand how intensive and ongoing interaction between members of different societies (and of differentially situated members within each society) shaped emerging cultural categories of difference and sameness.

This analytical shift has wide-reaching implications for the study of early modern cultural mediation in the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire can no longer be treated as an external force or at best as a marginal appendage to the grand narrative of European history. Nor can it be considered as a fixed, looming Other, whose outsider status was unmitigated and unchanging. Such a historiographical shift calls for a redrawing of the boundaries of our units of analysis. It suggests that the comparative study of the Ottoman Empire and other early modern polities should be supplemented by cross-regional studies that can take into account the actual movements of people across political boundaries. Furthermore, integrating the Ottoman Empire into our narratives of the early modern

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57 See references in note 22 above.
Mediterranean requires developing new conceptual tools beyond the paradigm of “influence” for thinking about the relationship between cosmographies and cultural practices that defied political borders. But before I develop this trans-imperial theme and outline its methodological and chronological ramifications, a few words are in order about social and juridical distinctions in early modern Metropolitan Venice itself.

LOCALS, FOREIGNERS, AND THE MOST SERENE REPUBLIC

A tight oligarchy proclaiming itself a republic, a vast empire commonly referred to as a city-state, impoverished nobles ruling non-citizen billionaires, legally recognized colonial aristocracy and a disenfranchised citizen class, a puppet “duke” and toga-clad senators—these are but some of the baffling contradictions of early modern Venetian society. Of the city’s peak population prior to the plague of 1575, numbering almost 190,000, only around 2,500-3,000 (1% to 2%) were citizens of noble rank, that is, adult males with the right to vote and to be elected to office. Approximately 4,000 more were non-noble male citizens by birth or through naturalization. Non-noble citizens by birth (“cittadini originarii”) were entitled to certain positions in the Republic’s extensive civil service, but were not part of the legislature. Citizenship by birth was thus the special mark of that segment of the metropolitan population who could make claim to civil service. Naturalized citizens (“cittadini de intus” and “de intus et extra”) came for the most part from the ranks of foreign merchants, who sought Venetian citizenship primarily

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60 In other words, only 3 to 5 percent of the city’s residents were citizens. This percentage is infinitely smaller if we consider the overall population of Venice’s vast empire on the Italian mainland and in the Adriatic and Mediterranean. On Venice’s social stratification, see Lane 1973: 324; Chojnacki 1994; Grubb 2000. On the structuring of Venetian citizenship, see Bellavitis 2001.

61 On the role of the Venetian citizen class in the Republic’s administration, see Neff 1981; Zannini 1993.
for tax purposes. For these merchants, the significance of citizenship lay first and foremost in commercial privileges rather than in political franchise. Indeed, as Cochrane and Kirshner suggest, the Venetian “citizen” should be thought of as a legal category whose opposite was neither noble nor plebeian, but rather “foreigner,” a contrast whose implications I explore below. The rest of the city’s male population were either popolani (plebeians), foreign merchants, or émigrés from the city’s vast agricultural hinterlands on the Italian mainland (the Terraferma) and colonies along the Adriatic coast and in the eastern Mediterranean (the stato da mar), by then increasingly threatened by Ottoman military power.

Early modern Venice was a city of immense commercial capital and flourishing industries. But it also suffered from a growing population of poor journeymen and colonial refugees. The custodians of a strongly centralized state, Venice’s ruling class, the patricians, increasingly turned away from long-distance trade, their traditional hallmark and point of pride. Instead, they busied themselves with the administration of the empire as well as of their private agricultural investments on the mainland. It was this withdrawal of the Venetian patriciate from commercial activities in the sixteenth century that opened the door to a greater presence of foreign merchants in the city. Merchants from as far afield as Central Asia and transalpine Europe lived and traded with

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62 Cowan 2000; Ferro 1779: 762–65; see also Kirshner 1979 on the requirements for naturalization; Mueller and Piasentini n.d. for an online database of naturalization in late medieval Venice.
63 Cochrane and Kirshner 1975: 328. Depending on context, “foreigner” could include not only the myriad northern European and Ottoman merchants who sojourned in the city, but also immigrants from Venice’s empire, even from nearby territories.
64 Tucci 1973: 346.
65 For an illustration of how this withdrawal enabled colonial subjects (in this case: Greeks from Zante) and English merchants to establish their own commercial networks, which were still centered around Venice, see Fusaro 2002. On Venetian trade in the seventeenth century generally, see Sella 1961.
one another in textiles, grains, leather, glass, wax and spices, to mention but a few of the many commodities trafficked in Venice, which was still one of Europe’s main emporia.

This population of foreign merchants increasingly came under the jurisdiction of
the *Cinque Savii alla Mercanzia*, the Venetian Board of Trade, which, after its establishment in 1507, soon became the central organ for monitoring mercantile activity within the city.\(^{66}\) As a court of appeals for all foreign merchants, the Board gradually replaced the judiciary body once in charge of foreigners, the *Giudici al Forestier*, whose summary procedure was no longer thought to provide foreign merchants with sufficient protections.\(^{67}\) The Board of Trade continued to expand its jurisdiction throughout the sixteenth century, and by its end was one of Venice’s most powerful institutions.\(^{68}\)

Alongside the Board’s expanding jurisdiction over foreign merchants, it also came to supervise the activities of commercial brokers and public dragomans.

This brief introduction to the complexities of early modern metropolitan Venetian society has already suggested the central place of state institutions in processes of ethnic differentiation. Yet the early modern state can hardly be understood without its complement, “the Church.” Earlier generations of political historians tended to separate the two, whether due to a narrow institutional approach (especially in Italian scholarship), or the emphasis on the northern Italian communes as the fountainhead of modern republican traditions (especially by Anglo-American scholars). The latter in particular tended by and large to leave the Church altogether out of their narrative of the emergence

\(^{66}\) For a transcript of the Senate resolution of 1507 to establish the Board of Trade, see Borgherini-Scarabellin 1925: 16–17. An English translation is available in Chambers and Pullan 2001: 168–69.

\(^{67}\) For a discussion of the *Giudici al Forestier* and its decline, see Fusaro 2000: 138–52 and passim. On the justice administered to “foreigners” and on early modern legal concepts of foreigners as “poor in relational resources,” see the illuminating discussion in Cerutti 1995.

\(^{68}\) Despite its obvious significance, the only extensive treatment of the Venetian Board of Trade to date is Borgherini-Scarabellin 1925.
of the early modern state, or at best to treat it as a reactionary force against which the State, led by civic-minded humanists, rebelled and triumphed.\textsuperscript{69}

Against its relative neglect by political historians, social historians of early modern Italy pioneered in exploring the State-Church nexus, employing a wide array of methods ranging from quantitative economic history to microhistory, gender history, and networks analysis. Through case studies, social historians from the early 1970s on have canvassed a detailed picture of the complex relationships between individuals, communities, and large structures of domination.\textsuperscript{70} In the aftermath of Gerhard Oestreich’s introduction of the concept of “social discipline” to the study of early modern Europe, and Michel Foucault’s discussion of early modern disciplinary practices, historians have become intrigued by the impact of church and civic institutions alike on social behavior.\textsuperscript{71} Much aided by the accessibility and richness of northern Italian communal and ecclesiastical archives, a leading research center, the \textit{Istituto storico italo-germanico} in Trent, has fostered a broad research agenda on the Catholic Reformation in northern Italy, inspired by Oestreich and other Weberian German historians of the early modern state. Historians associated with this research center have explored the micro-technologies of ecclesiastical power, the interpenetration and patronage networks of civic and church elites, and particularly the disciplinary project at the heart of new confessional practices in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545–1563).\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{69} For a clear representative of the latter, with a Venetian focus, see Bouwsma 1968. For critiques of Bouwsma specifically, and the “civic humanism” paradigm more generally, see Pecchioli 1983; Muir 1995; Molho 1998; Hankins 2000.


\textsuperscript{71} Oestreich 1968; Foucault 1977.

\textsuperscript{72} Prodi and Penuti 1994; Prodi and Reinhard 1996. For Venice, see Montanari 1987.
The attention paid by historians associated with the Italo-German Institute to the micro-technologies of power and their positive reassessment of the place of the Church in the emergence of modern state institutions have been most welcome. At the same time, other scholars have become increasingly skeptical of the actual ability to effect “social discipline” of early modern institutions, or even to exercise meaningful surveillance. In particular, critics have argued against the implicit assumption that the Papacy and its attendant organs (chiefly the Roman Inquisition and the Jesuits) exerted overwhelming and uniform control throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and across widely diverse political and social formations. Recent studies of early modern confraternities have explored how these participatory institutions sometimes recalibrated urban social hierarchies under the aegis of the Church. Students of the Roman Inquisition have underscored its radical divergence from its Spanish precursor and the importance it placed on controlling and reforming social behavior rather than on prosecuting heresy. Case studies of interactions between inquisitors and non-elite populations have underscored the fundamental impact these groups had on each others’ cosmography and ritual practices. This upsurge of interest in the relationship between the Church and the State in early modern Italy has further subjected the chronological categories of “Reformation,” “Counter-Reformation,” “Catholic Reformation,” “Tridentine,” and “Post-Tridentine” to close scrutiny.

73 Hudon 1996; de Boer 2001; de Boer 2003.
74 See references in chapter 5, p. 158, note 6.
76 Ginzburg 1980; Ginzburg 1983; Prosperi 1982; Prosperi 1990.
77 O’Malley 2000.
It is in this context that the early modern Mediterranean offers an interesting vantage point from which to reappraise the fraught relationship between the Venetian state and the Roman Church. Indeed, the Venetian tendency to subjugate ecclesiastical interests to (imperial) reason of state was a constant source of tension with the Papacy. Long before it placed Venice under interdict during 1606–1607, Rome’s relations with the Serenissima were anything but serene, as the two powers disagreed on innumerable aspects of domestic and foreign policy, from Venice’s reluctance to assist the papacy against the Ottomans, to its notorious disinclination to suppress its thriving Lutheran printing press, to its exclusion of bishops from all government offices while granting its patriciate a monopoly on all ecclesiastical positions throughout its empire, to its de facto acceptance of the return of New Christians to Judaism, to its promotion of the Greek Orthodox Church’s jurisdiction over Greeks in the colonies as well as in the city proper.

Rather than suppress ecclesiastical institutions, Venice made them part of its elaborate structure of governance. In Paul Grendler’s famous words, “the Venetians tended to see the local church as a department of state whose responsibility was saving souls and promoting social discipline.”

Church institutions were part and parcel of Venice’s efforts to monitor the population in an attempt to fight the plague. Civic magistracies were the primary arbiters in matters of heresy, and they alone decided whether to turn a case over to the Holy Office. Even then, mandatory patrician

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78 Grendler 1977: 30. On Venetian efforts to limit Papal control over ecclesiastical institutions in its domains, see also Del Torre 1992; Fois 1994; Wright 1996.
79 It was church parishes, rather than the civic sestieri (the six administrative divisions of the city), which served as the basic units for data-gathering by the authorities. From 1504, parish churches were required to report all deaths within their jurisdiction; an ordinance in 1516 extended the same principle to Venice’s Jewish population, requiring the heads of the Jewish community to keep record of all births and deaths in the ghetto. Such legislation attests to the ingenuity of the Venetian government in recognizing the importance of local, community-based institutions and networks of surveillance for furthering its control. Beltrami 1954: 17–18; Carmichael 1986: 121–28; Laughran 1998.
representation among the inquisitors made sure Venetian political interests would be given due consideration.  

The Venetian printing press was heavily dominated by Greek Orthodox and German printers often suspected of Lutheran sympathies, and yet Papal censorship attempts were fiercely resisted by Venice.  

Theological concerns were similarly subjected to reason of state and the logic of capital accumulation in the case of Venetian policies towards Ottoman Jewish merchants, who were granted autonomy and who enjoyed commercial privileges similar to those of Venetian-born citizens.  

Extensive religious autonomy was also enjoyed by the city’s large Greek and Armenian communities.  

Finally, no account of the State-Church nexus in Venice can ignore the centrality of convents—and of women’s forced monachization—to patrician families’ strategies of self-preservation and self-presentation. As Jutta Sperling demonstrates, such strategies 

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80 Santosuosso 1973; Ruggiero 1993.  
81 The sixteenth-century Venetian government tolerated Inquisitorial intervention with this thriving industry only in cases of demonstrable heresy. In all other cases, the industry's good economic health was deemed of highest import. See Grendler 1977.  
82 The economic crisis at the end of the sixteenth century led the Venetian authorities to overlook a suspected connection between Venetian Portuguese Judaizers, Lutherans, and North Italian Anabaptists, as well as earlier suspicions that Jews had spied for the Ottomans. In 1589 a charter was issued encouraging Jewish Ottoman subjects—many of whom had left Portugal as New Christians only a few years earlier—to settle in Venice. It also extended to them trading privileges in the Levant on par with those offered to Venetian-born citizens, on the condition that they revert to Judaism and live openly as Jews in the ghetto. This led to a controversy with the papacy, in which Paolo Sarpi contended that accommodating conversos in the city “redounded to the public benefit of Christianity” by dissuading them from settling in the Ottoman empire (and thereby strengthening it with their wealth and industriousness). “Thus,” writes Benjamin Ravid, “Sarpi ingeniously identified Venetian policy motivated by commercial raison d’état with the greater glory of European Christendom.” Ravid 1975: 277–78; Pullan 1977: 54. On the commercial privileges enjoyed by Jewish Ottoman subjects in Venice, see especially Arbel 2001.  
83 The post-Tridentine Papacy sought to gain control over the Greek Orthodox Church, which was seen as the first necessary step in reclaiming Catholic supremacy over all Christians. It thus sought to prevent Orthodox jurisdiction over Greek and Albanian communities in the Italian peninsula. Venetian policies stood in its ways time and again: In 1578 the Council of Ten granted residency in the city to a metropolitan Orthodox ecclesiastic, the Archbishop of Filadelphia Gabriele Severo. Four years later, it recognized his spiritual and Episcopal authority over the large Greek community in the parish of San Giorgio, as well as his status as general commissioner of the Patriarch of Constantinople in Venice. Severo’s salary, paid by the Venetian government, was increased periodically until 1593. See Peri 1975: 602. On the Greek Church and confraternities, see also Mavroidi 1989; Fedalto 1991; Fedalto 2002. On Jewish autonomy, see Malkiel 1988.
were the ultimate expression of the elite dowry system and of an increasingly hypergamous marriage pattern, part of the patriciate’s efforts to refashion itself as landed aristocracy from the early sixteenth century on. Large-scale monachization not only allowed the patriciate to preserve patrimonies and avoid the staggering costs of honorably dowering daughters (or, conversely, the loss of honor involved in marrying them down the social scale). At another level, it also forged networks of patronage between patrician families and specific monastic institutions. These networks palpably bound monastic communities to the ruling class and could potentially secure their allegiance to the state against papal interventions.

In short, the centralization of local ecclesiastical institutions helped bind patrician hegemony to the state’s economic well-being. By opening up additional institutionalized spaces for diverse forms of religious expression—especially confraternities and other charitable institutions—Venetian citizens and recent émigrés, members of different estates, professions and provenances forged dense networks of patronage, charity, and surveillance.

While metropolitan authorities were debating the extent of their accommodation of religious diversity in the city, colonial administrators were faced with a related set of issues in the maritime frontier. There, the need to appease both Catholic and Greek Orthodox clergy often demanded a careful balancing act. This brings us back to the place of the frontier in late sixteenth-century Venetian-Ottoman cultural mediation.

84 Sperling 1999b: 7.
85 On Venetian maritime religious policy in general, see Arbel 2002b; see also Wright 2000: 28–31 for some illustrative examples from late fifteenth-century Nauplion, in the Morea. Similarly, Molly Greene has explored how in the early seventeenth century Venetian administrators on Crete tried to avoid religious conflict between the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Candia (Heraklion), and at the same time to cut off
SCOPE AND CHRONOLOGY

The significance of Mediterranean frontier regions as spaces for the elaboration of emerging notions of ethnic difference in the late medieval and early modern period has already been noted above. The interest expressed in frontiers and borderlands (and how to tell them apart) by students of modern empires has significance in this context. At the same time, as historians have demonstrated, modern conceptions of sovereignty and territorially should not be applied wholesale to the pre-modern past. The very understanding of borders as clear lines of demarcation between two mutually-exclusive and absolute claims to sovereignty was very far from both the conceptual universe of metropolitan political commentators and the lived reality of subject populations in the Venetian-Ottoman frontier. In the Adriatic, as in other early modern frontier regions, sovereignty, as well as cultural, religious, and ethnic membership was the substance of constant claims and counter-claims by metropolitan administrators and by frontier subjects themselves in a variety of institutional contexts.

More importantly, conceptions of borders and boundaries were articulated not only in frontier zones. Of course, metropolitan administrators and travelers played an important role in bringing metropolitan discourses of governmentality to the frontier, but may have also promoted the circulation of texts, objects and people that made the frontier

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the Cretan Greek Church from the larger Orthodox world (which was mostly under Ottoman rule) by forbidding local priests from receiving their holy orders from the Patriarch in Istanbul. In an effort to gain popular support, Venetian officials were encouraged to visit Orthodox churches in the villages and to befriend the rural priests. Such efforts, however, had only limited success, as the Cretan clergy maintained secret contacts with the Patriarch in Istanbul. See Greene 2000: 176.

86 Pels 1997; Stoler and Cooper 1997; Adelman and Aron 1999.
87 Grendi 1987; Sahlins 1989; White 1991; Pfister 1993; Biggs 1999; Abulafia and Berend 2002; Pedani 2002; Coleman 2003.
materially present in the metropole. Other people also had high stakes in the elaboration of notions of ethnic boundaries in the metropole. As a recent review of Venetian historiography has suggested, Venice is now often celebrated as a “multicultural metropolis,” where “diverse ethnic subcultures of Greeks, Germans, Jews, Turks, and Armenians liv[ed] in relative harmony.”

Rather than endorse uncritically this ahistorical vision of multicultural tolerance, this dissertation posits the Venetian metropole as a node in a much broader trans-imperial system. From this perspective, the city of Venice cannot be detached from the larger field of power in which early modern categories of difference were formed and transformed, and which spanned the Venetian and Ottoman Mediterranean, including both colonies and metropoles. By recovering the role of trans-imperial subjects in these processes of cultural boundary-making, this dissertation calls attention to the importance of this under-studied and under-conceptualized group.

At the same time, it is not my intention to privilege either colonial, metropolitan, or trans-imperial subjects as possessors of a priori special knowledge of the Venetian-Ottoman trans-imperial system as a whole. Moreover, this dissertation locates the productive role of trans-imperial subjects precisely in their engagement of metropolitan institutions and genres. Methodologically, the prosopographical reconstruction of the social histories of individuals and families involved in cultural mediation involved sifting through multiple genres of documentation, including petitions, court records, account books, baptismal certificates, notarial deeds, wills, diplomatic reports, and inquisitorial depositions. Analytically, it required situating these individuals within specific

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88 Martin and Roman 2000: 8.
institutions, such as guilds and market squares, exchange houses and private residences, embassies, charitable institutions, government offices and inquisitorial chambers.

Traditionally, Venetian historiography has focused overwhelmingly on the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, seen as the glorious age of both Venetian political consolidation and artistic production. The Battle of Agnadello in 1509 was often noted as a defining turning point in Venetian history. The re-consolidation of Venetian rule on the Terraferma in the wake of Agnadello spelled a radical transformation of the Venetian patriciate, i.e. its re-fashioning as landed aristocracy and removal from its previous point of pride, the Levantine trade. It also signaled, for many, Venice’s imminent decline. An eerily parallel periodization long dominated an Ottoman historiography in which the death of Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver (“the Magnificent”) in 1566 conveniently marked the passing of the Empire’s glorious “classical age.”

This dissertation, by contrast, focuses on the century from the Battle of Lepanto (1571) to the end of the War of Crete (1669). Although delimited by two wars, this period was in fact marked by a long Venetian-Ottoman peace and sustained diplomatic

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89 Typical in this regard is Frederic Lane’s magisterial opus *Venice, a Maritime Republic*, first published in 1973, and still viewed by many as the most comprehensive synthesis of Venetian history. Although not strictly chronological, Lane’s narrative essentially ends in the 1580s. What few discussions Lane provides about the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries focus almost exclusively on changing banking and shipping methods. Combined, the chapters devoted (not exclusively!) to these three centuries take up in total only one quarter of the volume. Another major synthesis, Chambers’ *The Imperial Age of Venice* is explicitly limited to the two centuries from 1380 to 1580, so that the loss of Cyprus serves as a synecdoche for the end of the Venetian empire as a whole. For a critique of the implicit “decline and fall” paradigm in Venetian historiography, see Cochrane and Kirshner 1975.

90 After invading Venetian territory on the Italian mainland, the forces of the League of Cambrai defeated Venetian forces near Agnadello on May 14, 1509. It prompted the loss, if temporary, of virtually all Venetian mainland territories, and led to continued warfare in the Venetian and Milanese hinterlands throughout the next decade.

91 Venice’s economic crisis, from which it never fully recovered, was due, according to that school of history, to its inability to compete effectively with the Portuguese in the Asian spice trade, and to the “betrayal” of the patriciate, which transferred its investment from trade to agricultural enterprise on the mainland. For a critique, see Grubb 1986: 62–63 and passim.

92 For a useful review of the literature, see Peirce 2004: 7 and passim.
and economic collaboration, aided by the development of bilateral agreements negotiated through the Venetian bailo’s house in the Ottoman capital.

The reigning interpretation of the second half of the sixteenth century as the starting point of the imminent “decline and fall” of both the Venetian and Ottoman empires encouraged a prolonged historiographical neglect of the seventeenth century in both fields. More recently, however, historians have begun to notice that economic crisis did not spell the end of Venetian centrality within an emerging European public sphere. New scholarship further suggests that early modern Ottoman society was not (as previously held) fundamentally insular, regressive, or too preoccupied with its Safavid rivals to the east to concern itself with its neighbors to the west.93

As a result, the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have begun to receive much greater historiographic attention. The Battle of Lepanto in 1571, in which the Holy League defeated Ottoman naval forces, is now studied more for its ideological than its military repercussions. In particular, cultural historians emphasize the crystallization of a myth of Catholic unity—through a Venetian-Papal alliance—against a common Muslim foe.94 After Lepanto, the Ottomans were no longer seen by their European rivals as invincible.95 Nor, for its part, could Venice claim to be the main European power in the Mediterranean. Economic historians too emphasize both the unprecedented (if short-

94 On the political and military repercussions of Lepanto, see Hess 1972. On some of its ideological dimensions, see Stouraiti 2003. Papers by Bronwen Wilson, Helena Szépe and Iain Fenlon in a recent panel on “After Lepanto: Martyrdom and Memory” in the 2006 annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America also indicate new scholarly attention to the reverberation of this battle in Venetian visual arts, music, and liturgy.
95 On the consequences of this changing perception, from an Ottomanist perspective, see Murphey 1993.
lived) flourishing of Venetian-Ottoman trade in the second half of the sixteenth century, and the important transformation of this relationship in the wake of the entry into the Mediterranean of new merchant companies of the northern seaboard powers, the English, Dutch, and French. By focusing on the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I wish to contribute to this historiographical reassessment, and examine the transformation of Venetian-Ottoman relations in light of the shifting power balance in the Mediterranean.

In addition to the Battle of Lepanto, 1571 also saw the incorporation of the formerly Venetian colony of Cyprus into the Ottoman state (Crete would similarly become Ottoman almost a century later, in 1669). These conquests led to an influx of colonial émigrés to the Venetian and Ottoman metropoles and transformed important Venetian and Ottoman institutions by introducing new trans-imperial players into the commercial sphere. In the century after Lepanto, Venice’s shrinking maritime empire and failed efforts to preserve its commercial supremacy in the Mediterranean prompted its cultural realignment with transalpine Europe. The same century also witnessed the Republic’s ambiguous embrace practices of surveillance and doctrinal orthodoxy that were the hallmark of Catholic Reform. It is in this context that efforts by trans-imperial subjects to shape evolving Venetian discourses about the Ottomans gained special poignancy.

Finally, my focus on the period 1570 to 1670 was also motivated by the availability of consistent documentation only from that period on. Petitions to the Venetian Senate, which form the documentary base of much of my discussion in chapters

96 Goffman 1998; Eldem 1999; Greene 2002; Fusaro 2003. Also see Braudel 1972: 291 for an important caveat against the notion of an absolute Venetian economic decline in the early seventeenth century.
2, 6, and 8, are only preserved systematically from 1563.\(^\text{97}\) Fairly complete transcripts of trials by the tribunals of the commercial brokers’ guild, the subject of chapter 3, are preserved only from 1590. The same is true for notarial and baptismal records from the archives of the *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni*, the main institution for the conversion of Jews and Muslims in early modern Venice, and the subject of chapter 5.\(^\text{98}\) The genres of renegades’ “reconciliation” depositions in front of the Holy Office, and converts’ *examina matrimoniorum*, introduced and analyzed in chapter 4, are typical products of Post-Tridentine Catholic Reform.\(^\text{99}\) And while both dragomans and commercial brokers were active in Venice much earlier, most of the texts they composed survive only from the 1570s onwards. In addition, over half of the archival corpus of earlier dispatches from Venice’s maritime colonies was destroyed by fire in the 1570s.\(^\text{100}\) Needless to say, reasonably systematic archival documentation was crucial for developing my arguments regarding the articulation of discourses about the Ottomans, and the institutional practices in which they were embedded.

In this context, the methodological importance of petitions merits special mention. Petitions (It. *suppliche*) were the main vehicle through which early modern subjects engaged officialdom.\(^\text{101}\) Particularly in imperial societies such as Venice, which encompassed vast territories, complex socio-juridical hierarchies and diversified institutions, it was the malleability, contestation and re-calibration of conceptual categories that typified trans-imperial subjects’ practices of petition-writing. The fact

\(^{97}\) Tiepolo 1994: 890.  
\(^{98}\) Ellero 1987.  
\(^{99}\) The first extant Venetian *examina matrimoniorum* are from 1592; reconciliation depositions by Christians of Muslim background hardly survive from before the seventeenth century.  
\(^{100}\) Schmitt 2004.  
\(^{101}\) See Nubola and Würgler 2002; Millet 2003; Luebke 2005 and the bibliography therein.
that supplicants did not necessarily write their own petitions but sometimes employed the services of experienced scribes should not be seen as a problem. On the contrary: this study uses petitions not in an attempt to recover authentic subaltern “voices,” but to understand how categories were calibrated through the ongoing dialogue between officialdom and subjects. That the composition process involved other actors proficient in the genre does not fundamentally change the premises.\textsuperscript{102}

Another aspect of Venetian officialdom should be mentioned in this context: in order to preserve its authority, the Venetian merchant capitalist oligarchy relied on a republican myth, premised on the double notion of “a unified and civic-minded patriciate, guardian of the common good” and “a populace actively involved and fiercely loyal.”\textsuperscript{103} This tension between oligarchic and republican expectations about the Signoria’s relationship with its subjects made supplication a powerful vehicle for articulating different (and at times conflicting) expectations of the patrician ruling caste. Genres such as petitions perpetuated the idea of the patriciate as the benevolent and attentive custodian of the republic/empire, but also placed specific claims on this benevolence. This study thus reads petitions not through a functionalist lens which emphasizes their usefulness for hegemonic elites, but rather as dialogical instruments for the elaboration of specific subject-positions and their concomitant claims and counter-claims.

\textsuperscript{102} In the absence of any detailed studies about the provenance, education, and work practices of early modern Venetian scribes, this crucial dimensions of Venetian governmentality remains to be explored. For useful insights on the procedural aspects of petitioning the Venetian government, see the appendix “Suppliche in Venice” in Davis 1991: 181–95.

\textsuperscript{103} Grubb 1986: 44, 49. On patriarchy and the Venetian state, see especially Sperling 1999a; Chojnacki 2000; Raines 2006. For a classical discussion of the nature of the Venetian political system and its representations—republican and otherwise—in European political thought, see Bouwsma 1968; cf. Bowd 2000 for a useful overview of the state of the extensive historiographical debate regarding the myth of Venice in general, and Bouwsma’s thesis in particular.
Of special interest are thus collective petitions, where authors spoke on behalf of a group, and therefore delineated the group’s authorized boundaries. Given the saliency of ethnic boundary-making to both early modern Venetian governmentality and modern scholarship, petitions written on behalf of ethnic collectivities offer particularly productive genre through which to examine the articulation and transformation of ethnolinguistic and geopolitical categories. By observing their proliferation in both petitions and officialdom’s own textual production, I examine how increased visibility naturalized and authenticated the status of certain categories as supposedly corresponding to outside collectivities.

In paying close attention to petitions submitted by trans-imperial subjects and the responses they received from a specific magistracy, the Board of Trade, I also challenge the image of institutional continuity produced by Venetian documentation procedures. I show how institutional change colluded with the transformation of classificatory categories. My analysis is premised on the idea that in order to be successful, supplicants had to already be familiar with the Venetian social order. Whether juridical subjects of the Venetian state or not, their foreignness was mitigated already at the moment of its enunciation.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OUTLINE

To understand how paternalism, republicanism and citizenship itself were redefined through the dialogue—which petitions both produced and presupposed—between supplicants and officialdom, Part I of the dissertation is devoted to mediation through commercial brokerage, focusing on petitioning and related practices among
trans-imperial brokers. Chapter 2 explores the institution of commercial brokerage as a key link between the state and the marketplace, as well as between local and foreign. It outlines the different types of trans-imperial subjects who petitioned the government to be appointed brokers, and analyzes how they argued their case, what publics they imagined for their texts, and what notions of Venetian society and their membership therein they invoked. Chapter 3 then shows how trans-imperial subjects tried by the brokers’ tribunal for unlicensed brokerage challenged patrician notions of what constituted brokerage—and foreignness. Specifically, I show how they undermined official efforts to sever links between brokers and merchants, and to treat the former as impersonal agents of a vigilant state. Rather, brokers were embedded in trans-imperial webs of friendship and patronage that followed neither juridical definitions nor the “ethnic solidarity” presupposed by much modern scholarship.

If commercial brokers blurred the line between the Ottoman foreign and the Venetian local, religious converts, the subject of Part II of the dissertation, became ideological signs of the transformation of other into self (although in actual practice their insertion into Venetian society was qualified). Chapter 4 examines three genres of converts’ life histories recorded by the Venetian Inquisition, the Patriarchal tribunals, and a charitable institution for converts, to suggest the differing ways in which Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant converts to Catholicism narrated the process of conversion and the converted self. Chapter 5 then explores converts’ long trajectories after baptism through a detailed study of a charitable institution for the conversion of Muslims and Jews to Catholicism, the *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni* (Holy House of the Catechumens), established in Venice in 1557. Based on the House’s baptismal records and account books, the
Chapter explores neophytes’ ongoing relationship with its governors to show how
baptized Muslims and Jews, members of two paradigmatic others of the Venetian state,
became constitutive elements of Venetian networks of patronage that often extended to
the Venetian colonies and beyond the Ottoman frontier. Together, chapters 4 and 5 show
how conversion operated as a project of metropolitan subject-making in the context of the
Catholic Reformation and Venetian rivalry with Rome, but also of Venetian-Ottoman
imperial competition.

Part III of the dissertation studies another group of trans-imperial intermediaries,
namely dragomans, or diplomatic interpreters, who worked for the Venetian bailo in
Istanbul. Chapter 6 examines the emergence of a highly endogamous and powerful group
of dragoman families out of Venice’s colonial nobility, the Venetian citizen class, and the
Latin (Roman-Catholic) community of Pera, on the outskirts of Istanbul. Through a close
reading of Venetian diplomatic reports and dragomans’ petitions, the chapter traces this
professional group’s recruitment, training, and employment, and underscores the inherent
tension between loyalty and trans-cultural competence in Venetian dragomans’ careers.
Chapter 7 then explores dragomans’ evolving discourses about the Ottomans in relation
to their ties to both Ottoman and Venetian bureaucratic elites, i.e. their structural position
as “in-between.” My discussion of the Istanbul-born diplomatic interpreter Giovanni
Battista Salvago (d. 1644) and his report to the Venetian Senate on the Barbary Coast
underscores the centrality of trans-imperial dragomans to the articulation of proto-
Orientalist claims about Ottoman alterity. Through an illuminated manuscript produced
in the bailo’s house ca. 1660 I further exemplify the ways in which dragomans claimed
both great intimacy with and distance from Ottoman society, and repeatedly asserted their own membership in a Venetian cultural sphere.

Finally, Part IV examines the interactions between Venetian public dragomans, commercial brokers, converts, and Ottoman merchants and dignitaries to show how trans-imperial backgrounds, social ties, and institutional milieus were constitutive of notions of ethnic difference. Chapter 8 examines the petitioning battle between brokers, Ottoman merchants, and public dragomans around the taxation of “Levantine” merchandise, and highlights the various strategies employed by trans-imperial subjects interacting with the Venetian Board of Trade in articulating the stakes involved in mediation. Competing visions of mediation are also at the heart of my discussion of the visit of a Bosnian Ottoman military governor whose daughter ran away to Venice and became a nun in the 1620s. Here, I show how the differing life trajectories of the two interpreters appointed by the Venetian Senate to accompany the visitor, in conjunction with notions of conversion and subjectivity elaborated by the various participants in the interaction, produced diverging visions of the relationship between Venetian and Ottoman societies. One focused on the commensurability but essential separateness of the two, while the other implied their convergence and overlap. Finally, chapter 9 traces the genealogy of categories such as “Turks” and “Levantines” to institutionalized practices of mediation in the Venetian commercial sphere, and shows how the defining properties and “prototypical centers” of these categories shifted historically and from one genre to another. The chapter traces the debates surrounding the establishment of the Fondaco dei Turchi and the granting of language- and religion-based collective rights to various Ottoman and Safavid merchant groups. The analysis shows that what counted as
“Venetian” or “Ottoman,” “European” or “Levantine” was clearly context-dependent, and how notions of difference articulated by trans-imperial subjects were then picked up and recalibrated within specific Venetian institutions. It further illustrates how, by assuming the linguistic “helplessness” of foreigners, the Board of Trade reinforced the association of brokerage with bilingualism, and thus ultimately furthered the claim of converts, redeemed slaves and other bilingual trans-imperial subjects to be ideal brokers.

To summarize, this dissertation provides an empirically-grounded account of how specific trans-imperial groups in early modern Venice articulated categories through which Venetian-Ottoman cultural boundaries might be discussed. By examining how notions of ethno-linguistic groupness intersected with assumptions about gender, estate, age, and profession, this study shows the multivalence of claims about difference within specific genres and institutional sites. It underscores how, by positing cultural difference, early modern trans-imperial subjects also positioned themselves within an unsettled contact zone.
PART I: MEDIATION

CHAPTER II

TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS AS PETITIONERS AND AS BROKERS

The goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of ´discipline.´

—Michel de Certeau

A SLAVE, A MASTER, AND A BROKER IN-BETWEEN

In early August 1573, word reached the Venetian Holy Office of a teenaged slave named Zorzi (Venetian for Giorgio), who had run away from the house of his noble Venetian master, Marcantonio Falier. According to the initial deposition, Zorzi, formerly a Muslim, had been baptized and had received communion and other holy sacraments. But now, having gone into hiding in the attic of a house “where several

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2 Established in 1547, the Holy Office of Venice was a highly autonomous chapter of the Roman Inquisition, administered by clerics who for the most part came from Venice’s patrician ruling class. On this well-studied institution, see the bibliography in Ruggiero 2001: n3.
Turks live,” he had allegedly returned to Islam (“tornato a far Turco”) “having shaved his head and dressed as a Turk in order to go secretly to Turkey.” Five days after Zorzi’s escape, his master Falier, accompanied by his brother Luca and several friends and servants, visited Zorzi’s place of hiding. They were met by an uncooperative landlord, the Greek commercial broker Francesco de Demetri Lettino (better known by his Venetian-Greek nickname, Frangia), and his wife, Giulia Moier. The couple claimed complete ignorance of Zorzi’s whereabouts, but Falier persisted in demanding that his slave be returned. That evening Frangia took his son and Zorzi to spend the night at a friend’s house nearby, and the following morning Zorzi was unceremoniously returned to his master.4

Despite this “happy ending” from Falier’s point of view, and the apparent restoration of Venetian social order, the Holy Office did not drop the case. Frangia was arrested, and a lengthy investigation ensued. During its course not only Zorzi, but also Frangia, Giulia and their 18-year old son, as well as a neighbor and a friend of the family, were all interrogated. Their depositions suggest deep tensions between how inquisitors and witnesses drew moral, religious, and social boundaries between Venetians and Turks, Christians and Muslims, slaves and masters, merchants and brokers.

The inquisitorial trial of commercial broker Frangia is exceptional among the archival traces left by early modern Venetian commercial brokers. Unlike petitions for

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3 Marcantonio and Luca were two of the six sons of Domenico Falier (1492–1564) and Chiara Contarini, a patrician couple of rather modest means. The couple married in 1541, suggesting that in 1573 Marcantonio was a fairly young man. The fact that he brought along his brother Luca (b. 1545), himself a young man who had not yet embarked upon a career, suggests either Marcantonio’s even humbler position (and possibly younger age), or his sense that a group visit might command more respect. On the Faliers, see Targhetta 1994a; Targhetta 1994b.

4 Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 35, fasc. 12 (August 15, 1573). Page numbers in following citations refer to the pagination of the original file, which is not always consecutive.
employment as brokers (the subject of much of this chapter), or the brokers’ guild records (addressed in chapter 3), this unique inquisitorial document underscores the importance of domestic arrangements and personal ties in forging business alliances between commercial brokers and their clients. Indeed, the various testimonies reveal a complex set of alliances and interests, hierarchies of authority, and modes of interaction between locals, localized foreigners (like Frangia himself), and Ottoman sojourners, in clear violations of patrician notions of social order premised on Christian morality and civic unity, all constitutive elements of the “myth of Venice.”

This chapter explores commercial brokerage in Venice from 1497, when the guild of commercial brokers was instituted as the purview of citizens, to 1670, when its membership included a large minority of trans-imperial subjects—colonial émigrés, war refugees, redeemed slaves, converts, and other sojourners from the Venetian-Ottoman frontier. It traces divergent understandings of the place of foreigners in the city as shaped by trans-imperial brokers, their clients (especially Ottoman merchants), and Venetian officials. Against patrician understandings of the marketplace as composed of anonymous actors, brokers and their clients often forged ties that crossed religious, linguistic, and political boundaries, and that challenged the very foreignness of merchants.

As the chapter shows, brokers operated at the interface between the government and foreigners, between the mercantile and artisanal sectors of Venetian society, between state institutions and the market, and between rich and poor. They were of key

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5 This myth, shaped and shared by contemporaries and many modern commentators alike, has celebrated the Serenissima as confessionally unified, solidary across social hierarchies, and culturally distinct from its neighbors, whether colonial subjects, or Ottomans beyond the frontier.
importance to the very constitution of these categories, their boundaries, and their possible mediation. The significance of brokers’ intermediary and transformative role is particularly noteworthy once we consider the predominance of trans-imperial subjects among the ranks of this profession—including Christian converts, Jewish, Armenian, and Greek-Orthodox Ottoman and Safavid subjects, redeemed slaves, and émigrés from Venice’s Eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic colonies, among them war refugees and retired soldiers.6

The chief roles assigned commercial brokers by Venetian law was the extension of aid to foreign merchants in their negotiations with other merchants and the exaction of taxes from them on behalf of the state. Both these roles were ideally located in the marketplace and were premised on the widespread legal notion that foreigners were “poor in relational resources” and hence needed special protections.7 But Frangia’s trial offers a more nuanced view of how the commercial interactions of brokers and foreign merchants became part of a larger social fabric of domestic arrangements, alliances, and affect. If Frangia is the licensed broker in this story, other people in his household, chiefly his wife and daughters, assume intermediary roles too and perform various tasks that redefine authority, familiarity, and community.

Outlining the intersecting religion-, language-, estate- and gender-based power hierarchies at work in Frangia’s case helps us to situate it within the broader ideological

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6 Cypriots and other Venetian colonial subjects moved to the metropole in increasing numbers in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571, hoping to restore their wealth, if not their status. The relationship between Venice’s colonial nobility, who sought repatriation in Venice, and the tightly guarded oligarchy that ruled the Republic was fraught with tensions. According to the historian of Venetian Cyprus Benjamin Arbel, many Cypriots presented themselves to the Venetians as the descendents of Venetian nobles following the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus (personal communication). For a fascinating discussion of attempts by émigrés from Crete to reclaim their Venetian patrician ancestry in the sixteenth century, see McKee 2000: 76ff; O’Connell 2004.

7 Cerutti 1995: 452.
context of early modern Venice. The unfolding narratives produced by the various
witnesses summoned to court reveal several transgressive intimacies, at least from the
point of view of Frangia’s patrician interrogators. Indeed, key testimony to such
intimacies was provided by the escaped slave himself. Zorzi claimed that he had planned
to leave for the Ottoman Empire in the hope of finding his Christian Bulgarian parents,
whom he had not seen since he was kidnapped as a young boy. He had been encouraged
to escape from his current Venetian master Marcantonio Falier, he said, by several
friends in similar circumstances. All of them had purportedly managed to escape Venice
on board a ship heading to Smyrna (Izmir) just a few days earlier. They were aided not
only by Turkish merchants and their slaves, but also by Frangia’s family.

From the beginning, then, Zorzi was reluctant to abide by the rules governing
Venetian domestic slavery. Rather than endorse his new identity as a baptized slave, he
wished to return to his ur identity—not that of an Ottoman Muslim convert, but that of a
kidnapped Christian boy. In the process, he recruited an extended network of
accomplices, crossing spatial, social and religious boundaries. His professed desire to
reunite with his parents was, moreover, a powerful indictment against his current servile
state, challenging the legality of his very enslavement. In order to befriend Frangia’s
tenants, the Ottoman merchants, and secure their assistance in his escape, Zorzi was even
willing to “reactivate” his Muslim past and resume his (outward) Muslim identity by

8 In theory, if not in practice, Venetians were not supposed to trade in—and certainly not to possess—
Christian slaves. This moral restriction might be ignored as a matter of course when it came to slaves who
had converted to Christianity after their enslavement, yet it was harder to ignore when a slave could prove
he or she had been born to Christian parents. Not surprisingly, claiming to have been kidnapped from
Christian parents at tender age was a very common trope in inquisitorial depositions by slaves. This
broader context of converts’ biographical narratives is analyzed in chapter 4. On the Venetian slave trade
in general, see Tenenti 1955; On the efforts to convert slaves in early modern Italian households, see Bono
1998; Bono 1999.
wearing a white turban. It is impossible of course to determine what exactly transpired between Zorzi and his Ottoman-Turkish hosts in Frangia’s house, but we can assume that Zorzi was convincing enough in invoking his Muslim background for the merchants to collaborate in his ultimately unsuccessful attempt to return to the Ottoman Empire.

If Zorzi’s testimony pokes holes in patrician representations of a perfected Venetian social and religious order, other testimonies in that trial similarly undermine notions of a stable domestic order. Throughout the trial, Frangia sought to present himself as the master of an orderly household and to claim authority over his wife, children, and tenants. But his claims to authority were seriously compromised by two revelations: that the keys to his house were actually held by his Ottoman tenants and that the broker-landlord was utterly dependent on the translation skills of his tenants’ slaves, for he himself did not speak a word of Turkish. Not only did these slaves possess vital communicative skills, but their friendship with a diverse group of young slaves, servants, and apprentices across the city gave them a broader social access, belying their presumed marginality and isolation. Furthermore, these slaves apparently exerted enough authority to conduct Zorzi’s head shaving. This act transgressed not only religious, but social hierarchies as well. It mirrored and reversed Zorzi’s baptism by his patrician master only eighteen months earlier, an important ritual enactment of ownership and supposed spiritual transformation.

9 Head shaving and the wearing of “Turkish” clothes were widely regarded by early modern Venetians as a sign of Muslim conversion. Significantly, change in dress, and especially the donning of the turban, was similarly held to be a sign of a convert’s new religious affiliation in the Ottoman Empire. I thank Tijana Krstic for discussing these parallel conceptions of conversion with me. For the relationship between outward appearance and presumed inner spiritual transformation in early modern Venice, see also Wilson 2003; Johnson 2005.

10 On the Muslim prohibition to shave a slave’s hair without his master’s permission, see Abdul Jabbar Beg 2005.
Thus, in order to act as broker, Frangia depended on a much larger network of intermediaries. The extent of this network is revealed by the testimonies of his wife, his son, and his neighbor. The position of Frangia’s wife, Giulia, emerges as particularly ambiguous, as she only partially adhered to the religious and moral boundaries sanctioned by Venetian officialdom. Supposedly subordinate to her husband’s commands, she deftly negotiated with Zorzi’s master Falier, and knowingly lied to him about his slave’s whereabouts. More broadly, she was in daily contact with her Ottoman tenants about eating arrangements, and may have tacitly collaborated with them not only in Zorzi’s case, but also in hiding other runaway slaves in her house.

This inquisitorial record further allows us to explore some of the Venetian authorities’ implicit concerns regarding brokers’ person and profession. From the start, Francesco de Demetri’s Greek name, Frangia, recalls his dual social position as both a Venetian civil servant and a Greek, a Venetian social category often suspect of political as well as religious subversion. And if his Greekness were not enough, Frangia rented rooms to Muslim Ottoman merchants. This was in clear violation of the law, which forbade anyone, save for licensed hoteliers (most of whom were patricians), to lodge foreigners, and in particular cautioned brokers against doing so. This was a repeated point of contention, as brokers were ideally placed to offer newly-arrived foreign

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11 On the triadic relations between Greeks, Latins and Muslims in the early modern Mediterranean, and specifically on Venetian anxieties regarding Greek-Ottoman collaboration, see Greene 2000. As I argue below, the profession of commercial brokerage became increasingly “ethnicized” and suspect in the wake of the loss of Cyprus (1571) as many émigrés from the lost colony gained employment as brokers in Venice.

12 Urban Padoan 1990: 18; Costantini 1996. Brokers were prohibited by law from providing merchants with any services other than commercial brokerage. In 1497, the Council of Ten, Venice’s highest authority, specifically warned brokers against renting rooms to foreign merchants: “…aliquis sansarius de caetero non possit dare recapitum mercatorum forensibis in domo sua, vel quam tenet, vel tenebit ad hunc feceret n.o facero aliquam maonam, sub pa’na perpetue’ privationis ab exercitio sansarie”: Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 2v (June 26, 1497). See also Manno 1995: 127.
merchants lodgings and other services.\textsuperscript{13} Brokers frequently claimed ignorance of the law forbidding them to lodge their clients, insisting that they were in fact doing merchants a favor by welcoming them into their homes.\textsuperscript{14}

The ban on brokers’ lodging of foreign clients probably stemmed from an effort to monitor foreigners’ presence in the city, and to secure revenue from the tax collected through licensed hoteliers. But it was increasingly linked to religious concerns and to restrictions on Muslims’ freedom of residence. Indeed, Frangia himself vaguely alluded to “scandals” caused by the lodging of Muslim merchants in Christian households when he petitioned the government the following year to grant him an exclusive privilege to operate a \textit{fondaco} (exchange-house, from the Arabic \textit{fundouk}) for “Turks.”\textsuperscript{15}

Frangia’s shrewd emphasis on the need to prevent scandals struck a sensitive chord. Indeed, beyond an obvious concern regarding Zorzi’s planned escape and ostensible apostasy, inquisitors questioned the moral well-being of Frangia’s family itself. During interrogation, Frangia, Giulia, and their son were repeatedly asked about the nature of their interactions with their Turkish tenants. Inquisitors wanted to know who cooked the Turks’ food, what kind of food it was (in particular, whether tenants ate meat on Friday, a clear sign of religious transgression), and whether the family and the tenants had ever eaten together. Giulia was particularly careful in her replies, assuring her interrogators that no contact through food (let alone through the sociability presupposed and re-enforced by commensality) had taken place between her family and

\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, in many other late medieval and early modern cities, hoteliers frequently engaged in commercial brokerage. In some cases, as in Antwerp from 1437 to the mid sixteenth century, hoteliers were actually encouraged to serve as brokers to their foreign lodgers and in other parts of Flanders brokers were virtually all hoteliers. See Dilis 1910: 304, 309–10, 319; De Pelsmaeker 1905: 440, 445–46.

\textsuperscript{14} The ties that were facilitated by the sharing of domestic space between brokers and their foreign tenants-clients are a recurring theme to which I will return in chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{15} See chapter 9 for a discussion of the fondaco’s history.
her tenants. Concern over food restrictions and their violations typified the Holy Office’s attempts to expose and uproot heresy, and Giulia was clearly conscious of the link between the violation of Catholic food restrictions and heresy.\textsuperscript{16} When asked what her family had eaten on Friday evening when Zorzi was discovered in the attic, she responded: “Salad and razor-shell clams.”\textsuperscript{17} Significantly, her detailed answer to the next question, about what her Turkish tenant had given her to cook for dinner that evening, suggests she was well aware of what her interrogators were after:

He eats meat every day, and we don’t eat meat, neither on Wednesday nor on Friday for any reason, and it is true that he gave one of my little girls, who is four years old, pumpkin roll [piadena de Zuche], and I told her not to eat anything with grease [ontosotil] or meat, and the cat ate it in the pantry.\textsuperscript{18}

Giulia thus emphasized that she deemed the food that the Turkish tenant had given her little daughter worthy only of the cat. (Even then, it could only be consumed out of sight, in the pantry.) On the other hand, the fact that her tenant offered food to the girl may suggest some ties between tenants and property-owners that went beyond polite greeting on the staircase. If, as Giulia vehemently claimed, “we stay downstairs, and don’t know who comes and goes [upstairs],”\textsuperscript{19} what was her daughter doing in the tenants’ apartment in the first place? And if no contact ever occurred between tenants and landlords, why did Frangia specify in his request to open a \textit{fondaco} for Turks that his family would reside elsewhere, and that only he would be dealing with Muslim tenants?

\textsuperscript{16} Giulia’s family name, Moier, suggests she may have been of German origin, perhaps even Protestant. However this was never suggested during the trial, and the records do not mention her ethnicity in any way.

\textsuperscript{17} “Della salata et delle Cape longhe”: \textit{Ibid.}, c. 13r (Aug. 22, 1573).

\textsuperscript{18} “Lui magna carne ogni Zorno, et noi non magnemo carne, ne de mercore, ne de venere p[er] ogni gran cosa, e ben vero, che l’ha da a una mia puttine una piadena de Zuche, che ha 4 anni, Et mi ghe dissi non le tacche che le non sia con l’ontosotil o con la carne, et la gatta le ha mangia in crenza”: \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{19} “Nui stemo de suso, et non cognosco, che vien, et chi va”: \textit{Ibid.}, c. 12r (Aug. 22, 1573).
To address these questions and the differing understandings of mediation and foreignness invoked by brokers, merchants, and government officials, this chapter considers the mass introduction of trans-imperial subjects like Frangia into the profession of commercial brokers. I explore how trans-imperial subjects petitioned the Venetian government to gain employment as commercial brokers, and, more broadly, how they claimed membership in metropolitan Venetian society, while in fact expanding the meaning of such membership well beyond the boundaries of legal citizenship. At their means was a specific genre: the *supplica* (letter of supplication, or petition).\(^{20}\) By analyzing this particular genre of writing, I show how trans-imperial subjects’ sense of their relationship to the Venetian state shaped their narratives of supplication; in other words, how the ways in which they crafted their petitions depended on how petitioners understood their pasts, on how they envisioned their futures (as commercial brokers and as metropolitan subjects), and how they sought to make these pasts and futures compelling to the patrician interlocutors who were ultimately to decide their cases. By paying close attention to how they framed their petitions, we can gain a better understanding of how non-metropolitan subjects articulated subjecthood in relationship to

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\(^{20}\) The corpus examined in this chapter includes virtually all petitions for employment as commercial brokers conserved in the Venetian State Archives for the period 1563–1670, the first hundred years for which such petitions survive systematically. Generally, petitions to the Venetian government are organized in two main series: *Collegio, risposte di dentro* (for petitions referred to magistracies within Venice, starting in 1563) and *Collegio, risposte di fuori* (for petitions referred to magistracies outside the city, particularly the army, starting in 1554). I thank Dott.ssa Sandra Sambo of the Venetian State Archives for pointing out to me this division and its limitations. Significantly, the two series above, despite their names, do not include the actual *risposte*, i.e. the formal reports that magistracies produced in response to petitions, but, as a rule, only the original petition and a summary of the resolution by the College on which magistracies the petition should be referred to, if at all. However, some magistracies did keep records of their *risposte* in separate series, which can sometimes be cross checked with the petitions to which they refer. The Venetian Board of Trade, *Cinque Savii alla mercanzia* (see below), kept a particularly extensive archive of its responses (*Cinque Savii, Risposte*). This genre merits a separate study about the voicing of supplicants’ narratives in the writings of officialdom. On Venetian petitioning practices, see Davis 1991: 181–95.
the political economy of early modern Venice and, more broadly, to the imperial and patrician dimensions of early modern states.

Before we enter the world of early modern brokers, I should note that this chapter is not meant as a comprehensive history of Venetian commercial brokerage, which is yet to be written. Indeed, while this chapter has benefited greatly from the growing literature on the history of early modern markets, financial institutions and international commerce, as well as from several magisterial studies of the medieval Venetian economy by Gino Luzzatto, Frederic Lane, Reinhold Mueller and others, the transformation of Venetian economic institutions from the second half of the sixteenth century on is far less studied, perhaps due to the paradigm of “crisis and decline,” which dominated the field for a long time. This allows for only tentative remarks about the role of brokers in the economic transformation of that period. Instead, this chapter explores brokers’ contribution to a cultural transformation: the consolidation of new geopolitical and ethno-linguistic categories and sensibilities.

WHAT IS A BROKER? A VIEW FROM VENICE

With the expansion of long-distance trade in the late Middle Ages and throughout the early modern period, commercial brokers, who mediated between sellers and buyers, became ubiquitous in Mediterranean commercial centers. Some nineteenth-century historians of this institution insisted on its Roman origins. Others linked the emergence of brokers to the growth of urban economies in the thirteenth century. The expansion of cross-Mediterranean trade in the wake of the Crusades and the establishment of enduring

21 Pertile et al. 1894: 692.
22 Van Houtte 1936: 106.
Genoese and Venetian mercantile colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean may have been equally important factors in the introduction of this institution (known in Arabic as *simsar*) to the Italian peninsula (where it was known as *sanser* in Venice, *sensale* or *mezzano* in other cities).\(^{23}\) Whereas legal traditions and commercial practices clearly varied across time and space, the institution of commercial brokerage itself was remarkably ubiquitous across the early modern Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Indian Ocean, exhibiting some strong structural similarities across various trans-imperial entrepôts.\(^{24}\)

Regardless of the institution’s (probably multiple) origins, evidence for the operation of brokers in Venice, as in other commercially oriented city-states, dates back to the thirteenth century.\(^{25}\) Some brokers, such as those operating in the Jewish ghetto and in the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, were presumed to cater to clients of particular provenance (although, as will become evident below, this was not always the case). Most brokers, however, operated in Rialto—Venice’s marketplace and commercial hub, and were known as *Sensali ordinarii di Rialto* (“regular brokers of Rialto”). The vast majority of these brokers exhibited little specialization in either clientele or commodities (with the exception of grain, whose brokers were supervised by the *Officio alle biave*).

\(^{23}\) See Abulafia 1993 on Italian merchant colonies in the medieval Mediterranean; Colin and Becker 1999 on brokers in Medieval Arab societies; Cortelazzo 1989b on the etymology of *sanser*sensale. But see also Van Houtte 1936: 115 for a cautionary note against assuming that the Arab institution of *simsar* was introduced in Europe with all of its original functions intact.

\(^{24}\) On early modern cross-cultural trade generally, see Curtin 1984. For specific case studies of brokers in places other than Venice, see Qaisar 1974; Abdul Jabbar Beg 1977; Pearson 1988; Bornstein-Makovetsky 1989; Das Gupta 1991; Colzi 1998; Farolfi 1998; De Matteo and Schisani 1999; Bolognesi 2000; Vigiano 2001; Cohen 2003. For an overview of brokerage-related commercial law in various Italian city-states, see Lattes 1884; Pertile et al. 1894: 692–96.

\(^{25}\) Luzzatto 1995: 103. See also Vercellin 1979; Vercellin 1980 for an overview of the history of commercial brokerage in early modern Venice. It was Giorgio Vercellin’s path-breaking work which initially suggested to me the analytical potential of the topic. I take this opportunity to thank him for his kind advice.
Otherwise, the only noticeable official distinction obtained between Rialto’s commercial brokers, on the one hand, and bond and bill brokers on the other hand. By the fifteenth century, even this distinction eroded in practice, where a certain ambiguity of roles was normal [...] operators in each distinguishable category of manipulators of money, for example, might also lend money under some guise, often illegally, or deal at least occasionally in bullion as well as in worked silver and jewelry, tasks that we might expect to find only among goldsmiths.26

Despite important continuities with their medieval predecessors, the incorporation of brokers into a guild and a confraternity in 1497 marked a dramatic shift in their social composition and duties.27 It was through the organization of commercial brokers into a guild and consequently their subjection to much tighter state supervision in the course of the sixteenth century that their activity, in the words of one scholar, “transcend[ed] the field of private economic relationships [...] into the sector of public law.”28 In this sense, the Board of Trade’s jurisdiction over the brokers’ guild, after centuries in which individual brokers were required to report to different government agencies, such as the Officiali alla Messetteria29 or the Visdomini al Fondaco dei Tedeschi,30 marked an

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26 Mueller 1997: 26. It was only in 1571 that the sensali di cambii (bill-of-exchange brokers) were allowed to form a separate guild and confraternity, modeled explicitly on that of commercial brokers: Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 13, fasc. 274 (October 24, 1571). This situation differed in other cities. In Bologna, for example, each broker had to announce in advance which commodities he would deal with, and then be subject to regulation by the guild active in that sector (Farolfi 1998: 310). Such guild membership, however, did not necessarily prevent brokers from brokering other commodities. As Antonella Astorri notes in her study of Girolamo di Agostino Maringhi, a late fifteenth-century Florentine broker and member of the apothecaries’ guild, his account books listed over fifty different kinds of merchandise. Astorri 1988: 391.
27 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 2r. I discuss the relationship between the guild and its confraternity in chapter 3.
29 This agency, established in the thirteenth century, was initially in charge of collecting all brokerage tax. With the establishment of the Board of Trade in the sixteenth century, its jurisdiction was substantially reduced, to include the collection of tax on the sale of real estate, such as “mills, plots, marshes, swamps, houses, ponds, forests, ships, and sailing equipment.” See Da Mosto 1937: 198.
30 Established in 1268, this magistracy supervised all economic activity in the German Exchange House, including the operation of brokers on its premises. See Da Mosto 1937: 189.
important change. It was, no doubt, part of the Board of Trade’s concerted effort to centralize Venetian commercial policies, to facilitate long-distance trade and to attract foreign merchants to the city.\textsuperscript{31}

While the Board of Trade did not participate in electing guild-member brokers,\textsuperscript{32} it had a strong say in virtually all legislation regarding brokerage and it supervised brokers’ ongoing activities. The Board also had a substantial influence over the granting of brokerage privileges, which allowed non-citizens legally to engage in brokerage without becoming guild members. In fact, petitions for appointment as brokers by privilege were regularly referred to the Board for appraisal, and the resulting reports often carried great weight in the government’s ultimate decision.

This is not to say that prior to the sixteenth century brokers had no role in bringing the Venetian marketplace under the sphere of government control. As Reinhold Mueller argues, already by 1422 brokers were required to register each transaction so that the brokerage tax (\textit{messetteria}) could be correctly applied.\textsuperscript{33} Yet, until the Senate decreed the election of one hundred brokers in September 1503, and guaranteed these brokers’ monopoly over commercial brokerage in Rialto, virtually anyone could operate as broker in Venice, and there was no mechanism in place to enforce the collection of brokerage taxes.\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, the main reason mentioned by the Senate for capping the

\textsuperscript{31} On the establishment of the Board of Trade as part of the reorientation of the Venetian Republic as a territorial state in the sixteenth century, see Lanaro Sartori 1999: 86ff.

\textsuperscript{32} This was the purview of three other magistracies: the \textit{Provveditori di Comun}, the \textit{Consoli dei Mercanti}, and the \textit{Officiali alla messetteria}.

\textsuperscript{33} Mueller 1997: 519.

\textsuperscript{34} The number of guild members was deemed insufficient already by the \textit{Officiali alla messetteria}, who were able to pass a Senate law in December 1503 (that is, only three months after the first bill), to increase the number of regular brokers to one hundred fifty. This number was raised again to one hundred ninety in 1560. See \textit{Consoli dei Mercanti}, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrature a stampa,” c. 11 (December 21, 1503); \textit{Ibid.} c. 18 (May 26, 1560).
number of brokers, making citizenship a pre-requisite for appointment, and incorporating brokers in a guild, was precisely the “great number of foreign brokers [who] do not care about anything but their own property, [and therefore] fail to note down the transactions they conclude, with the greatest damage to Our Signoria…”

Concern over brokers’ uncertain loyalty and an effort to turn them into an effective mechanism of surveillance over foreign merchants may explain the requirement of literacy (“must know how to read and write well”), which was stipulated in the original preconditions for elections into the guild in 1503 and was repeated in guild statutes in 1551. The law further urged guild brokers under sacrament to be solemnly given them by our Governatori delle Intrade [customs officers], to search, inquire, and investigate all those who do, practice, or conclude any deal [Mercado], either in Rialto or in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, who are not regular brokers and registered in the above mentioned confraternity, under punishment to those who in any way presume to do, practice, or conclude any business, either in Rialto or in the above-mentioned Fondaco, of 300 Lire di piccoli to be divided in half between the above mentioned confraternity and the accuser. And if those to accuse him are brokers they shall remain secret, and if the accuser is not a broker, and is fit to enter in his place, [he may do so] without

35 “Et questo perchè essendo molti di loro Sanseri Forastieri non curano ad altro, se non al proprio ben, & delli suoi, non dando in nota i Mercadi, quali loro fanno con grandissimo danno della Signoria Nostra…” Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” cc. 1–10 (September 19, 1503). This was not a new problem: As Luca Molà shows, already in 1365 the Great Council sought to address the problem of foreign brokers who, it was argued, came to the city without their families and resided in the houses of their merchant clients, by making citizenship “de intus” a prerequisite for exercising the trade of broker. See Molà 1994: 130 n52; Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, reg. Novella, c. 107v (June 28, 1365). Similarly, according to the economic historian David Jacoby, late medieval state assessors in Venice, who also acted as official brokers in charge of collecting the brokerage tax, included at least seven Greeks and numerous Jews. See Jacoby 1999: 55, 65.

36 Marco Ferro, a jurist who compiled Venetian law in the eighteenth century, adds that “the merchants need these people [i.e. brokers], because their notes serve as proof in court, being considered commonly as a kind of incontestable public document.” See Ferro 1779: 676. Similarly, in early modern Bologna, “[brokers’] records gave contracts legal and probative value in judgment.” Farolfi 1998: 307. Yet, several lists of guild members which bear their signatures clearly attest to many brokers’ difficulty with signing their name, indicating that the requirement of literacy was only nominally observed.

37 Lira di piccoli was one of several silver coins, which served as currencies of exchange in medieval and early modern Venice. These loosely corresponded to a set of gold currencies of account. In this period, 1 Venetian gold ducat was equivalent to 6 lire, 4 soldi of account, or 124 soldi in all. Molà 1997: iii. For an introduction to the baffling world of the Venetian money market, see Lane and Mueller 1985.
further election, and [the accused] beyond the said punishment must remain in prison behind bars. Those transgressors and falsifiers shall be punished…³⁸

Oaths to uphold guild regulations, and to actively pursue, report, and denounce fraudulent colleagues, were a staple of many Venetian guild statutes as early as the thirteenth century.³⁹ But given the potential loss of public revenue in the case of brokers the government did not shy away from outright bribes in an attempt to secure their loyalty. To discourage brokers from engaging in trade on their own, guild members enjoyed an exemption from all levies, save for a 10% tax on import customs (intrada). In exchange, they were required to annually pay 100 ducats to the governatori dell’intrade.⁴⁰

Such efforts to secure brokers’ loyalty and impartiality proved less than successful. According to Venetian law, brokers had to be present at all transactions involving foreign merchants, ostensibly to ensure the payment of customs as well as to prevent foreigners from being defrauded. In fact, their presence was also meant to allow an increasingly nervous government to keep track of the activities of foreign merchants. Yet brokers were never mere agents of government will. The repeated legislation requiring that brokers be impartial, that they refrain from engaging in any commercial activity on their own, and that they submit periodic written records of all transactions in which they were involved, underscores precisely their partiality.⁴¹ The documentation

³⁸ Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” c. 8 (September 19, 1503).
⁴⁰ Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated (September 19, 1503). Later legislation periodically changed brokers’ taxation. In 1645, for example, the brokers’ guild petitioned to be exempted from one of two taxes to which they were subjected at that time, the “decima & annata” and the quota of oarsmen. They were exempted from the former on June 4, 1646. Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated (April 27, 1645).
⁴¹ Lattes 1884: 107.
brokers produced of their activities was never simply an unmediated, transparent
reflection of the economic transactions in which they were involved.

Several solutions were attempted in light of brokers’ failure to submit written
reports of transactions in which they had been involved. In 1511 the Consoli dei
mercanti required brokers, sellers, and buyers to sign their names in a special register to
be kept by the brokers’ guild immediately upon concluding a deal. In 1560, the Board of
Trade reduced from ten to three the days allowed between the conclusion of a transaction
and its reporting by the broker in the hope of curbing “the many frauds” supposedly
occasioned by the ten day hiatus. In 1586, the Board threatened to fire brokers failing to
note transactions in their books. Finally, in 1641 it required brokers mediating
transactions with Ottoman merchants to note all sales in their notebooks, and have the
seller and buyer co-sign (or stamp, if illiterate) these notes as well. All transactions were
to be reported to the Board within eight days.42

These concerted, but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to subject brokers to the
reason of state have been frequently overlooked by historians. To the extent that brokers’
textual production has caught scholars’ attention at all, it has been taken at face value, as
objective documentation of the activity in the marketplace. Brokers’ writings, in other
words, have been treated as transparent windows onto economic reality, equally
serviceable to early modern rulers and to modern scholars.43 But, as will become clearer

42 Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “sanseri,” c. 10r (January 28, 1510 m.v.), fasc. “Per li magistrate a
stampa,” cc. 18–19 (May 26, 1560), fasc. verde, c. 9v (May 5, 1586); Artì, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated
(December 17, 1641).
43 For example, one scholar claims that already by the thirteenth century “the State could verify prices… for
government officials mediated all (legal) transactions in Venice no later than 1225. It was illegal to
transact without the intervention of sensali della messetteria […] The sensali made sure that sale taxes
were paid and that merchants did not break the law”: González de Lara 2001: 24. Such a view misses not
only the fact that many transactions escaped the purview of the state, but also that brokers were very rarely
shortly, brokers did not simply document an independent reality external to their actions. Rather, their activities helped to shape it as did their documentary practices. It is to these practices that I now turn.

THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF TRANS-IMPERIAL PETITIONERS

Petitions to be granted brokerage privileges by trans-imperial subjects shed much light on emerging early modern discourses about the relationship between brokerage, citizenship and subjecthood. As I show, supplicants insisted on their own membership in Venetian society by emphasizing Christian and civic virtues, by invoking a history of loyal service to the state—both their own and their ancestors’—and generally by insisting on the state’s paternal responsibility for the well-being of its least fortunate subjects. The rhetorical strategies that characterize each subset of this admittedly diverse group of trans-imperial subjects reveal important differences in how supplicants’ notions of civic membership and social boundaries were articulated in the life stories they narrated to support their cases.

As noted above, the prevalence of non-citizens among brokers was certainly not a new development of the sixteenth century. But only with the incorporation of brokers

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dutiful and disinterested executors of governmental policy. Indeed, as we shall see below, their actions reflected several, often conflicting interests, including their own and those of foreign merchants. Unfortunately, a positivist approach to brokers’ documentation is far from unique to Venetian historiography. Dutch economic historians Oscar Gelderblom and Joost Jonker have recently noted that the early seventeenth-century charter of the Amsterdam guild of sworn brokers (Makelaars) “included an official obligation to keep a register of all the transactions arranged, and the brokers’ data served both as raw material for the official commodity price current, and as proof for the price of particular goods on the market at a specific time”: Gelderblom and Jonker 2003: 13. In a similar vein, Edward Stringham analyzes the Amsterdam-based broker Joseph Penso De La Vega’s polemical text *Confusion de Confusiones* (1688) as an unmediated reflection of financial practice: Stringham 2003. But see Jonathan Israel’s reminder that among the key factors De La Vega listed as affecting the stock market were “the designs and machinations of the stock exchange dealers themselves”: Israel 1990: 414. See also Israel’s comments on De La Vega’s intended audience and purposes, which highlight the author’s self-consciously polemical intentions in *ibid.*, 419, and the discussion of De La Vega’s literary training in Kellenbenz 1996.
into a guild and hence their subjection to governmental supervision did this become a nameable “problem” that the authorities felt they might address through legislation. Historians have noted a general attempt by the sixteenth-century Venetian government to curb what was perceived as foreign “takeover” of the city’s guilds.\textsuperscript{44} When the brokers’ guild statutes were approved in 1503, the Senate decreed that all guild members must be citizens by birth.\textsuperscript{45} But three months later, when guild membership was increased from one hundred to one hundred fifty, the Great Council stipulated that the fifty additional brokers could be either “Venetians or others who have resided in the city for fifteen years.”\textsuperscript{46} But this closure did not remain in effect for long. In the course of the sixteenth century formal citizenship requirements for brokers were repeatedly reduced, and in actual practice they were circumvented and eventually waived almost entirely.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} According to the historian Anna Bellavitis, after 1520 “foreigners” could only enter the offices of guild stewards (gastaldi) and judges if they were the sons of foreigners but born in Venice, formally naturalized and married to a Venetian woman. This requirement was eventually enforced on all guilds even when it contradicted their own statutes. However, as the historian Luca Molà notes with regards to the silk guild in 1537, “While guild officials in fact decided to exclude all foreigners from admission to the guild and from apprenticeship… they were unable, or unwilling, to impose the same rule on the various classes of artisans, whose survival—in Venice as elsewhere—largely depended upon the steady, and always welcome, influx from abroad.” Molà 1997: 100; Bleavitis 2001: 40.
\textsuperscript{45} Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” c. 1. (September 19, 1503). See also Ferro 1779: 677.
\textsuperscript{46} Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” c. 11 (December 21, 1503). This was still more restricted than fifteenth-century legislation, which allowed anyone who had resided in the city for ten years to operate as a broker in Rialto, and which waived residency requirements altogether for certain other types of brokers. A summary of a Senate resolution in the matter from January 22, 1435 m.v. appears in Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. verde, cc. 1r–v.
\textsuperscript{47} In 1519 the three Proveditori di Comun, the commission in charge of electing new members of the brokers’ guild (and, significantly, also in charge of generally supervising the guilds and naturalizing foreigners), decreed that “all these foreigners, who have petitioned to become regular brokers, who have taken a Venetian wife in accordance with the decree made by the Great Council on July 5, 1517, can benefit from the decree that they can be brokers, and therefore can be voted and elected by this College, as if they were citizens by birth”: Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 26. The case of the broker Battista Garibaldo, who in 1553 was threatened with having his license revoked due to the fact that he was Genoese, is telling: Garibaldo argued that having taken a Venetian wife qualified him as citizen. The Board of Trade accepted his arguments and renewed his license. Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 146, fasc. 26 (August 9, 1553).
increasing institutionalization of brokerage through special privilege (i.e. by non guild-members) obviated such requirements altogether.

Yet the process of supplicating for and obtaining a privilege for non-guild brokerage should not be seen as separate from the processes of brokers’ guild incorporation discussed above. It was precisely the new closure and institutionalization of brokerage that necessitated the procedure of supplicating in order to operate as a licensed broker. *Supra-numerary*, the term used to refer collectively to this group of brokers by special privilege, bears witness to this relationship.

**Converts: Christian rhetoric, civic rhetoric**

A good portion of aspiring brokers were converts to Catholicism. Thanks to its commercial orientation, Venice had attracted in the course of the sixteenth century substantial numbers of Lutheran, Jewish, and Muslim merchants. Its fabled linguistic and religious heterogeneity appealed to many a heterodox, as well as to non-Catholics seeking to convert.⁴⁸ Wishing to attract foreign business, the government often acted on the principle of “don’t ask don’t tell” when it came to matters of belief and ritual. Yet, after 1557 Venice actively joined the conversionist frenzy that gripped Europeans in these years of Protestant and Catholic Reform by establishing the *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni*.⁴⁹ True to its Roman Jesuit model, part of the Venetian institution’s mission was to secure material assistance for neophytes, either through private patronage or

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⁴⁸ Pullan 1983; Head 1990. See also chapter 4.
⁴⁹ See chapter 5.
directly from the state.\textsuperscript{50} Religious precepts and effective social control were thus
articulated through civic patronage and charity.\textsuperscript{51}

Whether converts highlighted in their petitions their command of Turkish and
other languages, their extensive ties in the Ottoman empire, or simply their abject poverty
and fear of old acquaintances’ ridicule, the expectation that the government should
assume responsibility for their material well-being by securing them jobs as brokers was
widespread. The expectation that converts should be provided for may have derived from
the Ottoman custom of providing converts with money for new clothes, and sometimes
also employment.\textsuperscript{52} It also may have followed from the canon law concept that the
convert must improve his or her material status upon conversion.\textsuperscript{53} A link between many
converts’ Levantine provenance and their presumed propensity to broker trade with
fellow trans-imperial subjects further prompted converts to petition for employment as
brokers.

Many convert supplicants framed their appeal in a Christian moral universe. For
example, a certain Zuanne, a Muslim who converted to Christianity, appealed in 1611 to
be appointed broker of “Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, and Christians.”\textsuperscript{54} It is
significant that the residual category of “Christians” does not encompass “Armenians”
and “Greeks,” for it suggests that for the author “Christian” was synonymous with

\textsuperscript{50} Extant work on other early modern Italian cities suggests that neophytes could get married to local
Christians and settle in the city immediately following their baptism. For such evidence from Bologna, see
Sarti 2001: 457.
\textsuperscript{51} On the importance of charity through networks of patronage and clientage to the maintenance of
Venetian social hierarchies, see Romano 1987; Romano 1993.
\textsuperscript{52} Minkov 2000: 179–80.
\textsuperscript{53} According to Kenneth Stow, sixteenth-century Canon law conceived of the convert as a “new person,”
whose past is erased, and who therefore must be treated on a par with Christians. From this followed the
requirement that the convert’s material status must improve as well. See Stow 1976: 179.
\textsuperscript{54} Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 13 (August 25, 1611).
“Catholic,” and perhaps even “European.” Such a conflation of Christianity with
Europeanness positioned the supplicant himself as somehow no longer Levantine by
virtue of his conversion. The distinction between Greeks and Armenians on the one hand
and Latin Catholics on the other, a Byzantine legacy, was important in Ottoman
officialdom’s categorization of the “people of the book” (zimmi) under its jurisdiction.
A similar growing differentiation among Christian religious communities under Ottoman
rule became salient to the Venetian Board of Trade in the seventeenth century,
suggesting, perhaps, the role of trans-imperial brokers of Ottoman provenance in
transforming Venetian geopolitical categories and sensibilities.

Other convert supplicants claimed to have been forced to apostatize as slaves and
to have re-embraced Christianity immediately upon their release from captivity. Such
supplicants often invoked the Venetian Republic’s piety to strengthen their appeal. So,
for example, Michiel di Santo Summa, who petitioned for a job as a commercial broker
in 1560, recounted his mishaps as a mariner on a Venetian ship, where he had been
captured by Turks, forced to apostatize, and kept in captivity for nine and a half years.
The opening lines of his petition read:

The faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, founded on the Rock of St. Peter, can
truthfully be said not to be defended by any Christian prince more than it
is defended and conserved by the Venetian Republic.

55 I cannot address here early modern European perceptions of the Christian communities of the Ottoman
and Safavid Empires. But an emphasis on their difference may have had something to do with growing
missionary activity (by Jesuits, Carmelites, and others) directed at these communities from the late
On the gradual severing of the Balkans from Venetian images of Europe, see Wolff 2001; see also Petkov
1997 for an analogous process in German lands.
57 See chapter 9.
58 Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 33, c. 39r (March 12, 1561).
By affirming the Republic’s role as the defender of the faith, Summa is simultaneously making a claim to the state’s inherent Christian morality and to his own Christianity. The Christianity he refers to is Catholic: ecumenical and universalizing, centered in Rome (the Rock of St. Peter is the Saint’s tomb, on which, according to the Gospel of St. Matthew 16:18, God built his Church), and transcending any political boundaries, so that Venice can become the defender of Rome.59 As it turns out, Summa was a Venetian subject, perhaps even a citizen if indeed his father was Venetian as he claimed. Moreover, he had served in the Venetian navy, and was taken captive in battle. Yet, his appeal was primarily grounded not in any legal obligations of a state to its subjects and combatants, but in Christian morality. Hence his emphasis on his return from captivity—physical, but even more crucially, spiritual.

Summa’s petition articulates a very common expectation that the state should help redeemed slaves, especially ones forced to apostatize, by providing them with material assistance upon their release. Thus, his narrative maintains a strong Christian sense of divine agency as it weaves together the story of his redemption from captivity:

[H]oping that the Divine Majesty would liberate me […] and also by His grace it occurred that I escaped from said places, and arrived in this blessed city, all by Divine miracle.

Whereas in Summa’s petition agency is entirely divine, other petitioners invoked divine agency in order to make a claim not only to Christian charity, but to civic obligation as well.60 In fact, the two often came together, especially in petitions by those

59 Presenting Venice as “Christianity’s first line of defense” became part and parcel of Venetian propaganda in the early sixteenth century, when Venice abandoned the Holy League and concluded a separate peace treaty with the Ottomans in 1509. See Tenenti 1973: 28.
60 Not only was Summa appointed a commercial broker “with Turks only,” but his case was cited a few months later by an Armenian named Simon to justify a similar request that would, he claimed, save him from having to beg for charity in order to feed his family. His request was similarly granted. Collegio,
Venetian-born Jews whose conversion to Christianity granted them entry not only to the Christian moral community, but also, at least in theory, to formal citizenship. For example, in 1563 the convert Zuan Giacomo, formerly known as Jacob dalla Baldora, sought appointment as broker by articulating a general rule: the Republic “always” helps its loyal subjects, and especially those redeemed from the hands of the devil, i.e. converts:

The immense goodness of Your Sublimity, which always helps all its loyal subjects, and the poor oppressed by adversity, and the travails of this world, and most of all, those poor ones who, being in the hands of the Devil wanting the true light of the faith in our Sweetest Lord Jesus Christ our redeemer illuminated by the light of the Holy Spirit humbly go to the water of the Holy Baptism relinquishing all their sustenance, and ascend in the blood of Jesus Christ, as I have done, poor Zuan Giacomo becoming from a Jew a Christian, and formerly called Jacob dalla Baldora, and having been baptized, and left without any sustenance, brought through God’s grace to the house of the Magnificent Master Andrea, and Girolamo Contarini and their brothers under the most eminent Mr. Dario for the love of God until some Christian help would provide for me, and although I was left without goods of any sort, grace has not left me, and hope in our highest redeemer, and the infinite clemency of Your Serenity. Therefore throwing myself humbly at your feet, as your most loyal slave, I ask for your Highness [celtitudine] to be content to grant me permission to exercise the office of broker in any place, as it has been conceded to others in such cases, until the occasion may come, to appoint ordinary brokers, so that with that favor, and thanks to Your Serenity, and to my Lord Jesus Christ, I can nourish my poor life, and pray the Highest God for the Felicity, and Exaltation of Your Serenity, and of Your Most Happy Dominion, and so I humbly beg your benignity and clemency.

The state thus fits in a divine program when it supports those who are born in the blood of Christ. If God can provide spiritual sustenance, the state must do its share by providing material sustenance. Significantly, the transition in the text from the general to the particular, and from Jesus to the author’s person, is immediately followed by the

Notatorio, reg. 33, c. 62v (June 13, 1561).

61 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 1, c. 7 (September 27, 1563). See appendix 1 for a transcript of the original petition.
introduction of new actors: the Contarini brothers, members of Venice’s patrician class.\(^{62}\)

They too are part of a Godly plan: It is through them, as the providers of nourishment and shelter, that the convert finds his physical place after finding his new spiritual place in Jesus. In fact, their help is metonymical for the hoped-for governmental help in the form of appointment as broker that Zuan Giacomo is ultimately seeking. Thus, by affirishing the state’s Christian charity, the author also affirms his own worthiness as its intended recipient.

A call unto the state to partake in a divine plan characterizes not only the petitions of former Jews, but of former Muslims as well. Andrea, the son of Piero de Larta (Árta, in the Epirus), petitioned the government in 1595 and asked to be appointed regular (i.e. guild-member) broker. He based his appeal on his poverty, “having left what little I had to come to the faith of Jesus Christ, and get out of the diabolical chains to live and die under the happy shadow of Your Serenity.”\(^{63}\) Here, while agency is “inspired by divine majesty,” it also serves to highlight the intentional nature of the supplicant’s own actions (“I left said place… in order to come to the faith of Lord our God, and make myself Christian…”). Andrea argues that he should be given the job for “knowing the Turkish language, and other languages, and also for being very experienced in this affair.”\(^{64}\)

For some converts, the rhetoric of divine agency could serve to highlight both continuity with their previous religious community and a new beginning. In 1618, a convert named Scipion Borghese, formerly known as Joel Ambasciadorino Hebreo,

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\(^{62}\) On Girolamo Contarini (1521–1577), who pursued a career in the Venetian merchant fleet, see Derosas 1983.  
\(^{63}\) Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 33, c. 156 (April 13, 1569).  
\(^{64}\) Ibid. See also del Borgo 1997. Piero’s petition was denied, suggesting that the granting of converts’ requests for employment as brokers was not automatic.
petitioned the government to grant him “2 brokerages in the Ghetto, so that they could be exercised by him or made to be exercised [by others] to support his family.”65 These brokerages were previously granted to his father’s maternal uncle, Dr. Salomon Ashkenazi, in recognition of his important role in negotiating a peace treaty with the Ottomans in 1573, and then extended to Salomon’s nephew Samuel, Joel’s father.66

Jews were not easily granted the privilege of brokerage in the ghetto. Yet this privilege was certainly known to be an acceptable token of recognition for special services rendered by members of the city’s Jewish community.67 What is significant about Borghese’s petition is his expectation to have such a privilege renewed, but now based on his new status as a Christian. In fact, as a key argument in favor of his unusual request, Borghese argued that such a privilege “would animate others to recognize the truth of our Holy faith, and abandon the errors of Hebraism to the glory of God, and for the health of their souls.” A similar argument was put forth by another convert, Francesco Gritti, the son of Samuel Pichio, “an old Venetian Jew from the Ghetto.” In his petition of 1620 Gritti claimed to have no other trade, and urged the government to appoint him broker “to the glory of God who called me… to the light of the Christian faith, and to the confusion of the obstinate Jews, who delight in seeing us, the baptized,

65 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 15, c. 2 (April 11, 1618). Evidently, he was named after the eponymous Roman cardinal Scipion Borghese Cafarelli (1576–1633), suggesting a sojourn in Rome. Cafarelli later became the cardinal protector of the Roman Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, indicating a lasting relationship with converts. See Rudt de Collenberg 1989: 19.
66 On Ashkenazi’s exploits, and for the family’s genealogical tree, see Arbel 1991.
67 See, for example, the case of the Jewish brothers Orso and Cervo, who sought, and received, perpetual appointment as brokers of carpets [tapezzarie] in the Ghetto Nuovo in 1577, and who emphasized in their petition their past services to the government, including the sale of carpets to the magistracy of the Rason Vecchie at cut-throat prices: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 6, c. 197 (November 13, 1577). Two years later, the Jew Elia Francese of Famagosta (Cyprus), asked to be appointed broker in the ghetto in recompense for his lost property in Cyprus. His request was similarly endorsed by the Board of Trade: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 136, cc. 129r–v (March 31, 1579); see also Arbel 2000.
go wandering and dispersed.” In a prompt response only 12 days later, the Board of Trade recognized the custom of granting such requests by converted Jews and endorsed Gritti’s appeal so that he could “continue [to live] in the holiest Catholic faith.”

Building on the ancient trope of conversion from Judaism to Christianity as a healing process of recognizing past error, Borghese and Gritti thus reminded the government of the political significance of providing for converts. They also cast the state as a paternal figure responsible for converts’ material well-being, recalling patrician understandings of themselves as benevolent paternal custodians of a well-managed republic.

By offering themselves as brokers, converts articulated a sense of themselves not only as fully transformed into Christian moral persons, but also as a potential link between the Christian universe of the Venetian metropole and the Jewish and Ottoman-Muslim merchant communities who made up its interior and exterior frontiers.

**Jews: usefulness and loyalty**

If a Christian frame was key to asserting a convert’s newly-found membership in Venetian society, what frames could Jewish supplicants employ? An interesting case is a petition submitted by the ghetto’s four Jewish night-guards in 1566 to renew their privilege to exercise brokerage in the ghetto as a supplement to their modest incomes of two ducats a month. To argue their case, the supplicants described the Jews’ long

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68 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 15, c. 231 (March 14, 1620). The same argument was brought up by another convert, Girolamo Valle, son of Samuel Abuaf, similarly a member of the Ghetto’s Venetian community, in his petition in 1621. See Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 16, c. 41 (May 4, 1621).
69 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 145, c. 58r (March 26, 1620).
70 On the continuities and discontinuities in converts’ lives after baptism, see chapter 5.
71 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 2, c. 76 (September 6, 1566).
presence in Venice by referring to various government decrees of the previous fifty years. By detailing the volatile nature of governmental Jewish policies, the petition made evident the authors’ own familiarity with Jews’ historically-changing juridical status in the city, suggesting to their patrician interlocutors their awareness of just how much this status depended on political exigency, and was thus changeable. More significantly, the petition characterized the Jewish community as morally-upright and an integral part of Venetian urban society. According to the supplicants, their role as guards was not only to prevent Jews from roaming outside the ghetto at night (the official argument), but also “to open the gates for the many [Jews] who continuously arrive from various parts of the world, and […] for the physicians who get up and are very frequently called to cure the inhabitants in Your city.” Thus, the authors attempt to draw from a shared fund of “civic credit” that the city’s Jews supposedly enjoy with the authorities for their good services as international merchants and physicians.

The Jewish collectivity emerges from this description as taking care of the city’s material—economic as well as physical—preservation. This is particularly interesting in light of their careful avoidance of references to ethnic and economic sub-divisions within the ghetto. Distinctions among Venice’s Jewish populace were formally recognized and institutionalized both within the ghetto and by the government from the early sixteenth

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72 See Boccato 1974 for an overview of commercial activity in the ghetto since its establishment in 1516.
73 Indeed, their timing could hardly have been worse: the years 1565–1566 marked heightened anti-Jewish Venetian policies, which were only exacerbated with the breaking of the Venetian-Ottoman War of Cyprus, for which Jews were blamed. Ravid 1982: 36–40.
74 “L’obligo grande che hanno ordinariamente, tutta la notte guardar esse porte, si per oviar che li Hebrei non vadino per la Città vagando per convenienti rispetti. come anchora per aprir molti di loro che vengono di continuo da diverse parti del mondo, et per aprire à medici, comare che arlievano, spessissimo chiamati alla cura, et bisogno deli habitanti, nella sua Città”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 2, c. 76 (September 6, 1566). On Venetian policing of the ghetto’s gates and the flow of persons in and out during day- and nighttime, see Ravid 1999.
century on. In fact, it was the renewed enforcement of these divisions that prompted a change in regulations regarding the ghetto guards. Unlike most Jewish petitions to the Venetian government, which upheld the official distinction between “Levantine” and “German,” (and sometimes “Venetian”) Jews, each with its own privileges and duties, this one claimed to speak in the name of all of the ghetto’s residents. It is not inconceivable that the supplicants were actually “German” Jews (i.e. of Ashkenazi origin, even if their ancestors had lived in the Veneto for several generations), as these were the least privileged Jews in Venice, most likely to be employed in lowly occupations such as the ghetto’s guards. “Levantine” (and later also “Ponentine”) Jews, descendents of exiles from Spain and Portugal, enjoyed for the most part extensive commercial privileges both in Venice and in the Ottoman Empire, and frequently employed family ties in long-distance trade that stretched across the Mediterranean.75 Unlike them, the Ashkenazi Jews, who did not enjoy Ottoman protection, were formally banned from all commercial activities in Venice save for money-lending and trading in second-hand clothes. So, while Levantine Jews frequently exercised commercial brokerage with few governmental sanctions, both in the ghetto and without, Ashkenazi Jews faced much heavier policing of their mercantile activities, and therefore had the most to gain from a formal permit to exercise brokerage, if only within the ghetto.

Unlike brokerage in the ghetto, which was granted to Jews under certain conditions, Jewish brokerage in Rialto was met with fierce opposition. As early as 1520 the Board of Trade decreed that, given the existence of many Christian brokers, “Jews

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75 Arbel 2001.
cannot be brokers” since “Justice does not suffer that Jews should take bread out of the mouth of Christians.”

As is often the case, however, practice proved much more dynamic than legislation would suggest. In 1641, upon his return from Istanbul, bailo Alvise Contarini endorsed a request by the Jew Samuel Spiera and his four sons to be appointed brokers in Rialto “together with all the nations.” The appointment was vigorously opposed by the Board of Trade, whose response is worth quoting in full:

Your Serenity, having recognized how important was the commerce in this marketplace, that the brokerage of trade in the market be contracted with the mediation of Civil and trustworthy persons, decreed in 1503 that these [brokerages] should be in the hands of born Venetians only, and instituted the corporation of 190 regular brokers of Rialto, to whom belongs this business of brokerage, obliging them to exercise no other trade, and prohibiting at the same time that anyone else should broker trade, and particularly the Jews, under the most severe punishments; although due to circumstances some other deserving individuals were granted permission to exercise [brokerage] as supra-numerary; and the right to broker trade in the ghetto, and of second-hand clothes, which have nothing to do with the brokerages of Rialto, was conceded to some Jews; and on the last day of June 1532 it seems that the merits of Mr. Mier Maurogonato made the heads of the Council of Ten grant him and his descendents, among other privileges, also the right to broker trade in the ghetto, and outside the ghetto. Perhaps in these equivocal words Mr. Samuel Spiera grounded his case, asking Your Serenity by way of the excellent Mr. Bailo to agree to grant him and his four sons permission to broker trade in Rialto together with all the nations; this will be in our mind a contravention of all public decrees, and resolutions of the magistrates delegated in these matters; however there is no shortage of other means for the public munificence to console him who with his own fruitful efforts to public advantage has sought to make himself worthy of public favor, as has done the above-mentioned Spiera, particularly in the latest

76 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 29r (September 28, 1520). However, in many other cases the Board of Trade represented a more pragmatic approach, and emphasized Jewish merchants’ contributions to the economy, vis-à-vis the magistracy of Ufficiali ai cattaver, who were placed in charge of the ghetto in 1516, and who tended to emphasize the need to curb Jewish infractions. See Malkiel 1991: 100.
circumstances in Constantinople and for which our excellent Mr. Bailo Contarini provides ample evidence […]\textsuperscript{77}

This response sharply contrasts “Civil, trustworthy persons,” with Jews, just as it contrasts the latter with Venetian citizens. It selectively recalls past legislation, but glosses over concessions made to non-native citizens to join the guild and the actual practice of admitting many non-Catholic Greeks and Armenians into its ranks. This erasure is meant to highlight the contrast between Christian guild members and the specific Jewish supplicant Spiera. Indeed, the Board goes to great length to establish a history of legislation (and its careful enforcement) that has prevented Jews from brokering trade, save for trade within the ghetto. That the authors also mention trade in second-hand clothes, the hallmark of Ashkenazi Jews’ precarious legal status in the city, might be an attempt to add insult to injury, highlighting Spiera’s Ashkenazi provenance as opposed to his connections in Istanbul.\textsuperscript{78}

Spiera, in all likelihood, was counting on a pattern of concessions of brokerage to Jews based on their services not only to the Venetian state, but also to the Sultan or to high ranking Ottoman officials. For example, in 1583 bailo Maffeo Venier reminded the government of the request of Ibrahim Pashà to have Mordacai Graffini and his two sons Moise and Jacob appointed “regular brokers in the ghetto.”\textsuperscript{79} In such cases, official recognition of Jews as commercial brokers between Ottoman and Venetian mercantile

\textsuperscript{77} Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 152, cc. 194r–v (July 12, 1641). See appendix 2 for a transcript of the original response.

\textsuperscript{78} On the trade in second-hand clothes in early modern Venice, see Allerston 1996.

\textsuperscript{79} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 17, cc. 213r–214r (May 17, 1583). I thank Benjamin Arbel for bringing the case to my attention and for providing me with a transcript.
elites also served to consolidate their already well-recognized role as power brokers between Ottoman and Venetian political elites. But just as Spiera suggested that the proverbial role of intermediary should place him in Rialto, so were the Venetian authorities’ sensibilities injured by the proposition. By seeking appointment as a guild member, Spiera attempted to obtain official recognition of what in practice was quite common, but always illicit and transgressive, i.e. Jews brokering trade outside the ghetto. The distinction “in the ghetto” and “outside the ghetto” was, as the Board of Trade must have recognized, nominal only. There were no restrictions on non-Jews’ entry into the ghetto nor on Jews’ freedom to leave it during daytime. In fact, court records of the brokers’ guild list the names of dozens of Jews charged with illicit brokerage in this period. Their clientele were frequently non-Jewish merchants, and their minimal punishments, when convicted, clearly did not prohibit them from continuing to broker trade, as I show in chapter 3. Yet by attempting to formalize Jewish brokerage in Rialto, and thus making the transgression explicit, Spiera and his Ottoman patrons exceeded what was permissible even for the pragmatically-minded Board of Trade. Probably, the Board was also responding here to complaints from the brokers’ guild. In its repeated protests against the declining volume of Levantine trade in the 1630s and 1640s, the guild frequently decried Jewish competition, and it quite likely

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80 Without entering into the important role of court Jews as political brokers in sixteenth-century Istanbul and elsewhere, it should be noted that international politics was clearly at stake in cases such as this. Interestingly, Graffini’s case set a precedent later cited by the Board of Trade when it granted lifetime permission to another Jew, Gasparo di Cremonesi, and his two daughters Zanetta and Cecilia, to exercise brokerage in the ghetto. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 137, c. 161 (February 26, 1585 m.v.), b. 145, c. 24v (December 4, 1629).

81 That Christians traded in the ghetto is well attested, and was even part of official laments against Jewish brokers in the ghetto and attempts to limit their activity to brokering trade with Jewish merchants only. Senato, Terra, reg. 44, c. 127 (June 1, 1563). See also Boccato 1974: 31.
resented Spiera’s request as well, especially given his demonstrated ties to Ottoman elites. 82

**Redeemed slaves: from willing service to forced servitude and back**

In their petitions for jobs, supplicants did not rely solely on Christian morality and civic membership. We have already glimpsed other strategies, such as emphasis on abject poverty, large, deserving families, and past services rendered to the state (often in the military, which relied heavily on colonial conscripts). Emphasis on service to the state in petitions for brokerage was a particularly common strategy among colonial subjects, who invoked not only their own past services, but also that of their ancestors, all the more so if they could claim relatives who had been killed, injured or enslaved while fighting Ottoman incursions into Venetian territory. For example, Giovanni Babin, a “Cypriot nobleman,” petitioned the government for employment as a broker in 1590, twenty years after Venice had lost Cyprus to the Ottomans. In his petition, Babin mentioned not only his five brothers, enslaved in Istanbul and Aleppo, but also other members of his long ancestry, all of whom were loyal servants to the Republic: his mother’s brother Scipio Costanzo, his father Giofre Babin “who was viscount numerous times, and procurator of the corporation of Nicosia, general captain of the rampart of San Luca,” and his paternal great-grandfathers “Cavalier Anibal Babin, and Pietro Gullo.” 83

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82 For a sample of collective petitions submitted in the late 1630s by the brokers’ guild and seeking reduction in mandatory payments on transactions involving Levantine merchants, see Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 27 (April 3, 1636 & June 20, 1636), b. 29 (February 1, 1638 m.v.), b. 30 (June 22, 1639); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 151, cc. 37–38 (December 30, 1636).

83 A second petition from 1601 deplores Babin’s current poverty and reminds the government of his family’s services and lost riches in Nicosia. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 140 (March 25, 1601). His request to broker trade of “Turks, Jews, and Greeks” was endorsed the following year. Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 7, cc. 43v–44r (February 9, 1602 m.v.). See also below my discussion.
Babin's Cypriot roots are worth dwelling on. Supplicants originating from Cyprus were far more likely than any other colonial subjects to invoke history in their appeals to the Venetian government. In particular, Cypriots sought to capitalize on memories of Venice’s lost Mediterranean colony, its riches, and the faithful services rendered by its feudatory class to the Republic. That Cyprus had been under Venetian rule for a particularly long time, and that its strategic importance made its loss in 1571 especially painful may well have been important. How the island’s well-established feudatory class (from whose ranks many supplicants came) understood its Venetian-ness also calls for further study.84

The narration of family history was an effective means of both recalling illustrious ancestry and of promoting offspring and agnates. At a deeper level, by invoking kin, redeemed slaves (whose whereabouts in their time of captivity were always suspect) indexed their rootedness in and continued commitment to a social order premised on kinship ties as its building blocks.85 For example, in 1609 a commercial broker named Zorzi da Milo petitioned to have his guild membership transferred to his son-in-law, Pietro Francolin. Zorzi was a redeemed slave and an émigré from Venetian Cyprus, although his name suggests roots in Milos, another Venetian colony in the Aegean lost to the Ottomans in 1566. To justify his somewhat unusual request, Zorzi mentioned his own frailty, and Pietro’s command of Turkish and Slavic. He also directed

84 Local Cypriot oligarchies were well-integrated into the Venetian system of rule on the island, not only as land owners, but also by taking key positions in the military and the civil service. See Arbel 1996: 971. On the nobility of Venetian Cyprus in general, see Rudt de Collenberg 1983; Arbel 2000. On Cypriot émigrés in Venice, see Kyrris 1968; Kyrris 1969; Kyrris 1970.
85 On the familial ideologies of the Venetian patriciate, see Grubb 1994; Sperling 1999; Sabbadini 1995. The rejection of a descent-based social order was one of the aspects of Ottoman governmentality which epitomized its alterity in Venetian patricians’ eyes (Wilson 2003: 39).
readers’ attention to his own two illustrious uncles. The Board of Trade opened its appraisal of the case by reminding the government that many Cypriots had been appointed brokers through special privilege in the past. It thus endorsed Zorzi’s effort to achieve the status of a well-deserving colonial subject and place his request in the realm of “favors to Cypriots.” The Board then verified the identity of Zorzi’s two uncles, Agarico Zebeton and Zegno Procopi, and the fact of their death during the War of Cyprus (1570–1572). Finally, the Board detailed Zorzi’s long service as a ship captain in the service of various Venetian ship owners. Thus, the response established not only Zorzi’s identity as a worthy subject, but also the Board’s authority as a body entrusted with appraising supplicants’ merit and, indeed, identity.

Redeemed slaves often requested—and were granted—brokerage “of Turks only.” The category of Sensali di Turchi (“brokers of Turks”) included both guild and non-guild brokers, and, as should be evident by now, did not encompass all who brokered Ottoman trade. In fact, all brokers—regardless of their actual title—who transacted with Ottoman merchants were subjected to the same regulations and taxation. Yet, the category of “brokers of Turks” was acknowledged in many official documents, including privileges granted to redeemed slaves to exercise brokerage. By linking the brokerage of Ottoman merchants with meritorious ancestry and redemption from slavery, the Venetian authorities recognized some kind of “poetic justice.” In one case, a former slave’s letter of appointment as broker stipulated specifically that the money earned was to be used to redeem his brother, who was still enslaved. In another response from 1588 to a petition...

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86 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 142, c. 119r–v (March 17, 1609), b. 144, c. 63r (n.d.).
87 Ambrosio Babino was appointed in 1592 broker of “Turks, Jews, Greeks, and Italians […] so that he could support himself, but also seek to recover from slavery Rimondo his brother”: Ufficio della Bolla
by Marco Bacco, an Albanian released from twenty years in Ottoman captivity, the Board of Trade mentioned services to the Republic rendered by the supplicant’s grandfather Triffon, once the commander of Cattaro (Kotor, Montenegro). It ultimately recommended Bacco’s appointment based on the precedent of brokerage “given to others in similar circumstances,” and emphasized that his request was to broker trade “solely with Turks.” That such distinction was only on paper does not seem to have mattered. Symbolically, Bacco’s appointment as the broker of “Turks” was a form of redress for his long Ottoman captivity.

Other redeemed slaves suggested in their petitions not only moral redress, but certain useful skills acquired during their long captivity. Giulio Torquato had been captured by Maltese pirates and had served as a slave in Istanbul for 12 years before he was finally released in 1564. A petition of 1567 requesting his appointment as a broker was written, quite unusually, in the third person. Interestingly, impersonal terms (as opposed to the first person) were a required formula in all petitions addressed to the Ottoman sultan, including converts’ petitions for financial assistance. Torquato’s petition emphasized

the great experience that he has among merchants of all nations and in addition to his fabled Italian, he also knows Greek, Turkish, Slavic, and other languages very well, so that he could be of universal use [...]
Torquato suggests that his knowledge of the languages of the Ottoman Empire lends him to “universal use.” The Venetian universe, in this view, clearly encompasses the Ottoman Empire, though not Transalpine Europe. Yet, as in the case of converts, redeemed slaves’ connections in Ottoman lands were a sensitive issue. Given the suspicion with which they could be met (Had they apostatized? How true was their reconciliation with the Church?), emphasizing intimate ties with Ottoman subjects could clearly hurt their cause. Instead, redeemed slaves unfailingly mentioned another intercultural skill: their command of languages acquired while serving in Ottoman households. These linguistic skills were often pointed out and capitalized upon in official responses to petitions as well. By invoking “skill” supplicants and their official interlocutors were thus able to gloss over the transgressive ties that bound petitioners to the Ottoman Empire.

**Ottoman Christians as trans-imperial subjects**

As I suggested at the beginning of the chapter, the trans-imperial subjecthood of converts, Jews, and redeemed slaves often placed their loyalty and, indeed, very belonging to Venice in some doubt. For Ottoman subjects who sought to become Venetians, establishing and maintaining not only juridical but social membership entailed special (discursive or other) labor. The Ottoman Empire inherited from its Byzantine

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92 The category of “slave” as used in these petitions derived from a much broader discourse about Christian captives in the hands of Muslims. Beyond its theological significance, however, it should be emphasized that whereas some Christians captured in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean served as oarsmen, many others were employed in domestic service under conditions that may not have differed substantially from those of servants and domestic slaves on the Italian peninsula and elsewhere in that period. The religious implications of such domestic arrangements are yet to be fully explored, but see, on the ideological dimensions of the Mediterranean slave trade, Rudt de Collenberg 1987; Bennassar 1989; Bono 1998; Bono 1999; Davis 2003.

93 The extent to which supplicants’ claims to know languages were substantiated remains unknown. So far, I have found no indications of governmental examinations of supplicants’ linguistic skills.
predecessor a large array of Christian and Jewish communities, whose religious, political, economic, and kinship structures might at times link them to other powers, including Venice. These links were of course contingent and fluctuating. Here, I can only point out in passing that the Venetian government was often sympathetic to Ottoman Christians’ appeals, particularly when they could cite past services to the Republic.

An example of how Christian supplicants from the Venetian-Ottoman frontier sought to capitalize on their trans-imperial subjecthood is the following petition for a brokerage license, submitted by Lorenzo Capessich of Sebenico (Sibenik) in 1621:

While I, Lorenzo Capessich of Sebenico, sojourned in Turkey on the occasion of business for the entire course of twelve years, I have mastered perfectly the Turkish language, such that it adds to the Slavic and Italian that I know very well, making me fit to act for the public and private benefit in commerce, especially having acquired many friends in the country, which I have kept for the dependency that they have with our house in Sebenico, where I could make myself a fruitful subject and servant of Your Serenity in diverse affairs, in which I have been employed by Illustrious Public Representatives in the talks with the Lords Sanjaks, and in the negotiations with Turkish ministers; and since I have decided to settle and to be able to live with honest utility in this great [Alma] city which is Universal Fatherland to all the people and to me especially born of deserving Parentage, and of a mother from the family of Vegici Spatafora of Nauplion, who with the loss of that most loyal city lost many riches; I petition reverently Your Serenity that it deign to grant me the favor that I be appointed Regular Broker, [so] that I will not stop laboring in that position to forever give preference with public service to the satisfaction of merchants for the growth of commerce.

Capessich presented himself as the ultimate trans-imperial subject. Firstly, he was the product of a colonial union between a Dalmatian father (as his name and place of provenance suggest) and a mother from Nauplion, Venice’s former colony in the

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94 For studies of the historical transformations of the Ottoman system of ruling over Christian and Jewish communities, see Braude and Lewis 1982; Goffman 1994; Paraskevas 1999. I thank Tijana Krstic for introducing me to the debates over this issue, and for suggesting these particular readings. See also Rodrigue 1996 for an insightful discussion of Ottoman conceptions of religious difference.

95 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 16, c. 135 (November 13, 1621). See appendix 3 for a transcript of the original petition.
Peloponnesus, lost to the Ottomans in the Peace Treaty of 1540. Moreover, his entire life trajectory seems to lead to Venice. Not only did he actively choose to become a Venetian by moving to the metropole, but he casts his long sojourn as a merchant in Ottoman lands as a “public service” to his beloved patria. Such a conflation of private interest and public service would have been a familiar trope to his patrician interlocutors, as large Venetian merchant colonies had been established in major Byzantine trading hubs such as Izmir, Bursa and Trabzon as early as the 1200s, and continued to thrive after these cities became Ottoman, often serving as centers for gathering military and political intelligence on behalf of the Republic. Indeed, Capessich based his appeal neither solely on the merits of ancestry, nor on his mercantile credentials and linguistic skills. Rather, he emphasized his proven public service as an interpreter and a go-between. Most significantly, he made the case of being a child of Venice by virtue not only of parentage, but of volition. Likewise, he suggested that his ongoing connections in Sibenik (where parts of his family still resided) and among Ottoman friends would not hinder but rather advance his hoped-for new position as commercial broker. Finally, his petition suggests that his primary allegiance should be to the merchants he would service, since this would guarantee “the growth of commerce”—appealing to the Board of Trade’s interest in renewing Venice’s commercial attractiveness in a period of sharp decline in the volume of international trade in the city. In short, Capessich aligned his life trajectory with the fortunes of the Republic, in a move not unlike that of patrician self-representations, which “folded the individual family’s claims to eminence into the

96 On Venetian Nauplion, see Wright 2000.
overall glories of the ruling group." Not surprisingly, Capessich’s petition was enthusiastically endorsed by the authorities, who cited his mastery of language, his previous services as spokesperson for the Republic in border negotiations with an Ottoman Sanjak, and his maternal pedigree.

**CITIZENSHIP RECONSIDERED**

Historians have enumerated the immense diversity of purposes that led people to seek citizenship in late medieval and early modern Italian city-states. Far less attention has been paid to how civic membership was negotiated and practiced, beyond the legal act of naturalization. We saw above how an appeal to civic membership was a powerful rhetorical tool supplicants used in order to urge the Venetian government to appoint them as brokers. This suggests that if formal citizenship was the purview of only a narrow segment of the Venetian population, another form of membership in metropolitan society was elaborated by Venice’s trans-imperial subjects. Indeed, their petitions to be appointed brokers articulate an ideal of membership in metropolitan society that shares some of the premises underwriting formal citizenship, but that extends such membership far beyond the citizen class. This expansive ideal of membership is significant not simply because it includes new constituencies, but because it modifies the premises of citizenship. Rather than the mere incorporation of an individual subject into the city’s bureaucracy, the trans-imperial subject-turned-broker linked Venice with its colonies and frontiers, both juridical and ethnoreligious.

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99 Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 8, c. 153r (November 15, 1622).
100 Kirshner 1973; Costa 1999.
101 For a notable exception, see Herzog 2003.
This is not to suggest that legal citizenship did not matter. Indeed, trans-imperial subjects, particularly those engaged in commerce, readily sought to become naturalized Venetians. And while metropolitan Jews were categorically denied Venetian citizenship, this did not always go unchallenged. Mazo, the son of Gabriel, was born in Venice to a family of Jewish merchants and financiers. A highly inventive character, his petitions to the government, replete with suggestions for improvements of public administration, repeatedly crop up in the archives. In 1586, he and his brother in law Isac-dal-Ben from Casal di Monferrà offered to reveal “a secret of great importance” in return for becoming Venetian citizens along with all their sons and daughters, current and future. The same supplicants had petitioned only four months earlier to become guild member brokers. What they offered in exchange could itself be read as a token of their deep allegiance to the Venetian Republic: a new method for registering the population, so that the authorities could “easily tell who comes and who goes in the entire state.”

To conclude, trans-imperial subjects employed myriad strategies to convince the Venetian government to appoint them commercial brokers. Significantly, supplicants to the Venetian government only rarely sought to capitalize on some “radical alterity” of the Ottomans, a strategy that was much more commonly employed by other supplicants and in other institutions in the Venetian-Ottoman contact zone, including, as I show in

102 Venetian Jews were not granted citizenship until the city came under Napoleonic rule in 1797. But, as with many aspects of Venetian law, the situation differed in Venice’s Mediterranean colonies where, at least in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some Jews could enjoy the status of Venetian nationals, granting them certain mercantile privileges such as tax and customs breaks. Such status, however, may have had more in common with the status of Venetian (and other Italian city-states) protégé enjoyed by many merchants in the Byzantine Empire (and later in the Ottoman Empire under the capitulation system) than with citizenship in the Venetian metropole. See Ashtor 1975; Jacoby 1987; Jacoby 1997: I: 549, III: 269 and passim. See also Cooperman 1987: 68 on the protected Jewish Veneti albi or “white Venetians” of Constantinople.

103 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 8, c. 197 (February 16, 1586 m.v.).

104 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 8, c. 162 (August 25, 1586).
chapters 7 through 9, by dragomans and by some foreign merchants themselves. Rather, aspiring brokers grounded their appeals, on the one hand, in a narrative that positioned the Venetian metropole as the telos of their life trajectory. At the same time, they emphasized their own embodiment of Venetian-Ottoman interconnectedness through kinship, friendship, and political exigency. Thus, they invoked the role of intermediary not only as their ultimate future, but also as what they had been all along.
This chapter looks at various struggles between the guild of commercial brokers and unlicensed practitioners of brokerage, as documented in the guild archives. The chapter opens with a general consideration of the problem of studying a past institution through its present archives, the product of multi-layered and historically-shifting documentary practices. It then discusses illicit brokerage, as documented in the guild tribunal’s records, archived intermittently from the last decade of the sixteenth century on. Here I identify the people denounced to the guild for illicit brokerage, study how their conceptions of brokerage squared with those of the guild and of its supervising state magistracies, and suggest how the inclusion of dissenting testimonies as a genre of documentation within an institutional archive might itself be addressed historically. By considering the multiplicity of practices involved in performing mediation (some of which I already discussed in chapter 2 in relation to Frangia’s case), this chapter
underscores the embeddedness of the Venetian marketplace in other institutions and modalities of sociability. Whereas all brokerage had the potential of being confused with acts of friendship, collegiality, or patronage, it was specifically “outsiders,” trans-imperial non-guild members, who were singled out for engaging in it. Consequently, the chapter explores how shifting understandings of foreignness in the marketplace were dialectically related to conceptions of space, to the city’s economic fortunes, and to the relationship between patricians, citizens, and trans-imperial subjects.

A GUILD AND ITS ARCHIVE

Venice was unique among early modern urban societies in requiring economic guilds (arti) and their members to operate religious-charitable confraternities (scuole). When the Senate decreed the establishment of the scuola di sensali ordinarii di Rialto in 1497, its charter was modeled on the confraternity of the silk workers at San Giovanni Crisostomo. Like the silk workers (and, indeed, most other Venetian tradesmen), brokers were thus incorporated in a double institution: a guild and a confraternity. In early 1499 the Council of Ten approved a request by the brokers’ guild to hold its confraternity meetings in the church of Ognisanti (“All Saints”). Once the first hundred guild members were elected in 1503, regular meetings were held in the church, and by

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1 On early modern brokerage and patronage in general, see Kettering 1986.
3 Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” c. 8 (September 19, 1503). On the silk workers’ confraternity, see Molà 2000.
4 The difference between a simple “scuola artigiana” (artisanal confraternity) and a composite “scuola artigiana e scuola di devozione” (artisanal and devotional confraternity), noted in passing by Lia Sbriziolo (1968: 414) is yet to be studied.
5 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 2 (January 17, 1498 m.v.). The church, located in the sestiere of Dorsoduro, was demolished in 1820. The patron saint of the confraternity was the Holy Virgin Mary of the Ascension (BVM Assunta).
November of that year the membership deliberated to hold Mass there every morning. But despite this bout of piety, the confraternity was to operate, for its 62 years of existence, as an extension of the guild, with little evidence of any pious fervor.

According to Richard Mackenney, the relationship between Venetian trade guilds and their religious confraternities could be tenuous, with the two often having rather discrete domains of activity. Yet, as will become clear below, the brokers’ confraternity had rather diminished religious, philanthropic, or convivial functions separate from the guild. In fact, until the members finally deliberated to replace their confraternity with an “office” in 1566, it was the confraternity, rather than the guild, which figured in all official deliberations regarding brokers as a corporate entity, but as such it reflected (and was ostensibly subjected to) the primarily organizational, economic and legal agendas of the guild.

This is not to say that charitable activities are completely absent from the confraternity’s records. In 1524, the confraternity decided that every year, during Olive Week, the debts of its five poorest members should be reduced by one ducat each. In 1595, it deliberated to contribute 50 ducats from its “poor fund” (Cassa de Poveri) towards redeeming Pasqua, the daughter of Piero Capello, a deceased broker. Pasqua, the membership noted, “finds herself a slave in Morocco with her 12 year old daughter.” Two months later, Impolitá, the wife of Zuan Francesco Pisani, a broker imprisoned by the guild, petitioned the confraternity for a monthly stipend of half a ducat and for her

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6 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 7v (November 13, 1503).
7 Mackenney 1987: 4 and passim.
8 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 36r (December 20, 1524).
9 Arti, b. 520, fasc. 1, unpaginated (August 7, 1595). On the ransoming of captives from the Barbary regencies, see Davis 2003: 151ff and passim.
husband’s release. Her request was granted.\textsuperscript{10} In 1608, the guild waived its entry fee for Anzolo Bonaldi, a recent convert newly admitted as broker.\textsuperscript{11} Given the very incomplete nature of the confraternity’s surviving treasury expenditure registers, it is hard to determine whether the above charity cases were the only ones for which the confraternity allocated funds or, what is more likely, whether the records of additional, similar cases are now lost. Conversely, the replacement of the confraternity by an “office” in 1566 suggests that at least some of the more powerful guild members saw as their main goal the protection of their corporate professional privileges, rather than the provision of charity to their less fortunate brethren, or other religious functions.\textsuperscript{12} This point merits further investigation, particularly in light of the growing social and religious heterogeneity of the profession.

Institutional definitions aside, the idiom of piety and the safeguarding of professional monopoly could also coalesce in important ways. A copy prepared in 1687 of the guild bylaws had the following Latin “prayer in the guise of litany” on its frontispiece:

In the name of all saints, intervene on our behalf. Liberate us, Lord, from the insidious Jews and those who daily steal our bread. So we can live quietly and enjoy our industry with God’s blessing, we ask you, hear us. Amen.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. (October 10, 1595).
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. (September 16, 1608).
\textsuperscript{12} This change was voted into effect in a general membership meeting on February 1, 1565 m.v. See Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated.
While opening prayers were common to many confraternal statutes, this specific prayer deftly juxtaposed the guild’s Christian virtue with the insidiousness of unlicensed competitors, who are cast as Jewish by definition.

Decrying ungodly contraventions against guild laws and situating the industry and material well-being of brokers within a divine scheme were not the only measures taken by the guild in the latter half of the seventeenth century to guarantee its material survival. In fact, this 1687 copy was based on the 1670 bylaws, part of guild officials’ increased pre-occupation with copying and archiving. Indeed, in this period the guild took numerous new measures to preserve a record of its history for use in future litigation. It did so mostly by commissioning new copies of existing documents, but also by periodically reorganizing existing files. Perhaps due to rapidly declining revenues and a growing sense of economic crisis among the membership in this period, the guild governors lay ever growing stress on the significance of keeping an orderly archive and frequently referred to previous documents in their deliberations. Upon electing Francesco da Riva as the guild’s syndic in 1654, the membership mandated him “to save, and preserve, all the decisions, orders, and similar materials... which should be kept in an orderly fashion.”¹⁴

Unfortunately, the consequent re-copying and re-ordering of the guild archives has resulted in an incomplete and rather disorganized collection. Although the Provveditori di Comun ordered the guild as early as 1577 to keep records of all trials for illicit brokerage, up until 1670 we have a complete listing and transcripts of

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¹⁴ Arti, b. 530, fasc. 33, c. 23r (February 16, 1653 m.v.).
interrogations only for the years 1596–1598, 1608–1609, 1613–1614 and 1643–1647.\textsuperscript{15}

Many other transcripts of trials for illicit brokerage mentioned in the registers are now lost. The surviving materials for the period up to 1670 make up 13 of the total 33 boxes in the guild archives.\textsuperscript{16} These contain hundreds of indices, registers, and protocols. The remaining 20 boxes span the period up to the disbanding of Venetian guilds under Napoleonic Law in 1806.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{THE GUILD’S TRIBUNAL}

Like many other Venetian trades, the brokers’ guild was allowed from its inception to establish its own tribunal to adjudicate cases of violations of guild statutes, with the \textit{Officiali alla messetteria} acting as an appellate court.\textsuperscript{18} In reality, the tribunal focused exclusively on cases of illicit brokerage, whereas brokerage-related offenses by guild members were largely handled by the Board of Trade. The tribunal’s authority to try and penalize unlicensed brokers, while confirmed in 1520 and re-affirmed periodically, was increasingly challenged from several directions, until in 1626 the Senate authorized the Board of Trade to bring charges against unlicensed brokers in other courts.\textsuperscript{19} Quite possibly this marked the growing tensions between the guild’s protectionist agenda and the Board of Trade’s tendency to endorse foreign merchants’

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\textsuperscript{15} Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. verde, c. 8r (February 6, 1576 m.v.).
\textsuperscript{16} Appendix 4 provides an inventory of the guild’s archives in their current form. Regrettably, most indices and registers refer to volumes no longer to be found in the archives.
\textsuperscript{17} Tiepolo 1986: 118.
\textsuperscript{18} Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. “Per li magistrate a stampa,” c. 8 (September 19, 1503).
\textsuperscript{19} Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. verde, c. 14r (February 7, 1625 m.v.).
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interests. Similarly, and despite fierce opposition by the guild to any infringements upon its jurisdiction, defendants repeatedly tried to take their case to other magistracies, which, they hoped, would prove more sympathetic to their plight. In 1662, for instance, the guild pressed charges against an Armenian broker named Ovanes, who operated by special Senate privilege. Ovanes tried to move his trial to the Board of Trade. The guild opposed Ovanes’ attempt, and the Board was eventually forced to return the file to the guild. Ovanes then took his case to the powerful Heads of the Criminal Court of Forty (Capi della Quarantia Criminale), only to fail again.

Besides the guild’s protectionist agenda vis-à-vis outside, non-member brokers, a fundamental power disparity within the guild should be recognized. Like many others, the brokers’ guild was a two-tier institution, in which a mass of relatively poor members were governed by more affluent and well-positioned officials. The names of the guild’s presidents, who also operated as judges in its tribunal, suggest that they were mostly cittadini originarii, Venice’s second-highest status group. The relative poverty and limited access to citizenship of many brokers thus contrasts sharply with the extensive judicial and administrative powers granted to the guild’s presidents, treasurers, syndics and stewards. This raises important questions about internal divisions and hierarchies.

20 In 1615, despite petitions from Archduke Maximilian V and from Cardinal Marduzzo to reinstate Tomio Ottolino as broker after he had been convicted of defrauding an Armenian merchant, the Board refused to do so, and recommended only to shorten his prison sentence. The Board argued that his sentence should “serve as example to others, and to avoid the danger of new frauds” (“così per esempio d’altri, come per non incorrer in pericolo di nuove fraudi”). Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 27r–v (January 21, 1614 m.v.). I thank Giorgio Rota for bringing the case to my attention.

21 Due to the ongoing war with the Ottomans over Crete, the 1660s saw a lull in Levantine trade in Venice, which led the Board of Trade to repeatedly devise new policies sympathetic to Armenian merchants’ interests, in the hope of attracting them back to Venice and away from its emerging rivals, especially Leghorn.

22 Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated (April 28, 1662–May 19, 1662).

23 Ibid. (May 31, 1662, July 16, 1662, July 21, 1662).
within the guild, about implicit requirements for appointment to the guild tribunal and
other elected offices, and about guild officials’ relationship to non-guild scribes and
notaries, who were key participants in the production of the massive documentation on
which the following discussion is based. This also suggests that judges’ criteria for what
constituted brokerage, their perspectives on the marketplace, and their involvement—
often through kin—in larger mercantile networks, may have differed quite dramatically
from those of both rank-and-file members and unlicensed brokers.

Finally, a word is due on the legal procedure itself. Trials for illicit brokerage
were usually prompted by secret denunciations (as mentioned, Venetian law stipulated a
cash prize for denouncers of unlicensed brokers). The court was presided over by
investigative judges, who interrogated witnesses and then issued their ruling. Witnesses
were summoned by the court, and defendants were allowed neither to present their own
witnesses nor to cross-examine prosecution witnesses at the initial phase of the
investigation. Nor did they normally use an attorney. In all these respects, trials by the
tribunal of the brokers’ guild resembled inquisitorial procedures.25

24 That conflict indeed arose periodically within the guild is suggested by an appeal from 1668 by three
Armenian brokers, Francesco Bartolazzo, Martin Valegian, and Ovanes (possibly the same Ovanes whose
litigation with the guild was discussed above), to the Provveditori di Comun against what they claimed was
overtaxation by the heads of the brokers’ guild “with most evident partiality and prejudice against us.” The
guild was instructed to present within three days all books of its treasury for the past 25 years. The
Armenian brokers’ claims were dismissed as “an attempt to evade a just tax.” Arti, b. 530, fasc. 54, c. 5r
(September 3, 1668).
25 Yet, as the historian Elizabeth Cohen notes with regards to the latter, “there were a lot of safeguards built
into that system […] inquisitorial procedure was neither careless, nor unreasonable. E.g. the defendant did
not bring witnesses in the initial phases of the ‘trial for information,’ but after the case had been assembled,
the defendant was usually provided with a copy of the depositions (without the names of the speakers) and
given a time to assemble a defense”: Elizabeth Cohen, personal communication. On inquisitorial
procedures and their role in early modern legal practice, see Langbein 1974; Tedeschi 1990; Buganza 1998;
Ago 1999. I thank James E. Shaw and Laurie Nussdorfer for bringing these works to my attention.
TRIALS FOR ILLICIT BROKERAGE

Using court records as historical documents raises multiple methodological problems, and especially the complex levels of mediation by scribes, interrogators, interpreters and notaries. In addition, an inherent danger of studying social practice from litigation is that we only glimpse occasions when things “went wrong.” Such occasions are hardly characteristic of how social relations unfolded most of the time. In the following pages I use litigation documents not in order to recover commercial practices that were supposedly separate from them. Ongoing, close ties among witnesses, not to mention the stylized narrative sequences necessitated by interrogators’ leading questions, would make any interpretation of these legal testimonies as windows unto an external reality highly problematic. Instead, I hope to show that the practices of “illicit brokerage” were embedded in the legal system that defined them as illicit, and in different actors’ understandings of what constituted mediation, as conveyed to and by the court.

Second, in the following analysis, trans-imperial brokers figure prominently. Of the 55 names of those tried for illicit brokerage in the period up to 1670 listed in one nineteenth-century inventory to the guild archives (which have been reorganized since), 21 (38%) can be definitively identified as Jewish, Greek, Armenian or German. More dramatically, of 52 trial records in one of the heftiest volumes of court records in the guild archives, only four cases (less than 8%) involved no defendants who could be

26 This list is partial. By my count, at least 105 trials for illicit brokerage were held in this period.
conclusively associated with one of the above ethnicities. Early eighteenth-century copies of lists of brokers in the period up to 1670 marked with a red check the names of Jewish and Armenian violators of guild bylaws (but not Greek or German ones). Even in the absence of conclusive statistics, and with many of the original records now lost, trans-imperial subjects seem over-represented—as brokers and as clients—in trials for illicit brokerage. This holds true even given their dominance in the Venetian mercantile milieu. That said, they were by no means the only persons targeted by the guild, which in this very period increasingly admitted to its ranks many Greeks, Armenians, and Germans, though not Jews.

Greek commercial networks

Many Greek-speaking subjects of the Serenissima, like Frangia de Demetri, operated as commercial brokers, some illicitly, others as guild members or through special privilege. In many cases, they formed partnerships with other brokers, Greek or non-Greek. Brokerage partnerships per se were not universally illegal. In 1553 the Board of Trade decreed that partnerships between two brokers were legal as long as both partners were guild members. As Antonella Astorri argues, such partnerships allowed participants to act as a true mercantile company, and benefit from commercial

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27 Arti, b. 525.
28 Arti, b. 519, fasc. 2 (1705).
29 See, for example, the trial of Giacomo Greco and the German broker Baldissera Soeler ("Zotto") for facilitating the sale of 20 bags of Cypriot cotton by Donado Macarelli to Johannes ("Zuanne") Ernest: Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 57r–58v (June 27, 1597).
30 The situation was similar in early modern Rome, where the brokers’ guild statutes specifically authorized partnerships between two (but not more than two) guild members. See Colzi 1998: 407.
information to which brokers had more access than others. However, a general ban on partnerships between guild and non-guild brokers was in place from the very inception of the guild in 1503, and was reiterated in a statute from 1533 decreeing “that from now on no broker of ours will collaborate with any non-guild broker in concluding any business of any sort of merchandise either as partner or as interpreter or under any other name under penalty according to the law of 1503.”

The authorities often found out about the operation of unlicensed brokers when they were denounced by their licensed partners, possibly in an attempt to exculpate themselves from charges of illegal partnership. A guild resolution of 1595 denounced those who, having acquired some capital, or become incapable and unable to exercise anymore the trade [of broker], transact in partnership with an unlicensed broker in the presence of witnesses, and divide and share between them the profit of brokerage for that transaction which they have concluded. Then the unlicensed broker goes to denounce the licensed one to the office of brokers in virtue of the said law, and makes them grant him the prize of what he did, that is the place of the denounced broker, and he pays the pecuniary penalty, beyond what he gets from the agreement between them for the brokerage payment, and in this illicit and scandalous way the laws are vilified, a matter truly of little public dignity.

This description underscores the extent of the collaboration and possible shared interests between unlicensed and licensed brokers. It is borne out by repeated evidence from trials for such illicit partnerships.

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32 “Che de cetero niun senser n’ro non pratichi con alcun senser straordinario p[er] concluser mercadi di cadauna sorte si p[er] compagno come p[er] interprete overo p[er] qualunque altro nome caschi in pen’a giusto alla leze del 1503”: Arti, b. 520, fasc. 1, c. 2v (October 9, 1533).
33 “Loro si servono di quella per ministra delle sue cattive attioni in questa materia, che havendo alcuno di loro acquistando qualche capitale, ò essendo impotenti à non poter più esercitar tal’offitto fanno mercadi in compagnia con un’extraordinario alla presentia di testimoni, et dividono, et partiscono il vadagno della sansaria di quella tal mercantia, che hanno concluso, intendenosi trà di loro, poi quel tale extraordinaio và a denontiar l’ordinario all’ offitto de sanseri in virtù della detta legge, facendosi dar il beneficio di quella, cioè il suo luoco dil sanser denonciato, et lui paga la penn pecuniaria, oltre il restar trà loro d’accordo dil precio della sansaria, et à questo modo illicito, et scandaloso, veghino à venderle in vilipendio delle leggi, cosa invero di pocca dignità publica...”: Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 111r (March 3, 1595).
In the early 1590s, Mano Gumeno operated for a while as an unlicensed broker. A partnership contract he signed in 1594 with two guild member brokers, Manoli Gardichiotti and Piero Colona, was ultimately brought to the attention of the Provveditori di Comun, who quickly annulled it. Interestingly, Colona, a Venetian citizen, argued that he had been coerced into the partnership by Gardichiotti, but that once he found out it was illegal, he kept the partnership unrealized. He further urged the authorities to absolve him and condemn only his partners. The Provveditori di Comun followed his request, and fined his two Greek partners the rather modest sum of 5 ducats each, “to be applied to the poor fund.” Colona’s experience clearly did not deter him from entering partnerships with other Greek brokers again: only two months after denouncing his former partners Gumeno and Gardichiotti, his name came up in the trial of two other Greek brokers, Niccolò Saccà and “Tarantà Greco.” While his role in that affair was never spelled out, he was mentioned as one of the people present on the “crime scene” with Saccà and Tarantà, suggesting a similar arrangement to the one he had with Gumeno and Gardichiotti. Four months later, he stood yet another trial for illicit brokerage partnership with the same Niccolò Saccà. Their fines, initially set at 60 Lire di piccoli each, were later reduced to 50 liras (about 8 ducats) combined, suggesting that Colona’s influence within the guild allowed him to continue in such shady deals relatively undeterred.

34 Gumeno may have been related to the high status Cypriot family of Goneme/Gomnene. See Rudt de Collenberg 1982a: 58.
35 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, c. 2v (January 24, 1596).
36 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 32r–35v (March 14, 1597). The contract, which was included with the trial records, had been signed in Greek by Gumeno and Gardichiotti, and in Italian by Colona.
37 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, c. 46 (May 16, 1597).
38 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 87r–88v (September 3, 1597).
Another trial involving an alleged partnership between a Cypriot guild member broker, Giacomo di Suro, and an unlicensed Albanian broker named Zorzi, a Muslim Indian merchant named Assan Beich “Sguerzo,” and the Murano glassmaker Zuanne della Nave illustrates many of the themes discussed in this chapter. It provides further evidence of the existence of networks of friendship among foreign merchants and trans-imperial subjects, in an effort to counteract the potential anonymity of the marketplace and circumvent policing efforts by guilds, governments, and landlords. In particular, it underscores the potential role of trans-imperial subjects from the Venetian-Ottoman contact zone as intermediaries between Muslims and Christians, foreigners and locals, Ottomans and Venetians.

In early 1597, a secret denunciation reached the brokers’ guild, according to which Zorzi the Albanian had helped the Indian merchant Sguerzo (lit. “squinter”) to sell seven parcels of indigo to the Murano glassmaker Zuanne della Nave in exchange for “many glasses of different sorts,” and then called a licensed broker, the Cypriot Giacomo di Suro, to note down the transaction and “show that he was present in the said deal.”

The first witness interrogated was Camilla Aclea, Sguerzo’s landlady. She had learned about the deal from the Indian merchant himself, through the interpretation of a certain Pietro, a Muslim convert to Christianity. She believed, she said, that the broker in that deal had been Giacomo the Cypriot. Indeed, she had heard it from Giacomo himself. As for Zorzi the Albanian, he was also a familiar face in her house, as he had gone with Sguerzo two or three times, “to do what I do not know.” To remove any doubt, she

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39 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 10v–12v (February 6, 1596 m.v.).
quickly added, “Zorzi told me I’m not a broker, Mr. Giacomo the Cypriot is a broker, and I didn’t earn anything from that deal.” However, she conceded that “if Zorzi told me a lie, so am I telling it to you now.” The day after her testimony, Camilla returned to the brokers’ office, wishing to “unburden her soul” after a sleepless night. She now remembered having once seen Zorzi the Albanian in the house, and having been told he was there in the company of (or, in partnership with) Giacomo the Cypriot. Another time, when she spotted Zorzi leaving the house, he told her he went “to fetch ser Giacomo the Cypriot, so he could note down this deal of indigo.” As a landlady, Camilla certainly kept a watchful eye on her Muslim tenant and his friends. This underscores the role of landladies and landlords as nodes of information serviceable to foreign merchants, but also as crucial components in the authorities’ attempts to regulate and contain trans-imperial networks.40

A few days later, the tribunal heard the testimony of Pietro, Sguerzo’s convert friend. He too had seen Zorzi and Giacomo in the company of Sguerzo and had no doubt they were both brokers. Indeed, Sguerzo told him so. But his testimony also suggested that Giacomo, the licensed broker, was not a mere “cover” for Zorzi: “I saw Giacomo show the indigo to the merchant, and another time I saw him bring money to the Muslim [i.e. Sguerzo], who said that he’d been in Murano to see the merchant…”

It is very plausible that Pietro coordinated his testimony with his friend Sguerzo, for the latter’s interrogation, performed through an interpreter named Nicola, and under oath “all’uso di turchi,” offered an interesting twist: he denied ever having discussed the

40 On the importance of oral networks in the circulation and control of politically-sensitive information in early modern Venice, see Horodowich 2003; Horodowich 2005.
deal with Zorzi, and, when asked whether Zorzi had ever been present during negotiations, claimed that “Zorzi comes to my place often” but that he had never intervened in the deal. Against Sguerzo’s ambiguous testimony, the glassmaker della Nave had little doubt about Zorzi’s culpability: “I know him since he works there in Murano, he comes with Turks [i.e. Muslims] to the road outside [the church of] Paternostri.” In fact, the first time Zorzi came “to ask if we wanted indigo in exchange for glass and money, I told him we didn’t want to barter, and we let him go away.”

Whereas Sguerzo and Zorzi met at home, the artisan della Nave only knew the two in the public space of the church square. What for him constituted brokerage in the marketplace, for a foreign merchant may well have constituted friendly advice. This distinction proved crucial. A month later, formal charges were pressed against Zorzi and Giacomo, and the two were (separately) interrogated. Both denied that Zorzi had anything to do with the deal between Sguerzo and della Nave, and both were acquitted shortly thereafter. This surprising ruling suggests that even when multiple witnesses testified to a person’s close ties with merchants, and attested to his presence during the closing of a deal, the willingness of a licensed broker to take responsibility, and a categorical denial by a merchant, could counteract what may seem to us like fairly clear evidence of unlicensed brokerage.

**Jewish commercial networks**

We saw above that only few Jews were granted privilege to broker trade in the ghetto, and that none were ever admitted into the brokers’ guild in Rialto. Repeated
legislation threatened unlicensed Jewish brokers with harsh punishment.\textsuperscript{41} Nonetheless, many Jewish brokers did operate in Rialto, often in collaboration with licensed, guild-member brokers, as well as with Venetian merchants and factors.

The popularity of the broker’s profession among seventeenth-century Sephardic Jews has been explained in another context by the decline in their traditional specialization in trade with Portugal and Brazil, their exclusion from other professions, and their commercial expertise and important international trading links.\textsuperscript{42} Whether Venetian Jews had similar reasons to engage in brokerage is difficult to determine without further research into the transformation of the Venetian Ponentine Jewish community in the course of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{43} What is clear already is that by 1670 the competition posed by Jews to the brokers’ guild was deemed fierce enough to warrant an amendment to the guild’s statutes explicitly forbidding various types of artisans from engaging in the sale of commodities unless through licensed brokers.\textsuperscript{44} This regulation was likely inspired by several trials for illicit brokerage where Jews collaborated with Christian artisans, particularly jewelers, to bypass the brokers’ guild. For example, in 1660 the Jew David Crespin was charged with illicit brokerage of diamonds for the enormous value of 4,000 ducats. In his defense, Crespin claimed to

\textsuperscript{41} For example, in 1553 it was decreed that “if indeed there shall be any Jew who will dare act as broker, he must be condemned to three years as a galley’s oarsman in iron, and then be banned perpetually from the lands and towns of our Illustrious Signoria, in addition to paying fifty ducats…” (“Se veramente sarà alcun’ Hebreo, che ardisca di far sansaria, debba per tre anni esser condannato al remo in Gallia, con i ferri a piedi et dipoi bandito di terre, et luochi dell’Ill.ma signoria imperpetuo, oltra il pagar di ducatti cinquanta…”) Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 63r (July 4, 1553). See also Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 146, fasc. 26 (May 3, 1562).
\textsuperscript{42} Israel 1990: 417.
\textsuperscript{43} Federica Ruspio’s forthcoming doctoral dissertation on the social and commercial networks, business practices, and modes of self-representation of Portuguese and Sephardic merchants in seventeenth-century Venice promises to shed new light on these issues.
\textsuperscript{44} Manno 1995: 127.
have operated in partnership with the Christian diamond dealer Zuane Monte. His version was corroborated by Monte, as well as by several Jewish and Christian merchants and jewelers, who claimed to have known Crespin as a merchant, rather than as a broker. Crespin was acquitted from all charges.45

Indeed, in most trials of Jews for illicit brokerage, the transaction involved at least one non-Jewish party, often a Venetian.46 Not unlike their Greek and Armenian counterparts, Levantine Jewish brokers were well positioned to serve Ottoman and Safavid merchants who could benefit from a broker’s bilingual skills and connections in Venice. The Venetian merchant Zuanne Battista Carminati was a key witness in the trial of guild member Zuanne dal Lauro and of an unnamed Jewish broker, who had allegedly conspired together to sell to Carminati a Persian merchant’s silk carpets in exchange for coral. Carminati consistently claimed that dal Lauro and the Jew both “negotiated and concluded the deal,” but he could not remember any details about the Jew, other than his hat.47 Interestingly, the Persian merchant was never called to testify, and so, in the absence of other witnesses, Lauro was convicted and fined 10 lire, while his alleged Jewish accomplice remained unidentified.

This case exemplifies another recurring aspect of illicit brokerage. Just like Greek brokers, many unlicensed Jewish brokers were prosecuted together with guild

45 Arti, b. 527, fasc. 13, cc. 1–10 (January, 1660). Already in 1637, Board of Trade member Bernardo Bembo lamented Jews’ takeover of the diamond trade, and their purported advantage over jewelers and other artisans. See Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 151, cc. 126v–130v (September 28, 1637). I thank Federica Ruspio for bringing Bembo’s report to my attention.
46 Santoph [Santo] Cohen was accused in 1597 of having acted as broker in the sale of seven rolls of woven felt by Beniamin de Lion to brothers Luzio and Leandro Patrini. See Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 77r–78v (August 11, 1597). In 1618, Giacon Sasso, “son of old Sasso,” was convicted of illicit brokerage in the sale of satin by Gabriel de Zorzi to the Jew Ioseph Billanza (Abbolanza). Arti, b. 538, fasc. 27, cc. 33ff (September 11, 1618).
47 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 2, cc. 106–110 (September 1, 1609).
members, who may have operated as their long-standing partners. An explicit ban on brokerage partnerships between guild members and Jewish brokers was issued in 1580, threatening contraveners with severe fines of 200 ducats and galley sentences.48 This ban was not enforced in practice, despite its periodic reiterations.49 In fact, I could not find any evidence of brokers ever required to pay such prohibitive fines. In 1597 Salomon Portogallo and Girolamo Griselli were denounced for illicit brokerage in the sale of 3,000 lira worth of grain by Aron de Menachem Cohen to a goldsmith named Zuanne. Both were convicted, and fined 300 lira each, but shortly after, Portogallo appealed the verdict, and his fine was reduced to 60 lira, as was Griselli’s.50 Repeated legislation stipulated differential punishments for Jews and Christians, with much harsher maximum punishments for Jews, including banishment from the city. In practice, as Portogallo and Griselli’s case illustrates, both Jewish and Christian brokerage partners, when convicted, were normally meted the same punishment. As a rule, fines for partnerships, as for illicit brokerage in general, were hardly prohibitive.

Indeed, fines clearly did not deter Portogallo from collaborating with guild-member brokers again. Only a few months after his conviction in 1597, he was tried once again, this time for collaborating with Zorzi Bergonzi. The two had allegedly helped Abram Cohen Na’ar sell Christoforo Rubi “gold and silver wool worth a good sum, and other silken cloth in exchange for many zambellotti.”51 In yet another case,

48 Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. verde, c. 9r (March 4, 1580).
49 In 1595 the Great Council extended the ban to brokerage partnership with any foreigners (“estranei”). Ibid. c. 11v (March 3, 1595).
50 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 20–22 (March 13, 1597).
51 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 54r–55v (January 20, 1597 m.v.). Zambellotti was the Venetian term for Anatolian woolen textile made of camel or goat hair.
Portogallo was accused of collaborating with the broker Zuane dalli Quatro Todeschini in helping Jewish merchant Abram de Ventura sell four rolls of silk. A month later, Portogallo and a fourth partner, a certain Lazari, were convicted as “incorregibili.” Yet despite his proven “incorrigibility,” Portogallo’s fine of 300 Lire de piccoli was reduced to 160 Lira shortly thereafter, suggesting some connections within the guild.

A similar pattern of collaboration between guild members and unlicensed Jewish brokers emerges in the case of Menachem de Aron and Cecilio Albrin, tried for brokering the sale of two rolls of silk owned by Abram de Giuda to Zorzi Bergonzi (whom we just encountered above as a broker). It is impossible to ascertain whether the unlicensed Jewish broker Menachem de Aron was the son of Aron de Menachem Cohen, who figured above as a merchant in a case from 1597, but this seems likely. That merchants sometimes acted as brokers (at least from the guild’s perspective) to friends, acquaintances, relatives, or business associates, strengthens a point frequently raised by defendants themselves, namely, that to provide help and advice did not constitute brokerage, but merely collegiality. A similar dual role as broker and merchant typified many Christian Venetians, including licensed brokers. Zorzi Bergonzi himself, while a guild-member broker, also moonlighted as a merchant, in clear violation of guild regulations.

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52 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 69r–70v (July 24, 1597).
53 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, c. 77v (October 20, 1597).
54 Arti, b. 538, fasc. 27 (May 7, 1614).
55 In 1597 merchant Menachem Cohen sold 200 schiavine (woolen blankets) to Alberto Telarol through the brokerage of Abram Cohen and his brother Giacob: Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 4v–5r (January 24, 1596 m.v.). See also below.
56 See, for example, the trial of oil seller (travasador da oglio) Bartolo Mascari: Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, cc. 108r–109v.
Ultimately, the guild’s efforts to curb licensed brokers’ collaboration with unlicensed Jewish partners failed, leading to harsher, but ultimately ineffective measures. In January 1670 a new regulation required all guild members to take an annual oath before the guild’s presidents not to collaborate with any Jewish brokers. An earlier statute of 1667, which promised denouncers of Jewish brokers a bonus of 25 ducats (50 if the denouncer himself was a Jew), had apparently proved ineffective.

While some of those charged with illicit brokerage appear only once or twice in the guild’s records, others had a long career as litigants. Their repeated appearances in the records over an extended period of time allow us to consider more fully the competing claims invoked by the different parties as to the nature of their transgressions. A particularly visible case is that of brothers Jacob and Abram Cohen, and later their son/nephew Isach, whose legal disputes with the guild of commercial brokers span a half century from the early 1560s to the 1610s. On September 26, 1562 the brokers’ guild marked a small but significant victory in its litigation with Jacob Cohen, obtaining a ruling by the Signoria that affirmed the guild tribunal’s sole jurisdiction over the case, against the New Civil Court of Forty (Quarantia Civil Nuova), where Cohen sought to transfer his trial. Cohen did not give up, however, and in 1566 he (unsuccessfully) appealed the tribunal’s verdict of a few months earlier, this time with the Provveditori di Comun. Failure to convince the authorities to overturn the guild’s verdict did not deter Jacob and his kin from continuing in their commercial/brokerage activities in Venice.

57 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 2, c. 4r (January 15, 1669 m.v.).
58 Arti, b. 526, fasc. 50, c. 2r (August 30, 1667).
59 Consoli dei Mercanti, b. 58, fasc. verde, c. 6v (September 25, 1562); Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 67r.
60 Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, cc. 73r–75v.
Like other Levantine Jewish merchants, the Cohens enjoyed some clout in the
Ottoman court, which they sought to convert into concrete commercial advantage in
Venice. 61 Other members of the Cohen family engaged in a wide variety of commercial
activities, ranging from international trade and brokerage to artisanal manufacture and the
importation of technology from the Ottoman Empire. 62 This range of commercial
activities and breadth of expertise informed the Cohens’ actions when they periodically
stood trial for what guild authorities perceived as infringement on their brokerage
monopoly. In early 1598, Piero Ventura and Isach Cohen were charged with brokering
the sale of indigo in exchange for “a lot of quicksilver” between Sebastian Balliani and
Bartolomeo da Calese. In his interrogation, Cohen conceded that he knew the two from
Calese’s workshop, and that indeed “I may have sometimes been there and sometimes
not… I am frequently in Calese’s workshop, almost every day, because of some business
that ser Calese and I have.” 63 But, he argued, his interventions in the merchants’
 discussions were only as a colleague, not as a broker, “as one discusses among
merchants,” and, in any case, the parties had not paid much heed to his advice. 64 Both

61 In 1580, a certain “Giacob Coem” obtained a letter of recommendation from the valide Sultana (sultan’s
mother) Nur Banu, as a relative of the Ottoman court physician, Dr. Brodo and a person “held in great
esteem by Her Highness.” The original Turkish letter and an Italian translation were referred by the bailo
to the Heads of the State Inquisitors. Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli,
b. 5, cc. 193–195 (December 10, 1580). On Nur Banu’s letters to Venice and her patronage of Levantine
Jewish merchants, see Skilliter 1982.
62 In 1609, Isach petitioned the government for permission to bring goats to Venice to begin manufacturing
high-quality, Angora-style zambelotti through a secret method he had developed. Collegio, Risposte di
dentro, b. 12, c. 234 (March 8, 1609).
63 “Poria esser qualche volta si qualche volta no, Dicens mi son spesso in bottega dal calese quasi ogni
zorno p[er] alc[un]i negotii ha il S[igno]r Calese, & mi.” Arti, b. 525, f[asc. 1, c. 74v (January 9, 1597
m.v.).
64 “Poria esser che loro mi havessero ditto qualche parola vegniando à proposito come se regiona tra
mercanti, et che mi havesse messo qualche parola che no’ mi racordo ma havendo ghene p[ar]lado ghene
hanno p[ar]lado p[er] l’interesse che haveva come dalli ditti à lor sagrand.o interogando in tal material
intenderesi no’ dando vediso alle mie parole.” Ibid., c. 80r.

102
Ventura and Cohen were convicted as “incorregibili” and fined 300 lire di piccoli each.

But eight years later, Cohen asked for pardon, and his fine was reduced to 80 lira.65

So, what constituted (illicit) mediation?

While unlicensed brokers were fully aware that the guild considered brokerage by non-guild members as illicit by definition, this does not mean that the arguments they raised to counter accusations should be dismissed too quickly as mere opportunism. In fact, these arguments suggest if not a multiplicity of understandings of the nature of mediation at least a sense of what trans-imperial brokers and their local and foreign clients considered to be convincing counter-evidence, i.e.: what constitutes legitimate non-brokering intervention in a commercial interaction. Thus, defense arguments ranged from claiming not to have known the merchants in question at all,66 to having assisted a friend rather than having performed brokerage,67 to having translated rather than brokered trade,68 to having mediated without a commission, or simply to having been unjustly framed by a personal enemy.69

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65 Ibid., c. 80v (May 1, 1606).
66 See Angelo Frani’s testimony, where he persistently claimed not to remember any of the people involved in a transaction he allegedly brokered: Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 48r–50v (May 16, 1597). Frani was convicted, but his punishment was reduced.
67 According to the testimony of apothecary Orfeo Gianucci in the trial of Giovanni Domenico de Zorzi and Andrea Saraco, mentioned above, “it is indeed true that ser Zuanne Domenego said after we closed the deal… I am here not as a broker, but only for service, and as a favor to ser Zuanne Uper…” (“si è ben vero che esso sr Z. d’nego disse doppo serado… mi non son qua p[er] sanser, seno’ p[er] servisio, e co m? gio dal s.r Zuanne uper…”) Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 66r–67v (August 19, 1597).
68 A case in point is the testimony of Zacharia Cuchi, who was accused of having brokered the sale of four woolen cloths by Pietro Rezilion to Abram di Pietro, “a bold-headed Greek with a beret.” Cuchi claimed to have “passed by Rezilion’s shop, and so Mr. Rezilion called me to speak the language that the Greek couldn’t speak [i.e. translate from Greek to Italian], and then I left, and I don’t know what they did…” He was convicted, but his fine—seven lire—was rather minimal. Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 17r–v (March 5, 1597).
69 This was the strategy of Giacomo Raines, who claimed that the apothecary Bartholomeo Polferin, who
Merchants summoned to testify or charged with employing unlicensed brokers sometimes claimed not to remember very clearly whether any broker had been involved in the transaction, what the broker’s name was, or to have initiated business negotiations themselves, using the alleged broker merely as a proxy, an extension of one’s will. Such was the strategy of the wine merchant from Monemvasia, Domenico Balduci, who in 1609 was charged with employing the services of unlicensed broker Giacomo Trenturi in the sale of sixty bottles of malmsey wine to the patrician merchant Sebastian Soranzo. When asked who had told him about the potential deal, he responded “I told said Giacomo come with me, since I want[ed] to go and look for one [shop] of a nobleman, and so we went.” Thus, Balduci suggests that the initiative was entirely his, and that Trenturi only came along since he was asked to. Later, Balduci described the negotiation itself: “I started negotiating with the gentleman, and not being able to easily conclude the deal, Giacomo, wishing to leave, asked me, what do you say? And said many words and then he addressed me again and closed [the deal] with the gentleman.” In Balduci’s account, then, agency was entirely his, even while conceding that Trenturi’s intervention was crucial. In his version, Trenturi simply served as an agent who talked to Soranzo on Balduci’s behalf. To remove any doubt of illicit brokerage, Balduci assured his interrogators that “Giacomo was not given brokerage fees, nor do I intend to give

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70 The apothecary Cesare Amadio, who in 1609 bought 25 parcels of wax from Jacob and Salomon Papo, persistently claimed in his testimony that he could not remember the names of the brokers, nor “the precise details of that deal.” The two brokers allegedly involved in the case, David Farcas and Caliman Crassin, were acquitted. Arti, b. 525, fasc. 2, cc. 100–102 (June 11, 1609).

allegedly had struck a deal with Lucillo Fossato through Raines’ mediation, was his personal enemy. But as Fossato, too, testified against him, Raines was convicted and fined 10 lire. Arti, b. 525, fasc. 2, cc. 104–105 (August 25, 1609).
them to him, that’s the whole story.”71 Unlike similar cases where merchants denied any illicit mediation to have occurred, Trenturi was convicted, and fined 10 lira in addition to trial expenses.

Similar testimonies could lead to quite the opposite ruling. In 1597, the Greek Thodaro Memo was acquitted from charges of illicitly brokering the sale of 12 bales of Cordovan hides from the Morea by Spillioti Tapinò to Pietro Gozzi.72 His trial offers another glimpse of the claims brokers and merchants made in order to justify unlicensed brokerage. The tribunal’s first attempt to interrogate Gozzi’s nephew, Giovanni Battista, failed after he had refused to testify under oath. Threatened with a fine of 50 ducats, Gozzi reluctantly came back to testify the following week, but insisted that the hides had been purchased “without a broker.” Tapinò’s testimony three months later yielded a different version altogether. Memo had indeed been present during the negotiations, and, if not formally employed as a broker, he still had been paid 5 ducats by Tapinò’s apprentice on at least one occasion, and possibly more. Pietro Gozzi’s interrogation produced even more specific evidence. Memo had not only been present at Tapinò’s house when Gozzi had gone there to see the merchandise, but he had been the one who “helped to transport the bales, and show the hides, and give me the merchandise.”73

71 “Inter chi ne ha racorda detto mercato. risp mi ho ditto al ditto Jac.o vegni co’ mi che vorio andar à cercar certi una da un zentil’homo, et cosi andassimo. inter. se detto Jacomo se ha adoperato de mezo tra lui, et detto Cl.mo Sorenzo nel trattar, e serar del mercato. risp mi comincia à trattar co’l zentil’homo, e no’ potenelo cosi facilmente contremirsi, esso Jac.o poi volenndovi partir mi chiamò vi diciato? et disse tante parole e poi tornato vidriso se concluse con el zentil’homo; Dicens à detto Jac.o non dato sansaria, ne ho intentino’ de sarghela, questo è tutto il fatto.” Arti, b. 525, fasc. 2, c. 52 (March 14, 1609).

72 Arti, b. 525, fasc. 1, cc. 59r–60v (April 20, 1597).

73 “Aggiunto à averze le balle, et mostrar li cordoani, et me batava li merzi.” Ibid., c. 60r.
Memo’s own interrogation took place the following year. According to his version, he had been dragged into the affair by Gozzi, who had called out for him and said “do me a favor and… [help me] to mark one of these bales, and so I helped to mark a bale, and so I came back to account for [my actions] to said ser Piero Gozi.” But, Memo assured his interrogators, he had left the room immediately after, and had no idea whether Tapinò and Gozzi had ever struck a deal. He further denied having received payment from Tapinò’s apprentice. Despite his past convictions in similar offenses, cited by the court, Memo was acquitted the same day.

These cases reveal the inconsistency of rulings in cases of illicit brokerage. Why were some brokers acquitted while others were convicted based on similar, or even lesser evidence? The records suggest interrogators’ intense interest in merchants’ and brokers’ intentions, not just in evidence of fees paid or legal contracts signed. This is why the tribunal faced difficulty when confronted—quite frequently—with cases of friendship, family ties, and shared residence between brokers and merchants. Against a notion of brokers as impartial and disinterested intermediaries between two foreign parties, the magistracies encountered time and again brokers who were clearly affiliated with one of the parties, and who, in fact, claimed to have acted precisely as friends, rather than as brokers. That the tribunal itself accepted their assertions suggests that the plausibility of social ties across political and ethnoreligious boundaries was not completely eroded by that point.

74 Such long turnaround times for investigations in matters of illicit brokerage were not unusual, highlighting their lack of prohibitive effect.
OTHER FORMS OF (DOCUMENTING) STRUGGLE

The trials for illicit brokerage analyzed above formed one of the main strategies employed by the brokers’ guild in an effort to curb competition in the marketplace. But if legal procedures allowed the guild to target individual contraveners and subject them to lengthy legal battles against a relatively well-oiled and well-funded corporate body, other forms of conflict pitted the guild against other corporate bodies which, at least in theory, could be as well-organized and articulate.

In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the guild engaged in several massive (and costly) political battles against corporate bodies such as the brokers of the German Exchange House, Levantine Jewish merchants, and other collectives of foreign merchants. Such battles involved the drafting of numerous petitions and counter-petitions to the Senate, the Board of Trade and other magistracies, and the hiring of lawyers in the hope of affecting legislation on matters such as taxation on brokerage, individual brokerage privileges, the guild’s size and areas of monopoly, specific administrative organs’ jurisdiction over brokers, and, finally, the tense relationships with the Board of Trade’s dragomans, and the tax imposed on brokers’ commissions, ostensibly to finance (mandatory) interpretation services.

One such political battle opened in 1584, when a group of “Levantine merchants” (in this case, Jewish Ottoman subjects) lodged a seemingly procedural complaint with the Senate: old guild statutes gave persons convicted of illicit brokerage only one month to appeal their sentence. That, the merchants argued, put them at a serious disadvantage. But their complaint was more than procedural. They went on to challenge the very logic
behind the guild’s legal procedures, suggesting that persons charged with illicit brokerage were often not brokers at all:

[I]f a merchant, although of great capital and reputation, is seen in the company of people buying silken cloth or another merchandise of the city, which requires intervention in Turkish and other Levantine trade, if people, often because they do not have the language, or fear being defrauded, bring along a friend to advise them on their purchase, these regular brokers, by virtue of some of their Statutes, immediately bring charges against these leading and honorable merchants as brokers, raising their malicious falsifications, which disturb the good faith and the freedom of the marketplace […] 76

The petition juxtaposed “merchant” and “broker” as two mutually exclusive social categories. As would later become a common defense strategy in trials for illicit brokerage, the petition legitimizes a person’s presence during a commercial transaction as a sign not of brokerage but rather of a personal favor to a friend, intended to provide commercial advice and assist with language interpretation rather than to mediate between the parties. To deny him the right to be present, the petition argues, infringes on “good faith” and the “freedom of the marketplace.” Harping on the authorities’ acute interest in Levantine trade, one of the Republic’s main sources of revenue, the petition aligns the “merchant of good reputation” with the commercial interests of the Republic, and against the brokers’ guild. In another passage, the petition similarly juxtaposes virtuous merchants and deceitful brokers by claiming that brokers

(Always excepting the honor of the good ones) are wicked men, who, like informers, set traps for this or that merchant, with secret denunciations,

76 “S’uno mercante benche di Cavedale, e reputazione, è veduto in compagnia di persone, che compri panni di seda, ò altra merce della Città, come suole intervenire nè negotii di Turchi, è altri levantini, i quali ben spesso non havendo la lingua, ò temendo esser ingannati, conducono con essi loro uno qualche amico per Consiglio della sua compreda, subito essi sanseri ordinarii, in virtù di certi loro Capitoli querellano detti Principali, et honorati mercanti per sanseri, levando loro maliciose vanie […].” Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 96v (January 10, 1584).
frequently naming themselves as witnesses, and the merchants are interrogated regarding these denunciations, against all law and religion, and although they are eventually absolved, they suffer innumerable worries, with little honor, and reputation in the marketplace.77

Thus the petition contrasts the honor of merchants acting in an open marketplace with the secret denunciations and abuses of brokers. Regrettably, no official reply to this petition is recorded in the guild’s archives. Yet a copy of the petition in the guild’s books is immediately followed by a copy of a Senate resolution of two years later, which warned brokers against defrauding Levantine merchants by collaborating with local merchants. This sequence might have been random, but it does raise the question whether at least some brokers may have interpreted the Levantine merchants’ appeal as a carefully disguised attempt to defraud foreigners and defame the brokers’ guild at the same time.

A few years later, in early 1593, a group of Jewish merchants petitioned the government again, claiming that

We can no longer find anyone who would dare walk with us, nor come in our direction, nor prevent us from being defrauded in the city; because as soon as anyone comes, he is sued by the brokers, for having committed brokerage, and harrassed in a way that deprives us of our freedom, and counsel, and often defraudes us.78

This petition emphasizes not only the damage to the supplicants’ reputation and freedom as merchants, but also their helplessness in the face of potential fraud. Indeed, it presents their association with local “helpers” (the term broker is obviously avoided) as the only

77 “…(resservando sempre l’honor di buoni) sono de gli huomini re’i, i quali come spioni, stano insidiando questo, e quell’altro mercante, con secrete denoncie, spesse volte essi stessi nominando per testimoni, e sopra dette denonci’ loro, contra ogni legge, et religione, essaminandosi [sopra linea: ondi] benche finalmente assoluti, i mercanti patiscono però innumerabili angustie, con puoco honore, e reputatione della piazza”: Ibid., cc. 96v–97r.
78 “Non troviamo più alcuno, che ardisca caminar con noi, né venire alle nostre volte, né per la Città a disinganarne; perché subito, che viene alcuno, li vien dato querella da essi sanseri, di haver fatto sansaria, et sono travagliati in modo, che venimo à esser privi di libertà, et di Consiglio, et siamo spesso inganati....” Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, cc. 114r–v (January 25, 1592 m.v.).
means for preventing (unnamed) malefactors from hurting them. The spatialization of Jewish merchants in this passage is particularly telling: they are separate, coming from the outside (hence their helpers should “come in [their] direction”) and are encountered with potential fraud “in the city.” By positioning themselves as foreigners, i.e. as spatially and socially distinct from the city populace, the petitioners thus colluded in fundamental ways with guild brokers’ self-representations as the protectors of helpless foreign merchants, and, at the same time, as Venetian citizens worthy of monopolistic privilege by virtue of being locals.

**Caliman Soncino’s proposal, 1619**

In a petition urging the government to establish harsher punishments against unlicensed Jewish brokers, submitted to the Senate in early 1587, members of the brokers’ guild charged that “we are gravely injured by the said Jews, who daily devour the blood.”° Save for the ritual murder overtones, it was precisely the growing identification of Jews with unlicensed brokerage, and the charge that they evaded taxation and competed with hard-working Venetian brokers that lay at the heart of Caliman Soncino’s proposals to appoint Jewish brokers in Rialto. According to proposals he submitted in 1618–1619, fifty Jewish brokers would be allowed to operate freely in any transactions involving Jewish merchants in the city.°° Following the ritual

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79 “Così gravemente dannificati da detti hebrei, quali quotidianamente ci devorano il sangue.” Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 8, c. 195 (February 5, 1586 m.v.).

80 Copies of both proposals, the first submitted anonymously on March 4, 1618, and the second, submitted under Soncino’s name exactly a year later on March 4, 1619, are preserved in the brokers’ guild archive: Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, cc. 131v–133r. Summaries of the proposals’ contents are also included in a guild register prepared in 1682. Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated. Soncino was probably a descendant of the
lament of the brokers’ guild, Soncino asserted that much public revenue was lost because
the bulk of Jewish trade in Venice was concluded with the aid not of licensed brokers, but
rather of unlicensed, Jewish ones: “Your Serenity does not extract any revenue [from
Jewish commerce] due to the continuous, hidden and inevitable frauds, and
transgressions, which are conducted by the Jewish traders.” But, should his plan be
accepted, Soncino expected that “from a great evil which is reputed incurable, a good of
great profit for the public interest will come to be extracted.” Soncino’s petitions thus
made full use of the familiar trope of Jewish tax evasion. But they also suggested that
these violations were not “inevitable,” and “incurable” but indeed that Jews could be
transformed into productive members of Venetian society. To increase his proposal’s
appeal, Soncino offered to pay the government 2,000 ducats annually, in addition to all
other tax revenue that his brokers would be able to collect. Finally, he suggested that
Jewish brokers not be allowed to intervene in transactions “between Christian and
Christian.” This last caveat is significant for two reasons. First, Soncino employed
religious, rather than civic categories, i.e. he drew the line not between citizens and
foreigners, but rather between Christians and non-Christians. Second, his caveat did not
limit brokers’ domain of activity to transactions involving only Jewish merchants, but

celebrated printers’ family of the same name, who operated Hebrew printing presses in Soncino (near
Milan), Pesaro, Istanbul, Thessalonica and Egypt from 1483 to 1557.
81 “V’ra Ser.ta non cava alcun emulumento per le continue oculte, et inevitabile fraudi, et trasgressioni, che
dalli hebrei negotianti sonno comesse di modo, che da un tanto male che è riputato incurabile si venìra à
cavare un bene di gran profitto per li publici interessi.” Arti, b. 517, fasc. 1, c. 132r (March 4, 1619).
82 This was quite a substantial sum, comparable to the total annual revenue from the “third” tax on
brokerage of Muslim and Jewish merchants in those years. Whereas in 1602 the total annual revenue from
the brokerage tax of “Turks” was 1,576 ducats, in the fifteenth century it averaged 60,000 ducats. See
rather to ones involving any non-Christians. At the same time that he drew a line between Christian and non-Christian, he also authorized Jews to cross it.

The Board of Trade was unequivocal in opposing Soncino’s proposal, citing the need to protect local privilege as its main reason. Rather than address the problem of tax evasion by Jewish merchants, it insisted that the existing one hundred and ninety guild-member brokers were all “citizens by birth” and that there was no need for additional brokers, particularly in such times of lull in trade. Any competition from Jewish brokers, the Board added, would hurt guild members, who were already subjected to high taxation. 83 Thus, its reinterpretation of Soncino’s offer shifted the discussion from the problem of how to increase revenue to that of how to protect hard-working Venetian citizens from unfair competition. Whereas Soncino’s petitions signaled an effort to incorporate Jews into Venetian society by making them pay taxes and gain more access to guild-regulated trades, the Board redrew the line between citizens and Jews, reinforcing the latter’s foreign status. Soncino’s proposal was formally dismissed by the Provveditori sopra danaro pubblico on May 2, 1620. 84

Soncino resubmitted his proposal in 1623, this time suggesting that Jewish brokers be limited to transactions where at least one of the parties was a Jew. His revised petition also explicitly decried collaboration between Jewish merchants and brokers, who took their money, but never reported the deal to the authorities, thus depleting the public coffers. 85 Yet, despite the alarming figures he cited for lost public revenue, the proposal

83 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 145, cc. 22v–23r (March 14, 1619).
84 Arti, b. 520, fasc. 2, unpaginated.
85 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 16, c. 372 (October 30, 1623).
never met with any success, and was formally rejected by the Board of Trade in 1624. This time, however, the Board did acknowledge irregularities in guild brokers’ practices, and urged them to register all transactions in their books.\(^8^6\) The Board’s reluctance to consider Soncino’s proposal marks a political shift in its commitments: In this case, at least, maintaining legal and religious boundaries was deemed more important than the Republic’s financial solvency.\(^8^7\)

Failure did not deter Soncino from claiming to have reached some understanding with the Board of Trade, whose implementation, he claimed, was delayed only due to “contradictions” and “objections” by the brokers’ guild. When the guild followed up on a secret denunciation and sought to put Soncino on trial for illicit brokerage in 1635, he expressed concern that, although innocent, he might be convicted if judged by “a passionate and angry person,” and therefore asked to have his trial heard by the Board of Trade or the Provveditori di Comun.\(^8^8\) The Board endorsed his request and recommended that his trial be moved to the Provveditori di Comun (all the while, remarkably enough, eliding the question of whether his original proposal to appoint fifty Jewish brokers had ever been accepted, as Soncino maintained, or not).\(^8^9\) Unfortunately, the proceedings and outcome of Soncino’s trial, if it ever took place, are now lost.

\(^8^6\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 146, cc. 100r–101v (March 30, 1624).  
\(^8^7\) I thank Erika Gasser for highlighting this point.  
\(^8^8\) Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 26 (April 24, 1635).  
\(^8^9\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 150, c. 54 (May 7, 1635).
CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion yields some tentative conclusions about changes over time in the guild’s archival practice, courtroom dynamics, conceptions of brokerage, and enforcement of laws against unlicensed brokers. Compared with trial records for 1596–1598, records for 1608–1609 were for the most part significantly shorter and more generic, and the sentences meted out to those convicted were generally lighter. The records further suggest that the tribunal introduced a clearer set of questions in order to establish whether an alleged broker had received money or not, and that it deemphasized the nature of interaction between sellers, buyers, and brokers, as well as brokers’ specific role in the transactions. These tendencies cannot be generalized, however, as another series of court records, dealing primarily with brokers in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi (German Exchange House), reveal rather a keen interest in the question of brokers’ physical presence at a deal’s conclusion.90 In these records, a broker’s presence on the scene was often taken to be more conclusive evidence of his complicity than the receipt of payments for his services. The guild’s growing concern with the very act of uncontrolled mediation, evinced in these documents, may signal greater fear of competition (the 30 brokers of the German Exchange House were, unlike unlicensed brokers in Rialto, an organized, legally recognized body). But more likely, an assertive stance vis-à-vis a numerically much smaller group of competitors was meant to convey the guild’s supremacy, while infractions in Rialto went undeterred. To address these

90 The 30 brokers in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi were licensed, but did not become part of the brokers’ guild until 1683. Arti, b. 538, fasc. 15 (June 19, 1683).
issues conclusively further research in the archives of the German Exchange House would be required.

A second set of conclusions concerns the conflicting conceptions of mediation that emerge from the documents. A quick comparison with London, another important early modern commercial hub, is instructive here. In 1693, William Leybourn set out to define brokers in his *Panarithmologia or the Trader’s Sure Guide*:

Brokers are Persons generally, that have had Misfortunes in the World, and have been bred Merchants, (or else they are not capacitated to be Brokers) for they must be Men that have Experience in Goods, in Exchanges, in Seasons for buying and selling: They must be Men faithful, and of Repute; for the things they are entrusted with, are of great Consequence: And these Men are employed betwixt Merchant and Tradesman; and their Imployment is to find the Merchant a Shop keeper, or rather Chapman for his Goods.91

Despite the growing prominence of foreign merchants in late seventeenth-century London, much like Venice of a century earlier, Leybourn emphasized brokers’ role as intermediaries between merchants and artisans, rather than between foreign and local merchants.92 This is a reminder that early modern foreignness was not just a social “fact” but, fundamentally, also a legal category, one that could have greater or lesser purchase in different contexts.93 Leybourn also alerts us to another important phenomenon: many brokers came from merchant families, were trained as merchants, and were involved in specific merchant networks. Evidence suggests that in Venice, too, many bankrupt merchants turned to brokerage.94 In fact, it was their commercial savvy that allowed

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91 Leybourn 1693: 55.
93 See Herzog 2003.
94 According to Luca Molà, already in the first half of the fourteenth century many silk merchants took up brokerage as a temporary solution to their financial woes. See Molà 1994: 130.
them to perform their job well. Yet it was precisely this inability to separate brokers from merchants that caused disquiet among Venetian magistrates and guild officials alike, as it undermined the basic legal fiction of the impartiality and anonymity of the marketplace. Finally, Leybourn’s definition points to the importance of possessing specific social skills (such as connections, and the reputation of trustworthiness) as well as commercial expertise in the making of successful brokers.

All three aspects of Leybourn’s definition bear important corollaries in Venetian brokerage practices and their idealized representations by officials and modern scholars. Trust between merchants and “middlemen” has been the focus of much work in economic history, where all too often it has been conflated with “ethnic solidarity.”95 The advantage foreign merchants stood to gain from using unlicensed brokers now becomes clear enough. Not only did unlicensed brokers allow different commercial networks to intersect, but in fact they provided newly arrived merchants a relatively safe entry-point into local markets, by sharing their language, confession, or kinship ties. However, we should be careful not to assume that such ties were necessarily “ethnic,” or that they naturally produced trust. As we saw above, at least in Venice, brokers and their clients were not always members of what may seem to modern readers like a shared ethnicity. Even when they were, early modern ethnicity was not viewed as a fixed identity marker, shared across contexts. Deep and institutionalized internal divisions within Jewish, Armenian, and Greek communities certainly should caution us against

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95 Representative cases in point are Landa 1983; Landa 1994. For a critique of “middleman minority” theories and their embeddedness in colonialist assumptions about social relations, see Rothman unpublished.
supposing that all members of these groups always recognized their fellow ethnics as trustworthy. In fact, as indicated above, brokers and their clients were often united not so much by ethnicity as such, but rather by networks predicated on kinship, previous commercial ties, or working knowledge of each other’s language. Linguistic skills in particular were perceived as crucial, and thus gave bilingual brokers an advantage with a wide range of clients.

To conclude, my analysis of the archives of the brokers’ guild has revealed two rather contrasting views of brokerage, articulated by different groups. On the one hand is a view shaped by the interaction between the juridical and financial institutions of a vigilant state and the protectionist agenda of the broker’s guild. According to this view, brokers are semi-official bureaucrats, loyal Venetian citizens, intent on keeping a watchful eye on foreigners. Each group of persons—Venetians vs. foreigners, merchants vs. brokers, traders vs. tradesmen—knows its place, and keeps separate. On the other hand, we have a view of brokerage that is less explicitly articulated in statutes and other prescriptive documents, but can still be recovered from the practices of guild members, unlicensed brokers, and their clients. According to this view, persons can be Venetians and at the same time ally themselves with foreign kin or friends. They can be Jewish, Armenian, or Greek and consider themselves upright members of Venetian society. They can be merchants in the morning and brokers in the afternoon, guild members and

96 This point will be developed in fuller detail in the following chapters. For one of many intriguing civil litigations among Armenian merchants, where mistrust prevailed, see AdC, Misc. Civil, b. 210, fasc. 2 (January 29, 1664 m.v.).
business partners of unlicensed brokers. Such a view made the policing of social boundaries much more difficult.

All of this is not to say that social categories and boundaries were irrelevant to the activities of trans-imperial commercial brokers in early modern Venice. On the contrary, it is through an investigation of how various kinds of brokers invoked these categories differently and strategically that we were able to recognize conflict not simply in what brokers did, but also in how they described what they did.

Finally, these conflicting conceptions of mediation must be studied within the larger processes through which not only did brokers come to be seen as “ethnic,” but new categories proliferated, which cast trans-imperial subjects from the Venetian-Ottoman contact zone as increasingly “foreign”: the late sixteenth-century requirement that a Public Dragoman be present during all transactions involving Ottoman merchants (and later also Jewish ones), the spatialization of foreignness through the highly contested effort to confine Ottoman and Safavid merchants to a separate residence in the Fondaco dei Turchi from 1621 onwards, and, finally, the emergence of the category “Levantine” and the proliferation of other ethnolinguistic categories in Ottoman merchants’ petitions to the Venetian government from the 1630s onwards. I will return to these developments in chapters 8 and 9.
PART II: CONVERSION

CHAPTER IV

NARRATING CONVERSION: SOME KEY GENRES

For both the Church faithful and the Jews of Italy, the Casa dei Catecumeni, House of the Catechumens, was a place of the greatest significance. It straddled the border of the two worlds, and in its liminality lay its awesome power. A Jew could enter the Catechumens and come out a Catholic; in so doing he left one world and entered another. The convert was reborn, with a new identity and a new name.

—David Kertzer

INTRODUCTION

Against a prevalent Orientalizing disposition, which considers “East” and “West” as trans-historical, immutable, and self-contained binaries, historians of the early modern Mediterranean have for a long time emphasized the convergence and interdependence of sociocultural processes across the region. If earlier generations privileged the military, diplomatic, and economic aspects of cross-Mediterranean exchange, scholars now seek to

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1 Kertzer 1997: 55.
understand how mundane and ongoing interactions between members of different societies (and of differentially situated members within each society) shaped emerging cultural categories of difference and sameness.

The study of religious conversion in particular can benefit from and contribute to this new historiographical interest, as it highlights the need to take into account the mobility of people and signifying practices across political and religious boundaries, and to develop new conceptual tools for thinking about the relationship between the cosmographies and cultural categories of different groups. To understand this relationship, conversion should be studied as a set of historically-shifting social practices rather than as individual spiritual choices.

Yet much work on religious conversion in the early modern Mediterranean has tended to focus precisely on the spiritual motivations and sincerity of converts, i.e., whether people converted due to deep conviction or because of the material benefits that conversion promised to bring.² As anthropologists Talal Asad and Webb Keane argue, motivation and sincerity are not only extremely hard to gauge from available documentation (usually missionary), but also lack analytical rigor, embedded as they are in specifically modern Christian understandings of intentionality, interiority, and authenticity.³ Scholars who have embraced these critiques are now emphasizing how converts and missionaries differentially understood the stakes involved in conversion,

² Bennassar 1988; Allegra 1996; Foa and Scaraffia 1996; Vanzan 1996; Bono 1998; Baer 2001; Scaraffia 2002. The renewed interest in Mediterranean slavery is no exception to this rule, and scholarship on the religious conversion of slaves is still very much informed by the same paradigm of sincere vs. forced or induced conversion. See, for example, Bono 1999; Davis 2003.
³ Asad 1996; Keane 1997.
and contextualize converts’ transition from one moral community to another within wider imperial and colonial interests.\(^4\)

In line with these historiographic shifts, this chapter and the next explore not so much why people converted, but how. They ask what were the assumptions—in specific institutional contexts—about how to transform difference into sameness, and with what consequences for different kinds of converts and their social relations. To this end, this chapter follows three genres through which narratives of conversion to Catholicism from Islam, Judaism, and Protestantism were articulated in early modern Venice— inquisitorial depositions by reconciled renegades, converts’ matrimonial examinations, and baptismal records—to suggest how the process of conversion, and converts’ subjectivity itself, were articulated in these different genres. Utilizing Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope (see below), I identify two prototypical accounts of the spatiotemporal process of conversion, prevalent in Ottoman and Protestant conversion narratives, respectively, and argue for the key role of Venetian institutions and intermediaries in articulating both.

St. Augustine’s *Confessions* offers two separate stages of conversion. One, emphasized by many medieval Christian theologians, is a dramatic and singular moment of revelation, in which the self is radically transformed and created anew. According to historian Elisheva Carlebach

> Medieval religious usage borrowed the term *conversion* from the al/chemical sciences as a metaphor, in which one substance was changed into something utterly different by a mysterious process. Conceptions of transformation or rebirth had always informed the imagery of Christian conversion. In conversion

\(^4\) For a very partial list of works that address the imperial settings of early modern conversion, see Morrison 1985; Rafael 1988; Dorsey 1998; Geraci and Khodarkovsky 2001; Richter 2001; Mills and Grafton 2003; Abisaab 2004; Pardo 2004; Poirier 2004; Silverblatt 2004; Greer 2005.
to Christianity, divine grace transfigured the soul, created it anew, so that no residue of the earlier self remained.\(^5\)

Post-Tridentine conversion policies still featured many elements which both assumed and sought to reinforce this notion of radical transformation at the font through the complete severance of ties with a convert’s previous life.\(^6\)

Yet Augustine’s *Confessions* also imagines conversion as a lifelong process of self-exercise, striving, and gradual modification. This image of conversion links a journey that starts well before baptism, and continues thereafter.\(^7\) It is perhaps this understanding of conversion as a lifelong process which led Venetian administrators dealing with converts to tacitly acknowledge converts’ ongoing ties with their unconverted kin. Indeed, such ties were sometimes encouraged, seen as a key financial and emotional resource in safeguarding converts’ wellbeing, and as a first step in converting additional family members.\(^8\) Tolerance of such ties could be interpreted as recognition of the ongoing embeddedness of converts in preexisting social relations, linking their presents with their pasts.

Such continuity was often taken for granted in Ottoman Muslim notions of religious conversion as well. As in Venice, conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire at this time was not practiced as a moment of extreme rupture and radical severance of

\(^5\) Carlebach 2001: 1.
\(^6\) Stow 1976; Ravid 2001. However, as Elisheva Carlebach herself cogently shows, converts’ claims to have completely severed their ties with family also stemmed from their “need to appeal to Christian charity. Orphaned from the community that had nurtured them, they appealed for financial support as well as social acceptance to their adoptive community.” See Carlebach 2001: 24.
\(^7\) On the two meanings/stages of conversion in Augustine, see Outler 1955: 19 and passim; Riley 2004: 24–25 and passim.
\(^8\) On such lingering ties, see, for Venice, Pullan 1983: 275–93; for Rome, Sermoneta 1993; Stow 1993; Stow 2002.
one’s former ties. A host of practices developed in Venice in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century to integrate new converts into society bear striking similarities to Ottoman ones, rather than to Papal Post-Tridentine dogma.

How are we to account for the many parallels between Ottoman Muslim and Venetian Catholic practices of conversion in the seventeenth century? At the outset, it should be emphasized that Venetian conversion practices were shaped not only by the awakened religious sentiments of the Catholic Reformation, but also by the political and economic exigencies of a changing Mediterranean. In particular, the need—recognized by many Venetian patricians—to maintain good relations with the Ottomans in the face of growing economic competition from Dutch, French, and English naval powers often produced less than enthusiastic responses to Muslims seeking to convert to Christianity. It also sometimes led to acquiescence in the face of Venetians who had converted to Islam. How, exactly, Catholic conversion was articulated in different Venetian institutional contexts, and what relationship the narratives produced in these different contexts bore to emerging notions of Ottoman political and religious otherness is the subject of this chapter.

INQUISITORIAL DEPOSITIONS: CHRONOTOPIE PEREGRINATIONS

One of the key early modern institutions prompting people to narrate the circumstances of their religious conversion was the Holy Office. Whether through voluntary confessions or induced inquisitorial interrogations, deponents in front of the

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9 Krstic 2004; see also, albeit for a later period, Deringil 2000: 554.
10 Established in 1547, the Holy Office of Venice was a highly autonomous chapter of the Roman Inquisition, administered by clerics who for the most part came from Venice’s patrician ruling class. For a bibliography on this well-studied institution, see Ruggiero 2001: n3.
Holy Office were asked to explain or deny their alleged transition from one religious community to another. In some cases, they narrated their becoming Catholics; in others, their becoming non-Catholics; in yet others, their oscillating between the two. In all cases, however, deponents were faced with the need to fit their narratives into inquisitorial frames of reference, to make their narratives plausible and convincing and, vitally, to prove their current sincerity and orthodoxy as good Catholics.\(^{11}\) How was this achieved? How did people of widely varied backgrounds negotiate the constraints of a genre that was itself localized and prone to historical shifts to a great extent?\(^{12}\) How did they plot narratives they believed would be plausible and convincing?

As Tijana Krstic cogently argues, for early modern Christian Ottoman subjects the process of becoming Muslim did not originate in deep spiritual transformation, but in the acceptance of new ritual practices. Spiritual transformation may or may not have followed at a later stage, through participation in communal activities.\(^{13}\) Such a conception of religious conversion contrasts with the Protestant emphasis on interiority, authenticity, and the agency of the subject to find meaning in an unmediated relationship with God.\(^{14}\) Keith Luria, who has studied Protestant-Catholic conversion in early modern France, argues that it was precisely the seeming self-interestedness of converts and their frequent oscillation between confessions that encouraged both Catholic and Protestant clergy in the seventeenth century to develop “a model of conversion that stressed the

\(^{11}\) On the construction of plausible narratives within constraints imposed by genre and institutional setting, see Davis 1987; for an illuminating discussion of some specifically Venetian institutional genres, see Ferraro 2001.

\(^{12}\) On the differences between the Venetian inquisition and its Roman counterpart, see Monter and Tedeschi 1986. See also: Prosperi 1982 for a discussion of how inquisitors’ perceptions of peasants on Europe’s periphery were shaped by missionary reports from the Indies.

\(^{13}\) Krstic 2004: 120–2.

\(^{14}\) On Protestant conceptions of conversion, see Keane 1997; Keane 2002.
importance of conscience and deep interior motivation, as well as true doctrine and the role of intellect and emotion in adhering to it.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, while for Muslim subjects of Christian origin seeking reconciliation with the Church the most readily available line of argument was one of contingency, for Protestants converting to Catholicism, the expected driving force had to be interior and “pure.” If Ottoman subjects could benefit from arguing implicitly for a distinction between their intentions and actions, it was precisely such a distinction that was increasingly problematized and suspected for confessants from across the Alps.

To elucidate this difference, we may employ Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope (literally time-space) which he defines as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.”\textsuperscript{16} Attending to the differing chronotopic qualities of inquisitorial depositions helps to illuminate the underlying assumptions inherent in Ottoman and Protestant depositions about the nature of the person undergoing conversion and, consequently, the nature of conversion itself. Building on Krstic’s and Luria’s insights, I identify two prototypical chronotopes of conversion. One, which I call the “chronotope of conjuncture,” is especially prevalent in narratives by Ottoman deponents. It depicts the transition from one religious community to another as the unintentional outcome of deponents’ contingent insertion at particular historical moments into spatially-defined religious communities. The other, which I call the “chronotope of purposive journeying,” is

\textsuperscript{15} Luria 1996: 28.
\textsuperscript{16} Bakhtin 1981: 84. Put differently, it is “a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented”: See Emerson and Holquist 1981: 425. Use of the concept avoids privileging either time or space, but rather emphasizes their interdependence and inseparability.
especially prevalent in Protestant narratives. It describes deponents’ journeys from non-
Catholic to Catholic space as the outcome of a prior, inner spiritual transformation. The
journey is thus the result rather than the cause of conversion; it is a journey purposefully
undertaken by an already converted subject.

A good illustration of the chronotope of conjuncture prevalent in Ottoman
conversion narratives comes from the deposition of Abdone q. Giovanni of Aleppo, who
in 1616 confessed to the Venetian Holy Office his desire to re-embrace Christianity.
Since he had been, by his own admission, baptized at birth, Abdone had to undergo a
process of “reconciliation” with the Church in order to formally resume his Christian
identity. Such reconciliation processes were authorized and supervised by the Holy
Office, hence his deposition.\footnote{Venetian reconciliation procedures rarely involved more than some penitential exercises and/or religious
instruction in the \textit{Pia Casa dei Catecumeni}, and thus differed dramatically from their Iberian counterpart, where the reconciliation of \textit{conversos} often also entailed a public abjuration of heresy and a potentially harsh inquisitorial sentence. On Iberian reconciliation procedures, see Graizbord 2000: 206 and passim. On the Italian procedure, see Scaraffia 2002: 101ff.} In narrating his past, Abdone linked space, time and ritual
practice, suggesting that it was movement in space, dictated by historical exigencies and
life stages (pilgrimage, revolt, economic crisis, war), which prompted him to identify
himself now as a Christian and now as a Muslim:

I was born a Christian in Aleppo, and baptized. After about 10 years I was made
Muslim, and for that time [I] lived as a Muslim, and was circumcised. And now
having arrived in Venice, and wishing to leave said sect of Muslims and to be a
good Catholic I am in this place to do what I will be ordered to do.

Asked on what occasion he had left the Catholic faith and became Muslim.

[He] responded:[\ldots] I traveled from youth, and at a certain time when [in] Sidon in
the territory of Tripoli some Muslims rebelled, I joined them \textit{[lit. went among
them]} and put a turban on my head, and they accepted me and asked me who I
was, and I told them that I was Muslim. And I told them that from a young age I
had been away from my home, and that’s why I wasn’t circumcised, and so then
they made me circumcise. But I [only] told them that because if I had told them I
were Christian, they would have made me renge by force or they would have
killed me, and that’s why I told them I was Muslim. And then I also let them cut [i.e. circumcise] me for the same fear, so that they accept the fact that I wasn’t cut.

Asked why he went like that to Sidon among Muslims, and not among Christians. [He] responded[:] I was in Jerusalem to visit the Holy Sepulcher as a pilgrim, and on the way back I passed through Sidon and not knowing where to go, I joined them, because there was also a great need.

[…] Asked, he responded[:] When they cut me and made me a Muslim they called me Ebraim. And I served as a soldier for a year [under] a captain who was called Magiar Mustaffa who was the head of the rebels. And after the year had passed I went to Cairo, and since no one knew that I had been a Muslim, I dressed as a Christian and stayed among Christians for seven years. After that I went in the direction of Constantinople, [but] in Bursa there was a Muslim who recognized me [and knew] I had been a Muslim, and in order that he does not uncover me, I ran away to the Hungarian border to come in these ways to Christendom, but a barber told me that the roads were not safe, and that I would be captured as a spy, and so for fear I came back and by other ways I then arrived in Sarajevo. And from there with some Muslim merchants I arrived in Venice, and while I was with them I acted as a Muslim, because they considered me to be a Muslim, and believed that I was one of those marabouts (“santoni”) who go begging.

Asked, he responded[:] I didn’t return to Aleppo because it was known there that I had become a Muslim, and it wouldn’t have been safe for long, although I was there for two months on one time on my way, and went to Church like a Christian.18

In his deposition, Abdone presents an expedient understanding of religious affiliation, which is premised on practice rather than belief. When being Christian was inconvenient, he practiced Islam, when it became convenient again, he returned to practicing Christianity.19 By his own admission, he switched his allegiance at least five times, always due to contingent and pragmatic considerations. Here Abdone was invoking a popular trope of conversion to Islam at sword’s edge, which started with the


19 The gloss “Muslim” for Abdone’s self-reported conversion is somewhat misleading here: Abdone described himself as having turned “Turk” (“turco”). As I discuss in chapter 9, early modern Italian speakers rarely distinguished between “Turk” and “Muslim,” and glossed both (as well as Ottoman and, less frequently, any Ottoman subject of whatever ethnoreligious affiliation) as “Turco.” The complex of religious, juridical, and emotional identifications implied by “having turned Turk” is hard to disentangle in the absence of any other documents produced by or about Abdone.
Crusades, and continued with an image of the Ottomans as ferocious, barbaric people who violently convert their Christian slaves. Yet Abdone himself seems to have sensed the inadequacy of such a line of argument in front of the inquisition. He attempts to show a conscious plan to pursue a Christian life by prefacing his narrative with an explicit declaration of his wish “to leave said sect of Muslims and to be a good Catholic,” and by framing his voyage to Venice as a purposive, active quest to re-enter Christendom, presaged by his failed plan to reach Hungary, and his boyhood pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

As we will see shortly, Abdone was far from unique in linking his shifting confessional affiliation to a set of ritual moments rooted in membership in particular communities and places. For him, as for many others appearing in front of the Venetian inquisition, conversion entailed a journey from one geographical point to another, that is, from non-Christian to Christian locales and from one set of ritual practices to another. The road offers the opportunity for both religious indeterminacy and for smooth transition from one community to another. Moreover, journeys in space are linked to specific periods of time, and are segmented by rituals such as baptism, pilgrimage, and confession or, alternatively, circumcision and the donning of the turban.

Abdone’s effort to link conversion to specific chronotopic moments should be understood within the constraints of the genre of reconciliation narratives divulged to the Holy Office, and the difference between the narratives of persons of Ottoman background, on the one hand, and of Protestant Christian background on the other. Such a comparison is facilitated by the survival of two dozen reconciliation narratives in three

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20 Repeated conversions back and forth between Christianity and Islam have been documented in the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem, as well as in Mamluk and Ottoman territories. See Kedar 1997.
files in the archives of the Venetian Holy Office, dating, respectively, from 1616, 1630–1632, and 1647.\textsuperscript{21} The first and last files contain a total of seven depositions by Ottoman subjects, who all claimed to have been born Christians and to wish to return to Christianity after having lived as Muslims for years, sometimes decades. The middle file, dating from 1630–1632, contains thirteen depositions, three by Ottoman subjects of similar circumstances to the ones just described, and ten by German- and French-speaking subjects who were raised as Lutherans or Calvinists, and who wished to become Catholic. Of these twenty depositions, five are by women (four Muslim and one Protestant) and fifteen are by men (six Muslim, nine Protestant). Most depositions were facilitated through the active intervention and mediation (linguistic as well as theological) of clergymen: the prior of the Pia Casa in the case of Ottoman deponents, the preacher-confessor of the German “nation” in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi (the German Exchange House) and other Venetian clergymen in the case of Protestant deponents.

Two striking differences stand out between the depositions of Muslim-Ottoman subjects and those of Protestants. First, the former emphasize their changing family circumstances and geographical location as key to their shifting religious affiliation, and rarely dwell on personal motivations for such shifts. According to Ottoman deponents, they were Christian while living in a Christian household/community, and became Muslim once they moved into a Muslim one. Such transition is often accounted for by parents’ death or conversion to Islam, enslavement, marriage to a Muslim, or migration in search of economic betterment. In these accounts, as in Abdone’s, conversion follows geographical transition and change in personal status. Conversely, Protestant deponents,

\textsuperscript{21} Santo Uffizio, Processi, bb. 71, 88, 103.
while acknowledging their birth into Protestant families as the source of their heretical upbringing and former beliefs, consistently highlighted their individual choice to become Catholics, often linking this temporally-defined act of choice to key transformative moments—a dream, a vision, a vow taken during severe illness, a chance encounter with a Catholic preacher—which led to a spiritual awakening. In their accounts, the formal, outward assumption of a Catholic identity followed inner persuasion, and was followed by a geographical journey from Protestant to Catholic territory. Geographical mobility, in other words, was the outcome, rather than the cause, of their inner religious transformation, which takes center stage. Protestant depositions are also more detailed than those of Ottoman subjects with regards to articles of faith, highlighting both deponents’ past errors and current belief in Catholic truths. Theological issues are almost entirely absent from Ottoman depositions.

To illustrate the differences between narratives produced by Ottoman Muslims and by Protestants, let us compare the narrative produced by Maddalena olim Rachima in 1647 with that produced by Pierre Blanche in 1631. According to Maddalena,

I was born in the countryside of the city of Clini [Kluni], three days from Šibenik [Croatia], to Christian father and mother. My father was called Melin, he was a peasant and a soldier, my mother was called Chiarana; both died. I don’t know the name they gave me when I was baptized, and my sister Maddalena, who I don’t know to be alive or dead, told me I had been baptized. And I lived with my father until I was about ten. [scribe’s note:] Corrected by herself, she said] I had lived with my father until I was five, when I was taken by Muslim relatives of my father’s, who took me to Zemonico [Donji Zemunik, Croatia], where I was raised and was given the name Rachima, and they made me live according to Muslim law, and married me to a Turk [Muslim] called Fasula, who I don’t know to be alive or dead, but we didn’t have any children. I am about 50 years old and all this time I have lived as a Muslim, and conformed to the Mohammedan rites.

22 On the geographical mobility of Lutheran converts to Catholicism in the early modern Holy Roman Empire, see Corpis 2001: 112ff. On the journeys of early modern Jewish converts in the Holy Roman Empire and in England, respectively: Carlebach 2001: 112, 120; Dureau 2001: 34.
Now having arrived in this Catholic City and having been instructed for about 40
days in the House of the Catechumens in the articles of the Catholic holy faith I
see that Our Lord Jesus Christ is God, born of the Virgin Mary, that there are 3
divine persons, that the Church has 7 sages.\(^{23}\) And I hold and believe universally
all that the Holy Mother Church holds and believes. And therefore I am ready to
abjure, and live and die in this holy Christian faith.\(^{24}\)

Compare this statement to the one made in 1631 by the eighteen-year-old surgeon
Pierre Blanche (“Pietro Blanco”), native of Lyon, France, the son of a Calvinist father
and a Catholic mother:

[…] I have followed the life of my father, nourished and raised in the sect and
heresies of Calvin… and having left my country last year in the month of October
I stayed in Piedmont for several months, practicing medicine according to my
profession and finally five months ago I came to Venice, and stayed in the old
Lazaretto for about three months, and then in Venice, and after I left France, I
have always thought of leaving that heretical sect of Calvin, and becoming
Catholic because in France I saw some miracles and even more elsewhere in Italy,
done by the Blessed Virgin. Therefore I resolved with determination to become
Catholic, and actually made a vow to go to Rome, and I went to Genoa to do
contumacy [contumacia] and in the past days I went to [the church of] S.
Francesco di Paola to the Father Confessor who is present here […] because
knowing to have been in most grave error having held, observed, and believed all
that which the Calvinist sect holds, sees, and observes, and recognizing the
Catholic and Apostolic Roman Catholic faith to be true I ask now this most holy
tribunal to be reconciled with the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Catholic
Church.\(^{25}\)

Whereas Maddalena-Rachima dwells on her childhood vagaries and the
circumstances that turned her into a Muslim, Pierre sums up his childhood in one
sentence. And while for Maddalena her life story is one of changing family attachments,
for Pierre it is one of solitary traveling and career development. His geographical

\(^{23}\) I have not been able to confirm which seven sages this text refers to. Perhaps it is an oblique reference to
the widely-circulating Book of the Seven Sages of Rome, popular around the Mediterranean basin from the
late middle ages on, according to which people were encouraged to turn to the seven sages to profess their
faith. I thank Father Juan Flores for his assistance on this issue.

\(^{24}\) Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 103, fasc. Madalena q. Melin Turca (June 4, 1647). See appendix 6 for a
transcript of the original deposition.

\(^{25}\) Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88 (Oct. 16, 1631). See appendix 7 for a transcript of the original deposition.
journeys—his departure from heretical France and entry into Catholic space via the territories of Piedmont and Genoa—are presaged (prompted?) by the experience of miracles in his native country, and are closely interlinked with his spiritual journeys. Pierre emphasizes this spiritual transformation by defining his former beliefs as “sectarian” and “heretical” right from the start. Conversely, Maddalena describes the forty-odd years she had lived as a Muslim in a factual manner, suggesting no contrition or spiritual transformation until the very last sentence. She presents her current embrace of Christianity as the result of learning—the forty days of catechetical instruction she had received in the House of the Catechumens. Yet she does not ascribe to herself any prior intentions to return to Christianity before her arrival in Venice (which she describes as happenstance, not as a purposive journey), nor attests to any deep spiritual transformation. Whereas Pierre is eager to convince his interrogators that he had waited all his life to become Catholic and to arrive in Catholic lands, Maddalena does not dwell on intentions. For her, religion is determined by kinship networks. She had been a Christian when raised by her Christian parents, but became a Muslim once her Muslim relatives took her to Zemunik and married her off to a Muslim husband. Now that she is in a Catholic land, her return to Christianity follows. For Pierre, intentions are the driving force of his life-story. He is a willing individual, who shakes off the shackles of heretical kin to pursue his own desires, i.e. to reach Rome, and embrace Catholicism. He actively pursues this goal, first by embarking on a journey, then by seeking out a Catholic clergyman to assist him. If Maddalena’s arrival in the House of the Catechumens is left

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26 On the concept of “spiritual journey” as a hallmark of early modern Venetian evangelism, see Martin 1996.
unaccounted for in her narrative, Pierre presents his encounter with the confessor at the church of S. Francesco di Paola as the direct result of his endeavors, and his alone.

What might account for these stark differences between Maddalena’s and Pierre’s narratives? One obvious explanation is gendered notions of the self and its transformative capacity. By this I do not mean to suggest that kinship alliances determined women’s conversion more than men’s, or that geographical mobility characterized men more than women. Nor should we treat women’s conversion narratives as an unmediated reflection of the protagonists’ predicament. Rather, we should attend to the place of the kin group in gendered conceptions of the self in both the Mediterranean and transalpine Europe. Recently, Stefanie Siegmund has suggested that Jewish women’s narratives of conversion to Christianity in sixteenth-century Florence were shaped, among other things, by gender-specific cultural representations of the figure of the convert. According to Siegmund, female conversion was thought of as conversion “of the body” rather than “of the mind,” requiring the convert’s prior removal from her Jewish family and environment. In Maddalena’s narrative too, we can clearly identify a strong emphasis on rootedness in family and place as defining membership in a particular religious community.

Similarly, Bartolomé Bennassar has demonstrated the propensity of women converts from Christianity to Islam to justify their apostasy in front of the Holy Office as a result of their master’s or husband’s wishes. Thus, these women suggested that the continuity of their social role as care givers (domestic slaves, concubines, wives) justified

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27 The historian Anna Vanzan has gone so far as to conclude that Muslim women converts’ narratives reflected their “passivity and resignation”: Vanzan 1996: 332.
28 Siegmund 2005.
29 Bennassar 1996: 106.
the discontinuity of their religious affiliation, or, perhaps, that such discontinuity was not as total as their inquisitors imagined, since conversion helped them retain their overall social position. Men, on the other hand, rarely argued for continuity in social role as a justification for their conversion. Rather, they emphasized time and again the coercive dimension of their conversion, the fact that they had no choice but to convert or become martyrs.

Beyond noting the general availability of gendered representations of the converting self, I wish to call attention here to the role of specific intermediaries and institutions in shaping converts’ depositions. We should recall that Maddalena’s narrative, like most other reconciliation depositions, is delivered to us through the mediation not only of a specific genre—the inquisitorial dialogue, of which the reconciliation deposition was a highly structured component—and specific (if sometimes anonymous) judges and scribes, but also of a particular clergyman, named in the preambles to several of the depositions: Girolamo Pastriccio, the Prior of the House of Catechumens.\textsuperscript{30} While his interpretive, intermediary role is cast as a purely linguistic necessity, stemming from deponents’ ignorance of Italian, it was also, no doubt, theological and cultural as well. Pastriccio’s considerable role in shaping deponents’ narratives is further suggested by the strikingly similar structure and contents of several other reconciliation depositions in which he was involved, including at least two by other Muslim women professing to have been born to Christian parents and seeking reconciliation with the Catholic Church, the fifty-year-old Catterina Odorelavich, whose

\textsuperscript{30} Pastriccio was born in Split (modern Croatia), and became Prior of the House of Catechumens in 1645. ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 19r (July 22, 1645).
story was almost identical to Maddalena’s, and Anastasia Viggenich, who arrived in
Venice with her Muslim husband and two sons, all of whom converted to Christianity.31
All three testimonies were recorded within a few days of each other. Of particular
interest is Anastasia’s deposition, where not only her early childhood adhesion to Islam,
but also her very recent re-embrace of Christianity, are presented as determined by her
kinfolk. Her first conversion was brought about by her father’s decision to sell her to
Muslims. Now, “I find myself married to a Turk [Muslim] named Mustafà, who came to
Venice with [our] two sons to become Christian.”

Pastriccio’s understanding of the genre of inquisitorial reconciliation and his
theological imagination no doubt played a decisive role in the construction of these
narratives. His mediation was key not only during the depositions, but in deponents’
prior socialization in the Pia Casa. As I show below, prior to their reconciliation
ceremony deponents sometimes spent weeks in the Pia Casa, under the guidance of Jesuit
and other Catholic clergymen (often ones, like Pastriccio, with roots or rich past
experience working on the Ottoman frontier) and Venetian patrician patrons. As in their
depositions, so in the Pia Casa’s treatment of reconciled Christians, women were married
off to local Venetians shortly after their baptism, or placed in domestic service in
patrician households already linked to the Pia Casa through dense networks of patronage.
Men, on the other hand, were frequently placed either in apprenticeships or in military
service, often in faraway colonial outposts.

Yet, the fact that deponents emphasized contingent ritual practice rather than deep
spiritual conviction as defining their membership in a religious community was

31 Both files are in: Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 103 (June 4 & 7, 1647).
predicated not only on their gender, but also, crucially, on their place of provenance.³²

Both the Ottoman female emphasis on kinship and the Ottoman male emphasis on fear of violence as the determinant factor of changing religious allegiance share an important characteristic: they place the locus of agency outside the speaking subject. The twenty-one-year-old Giovanni Romolo from Thessalonica became Muslim when he was taken to Istanbul at age eleven, “forced to renege, circumcised, and made to trample on the cross.” He consequently lived as a Muslim for nine years until his arrival in Venice eight days before making his appearance in front of the Holy Office in 1630.³³ The eighteen-year-old Cretan Christoforo Sansona Sinope was recruited at age six to be a “Zamora” and “was always a Muslim by force, and externally and [in] exterior life but in my heart I was always a Christian. And I was a Muslim only outwardly, because I couldn’t do otherwise.”³⁴ Importantly, this is not to say that Ottoman deponents did not have a notion of interiority. On the contrary, as I noted earlier, Abdone framed his narrative by an abiding intention to reach Christian territory. Similarly, Christoforo Sansona Sinope distinguishes between “exterior life,” in which he practiced Islam, and his “heart” as the locus of purduring Christian belief. But unlike Protestant deponents, Ottoman ones did not ascribe to interiority and intentionality the same force to change the course of their lives, i.e., they did not account for their religious transformation by way of their will.

³² A recent article by Marc Baer addresses the gendered nature of conversion by examining the strategic use of conversion by women appearing before Sha’ria courts to dissolve their marriages in sixteenth-century Istanbul. Unfortunately, Baer does not specify how our notion of agency may be at odds with early modern Ottoman conceptions of subjecthood, and thus of agency and conversion. Baer 2004.
³³ Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88 (Oct. 3, 1630).
³⁴ “Sempre son stato turco per forza, et quanto all’estrarnero et al vivere esteriorem.te ma nel mio core son sempre stato christiano. Et solam[en]te Turco di fuora, perche non poteva far di manco”: Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 71 (June 7, 1616).
Indeed, the one deposition by a female Protestant preserved in the collection discussed above, by the twenty-four-year-old Swiss Anna Frais, bears much more similarity to those of her male Protestant fellows, than to any deposition by a Muslim woman. According to Anna,

having been born, nourished, and raised by a father and a mother in the lands of Lutherans, I have always held and believed all that the sect of Luther teaches, except that I have believed that there is purgatory, and also in the intercession of saints. Finally I have come to recognize my errors through the preaching and exhortations of the above-mentioned Father Fra Giacomo [and] have resolved to bring myself to the bosom if the Holy Catholic Church, totally detesting everything that contradicts said Church, [and] I confirm to believe in the future and observe that which the Holy Mother Catholic Church holds, believes, and teaches. Therefore I humbly appeal to this holy tribunal wishing to reconcile myself with said holy mother Church.35

As in Pierre Blanche’s narrative, and in striking contrast to those of Muslim women, Anna has scant little to say about her past kinship ties, other than to confirm her spiritual transformation (as well as to exculpate herself in part by suggesting her early skepticism about the basic Lutheran critiques of purgatory and intercession).

To conclude this section, a word of caution is in place against treating “Ottoman” and “Protestant” chronotopes of conversion as the products of internally-cohesive and self-contained cultures. Rather, we should see them as prototypes, which congealed in specific (in this case, Venetian) institutions and genres through the active mediation of identifiable social actors. As an illustration, let us examine a conversion narrative produced by a Venetian nobleman, which articulates an intermediate chronotope of conversion. In his reconciliation deposition of 1632, twenty-seven-year-old Venetian nobleman Marco Lombardo described how, six years earlier, he had been onboard a

35 Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88, (June 4, 1630). See appendix 8 for a transcript of the original deposition.
Venetian ship near Alexandria, Egypt, when captured by Muslims, and taken to a castle where

I stayed for four months and observed there the Mohammedan ceremonies, and had violence used against me by getting me drunk with brandy, and was violently circumcised and forced to speak Turkish, and I confessed to them to be Muslim for the fear of death with which they threatened me. But in my heart I had God, the Virgin, and the saints, which I always honored with my orations day and night. And I did not perform any other ceremonies, and that which I did, I did only with the exterior and never with the heart. Then when I saw an opportune time, I moved to Nazareth, and here I found a Franciscan friar who reconciled me [with the Church] in the manner that can be observed from the certificate he gave me, which I now present to the Holy Office. Now sorrowful and repentant I ask God for forgiveness and this holy tribunal to be reconciled to the holy faith, promising to live from now on as a good and true Catholic, and it is only a few days since I came back to Venice, that is about 5 days, and after I escaped from the Muslims [Turks] I have always lived in the Catholic manner and I confessed and communicated in Nazareth three times during the eight days I stayed there, and another time when I was in Zante.36

This dramatic narrative exploits the common tropes of Muslim barbarity and forced conversion at sword’s edge to appeal to the inquisitors’ mercy and exculpate the speaker from charges of apostasy. Unlike most Ottoman subjects seeking reconciliation with the Catholic Church, Marco identifies himself as an actor and an intentional subject. After narrating an initial episode of captivity and forced conversion where he is a passive victim (“had violence used against me,” “was violently circumcised and forced to speak Turkish”), in the rest of the text he narrates his own purposive actions (“I saw an opportune time, I moved to Nazareth, and here I found a Franciscan friar,” “I ask God for forgiveness,” “I confessed and communicated”). Yet, like most other deponents in front of the Venetian Holy Office discussing their conversion to Islam, Marco has surprisingly little to say about matters of belief, and presents the locus of religious affiliation in ritual

36 Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88 (Nov. 8, 1632). See appendix 9 for a transcript of the original deposition.
practices (in this case: circumcision and “speaking Turkish”; in other narratives: trampling on the cross, or eating meat indiscriminately on Friday and holiday), rather than in dogma or spiritual convictions. This calls for further examination of other narrative genres, both Venetian and Ottoman, which were available to deponents and their spiritual counselors, and which no doubt shaped their accounts.

**EXAMINA MATRIMONIORUM: FIXING ITINERARIES**

Another genre in which the two competing prototypical chronotopes of conversion can be traced is the *examina matrimoniorum* (matrimonial examination). In an effort to eliminate matrimony concluded without a priest officiating, the Council of Trent decreed that, if an intended bride or groom had lived away from their place of origin for a substantial period after puberty, their free (unwedded) status had to be verified prior to marriage.37 The process of verification took different forms, and applied to different categories of persons in various Catholic societies.38 In seventeenth-century Venice, an examination of two witnesses who had known the applicants their entire adult life was a pre-condition for marriage for all Christians whose baptismal records were unavailable, namely foreign-born Christians, as well as converts from Judaism and Islam.39 These witness testimonies, now preserved in the archives of the Venetian

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37 Franco 1995: 86.
38 In nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, for example, “certificates of solteria (bachelorhood or spinsterhood) were also required of foreigners, so-called vagos, people without a fixed domicile, widows and widowers, and all those who had absented themselves from their parishes for more than a year”: Martínez-Fernández 2000: 267.
39 To the best of my knowledge, the corpus of *examina matrimoniorum*, which survives in its entirety from 1592 onwards, has not yet been subjected to a detailed study. I should emphasize that the vast majority of petitioners for marriage license who were subjected to this procedure were not converts, but rather foreign born Christians, mostly journeymen and servants from the *Terraferma* (Venice’s colonies on the Italian mainland) and from Transalpine Europe, and, much less frequently, merchants and mariners from the *Stato*
Patriarchal curia, give a sense of how foreigners forged social networks within and outside the city, and how they sought to mobilize these networks to weave convincing biographical narratives that would allow them to marry in Venice. In particular, the testimonies suggest how foreigners and locals understood intimacy, localness, and embeddedness in specific social roles.

Of course, one should be careful not to read these testimonies as reliable sketches of actual life trajectories. As will soon become clearer, testimonies rarely contradicted each other openly, and the remarkable level of detail that witnesses were ready to provide about neighbors’ and mere acquaintances’ lives suggests careful prior briefing. In order to be granted a marriage license, applicants had to recruit witnesses who could claim familiarity with their whereabouts not only in Venice but, if possible, throughout their adult lives. This was highly unlikely in the case of Muslim converts and other Ottoman subjects, who often traveled a fair amount and did not linger in any one place for too long. Such persons had to either forge life histories which omitted inconvenient sojourns outside the city, or summon witnesses of similar background who could claim to have known them for their entire adult life.

For the purposes of this chapter, it is interesting to examine how testimonies on behalf of converts seeking marriage licenses linked their spatio-temporal movement with key ritual moments and religious transformation. The striking differences between the testimonies on behalf of Jewish and Muslim women converts may allow us to pose an
initial hypothesis about the chronotopic features of such narratives. All three cases I will
discuss are premised on the interlacing of spatiotemporal movement with women’s
changes of status, both religious and familial. But whereas conversion enabled, if it did
not determine, the Jewish convert’s transformations of status and geographical journeys
thereafter, the conversion of the Muslim women followed their transformation of status
and geographical journeys, and was implicitly presented as their effect.

Felice, daughter of Benetto and Dolcetta Cesana, was born in the Venetian ghetto,
and baptized in 1651, at age 13. In 1667, at age 29, she approached the Venetian
Patriarch for permission to marry. Felice’s two witnesses were long-time immigrants to
Venice: a fifty-year-old gondolier named Alvise, son of Daniele de Blanchis of Pinzano
in Aquilea, who had lived in Venice for thirty years, and the sixty-year-old Maddalena,
daughter of Giovanni Facini from Feltre, who had lived in Venice for thirty-seven
years. According to their testimonies, both witnesses came to know Felice as neighbors
shortly after her baptism, but had kept in touch with her over a sixteen-year period,
despite her several changes of residence.

The most striking aspect of Alvise’s and Maddalena’s testimonies on Felice’s
behalf is their contrived nature. Both witnesses provided the exact same chronology and
geography for Felice’s whereabouts over a sixteen-year period, including a sojourn in
Ferrara fifteen years earlier, and a list of all the parishes in Venice where Felice had lived
since leaving the Ghetto at age 13. It is unlikely that the two would have been able to

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40 Felice’s baptismal record does not survive in the registers of converts’ baptisms in either the Pia Casa dei
Catecumeni or the Patriarchal Curia.
41 It is noteworthy that Felice did not summon any Venetian natives as witnesses. Perhaps she did not
know any well enough, or perhaps she considered her witnesses localized enough to produce convincing
testimonies on her behalf.
date Felice’s move to Ferrara (1652), and state its exact length (10 months) unless briefed by her. Yet, despite their fabricated nature, and potential suspicions that her ten-month sojourn with Francesco Colombo in Ferrara might have raised about her celibacy and eligibility for marriage, the testimonies went unchallenged, and Felice’s request to marry was granted.42

Felice’s witnesses have little to say about her conversion, and make no explicit links between that event and her spatio-temporal transitions thereafter. Her conversion is clearly delimited in time (a past event which took place at the moment of transition from childhood to adulthood) and place (the convert left the ghetto and entered Catholic Venetian space). It is independent of Felice’s later peregrinations. In sharp contrast, another matrimonial examination, that of Maria, a widowed convert of Muslim background from the Aegean Island of Skyros, articulates a chronotope of conjuncture much akin to that characteristic of Ottoman women’s reconciliation depositions to the inquisition discussed above. Indeed, all of Maria’s witnesses make explicit the connection between her shifting kinship and household position, geographical and social mobility, and religious affiliation.

According to Maria’s three witnesses, she was captured as a youth by the Venetians on the island of Skyros in 1652, was brought to Crete by her captor, the operation’s commander Count Sabeni, who promptly had her baptized, placed in a

42 This was not always the case: Three years after Felice, Pier’Antonio q. Bechir, a Muslim convert from the Sibenik area, had to summon no less than ten witnesses (including two who submitted their testimonies in writing) before the Venetian Patriarch granted him permission to marry. Perhaps the fact that his baptism had taken place far away, in the town of Bisceglie in Spanish-occupied Puglia, and his lengthy sojourns away from Venice as a mariner, warranted greater scrutiny. For Felice’s case, see Examina Matrimoniorum, b. 81, cc. 1574r–v (Aug. 27, 1667). For Pier’Antonio’s: Examina Matrimoniorum, b. 68, cc. 375r–379r (Aug. 20, 1670).
monastery, and then married off to one of his lieutenant captains, a German Lutheran ensign named Stefan, who died a few months later. When Sabeni decided to move to Venice he took Maria along, possibly at her request, and put her to work as maidservant in his and in other, patrician households. However, when her plans to return to her patria were uncovered in December 1654, Maria was sent to the Casa del Soccorso, where she remained for a year and a half, until in May 1656 she was allowed to resume employment as a maidservant in the house of the Venetian Gerolamo Avogadro. Now, in 1659, a possible matrimony prompted her to approach the Patriarch with her witnesses.\footnote{ACPV, Examina Matrimoniorum, b. 63, cc. 371r–372v (March 20, 1659). On the Casa del Soccorso, a Venetian female charitable institution, see Chojnacka 2001: 125 and passim.}

The biography outlined above based on Maria’s three witnesses repeatedly links her conversion to her social and geographical mobility. Not only was her baptism a direct consequence of her capture and transfer to the Venetian colony of Crete, but her marriage to a Christian (though “heretical,” i.e. Lutheran, as one of her witnesses obliquely remarked) was made possible by these moves. Her widowhood, which followed shortly after, occasioned another journey—this time to the metropole, and a new state of servility. If marrying an officer gained her freedom from formal slavery, becoming a widow forced her to go back under the direct patronage and patriarchal control, first of Count Sabeni, then of Gerolamo Avogadro, and now, possibly, of a new husband. Indeed, as she was to discover once in Venice, her desire to go back to Skyros would be the pretext for her removal from Avogadro’s household and enclosure in a charitable institution. Only once her religious orthodoxy was confirmed (i.e. once she was sufficiently dissuaded from leaving Christian Venice to re-embrace her Muslim past)
was she removed from confinement. Now, perhaps at Sabeni’s and Avogadro’s behest, she was to be wedded again.

As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, the conflation of patronage, patriarchal authority, and religious discipline typified the relationships of female converts of Muslim background with their Venetian masters. Such complex relationships could involve additional members of a master’s household and an extended network of friends and kin. It is these complex ties of authority and patronage which may account for the contradictions sometimes found in matrimonial examination records. For example, Maria’s three witnesses diverged in important ways on the question of her relationship to Sabeni. Her first two witnesses, the thirty-seven-year-old ex-soldier Emanuel Machergiotti and the twenty-nine-year-old coppersmith Giacomo q. Raffaele Arneri, were both under sergeant major Sabeni’s command in 1652, and remained his protégés after moving to Venice. Both claimed to have been present at Maria’s first wedding, and plainly stated that Maria could not have re-married after her first husband’s death “because she has always stayed by the said Count.” These two testimonies apparently did not satisfy the Patriarch, for a month later another witness was summoned, the fifty-three-year-old Venetian native Gerolamo Avogadro, who by his own account was an old acquaintance of Sabeni’s, and who had employed Maria in his household “for the past three or four years.” His testimony suggested a rather different story. At the urging of the Venetian authorities he took Maria into his household in 1654, shortly after she had been “prompted by the chaplains of S. Zaccaria to turn to the Tribunals” against Sabeni. Avogadro was not interrogated as to the nature of Maria’s allegations against her patron, and did not divulge any further details. But Sabeni’s efforts to have Maria sent to the
*Casa del Soccorso* only a few months later, under the pretext of her alleged desire to return to Skyros (“with evident danger of reneging the faith”), may suggest an effort to silence a potential scandal. Significantly, Avogadro’s insistence at the closing of his testimony that it was Maria who had prompted Sabeni to take her to Venice with him—unconfirmed by the other witnesses—may have also served to emphasize Maria’s agency in a chain of events over which she exercised very little control, and to assuage any concerns about her interests in the prospective marriage.

Maria’s tangled relationship with Sabeni is only obliquely hinted at by the three witnesses (and, to be sure, was quite likely understood differently by each). Was she Sabeni’s sexual slave? Concubine? Beloved daughter-like protégé? In sending her first to a Cretan monastery, then to marry a German mercenary, then to Venice, then to Avogadro’s household, then to the Casa del Soccorso, and finally to a new marriage, was Sabeni covering up for, or trying to guarantee Maria’s well-being? These questions are impossible to address given the Patriarchal tribunal’s glaring lack of interest in them, and in the absence of any additional documents.

The matrimonial examinations of other converted women slaves of Ottoman background raise similar questions about the interdependence of religious conversion, social and geographical mobility. Take, for example, the testimonies produced the same year, 1659, on behalf of Cattarina, purchased in 1649 as a child of ten or twelve from a merchant on Zante (Zakynthos) by the Venetian Gabriele Gozzi. According to her two witnesses, thirty-seven-year-old Girolamo q. Aurelio Pruni and twenty-nine-year-old Domenico q. Bartolomeo Furello, both members of the Gozzi household, Cattarina had always been under Gozzi’s “protection.” Gozzi, they claimed, had kept Cattarina in his
house in Venice under lock and key until shortly before his death, when he had her transferred to the Casa del Soccorso of Vicenza, from whence she was returned to Venice by Gabriel’s father, Alberto, only a few weeks before the testimonies were produced.  

Whether Cattarina was Gabriele’s concubine or not (the witnesses claimed she had been a child of ten or twelve when captured in 1649, yet her baptismal certificate of 1654 defined her as “of adult age”), some of the dates in the narrative raise questions. Why was Cattarina baptized in the small village of Bevadoro (now part of the city of Vicenza), rather than in Venice, in which case she would have been eligible for support from the Pia Casa, but also subjected—along with her master—to much closer scrutiny? And why was her baptism held only in 1654, approximately five years after her arrival in Venice? More interestingly, how was she admitted into the Casa del Soccorso prior to her baptism (the governors of the Soccorso claimed in 1659 she had lived there for seven years)? And what prompted Alberto Gozzi to retrieve Cattarina from Vicenza and seek a husband for her now?

The extant documentation does not allow us to answer these questions conclusively. Yet, when read serially, the testimonies on behalf of converts repeatedly suggest the oversimplification of complicated itineraries, the glossing over of inconvenient details, and the irreconcilable contradictions between the testimonies of witnesses linked to converts and their masters in dense ties of patronage and outright

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44 ACPV, Examina Matrimoniorum, b. 63, cc. 647v–648v (Oct. 29, 1659). Alberto Gozzi was a Venetian merchant with some Ottoman trading partners. He was the master of at least one other converted slave girl, thirteen-year-old Antonia Margarita alias Sala, who was baptized in the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni on Oct. 13, 1655. See ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 45v. For his commercial activities, see, for example, Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 154, cc. 26v–27v (June 6, 1646).
dependence. These narratives both attest to the link between conversion and the vagaries of colonial and domestic subordination, and seek to erase their traces.

**NOTATORIO AND BAPTISMAL RECORDS: CATEGORIZING PERSONS**

Two types of documentation constitute the bulk of the surviving archives of the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni: baptismal/departure records and *notatorio*. Both were produced in very similar circumstances, in short proximity to the events they describe, by persons who were House priors or clerks, and for consumption by the same milieu of priors, members of the institution’s gubernatorial board, and Venetian government and ecclesiastical officials. Yet these two series of documents were organized around quite distinct logics, which in turn shaped very different kinds of texts. Beyond their significance for reconstructing the life trajectories of converts, and the ways such trajectories did or did not fit pre-existing patterns and governors’ expectations (the subject of the next section), the genres of baptismal records and bookkeeping, when read against each other, allow us to ask questions about the documentary practices of the governors, about how they understood the institution of which they were part, its relationships to its charges, the Church, the state, and the broader field of charitable institutions in early modern Venice.

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45 The Pia Casa’s archives are now split between two depositories: the Archive of the Venetian Patriarchal Curia and the Archive of Venice’s Charitable Institutions (Archivio I.R.E.). The former contains most baptismal records, whereas the latter contains two extensive volumes of the Pia Casa’s *notatorio* and other types of documents discussed below. According to Silvia Gasparini’s study of Venetian bookkeeping, a *notatorio* was a book in which “the quadernier is bound to inscribe credits not collected because of a lack of documents or the entreated prescription or desuetude, waiting for an inquisition to provide the missing data and allow their inscription on the ordinary quaderno for their exaction”: Gasparini 1994. At least in the case of the Pia Casa, the *notatorio* included a much greater range of transactions, as well as non-fiscal decisions taken by the board meeting. The gloss “bookkeeping” unfortunately does not convey this full range of meaning.
The Pia Casa’s notatorio registered, in brief, major decisions taken by the House’s board of governors. Entries are organized by the dates of the biweekly (and occasionally weekly) board meetings. While many catechumens, neophytes and other recipients of the House charity keep cropping up in the register week after week, they themselves are not the text’s organizing principle. Rather, at the center of attention are expenses, financial commitments and potential sources of revenue. Thus, only contextual evidence allows one to determine whether the proper name “Maria,” mentioned in the notatorio two weeks in a row, refers to the same person or to two homonymous persons. Obviously, the longer the gap between one mention of a certain name and the next, the harder it is to ascertain whether indeed both refer to the same person. While this poses serious methodological challenges, the notatorio records do provide a very useful point of entry into the operational logic of the Pia Casa. They allow for a comparative examination of the rationale behind governors’ decisions. For example—whom did they choose to support when money was scarce? How much were they willing to put into legal battles with the Jewish community over the baptism of Jewish converts’ children against the wishes of unconverted spouses/parents? Did their impetus change over time? What kinds of professional paths did the governors deem fit for different kinds of converts (young vs. old, men vs. women, Jewish vs. Muslim)? And, most importantly, how were these “kinds” determined? In other words, how did the governors draw the boundaries between different categories of converts, and what role did religion, language, economic status and gender play in determining their sense of who was fit to be integrated into Venetian society, and how?
The analytical usefulness of the data culled from the notatorio is much augmented when juxtaposed with other kinds of documents, particularly baptismal and departure records, and lists of beneficiaries of various bequests left to the House. The baptismal and departure registers cover more completely the period under investigation here, and survive in one form or another for the entire period 1590–1670, save for the first decade of the seventeenth century. Throughout this period, these genres and the distinction between them underwent considerable change. The early departure records comprised of a single, dated entry per person. Entries, which were listed in chronological order by date of departure from the House, invariably began with the neophyte’s new Christian name, followed by the previous, non-Christian one and former religious affiliation, a brief description of the circumstances of departure and the nature of his or her new employment. With the appointment of a new prior in 1645, and after a gap of ten years in the register, a new method was instituted for the registration of neophytes. Each page was divided into a two-column table, with each row dedicated to a single catechumen. The left column registered the date and circumstances of his or her arrival in the house, previous name, religion, place of provenance, and age. Then followed information about the date and place of baptism and the new Christian name given at baptism. The right column gave the date of departure from the House, and additional information about prospective employment. Later additions, such as dates in which the neophyte received money from one of the major bequests left to the House and the sum received, or the fact and date of death, were also registered in the right column.  

46 See appendices 10 and 11 for sample pages from the departure and baptismal registers.
Baptismal records similarly underwent a transformation in this period. The early register, covering the years 1590–1594, consisted of two columns per person on facing pages. Average columns occupied between one-third to one-half of an octavo-sized page. The left column opened with the date of arrival, followed by a narrative description of the circumstances of a potential catechumen’s arrival and admittance in the House. Sometimes it also provided details such as former name and religion, age, and place of provenance. The right column described the date and place of baptism, the Christian name given at baptism, and the name(s) of godparent(s). The later register, a copy of a now-lost original and covering the years 1626–1738, is much sparser. Each entry is allocated on average one tenth of a folio-sized page. The left column gives the Christian name, former name and religion, age, and date of baptism. It also indicated the entry’s original page number on the lost register. The right column, usually left empty, might contain the date on which the neophyte received money from one or two major bequests left to the House by patricians Tomaso Mocenigo and Giacomo Galli, and the sum given.

Despite these substantial differences, important commonalities warrant a consideration of the baptismal and departure registers together. In both, each entry is allocated limited, predetermined physical space on the page—not more than a few lines in most cases—concretizing materially the tendency to fit catechumens into a limited set of categories: “Jew,” “Turk,” “Moor,” “child,” “slave,” etc. The registers note only the barest milestones in a convert’s life prior to baptism, and even less of his or her whereabouts thereafter. This stands in stark contrast to the elaborate attention to converts’ conduct for decades after their baptism, characteristic of the notatorio.
The allocation of only limited space for each entry in the baptismal and departure registers, and the use of two columns per entry to mark two discrete stages, a “before” and an “after” in a neophyte’s life, was hardly accidental or inevitable. That these techniques were carefully observed in all later periods suggests that for the purposes of the registers’ compilers, the whereabouts of neophytes after their baptism mattered far less than the need to count souls, prevent repeated baptisms, and ascertain the fact of baptism and departure themselves. Thus, the moments of baptism and departure, respectively, represent in these two genres the legal fiction of a radical break with the past, and the beginning of a new life. As I will show in the next chapter, this legal fiction was worlds apart from the actual trajectories of Venetian converts upon baptism.

While often missing much vital data, the vast majority of baptismal and departure records did not fail to register catechumens’ previous, non-Christian name. As the historian Duane Corpis notes in his discussion of the serial documentation of Protestant converts to Catholicism in early modern Augsburg, the meticulous registration of converts’ previous names by the Franciscan monks who supervised their catechetical instruction suggests that the converts were not perceived as vagabonds or rootless foreigners. These converts were not to be treated as if they belonged to the faceless and nameless masses who perpetually roamed the countryside. The Franciscans named them in order to fix both their identities and their place within the monastic community, even if that place was only temporarily. Naming indicated that the Franciscans wished to integrate the converts into the broader Catholic community, thus distinguishing them from the unnamed beggars who might receive alms but who nevertheless remained anonymous outsiders […] Naming the converts’ place of origin distinguished them from migratory vagrants, who had no real “fatherland.”47

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A similar logic guided the governors of the Pia Casa in noting down converts’ names and places of origin. As we will see, rather than transitory sojourners who passed through the city on their way to another locale, converts were strongly encouraged to grow roots in Venice, and such roots were themselves often seen as indices of successful conversion. In fact, appearance in the baptismal register signaled only the beginning of a process of localization which was expected to last a lifetime. As neophytes were subjected to a host of disciplinary techniques which forever marked them as “baptized infidels,” they were also, crucially, to become part of the Venetian moral community. In a sense, as the historian David Nirenberg argues in relation to religious communities in late medieval Aragon, it was precisely such indelible marks of difference which made their bearers vital members of a community, holding an important lesson for everyone to see about God’s grace and the possibility of salvation.⁴⁸

A juxtaposition of the baptismal and departure registers and the notatorio also raises the question of their relationship to other prevalent genres of documentation at the time. An important, though neglected, genre that comes to mind is that of the family book (Libro di famiglia) which, as recently noted by the historian James Grubb, “frequently mingle[d] family notices and moral commentary with accounts of land management” and “retained strong residual traces of the account or management book into the Quattrocento and beyond.”⁴⁹ The similarity of concerns of the Pia Casa’s notatorio and baptismal and departure registers with those of libri di famiglie, points to the relationship of the institution of the Pia Casa to patrician understandings of the

⁴⁸ On difference as what binds together various groups in a moral community, see Nirenberg 1996.
⁴⁹ Grubb 2002: 15.
family. In the next chapter I consider how governors not only invoked familial metaphors to describe their relations with the catechumens and neophytes under their custody, but indeed sought to provide surrogate families to converts, and used the relational resources they already possessed as members of the political and professional elites of Venice to insert converts—and themselves—into webs of patronage that welded charitable benevolence, social discipline, and political exigency.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter considered several genres through which conversion was documented and regimented in different Venetian institutional contexts. It illustrated how spatiotemporal conceptions were key to the ways in which different genres articulated the process of religious conversion and its end product, the converted subject. In particular, I identified two prototypical chronotopes. The “chronotope of conjuncture,” which characterized narratives by or about Ottoman converts, conceived of religious conversion as the possibly unintended consequence of spatiotemporal transition from one spatially-defined religious community to another, and from the former’s ritual time to the latter’s. On the other hand, the “chronotope of purposive journeying,” which characterized Protestant narratives, conceived of religious conversion as the intentional, ur-cause (rather than default consequence) of a convert’s peregrinations and possible change of status.

Attending to the chronotopic qualities of different genres alerts us to a tension between how converts’ itineraries were narrated in reconciliation depositions to the Holy Office and in matrimonial examinations by the Venetian Patriarch, on the one hand, and
in baptismal and departure registers produced by officials in the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, on the other hand. In their inquisitorial depositions, converts often associated their transition from one religious community to another with geographical mobility and with significant ritual moments in their lifecycle. They envisioned the (re)embracing of Christianity as a journey into Christendom, with the Venetian metropole as an endpoint, both physical, and spiritual. Matrimonial examinations also often linked conversion with geographical journeys, although in this genre mobility was sometimes reduced to “plausible,” simplified itineraries from “there” to “here.” This tendency is even more tangible in the Pia Casa’s baptismal and departure registers. Rather than as journeys with multiple stops, potential complications, detours, and delays, the registers crystallized converts’ biographies into a limited set of pre-given categories of vital data, such as place of provenance, age, former name and religion. A life was reduced to three crucial dates: arrival at the House, baptism, and departure. Perhaps the fiction of the fixity of identity was particularly important to maintain in the face of the alchemical transformation envisioned to take place at the baptismal font: To bring closure to a previous life sequence, its contours had to be established first. Indeed, these registers visually and textually divide converts’ lives into two radically separate phases, a “before” and an “after.”

Yet, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, a radical break with one’s previous life was rarely characteristic of early modern Venetian converts. Instead, converts’ pre-existing social networks proved key in determining their itineraries after baptism.
PART II: CONVERSION

CHAPTER V

PRACTICING CONVERSION: THE PIA CASA DEI CATECUMENI

This chapter traces the longer trajectories after baptism of Muslim and Jewish converts to Catholicism in seventeenth-century Venice, as shaped by one of the key institutions that mediated the ongoing relationship between converts, local elites, and the Venetian state, the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni (Holy House of the Catechumens). My analysis is based on a database of virtually all convert baptismal records, account books and other documents in the archives of the Pia Casa for the period 1590–1670, the first eighty years for which substantial serial documentation by and about this institution survives.¹

In studying the archives of the Venetian Pia Casa, Holy Office, and Patriarchal Curia, I am less interested in either institutional or Church history per se. Rather, I view religious conversion as a set of interlinked social practices employed in the project of subject making and the perpetuation of imperial power relations in the Venetian state.

The process of religious conversion in early modern Venice was inseparable from two other projects critical to the early modern state: the encouragement of immigration from the Ottoman Empire and the permanent settlement of frontier populations, on the one hand, and the attempt to subject the populace to parish-based forms of social discipline and supervision through Church activities, such as regular confession and communion, on the other. While focusing on how conversion related to immigration and social discipline in the Venetian metropole, this chapter seeks to place these projects squarely within their imperial context. It therefore explores how both Venetian administrators and converts themselves exercised conversion not as a miraculous moment of rebirth but as a lifelong process intended to transform foreigners into loyal juridical subjects of metropolitan state and society.

CHARITY, DISCIPLINE, AND IMPERIAL SUBJECT-MAKING

In chapter 2 I discussed petitions for employment as commercial brokers presented to the Venetian Senate by supplicants whom I dubbed “trans-imperial subjects.” Among these trans-imperial supplicants seeking employment as commercial brokers converts constituted a distinguishable group. Their petitions repeatedly 2

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2 On vagrancy on the Ottoman-Venetian frontier, see Pedani 2002. For a sample of legislation by the Senate intended to curb emigration and depopulation of the Venetian countryside by penalizing emigrants, see Compilazione delle leggi, b. 203. On parish-based social discipline in the Venetian state, see Montanari 1987; Bizzocchi 1995.
articulated the notion that subjects and rulers were mutually linked through moral and civic obligations. Whereas petitions cast the Church as the provider of converts’ spiritual well-being, the state was exhorted to assume its own, material duties, by providing converts with employment.\(^3\) Such an understanding of the state as converts’ ultimate patron was articulated through other practices as well, besides petitioning and brokerage. In this chapter, I look at one of the key institutions which mediated the relationship between converts and the early modern Venetian state, the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni. I show how this institution was instrumental in shaping distinct forms of charity that allowed two groups of Venetian elites, patricians and citizens, to bring together their corporate spiritual and civic claims, and at the same time furthered their individual and family interests by weaving dense vertical and horizontal networks of patronage. Through the negotiation of converts’ adoption contracts, dowries, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities, and the periodic distribution of alms, the institution also served as a laboratory for the elaboration of practices of social discipline and community-building, which were key to Venetian elites’ mythic self-representations as the benevolent custodians of a well-run republic.

The Pia Casa dei Catecumeni was established in 1557 to shelter, instruct and ultimately baptize its charges. It was the fruit of collaboration between Venetian ecclesiastical authorities, Jesuits, lay patricians, and colonial administrators.\(^4\) Its model

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\(^3\) The practice of converts’ petitioning to the sovereign (or to lesser patrons) for financial assistance is not unique to Venice, and is well documented in the seventeenth century in both the Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire. On the former, see Minkov 2000; on the latter, see Corpis 2001: 109–10, 114.

\(^4\) Ellero 1987; Vanzan 1997. The founders were the theologian Dr. Giovanni Battista Trescolini and the patrician laymen Giacomo Foscarini, Giovanni Battista Contarini, Alfonso Maravessi, Girolamo di Cavalli, Giusto Morosini and Francesco Marcolini. Contarini and the Jesuit sympathizers Cavalli and Foscarini were among the founders and governors of another Venetian charitable institution, the Ospedale dei Derelitti. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 4–5; Aikema and Meijers 1989: 215–23. The Jesuits enjoyed great success
was a similar House established by the Jesuits in Rome in 1543 in response to calls for apostolic rejuvenation of the Church.5 Yet it was also deeply rooted in a long and thriving tradition of semi-autonomous charitable institutions in Venice as elsewhere on the Italian peninsula predating the Catholic Reformation. Such institutions provided an opportunity for patricians and non-patrician well-to-do citizens alike to exercise patriarchal modes of authority by distributing charity to socially inferior members of the congregation, be they poorer men, youth, or women.6 In the case of the Pia Casa, a general injunction to engage in charitable works was augmented by the specific Church teaching that “a person who helped save the soul of an unbeliever earned divine blessing, performing a deed that would be remembered at heaven’s gate.”7

Although the Venetian Pia Casa has not been studied in detail before, several historians have given it some attention. Some, notably Brian Pullan and Benjamin Ravid, have addressed its coercive mechanisms, particularly vis-à-vis Jews, in the context of Tridentine Reform. Others, like Monica Chojnacka and Anna Vanzan, have pointed to its charitable activities and role in facilitating patronage across geographical, gendered, and

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6 Of the vast literature on early modern charitable institutions, see especially: Pullan 1971; Grendi 1983; Cavallo 1995; Eisenbichler 1997; Gentilcore 1999; Terpstra 2000; Black 2004. For an illuminating discussion of the role of confraternal charity in shaping early modern civic elites’ ideas about welfare reform, see especially Terpstra 1994. On charity in a cross-cultural and comparative perspective, see the collected essays in Cohen 2005.

7 Kertzer 1997: 56. In 1687 Pope Innocent XI issued a plenary indulgence and a perpetual remission of sins to all governors of the Venetian Pia Casa. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 73–74 (Jan. 10, 1687 m.v.). Besides concrete social advantages discussed below, serving as a governor of the Pia Casa also brought a spiritual return: Upon a governor’s death, five masses were to be celebrated in his honor in the church of the Pia Casa, the remaining governors were to recite De Profundis, and the catechumens the Rosary. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 16.
economic divides. In my analysis below, I have sought not only to combine these two perspectives, and to treat the conversion of Jews and Muslims as one analytical field, but to identify how, as a nexus of benevolence and discipline, the Pia Casa functioned as an imperial state institution. Rather than view the House as distinct from its charges, I call attention to the transformative quality of institutional practices to define and redefine the institution itself, and all of those who were involved in its operations, including its citizen and patrician patrons.

Indeed, if part of the Pia Casa’s mission was to integrate converts and governors into preexisting, local networks of patronage, in fundamental ways the House was also an imperial institution, linking the Venetian metropole with its colonies and frontier regions. Frequently, House governors bore personal ties to the Levant through years of service as Venetian colonial officials or as merchants in the Ottoman Empire. High-ranking Venetian clergymen serving in the colonies were also part of the House’s extended patronage network. They participated in the House’s gubernatorial board meetings while in Venice, sent donations to the House, facilitated the transfer of potential catechumens to the metropole, and hired neophytes shortly after their baptism to serve in their households.

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8 Pullan 1983; Ravid 2001; Vanzan 1997; Chojnacka 2001.
9 See, for example, the participation of the Archbishop of Split in the interrogation of the Bosnian Chiarina, a prospective convert from the town of Dubar in the Sarajevo region in 1595, his participation the following month in the chastisement of two misbehaved converts, and his intervention on behalf of one of them with a prospective patrician patron. Three years later, the Archbishop was involved in an attempt to secure a spot for a young Jewish convert, Pietro Angelo Zen, in a seminary, and ultimately took him into his house until another arrangement could be found. In exchange for employing another convert, Marco, the Archbishop promised to buy him clothes. In 1611 a Muslim catechumen by the name of Assaim was admitted to the House based on a letter of recommendation by the Archbishop of Corfu. A letter by the Pia Casa governors to the bishop of Treviso in 1619 asked him to recommend a recently baptized neophyte, Orsetta, to one of the local convents. The same year a letter by Marco, the Bishop of Padua, urged the Pia Casa governor to admit Ibrahim, a Muslim in need of a catechist who knew his language. In 1654 the governors’ general meeting was attended by the Bishop of Kotor Vicenzo Buchia and his nephew, who
Links with the frontier were also forged through the hiring of colonial émigrés to serve in a variety of positions in the Pia Casa administration. For example, in choosing priors for the House, preference was given to candidates who commanded Greek, Hebrew, or Turkish, “so they could understand, and instruct, similar infidels.” Not surprisingly, many priors and prioresses were émigrés from Venice’s colonies in the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean, and some were converts themselves. Their imperial connections were often capitalized upon.

Permission to return to the frontier was almost invariably granted to converts who sought it, especially if they went there to serve in Venetian colonial households or in the military. For example, after serving for six years in the household of Andrea Contarini, who was the Pia Casa governor and a procurator of St. Mark, Giacomo Antonio alias Amer from Klimno (Croatia), who had been baptized in 1653 at age seven, was sent to the colony of Zante (Zakynthos) to work for the English consul William Vit. Upon his return to Venice in 1670, and after a short sojourn in Bergamo, his old master and patron Contarini purchased for him a captaincy in a cavalry regiment in Dalmatia. On another occasion in 1591 Bastian, a slave who ran away from his Ottoman Muslim master while sojourning in Venice and was able to prove he had been born a Christian, was reconciled, asked to take into their care the eighteen-month-old baby Paolin alias Giosef, son of Rachel, and promised to raise him and prepare him for the priesthood in due course. One of the major bequests left to the Pia Casa in this period was from Bernardo Florio, the archbishop of Zara, in 1657. See AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 15; AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 50r (June 8, 1595), c. 52r (July 20, 1595), c. 53v (Aug. 10, 1595), c. 90v (Dec. 10, 1598), c. 92r (Feb. 25, 1598), c. 94v (June 11, 1599), c. 95v (July 1, 1599); IRE, CAT B 6, c. 19v (May 19, 1611), c. 147v (June 6, 1619), c. 159v (Nov. 7, 1619); AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 44v (Sept. 24, 1654); Degli Avogadro 1857: xxv.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10} AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 29.}\]

\[\text{- Girolamo Pastricci from Split (Croatia) became House prior in 1645. Nicolò Nepusa from Kotor (Montenegro) became House Prior on March 26, 1654. A year later, on March 4, 1655, he was replaced by Michel Cozunovich, also from Split. Cozunovich served as prior for the next two decades. For a (partial) list of the House priors, see AIRE, CAT G 3, f. 1 (“Serie dei Priori del Pio Logo de Catecumeni”).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11} ACPV, Examina Matrimoniorum, b. 63, cc. 151r–152r (Jan. 29, 1670 m.v.).}\]
confessed and communicated, and then allowed to leave for Kotor Montenegro) to serve there in the household of the Venetian governor, Domenico da Revera.  

Converts and their patrons thus extended the Venetian moral community to the frontier, if not beyond it. Occasional references to catechumens sent to the House by Venetian magistracies in the colonies suggest that it was operative in consolidating ties with colonized populations, and perhaps eliciting consent in places where Venetian rule was premised primarily on military and economic might.  

For example, in 1663 the governors admitted into the House an unnamed renegade, sent at the explicit request of the Camera dell'armar (Defense Ministry) to be catechized and sent back to his place of residence, Sibenik in Dalmatia.

Fundraising was another mechanism through which the Pia Casa fostered horizontal and vertical ties across estates in Venetian society and throughout the empire. Most funding was secured from bequests left to the Pia Casa by patricians and citizens, both men and women, and, significantly, also by leading clergymen from the Terraferma and the Stato da Mar. Additional funding was procured through fundraising campaigns by patented convert alms-collectors in various Venetian territories, including campaigns dedicated to specific converts. This practice meshed well with broader Venetian policies intended to further the Serenissima’s hegemony on the mainland and in the

13 ACPV, BdC, 1, c. 6r (July 15, 1591 & Oct. 30, 1591). For other similar cases see also Ibid., c. 3r (Nov. 13, 1590), c. 8v (July 12, 1592); ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 2v (April 8, 1618), c. 3r (June 20, 1618), c. 16v (March 3, 1633), c. 19r (Sept. 1, 1645), c. 40r (Feb. 27, 1652 m.v.), c. 60v (July 22, 1665).

14 Evidence suggests that Orthodox Christian clergy in Mt. Athos and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire periodically assisted converts to cross the border and reach Venice. Krstic 2004: 290–1.

16 For a list of the bequests, see degli Avogadro 1857: xxv.

17 In 1595, the Venetian Pia Casa raised money as far away as the church of Val de Reder in the diocese of Trent for the dowry of a convert named Antonia, who was to marry Zuane, a Venetian scale-maker. AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 50r (June 14, 1595). See also: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 55v (Oct. 13, 1595).
maritime colonies. The administration of alms-collecting patents was also one of the mechanisms through which the Pia Casa sought to establish its jurisdiction over all converts of the Venetian state. Rather than allow converts to beg for charity on their own, the Pia Casa sent authorized converts on annual alms-collecting campaigns throughout all the churches of a given territory, the proceeds of which were then to be distributed among eligible converts. For example, a contract and alms-collecting patent issued in 1619 to the Jewish convert Antonio Giustiniano forbade any other converts from independently collecting alms on the Terraferma. Instead, they were to be “persuaded to return to the said Pia Casa their mother, assuring them that they will be provided for by the governors, as is their intention and thought.” The patent conceives of Venetian territory as a unified Christian space, where the Pia Casa’s moral authority, and, hence, ability to raise funds for its cause, go unchallenged. Yet its careful attention to the need to collaborate with and appease both local clergy and Venetian colonial administrators suggests a de facto recognition of the Pia Casa’s limited efficacy outside the city proper. The governors’ repeated correspondence with colonial administrators and clergy pledging them to assist its alms-collectors confirms this sense.

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18 The practice seems to have originated in Rome, where Converts were patented as alms-collectors as early as 1551. See Simonsohn 1989: 34.
19 ACPV, BdC, 20, c. 95 (July 1, 1619). See appendix 12 for a transcript and an image of the original patent.
BECOMING CATECHUMENS

In the period 1590–1670, the Pia Casa hosted a total of approximately 1,300 catechumens, between five and fifty a year, usually for a month or two prior to baptism and shortly thereafter, but occasionally for significantly shorter or longer periods.\(^{20}\)

Before they could be baptized and received into the new faith, candidates underwent a period of catechetical instruction by the House prior, were taught to recite their prayers,

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\(^{20}\) The regulations required at least eight months to elapse before a catechumen was baptized, to make sure of his or her true intentions. In reality the period was often much shorter. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 43.
and attended mass and confession regularly.\textsuperscript{21} The Pia Casa employed a variety of techniques intended to produce disciplined, controllable subjects. Catechumens were subjected to monastic-style time discipline, with clear limits on their hours of sleep, and with activities carefully regulated and scheduled for different times of day.\textsuperscript{22} Male and female catechumens were socialized into normative gender roles, with absolute segregation between the sexes. Female catechumens were restricted to the premises and employed in cooking, spinning, and washing laundry.\textsuperscript{23}

Jews made up about a quarter of catechumens in the Pia Casa in this period, and many came to the House with or following relatives. A large percentage of these Jewish catechumens, 43\% of men and 64\% of women, were Venetian. The now extensive scholarship on Venetian Jewry has alerted us to important socioeconomic and cultural differences within the ghetto population—between “Levantines” and “Ponentes” with roots and lingering contacts in the Spanish and Ottoman Empires, “Germans” or Ashkenazi Jews, and Italian Jews. Still, all Venetian Jewish converts shared some important features. Most obviously, almost all spoke some variety of Italian, and many wrote and read it as well. Long before their conversion, many Jewish converts formed part of kinship, social, intellectual and commercial networks that extended beyond the

\textsuperscript{21} Catechumens could also receive instruction from mendicant Friars fluent in their languages. The regulations stipulated that if the prior did not command the language of a prospective catechumen, he was to find a mendicant friar or another Christian to serve as interpreter, and then locate a clergyperson to provide religious instruction. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 42–43.

\textsuperscript{22} AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 52.

\textsuperscript{23} The first extant regulations of the Pia Casa, which date from 1737, suggest the limitations of earlier efforts to shape catechumens’ daily life. Much attention was devoted to the physical separation of female catechumens from the outside world. Any unmediated contact with men was strictly prohibited. Visits to the female wing by governors were to be infrequent, and conducted only by pairs of older governors past their fiftieth year while accompanied by the Prioress. The Prioress was likewise required to accompany the confessor during his weekly visits to the female wing, and to stay close by for the entire duration of his visit. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 19, 33.
ghetto and indeed beyond Venice and the Mediterranean. Such networks and skills proved decisive in shaping converts’ future residential and professional paths. It also made relapse following a chance encounter with former coreligionists, especially unconverted relatives, more plausible in governors’ eyes, warranting prolonged seclusion in the House prior to baptism.24

But, perhaps even more than other, similar contemporary institutions, the Venetian Pia Casa did not target only local Jews. Quite a few Jewish catechumens came from other parts of the Italian peninsula (26%), the rest of Europe (8%), Ottoman commercial centers such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Thessalonica (8.6%), Venetian and other Mediterranean colonies (3.4%) and North Africa (2.3%). But the majority of catechumens, about three quarters, were Muslims, mostly from the Ottoman Balkans (58%), North Africa (13.5%), the Greek Islands (12%), and Anatolia (6.7%). Only 6.3% came from the Black Sea, Ottoman Syria and Palestine, and the Safavid and Mughal empires combined.25 In other words, most converts came from the Ottoman-Venetian frontier and from Mediterranean regions with a long history as European colonies or trading posts, and thus may have had some prior contact with the Venetian world; quite a few may have been first generation Muslims.26


25 These figures, as well as the ones regarding the provenance of Jewish catechumens above, and of Muslim women in note 36, are based on the 651 catechumens whose place of provenance was registered and identifiable, i.e. exactly one half of all catechumens registered by the Pia Casa for the period 1590–1670.

26 This was especially true of Muslim women, 84% of whom came from the Balkans and the Greek Islands, compared with 65% of Muslim men. Only 3% of Muslim women came from Anatolia, Arab-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, and the Black Sea region combined. None came from Central Asia.
Some Muslim catechumens were soldiers in the Venetian army on the mainland or oarsmen and mariners in the Venetian fleet. They were sent to the House by or with the consent of their commanders, and usually returned to their posts shortly after baptism. Others came on their own, or were sent specifically for their baptism from Venice’s Adriatic and Mediterranean colonies. But the large majority of Muslim converts were domestic slaves in Venetian patrician and citizen households, where they might have served for years prior to their conversion. Although they were immigrants, and thus “poor in relational resources,” as historian Simona Cerutti puts it, long sojourn in Venice made at least some of them less poor in such resources than is sometimes assumed.

Still, since slaves often arrived in Venice alone, their separation from natal kin and community as a precondition for conversion had already been accomplished, obviating the need to confine them to the Pia Casa for long periods, as in the case of Jewish catechumens. From the 1640s on, rather than seclusion in the confines of the Pia Casa, many Muslim catechumens, especially children and women, who had already been employed as domestic slaves around the city, remained in their masters’ homes while

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28 On domestic slavery, see Romano 1991; see also Sarti 1991 on Bolognese slave converts.
30 However, archival traces of scandals in the wake of attempts by Ottoman Muslims to claim their relatives converted in Venice, especially young women, confirm the governors’ fears. See, for example, the case of a Muslim convert who, after twelve years in Venice, attempted to return to the Ottoman Empire, but was captured in the Fondaco dei Turchi: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, cc. 89v–90v (Oct. 9, 1622); or the case of the converted daughter of a high-ranking Muslim Ottoman official from Clissa who became a nun in Venice, and whose father’s attempts to persuade her to return home were refused and met with counter attempts to convert him to Catholicism, discussed in detail in chapter 8: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 18, cc. 38r–48v (June 4, 1627); or, finally, the case of a Bosnian convert who claimed to have run away from her husband, and to have been consequently kidnapped by her Muslim relatives with the help of Venetian collaborators: Avogaria di Comun, Misc. Penale, b. 343, fasc. 15 (Aug. 7, 1642). This and similar cases are briefly discussed in Vanzan 1996.
receiving catechetical instruction. Although registered with the Pia Casa, they came to the House only for their baptism ceremony, which could take place anywhere between a day and over a year from the date of their admittance as “children of the House.”31 Some converts were even registered with the Pia Casa after their catechization and baptism elsewhere. These procedures did not supplant catechization in the Pia Casa, but rather reflect the institution’s effort to exert authority over all convert baptisms in Venice.32

The occupational profile charted above should not obscure the fact that the majority of catechumens ranged from newborns to teenagers.33 This is significant, in that the younger the converts the more their future depended on governors’ efforts to place them in domestic service (for both girls and boys), negotiate an apprenticeship or military post (for boys), marry them off honorably by financing their dowries or facilitate their admission to convents (for girls). Efforts to secure converts’ future took different paths, depending on how governors perceived the moral, intellectual, and physical capacities that age, gender, ethnic origin, level of education, and pedigree bestowed on different kinds of people. Converts’ future paths were also shaped by Jewish and Muslim converts’ disparate access to local social networks.

31 Such arrangements clearly benefited masters, who did not wish to part with their domestic laborers for extended periods of time. It also offered the Pia Casa an effective way to claim authority over more neophytes without shoudering all the responsibility for their future. For a sample of cases, see ACPV, BdC, 2, cc. 19v, 20r, 21v, 22r; ACPV, BdC, 3, cc. 12r–v.
32 This hypothesis is supported by the unusually high number of baptisms registered by the Pia Casa in 1647–1649, 37, 45, and 37 respectively, compared with the annual average of 10 in the previous quarter of a century.
33 In the period 1640–1670, in which age at baptism was registered in over 95% of the cases, children and youth under 16 constituted over 37% of all converts, with additional 20% in the age group 17–20. As other parameters of the convert population (gender ratio, prior religious affiliation, and place of provenance) did not change much between 1590 and 1670, we may assume that children and youth constituted an actual majority of converts even before 1640. These figures diverge quite dramatically from the corresponding figures for Rome, where many more Jewish converts seem to have been adults between nineteen and thirty, with children and youth constituting a much smaller portion of the total convert population. For a table of Jewish converts by age in early modern Rome, see Milano 1970: 144–45.
Of the roughly 1,300 catechumens who entered the Pia Casa from 1590 to 1670, over 160 (12%) did so with or following relatives. In several cases, nuclear families from the Ottoman Empire arrived in the House together, and, significantly, in all cases they departed en bloc shortly after baptism to resettle outside Venice, often in the frontier. For example, on August 1, 1619, the “well deserving” Paolo Armano alias Regeb from Üsküdar (now part of Istanbul, on the Asian shore of the Bosporus), his renegade wife Maria, who had been baptized as an infant, and their five sons, arrived in the Pia Casa. Paolo had served onboard a Venetian armored vessel, and upon baptism was persuaded to resume his post along with three of his sons. The governors promised to assist Maria and their remaining children. Both spouses received money and new clothes upon departure from the House. In early 1624, another converted couple, Paolo and Rosetta Marina, left the Pia Casa with their daughter and moved into their own house in “a village in the region of Sarenzo” (Istria). Later that same year, Giovanni Pietro de Piccolo, a renegade Christian from Udine now reconciled with the Church, his Muslim wife, and their five baptized children left the Pia Casa with the governors’ permission to go to the town of Loreto, where the wife was to be baptized.34

In the above examples, conversion fitted not only into a familial quest for social mobility, but also within an imperial logic that sought to repopulate the frontier and extend the metropolitan moral community to it. More frequently, a parent wishing to convert arrived at the House and brought his or her children along.35 This could reflect a

34 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 154r (Aug. 1, 1619), c. 156v (Sept. 12, 1619), c. 159r (26 Sept. and Oct. 24, 1619), c. 159v (Nov. 14, 1619); ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 8v (Feb. 13, 1623 m.v.), c. 10r (July 23, 1624).
35 In the case of local Jewish converts, this could often lead to acrimonious legal battles. See, for example, the failed appeal to the Venetian Senate by Abram Caneiani and the Venetian Jewish Community in an effort to retrieve Abram’s son, taken by his mother, Altadonna, to the Pia Casa in 1616: Compilazione
search for better prospects upon a spouse’s death, or an attempt to break free from an unhappy marriage. The records rarely reveal the motivations behind such moves, but it is safe to assume that the arrival of free Muslim Ottoman women and children in the Pia Casa was part of a larger migration wave in search of new prospects. A case in point is that of the thirty-year-old widow Salige from Corquiza (Korce in Albania), who arrived in the Pia Casa with her two children, a twenty-five-year-old fellow townswoman, and two other children on 1 July, 1665. All six, along with another Muslim convert and her two children, were baptized in a single public ceremony in the church of the Jesuits two months later. With the governors’ blessing, a few weeks after baptism the three women went to live together on their own in a house in Corte Morosina in the parish of San Martin, while their children dispersed: one became an apprentice to a local weaver, and the other five were placed as domestic servants in Venice, Padua and Cremona. The children’s divergent paths proved key to their future. In 1670, all five children who remained in the Veneto region received funds from a bequest left to the House, while the girl sent to Cremona was never mentioned in the records again, suggesting that her tracks were lost.

By observing that conversion could facilitate family mobility, we should not assume “family” as the agent of purposive action. This is well illustrated by the de Castro family, whose five adult siblings passed through the Pia Casa in considerable

delle leggi, b. 294, c. 278 (March 14, 1616). On child baptism in Venice, see Ravid 2001; on contemporary theological debates regarding child baptism, see Roth 1936; Rowan 1975; Bernos 2003; for an extensive treatment of two nineteenth-century cases of children baptized against parental wishes in the Papal States, see Kertzer 1997; Kertzer 2002.

On conversion as an Ottoman women’s strategy for escaping marriages, see Baer 2004.

ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 62r (Oct. 25, 1665), c. 62v (Sept. 8, 1665 and Oct. 5, 1665), c. 63r (Nov. 17, 1665 and Jan. 22, 1665, 1665 m.v.).

ACPV, BdC, 3, c. 31v (Sept. 7, 1670 to Feb. 25, 1670 m.v.)
intervals: Salamon, Mosè, Sara, Rachel, and Abram, children of Bianca and the late Isach de Castro, a well-respected Venetian Jewish family of Iberian descent, were all baptized between 1650 and 1665. The timing and order of their arrival at the Pia Casa, and their respective ages at the time, are significant. First to convert were the two younger sons, then their two youngest sisters. All four were between eighteen and twenty at the time of their baptism. In 1657, when the youngest sister Rachel arrived in the Pia Casa, she was accompanied by her widowed mother, Bianca, who was sixty at the time. Perhaps Bianca preferred baptism over severing ties with four of her five children; perhaps the prospect of staying by herself in old age without even her youngest daughter to assist her seemed bleak enough to warrant such a move. Finally, when the last sibling to convert, Abram, set foot in the Pia Casa in 1665, at age forty, he brought along his wife Stella and their five toddlers. Abram was the eldest, and, unlike his siblings, had already established a family of his own at the time of conversion. Like his mother, his ultimate baptism—years after his four siblings—suggests a reluctant surrender to a move that was probably not of his own making, but that would keep the clan together. Indeed, upon baptism Abram, Stella, and their children joined Abram’s siblings in the family house in the parish of San Maurizio.

Unlike the de Castros, the vast majority of converts arrived in the Pia Casa alone and left it alone. Even when parents arrived with their children, they were likely to be separated and set on different tracks, sometimes for good, with the children sent to work or given in adoption to Venetian families. For example, in 1592 the governors decided

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39 By the mid seventeenth century the Iberian de Castro family was scattered throughout Europe. On some of the highly learned and prolific branches of this family, many of whom were physicians and academics in Hamburg and Amsterdam, see Kayserling et al. 1971: xiv and passim.
40 ACPV, BdC, 2, cc. 63v–64r (Sept. 27, 1665).
that the convert Gerolamo, recently employed by the Venetian Salt Office, could only
visit his daughter, who was still living in the Pia Casa, every fifteen days, and then only
in the presence of female guardians. In 1616, the two school-aged sons of a Muslim
convert from Antivari (Montenegro) were taken from her and placed first in the prioress’
quarters, then outside the Pia Casa, with an older convert and her husband. Five months
later, in an unusual move, one of the boys was consigned to his mother for a week only
“because otherwise he suffers.”41 To understand the logic of this separation of convert
parents from their children we should look at the long-term patronage claimed by the Pia
Casa over neophytes.

Perhaps the key principle organizing the Pia Casa’s relationship with neophytes
was the reconfiguration and sometimes severance of former kinship ties, while using a
patriarchal vocabulary to define the different positions of authority within the institution.
Catechumens were referred to as “children of the House” in all official documentation, a
designation that stuck, regardless of age, for years after baptism. Governors, on the other
hand, were “brothers,” following confraternities’ official egalitarian ideology (if quite
tenuous practice). They also figured as “fathers” to the catechumens, over whose
destinies they exerted enormous control. The two patrician or citizen ladies appointed to
counsel the prioress on the management of the female wing were similarly to show
converts “charity, and maternal love.”42

41 AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 4r (June 25, 1592); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 99r (March 3, 1616), c. 103r (June 16, 1616),
c. 105v (Aug. 25, 1616), c. 107v (Nov. 10, 1616), c. 108v (Nov. 23, 1617).
42 The incorporation of women in the House management dates to 1613, when a group of patrician and
citizen ladies were prompted to provide “useful observations” on the proper running of the female wing in
the wake of an unnamed scandal. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 20.
This patriarchal logic was articulated in myriad charitable and disciplinary practices which cemented a lifelong bond between neophytes and the Pia Casa, and which defined “converthood” for years after baptism. The Pia Casa extended its paternal care not only to converts, but to well-behaved converts’ children as well. In some cases, the governors stepped in to support converts’ children upon a parent’s death. At least as frequently, intervention was sought out by the convert parents themselves. For example, in 1615, the governors approved a petition by the convert Chiara to help provide a dowry for her daughter, who was about to get married, since “the mother has always behaved herself well.” Later, they also gave the daughter a straw mattress.  

By scaling charity to match converts’ moral conduct, the governors not only encouraged their former charges to meet their standards of good behavior, but on occasion intervened as surrogate parents, with lifelong ties to and claims over converts and their families.

**BAPTISM AND BEYOND**

The form and meaning of the sacrament of baptism was the subject of much debate among medieval and early modern theologians. Thomas Aquinas emphasized in his *Summa Theologica* that the validity and efficacy of baptism depended on the intentions of the recipient, not on the officiate. He therefore demanded prior catechism, and evidence that the catechumen would be able to lead a Christian life upon baptism. Late medieval missionaries in the field, on the other hand, were often willing to confer

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43 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 91r (May 14, 1615), c. 96r (Nov. 19, 1615).
baptism on anyone expressing the wish to receive it, regardless of prior instruction or future prospects.44

The Pia Casa governors were less eager to baptize at all costs, and on several occasions denied baptism (or even admittance to the House) to people deemed insufficiently prepared or willing. In 1615, Alegra from Corfù was admitted to the House “after having been denied entry once for not being well-instructed in the matters of faith.” Permission to baptize her was sought already a week later, suggesting that in this case, at least, arrival at the Pia Casa marked the end point of a process of catechetical instruction, rather than its beginning.45 In most other cases, however, catechumens underwent a period of catechetical instruction upon admission. This period could last anywhere from a day to a year and more, either on the premises, or, in the case of slaves, on galleys, in prison, or in a master’s home. Only after an “examination of conscience” by at least two governors could catechumens be led to the font to be baptized.

Baptism was thought to encapsulate and enact a convert’s radical break with his or her past and the beginning of a new life. Yet the ritual itself and the privileges derived from it were conceived in terms of the convert’s previous, non-Christian life. For example, although regulations required that all baptisms be held in the small chapel of the Pia Casa itself, these account for only 44% of the total baptisms whose location is documented. When the convert was a slave sponsored by his or her master, the ceremony was sometimes held in the master’s parish church.46 Such ceremonies, attended by many...

45 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 95v (Nov. 12 and 19, 1615).
46 Of the 512 baptisms whose location is documented, only 227 (44%) were held in the chapel of the Pia Casa. Another 163 (32%) were celebrated in one of seven churches: the Tolentini, Frari, Gesuiti, Santa Maria Formosa, Umiltà, Santi Apostoli, and Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The remaining 122 (24%) took place...
acquaintances and neighbors, and with the convert’s old master or his immediate kin often acting as godparents, served not only to ritually enact spiritual transformation, but to re-affirm a pre-existing social structure, which the ceremony itself did little to alter.

In addition to baptism in a master’s parish church, public baptisms were also held periodically in various churches around the city, especially when a large group of converts could be gathered, as in the case of the conversion of an entire family. Such ceremonies were ideological victories. They celebrated not the singular transformation of an individual convert, but his or her removal from an enemy community, whether “Jews” or “Turks.” Thus baptism, which crystallized the moment of transition from one community to another, served as a reminder of the convert’s indelible past.

This public aspect of conversion in fact necessitated the repetitive recalling of a convert’s previous identity. This is well attested to in the frequent designation of converts in the Pia Casa’s archives as either “infedeli convertiti”—converted infidels—or as former Muslims or former Jews, even decades after their baptism. For example, Isabetta of Oderzo (near Treviso), baptized sometime before 1592, was still referred to in entries in the Pia Casa’s account books as “formerly Muslim” as late as 1619, after becoming first an Ursuline nun, then a wife, and finally a widow.\(^47\) Zuan Battista, who was baptized (possibly as a child) in 1594, and who later became a commercial broker, was similarly referred to as “formerly Muslim” in 1611.\(^48\)

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\(^47\) AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 116r (March 29, 1618), c. 143v (May 2, 1619). The references to Isabetta as “formerly Muslim” (“olim turca”; “già turca”) were in two contexts: first, her return to live in the House after a long sojourn in Oderzo, near Treviso and the death of her first husband, Zuane Comin; and, second, a proposed employment contract for her with the Venetian silk merchant Giulio Rossi, later to become her second husband. On other occasions in the same period archival documents referred to her by her deceased husband’s name and by her place of provenance.

\(^48\) AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 18v (May 8, 1611).
As far as I know, no surviving records describe baptismal ceremonies of converts sponsored by the Pia Casa before the eighteenth century. But some of the paraphernalia used was documented in the House meeting notes, from which a picture emerges of differential treatment of converts predicated not only on gender but also on age and, most tellingly, social status prior to and after conversion. For example, the baptism ceremony of a Jewish boy renamed Pietro Anzolo Zen warranted the presence of two trumpeters and some pipers, perhaps due to the fact that the child was destined to be trained by the Dominican friars at the monastery of San Giovanni e Paolo. The special celebration may have been prompted also by his status as heir to a substantial inheritance from his paternal grandfather. Soon after Zen’s baptism, however, House regulations sought to limit musical accompaniment during ceremonies. They also decreed that the clothing given catechumens to wear to the font should be “proportional to their merit.” (Unfortunately, the governors did not indicate how “merit” was to be calculated.) Later revisions decried the excessive jewelry worn to the font by some women catechumens, and reminded them that “the Sacrament regenerates the Spirit, not the Body.” Obviously, converts had quite different ideas of what would be proper dress on their baptism day. In at least one case, a convert named Giovanni Battista refused to don a

49 AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 85v (May 14, 1598), c. 86r (May 21, 1598), c. 87r (June 18, 1598), c. 88r (July 9, 1598 and July 23, 1598), c. 89v (Oct. 15, 1598), c. 90v (Dec. 10, 1598), c. 92v (March 1599).
50 “Si ribadisce quanto deliberato nel 1611, che nei battesimi si chiami a suonare un solo complesso di suonatori, o i pifferi o i cornetti”: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 158r (Oct. 10, 1619).
51 “La spesa del vestito ai nuovi battezzati sarà proporzionata al merito dei neofiti”: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 118r (April 21, 1618).
52 “Siano nella funzione d’esso Battesimo rigorosamente proibite tutte le gale, ed ornamenti secolareschi… nè le Donne possano usare vestimenta preziose, Gioje, Oro, ed Argento, ma compariscano tutte modestia, ed umiltà al Sacramento rigenerante lo Spirito, e non il Corpo”: AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 98.
The actual nature of baptism ceremonies, although never described in the documents, was inspired at least in part by the suggestions of converts themselves. In 1611, the register notes special preparations and decorations made on the occasion of the baptism of a young Jewish woman named Ricca “as recommended by Enrigo, baptized in Mantua.” And while the regulations stipulated that expenditure on baptismal clothes should not exceed fifteen ducats, the baptism of at least one other Jew, Raffael of Mantua, warranted the expenditure of the substantial sum of twenty ducats and two liras. Similarly, in several cases, the Christian name given a convert was his own choice. For example, in early 1597 the Tripolitan Jew Moise Abrananel [Abravanel] arrived aboard ship to Venice, and declared his wish to become Christian and be named Costantino. His wish was granted. Jewish converts’ greater leverage in shaping the terms of their conversion—of which the baptism ceremony and a new Christian name were two important aspects—suggests once again the different ways in which conversion practices were embedded in larger power structures. It seems hardly accidental that all the examples above refer to the baptismal paraphernalia of Jews, and not of Muslims.

53 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 4v (Nov. 12, 1610). The same convert was the cause of much trouble to the governors, due to his rowdy behavior before and after baptism. The decision to dress him in simple cloth may have been in retaliation. Ultimately, a year later when he asked for a new coat, the governors not only denied his request, but issued orders prohibiting him from ever again knocking on the House doors, and ordering the prior and porter not to let him in. Ibid., c. 33r (Oct. 6, 1611).
54 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 23r (June 23, 1611).
55 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 67v (March 21, 1613) and 68v (March 28, 1613). For a reference to the bylaws, see the case of Sara, a foreign Jew, for whose baptismal garment the governors were especially reminded not to exceed the 15 ducats stipulated: Ibid, c. 85v (Sept. 4, 1614).
56 AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 74r (Jan. 2, 1596, m.v.) and c. 74bis. (Mar. 6, 1597).
GODPARENTHOOD AND CO-PARENTHOOD

The institution of godparenthood has been the subject of much anthropological inquiry, beginning with a pathbreaking essay by Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf in 1950. In that essay, the authors formulated some general hypotheses about the divergent functions of godparenthood in class and classless societies, suggesting that vertical godparenthood across classes was instrumental in furthering social solidarity, especially by establishing a strong bond between parents and godparents, known as co-parenthood. They productively emphasized godparenthood’s “functional relationships to other aspects of culture,” and warned against treating kinship as a separate domain.\(^{57}\) The following investigation of the baptismal sponsorship of converts is greatly indebted to Mintz and Wolf’s insights into the role of godparenthood and co-parenthood across ethnic groups (especially their examples of Indian parents’ choosing Ladino godparents for their children), as well as to more recent studies inspired by their initial work on baptismal sponsorship of indigenous converts to Christianity in colonial New Spain.\(^{58}\)

Although the godparenthood of converts in early modern Venice was clearly linked to specifically Christian notions of what constituted a moral community, it should be noted that for many Balkan Muslim converts, the institution of baptismal sponsorship was rather familiar. Baptismal sponsorship and its ensuing relations of ritual kinship were widely practiced in Christian Orthodox communities in late Byzantium.\(^{59}\) These institutions did not disappear with the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, but found new forms and meanings. Indeed, Ottomanists have long noted the strong structural-

\(^{57}\) Mintz and Wolf 1950: 342.  
\(^{58}\) Charney 1991; Cline 1993.  
\(^{59}\) Macrides 1987; Macrides 1990.
conceptual linkage of civic and spiritual mutual obligation between the sultan and the subject-convert. As Caliph of all Muslims, the Sultan could make spiritual claims to universal dominion over believers and non-believers alike.\textsuperscript{60} This dominion was often articulated through practices such as the patronage and sponsorship of converts.\textsuperscript{61} In regions of the Ottoman Empire with substantial Christian populations, such as the Balkans, even Muslim members of the community often served as baptismal godparents. Indeed, the Bosnian practice of including Muslim sponsors on special occasions was prevalent enough to warrant a Papal decree in 1676 forbidding “the admission of heretics as sponsors, even though the strongest reasons of friendship and familiarity prompted the choice of such a person.”\textsuperscript{62} In other words, the secularized contexts and usages of godparenthood were a potentially shared idiom for Ottoman converts and their Venetian patrons.

In distinction from the prevalence of sultanic patronage in the Ottoman Empire, the Venetian “church-state compact,” was articulated primarily through charitable institutions such as the Pia Casa, which allowed patricians and citizens to further their civic as well as spiritual claims.\textsuperscript{63} As the baptism ceremony helped forge spiritual kinship and further patronage ties between godparent and convert, it also consolidated claims by the Pia Casa to be the convert’s true parent. What makes the godparenthood of Venetian converts particularly interesting is that the parental figure with whom godparents were to establish co-parenthood relationships was not a person, but an

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{60} Necipoglu 1989; Fleischer 1992.
\textsuperscript{61} Minkov 2000.
\textsuperscript{62} Quoted in Mintz and Wolf 1950: 349–50.
\textsuperscript{63} On civic patronage through charitable institutions, see Mueller 1972: 76.
\end{footnotesize}
institution—the Pia Casa itself, which, as we saw, claimed paternal guardianship over all “children of the house.”

Of 304 Venetian converts whose godparents are known, 277 had one godparent, 23 had two, and only four—all of them women and girls—had three or four godparents. The overwhelming majority of godparents were men, and the 18 godmothers on record sponsored mostly female converts (and two very young boys). Although Jews make up only a quarter of converts with known godparents, they constitute over half of those with multiple godparents, suggesting their greater insertion into local networks of patronage. In contrast, Muslim women were especially unlikely to receive multiple godparents—only two such cases are registered.64

The majority of godparents of both Jewish and Muslim, female and male converts were patricians, but quite a few were citizens and artisans, occasional foreign dignitaries, and even servants. When two or more godparents were assigned, one was often patrician, the other—citizen or artisan. This reflects the collaboration of patrician and citizen elites on the Pia Casa’s board, as well as the institution’s claim to universal, inclusive command over all convert baptisms in Venice. It also alerts us to the fact that not all godparents assumed actual responsibility for their godchildren, but were sometimes selected primarily for their social prominence, especially when multiple godparents were assigned.

64 One was the moor Anna alias Fattime from Alexandria, who went to serve in the household of the patrician Francesco Contarini. The other was the Russian Marina alias Sabba, a fourteen-year-old slave of the Marini family, who went back into their service upon baptism. ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 42r (April 26, 1654), c. 60r (Dec. 29, 1664).
In general, the practice of godparenthood in Venice, as in many other societies, strongly prohibited parents from serving as their children’s baptismal sponsors.\textsuperscript{65} This rule was repeatedly broken in the case of converts, for whom, as shown above, the Pia Casa governors often took the place of birth parents. Here, many, though by no means all, godparents were House priors, governors, or their immediate kin, and, not infrequently, their convert’s past or future masters and legal guardians.\textsuperscript{66} Thus, baptismal sponsorship also strengthened the authority of individual governors and priors over neophytes, who became their godchildren or employees. In 1591, forty-seven-year-old Sabatai son of Isach of Ferrara was brought to the Pia Casa by one of the governors, Eusebio Renati, himself a Jewish convert, who eventually served as Sabatai’s baptismal godfather four months later.\textsuperscript{67} Renati was not the only governor to sponsor converts: The citizen Paolo Cremona, longtime governor of the Pia Casa and one of two commissioners in charge of an enormous bequest distributed to converts, served as either godfather or master to at least six converts.\textsuperscript{68} Thirty-year-old Turkish slave Jesup, renamed Zanbattista, had as one of his godfathers the House prior, Gerolamo de Roca, himself a convert of unknown background. Zanbattista’s second godfather, Serafin Serafinelli, a longtime governor of the House, was a commercial broker who later

\textsuperscript{65} On this prohibition in general, see Gudeman 1975; Pitt-Rivers 1977; for Venice, see Grubb 1996: 48–49.\textsuperscript{66} This phenomenon requires further discussion, as it raises crucial questions on the relationship between spiritual kinship (particularly adoption by patrons) and Venetian patrimonial state formation. For suggestive comments about this relationship in general, see Parkes 2003: 762 and passim. On Venetian patrimonialism and its attendant forms of genealogical consciousness, see Raines 2006: 454–551.\textsuperscript{67} ACPV, BdC, 1, c. 4v (March 20, 1591), c. 5r (July 7, 1591). On Eusebio Renati, see also Pullan 1983: 127, 245, 289.\textsuperscript{68} In 1647 he became master to twelve-year-old Niccolò alias Husaim from Strana, and a year later to eight-year-old Pietro alias Xafer from Klis (Croatia). In following years, he godfathered twenty-two-year-old Giovanni alias Assan from Edirne, thirty-year-old Istanbulite foot soldier Paolo alias Mehmet, twenty-year-old Paolo alias Michiel from Asistat (Hungary), and a twenty-seven-year-old Venetian Jew, Lorenzo alias Michiel Francese. ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 21r (Aug. 15, 1647), c. 23v (Sept. 13, 1648), c. 30v (June 25, 1650), c. 34r (June 4, 1651), c. 54r (May 8, 1661), 64v (Jan. 24, 1665 m.v.).
became president of the commercial brokers’ guild.\textsuperscript{69} His godson’s long career as a broker may have been facilitated by Serafinelli’s own ties.\textsuperscript{70} Such conflation of duties demonstrated in Cremona’s and Serafinelli’s cases must have been quite common, as later regulations specifically forbade governors from serving as converts’ godparents, in order to prevent them from favoring their godchildren over other neophytes, and to encourage them to keep to their role as “communal fathers” of the entire House.\textsuperscript{71}

Through baptismal sponsorship, even godparents who were not formally affiliated with the Pia Casa proved crucial to the House operations, by furthering its patronage networks into new milieus. Unlike Rome, where a large percentage of Muslim converts’ godfathers were clergymen and foreign dignitaries, in Venice, the godfathers and godmothers of both Jewish and Muslim converts were primarily local, lay patricians, usually not of the first rank of the political elite, but rather members of the patriciate’s minor branches, or the children or younger siblings of important state officials, as well as quite a few well-to-do citizens.\textsuperscript{72} Yet even with less illustrious godfathers, not only convert godchildren, but the Pia Casa itself stood to gain powerful patrons. In the mercantile and artisanal milieus in which many converts could hope to eventually find employment, a merchant godfather could prove at least as useful as a diplomat or a high-ranking civil servant.

\textsuperscript{69} ACPV, BdC, 1, c. 12r (Feb. 7, 1592 m.v.).
\textsuperscript{70} Serafinelli godfathered at least three other converts: twenty-two-year-old Giulio alias Samuel from Ferrara, eighty-six-year-old oarsman Giacomo alias Ali Moro from Alexandria, and fifty-eight-year-old oarsman Zuanne alias Ali from Gallipoli. ACPV, BdC, 1, cc. 16v–17r (Jan. 6, 1593 m.v.), c. 17v (June 5, 1594), cc. 17v–18r (June24, 1594).
\textsuperscript{71} AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 43.
\textsuperscript{72} Unfortunately, the surviving documentation does not allow for a clear identification (and hence prosopographical and genealogical study) of most patrician godparents. However, a preliminary search for the names of several dozen converts’ patrician godparents in the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani yielded almost no entries, suggesting the godparents’ secondary political and cultural prominence as a group. For a discussion of Roman converts’ godparents, see Rudt de Collenberg 1989: 50–71.
In addition to weaving or strengthening patronage ties between converts, their godparents, and the Pia Casa, baptismal sponsorship could also reinforce clientage ties between older converts and the institution. By inviting older converts to sponsor the baptism of more recent catechumens the Pia Casa not only consolidated its existing ties with neophytes, but also cashed on their indexical value as living proof of the efficacy of its work. To be worthy godparents, converts had to first prove themselves as good Christians. Serving as godparents was thus a “proof” of success as converts, and, indeed, as upstanding members of a locally-based Christian community.73

Another practice that suggests how converts were localized is their re-naming at baptism. Whereas some converts were recorded simply as “the moor of X” or “the Turk of Y,” the majority were referred to by Christian names, sometimes even prior to their baptism. Unlike the Muslim and Jewish traditions, where converts were often given names which singled them out as converts, the names given to converts in Venice were mostly common in the population at large.74 Despite their generic nature, or precisely because of it, such names both indexed and solidified the convert’s new membership in Venetian society. Furthermore, unlike other Venetians, whose personal names were “above all a statement of the natal family,” and hardly ever based on a godparent’s name,

73 In 1592, Nicolò, a Jewish convert, godfathered another Jewish convert, thirty-eight-year-old Andrea Stefano alias Jacob Cain from Frankfurt. Perhaps the neophyte’s foreign provenance warranted his godfathering by a more established convert. Andrea Stefano ran away from the Pia Casa only nine days after his baptism, taking away some clothes, to the governors’ great dismay. ACPV, BdC, 1, c. 9v (Nov. 17, 1592), c. 10r (Dec. 26, 1592).
74 Giovanni/Giovanni Battista was by far the most popular convert’s name, given to over thirty percent of male converts; the most popular female convert name was, not surprisingly, Maria, given to almost twenty percent of female converts. For both men and women, the five most popular names appeared in over fifty percent of the cases. For men, these were, in descending order of popularity: Giovanni, Francesco, Giovanni Battista, Antonio, and Pietro. For women, the names were: Maria, Caterina, Anzola (Angela), Anna, and Maddalena. About eighty percent of converts, both women and men, received a single Christian name. Only a tiny fraction received more than two.
converts’ names not infrequently followed those of masters, godparents, or their relatives. Converts’ names thus also reinforced their embeddedness in patronage systems and spiritual, rather than natal, kinship networks.\(^{75}\)

In other cases, converts’ new names actually recalled their pre-Christian lives. Converts might be given Christian names which sounded similar to their original names, as in the case of twelve-year-old Muslim girl Fumia, who was baptized as Euffemia in 1665, or the Jew Samaria who was baptized as Zamaria in 1626.\(^{76}\) Or they might keep their previous names.\(^{77}\) Even when a new Christian name was registered at baptism, the old name might prevail: Sultana, a Muslim convert-turned-nun from Klis (Croatia), a frequent recipient of charity from the Pia Casa, was referred to by that name far more often than by either her Christian name, Lucia, or by her monastic name, Zuanna.\(^{78}\) Cases such as this, in which converts retained their previous names, suggest continuity rather than a radical break with the past.

\(^{75}\) On Venetian naming practices, see Grubb 1996: 42–47.

\(^{76}\) ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 62v (Sept. 8, 1665); ACPV, BdC, 3, c. 1v (Oct. 10, 1626). Governors’ creativity stopped short of following the same naming practice with Fumia’s mother and five-year-old brother: the former, Salige, was renamed Francesca. The latter, Mustafa, was renamed Francesco.

\(^{77}\) As in 1617, when the governors decided to buy a used cloak for “Matine, ex turco,” now a servant in the house of Leonardo Priuli in the parish of San Stae. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 109r (Dec. 1, 1617).

\(^{78}\) Of the forty-odd references to her in the House meeting notes, she is named “Sultana” 23 times, “Lucia-Sultana” 11 times, and “Lucia” only once: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 13r (Feb. 13, 1610 m.v.), c. 13v (Feb. 25, 1610 m.v.), c. 17r (April 21, 1611), c. 19r (May 13, 1611), c. 29r (Aug. 18, 1611), c. 33r (Oct. 6 & 13, 1611), c. 38r (Dec. 22, 1611), c. 45r (March 15, 1612), c. 54r (Aug. 23, 1612), c. 55v (Sept. 20, 1612), c. 56r (Sept. 27, 1612), c. 58v (Nov. 8, 1612), c. 63v (Jan. 18, 1612 m.v.), c. 66r (Feb. 28, 1612 m.v.), c. 71r (May 23, 1613), c. 76r (Oct. 31, 1613), c. 77v (Dec. 19, 1613), c. 78r (Jan. 2, 1613 m.v.), c. 89r (Feb. 19, 1614 m.v.), c. 89v (April 9, 1615), c. 91r (May 29, 1615), c. 96v (Nov. 26, 1615), c. 97r (Dec. 17, 1615), c. 97v (Jan. 7, 1615 m.v.), c. 98v (Feb. 4, 1615 m.v.), c. 102r (June 3, 1616), c. 116v (March 29, 1618), c. 129r (Oct. 16, 1618), c. 134r (Dec. 20, 1618), c. 135r (Jan. 18, 1618 m.v.), c. 141v (March 21, 1619), c. 144v (May 16, 1619), c. 163r (Jan. 23, 1619).
BECOMING LOCAL?

In theory, if not always in practice, conversion in Venice was to serve as an act of simultaneously becoming a Catholic and a Venetian juridical subject. Contemporary legislators often translated converts’ new civic membership into concrete economic benefits and opportunities for social mobility via artisanal patents. Indeed, from the mid seventeenth century on, papal bulls and Venetian Senate decrees alike repeatedly sought to guarantee converts’ economic advancement by allowing them to exercise any trade or profession of their choosing without paying guild entrance fees.79

One path of insertion into Christian society was the pursuit of education. University or seminary education for promising young converts was occasionally funded by the House. Zanetto, son of Tomasina, was sent to the seminary of San Cipriano in Murano soon after his baptism in 1592, to be schooled at the expense of the Pia Casa. Five years later, expenditure on his books, writing materials, and clothes, as well as general reminders to “take care of the needs of Zanetto in the seminary” still figured prominently in the House records, as they did throughout the register until its end in 1599.80 A similar pattern of heavy financial investment in a particular child convert destined for an ecclesiastical career emerged in 1610, when the Jewish convert Giovanni-Iseppo Strassoldo asked for his son Paolo to be sent to the seminary of Castello. Three years later, upon completing his course of studies, Paolo was first assigned to serve as an

79 The Senate issued decrees in this matter on Jan. 2, 1676 m.v. and on June 30, 1688. Both are reproduced in AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 68–70.
80 AIRE, Cat B 4, c. 61r (March 7, 1596). See also: c. 4r (June 18, 1592), c. 11r (Jan. 13, 1592, m.v.), c. 13r (Feb. 18, 1592 m.v.), c. 15r (March 18, 1593), c. 16r (April 8, 1593), cc. 20r–v (June 10, 1593), c. 21v (July 15, 1593), c. 22r (July 29, 1593), c. 23r (Aug. 16, 1593), c. 25r (Oct. 14, 1593), c. 26r (Nov. 10, 1593), c. 27r (Dec. 2, 1593), c. 33v (March 31, 1594), c. 34v (May 5, 1594), c. 35r (May 17, 1594), c. 36v (June 16, 1594 and July 7, 1594), c. 37v (Aug. 4, 1594), c. 38r (Aug. 11, 1594), c. 39r (Sept. 15, 1594), c. 40r (Sept. 22, 1594), c. 40v (Sept. 27, 1594), c. 44v (Feb. 9, 1594 m.v.), c. 47v (May 9, 1595), c. 62r (April 4, 1596), c. 70r (Aug. 13, 1596).
assistant to the Patriarch of Aquileia, and then sent to the seminary of the Somascan order. His annual tuition fees of thirty ducats, a new set of clothes, and a bed were all paid for by the Pia Casa. Long after he had left the Somascans to attend the Neophytes’ College in Rome, and after his stipend from Venice was officially terminated, the Pia Casa still paid for Paolo’s books.81

That those neophytes placed in seminaries clearly mattered more than others is indexed by the level of detail of entries about them in the House register, as well as by their sheer volume. Beyond their individual merits, perhaps the special treatment of these children was warranted by their families’ long-term pattern of “exemplary” relationship with the Pia Casa. Paolo’s two sisters, Maria and Giulia, became nuns in the monastery of Saints Mark and Andrea in Murano, while their father, Iseppo, would later become the House solicitor and envoy to Rome.82

A few other Jewish converts, especially if baptized as adults and of elite background, could make a claim to prior expertise in Hebrew, Talmud or Cabbala, all highly valued commodities in the world of humanistic learning.83 The bulk of converts, however, especially Muslim, could not build on their intellectual assets in staking out a

81 AIRE, CAT B 6, cc. 2r–v (Oct. 12, 1610), 4r (Nov. 9, 1610), 8r (Dec. 16, 1610), 9v (Jan. 7, 1610 m.v.), 20v (May 26, 1611), 21v (June 9, 1611), 27v (Aug. 11, 1611), 37v (Dec. 15, 1611), 66r (Feb. 28, 1611 m.v.), 71r (May 23, 1613), 72r (June 20, 1613), c. 85v (Sept. 4, 1614), c. 86r (Sept. 18, 1614) and c. 107v (Nov. 3, 1616). On the Roman Neophytes’ College, established by Pope XIII in 1577 with the intention to train young catechumens for eventual church service, see Bono 1998: 434.
82 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 1v (Oct. 1, 1610), c. 22v (June 16, 1611), c. 37v (Dec. 15, 1611), c. 77v (Dec. 19, 1613), c. 89v (April 9, 1615), c. 94v (Oct. 15, 1615); AIRE, CAT C 2, c. 430r (July 3, 1608), 430v (Sept. 1, 1610).
83 Simonsohn 1989. Two cases stand out: the Jerusalemite Rabbi Domenico Gerosolimitano alias Samuel Vivas, who became censor of Hebrew books after his baptism in 1593, and the Venetian Giulio Morosini alias Samuel ben David Nahmias, who enjoyed a long career in Papal service in Rome following his baptism in 1649. In both cases, exceptional education at youth enabled these converts to become serviceable in ecclesiastical circles and to secure not only their own future, but, in the case of Morosini, that of his brother and nephew as well. For Gerosolimitano’s baptism, see ACPV, BdC, 1, c. 14v (Aug. 6, 1593); Ioly Zorattini 1998. For Morosini, see ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 29r (Dec. 22, 1649); Simonsehn 1903; Ravid 1983; Ioly Zorattini 2000.
future. Only rarely, if ever, could the few Muslim converts with knowledge of Arabic, Turkish, the Qur’an, or Shari’a law, find scholarly employment. The reasons for this are multiple, and have to do, in part, with humanists’ general lower level of interest in Islam and Turkish and Arabic letters, compared with Judaism and Hebrew, and the availability of Christian native Arabic speakers.\textsuperscript{84} It may have stemmed also from Muslim converts’ limited command of Italian, in contrast with Jewish converts, who were often fluent speakers of the language. Muslim converts were also confronted by a wide perception of enemy subjects as mostly fit for menial work as slaves, servants, or soldiers, rather than as scholars and educators. Not surprisingly, most converts eventually resorted to the same occupations and status they had held prior to their conversion. Many also remained dependent on charity from the Pia Casa for years after their baptism, if not for life. This situation forced many to tighten their local networks of patronage and eventually allowed some Muslim converts more direct access to routes of insertion in Venetian society, as compared to Jewish converts-turned-friars, priests, preachers and scholars: As slaves and servants, soldiers and journeymen, Muslim converts could and did get adopted by or married into local families.

The overall dependence of converts’ career paths on their access to local social networks is further illustrated by the rarity of Jewish converts who became soldiers. Out of a population of about two hundred youth and adult male Jewish converts, only six are documented as having become soldiers. None of them came from Venetian territories, although Venetian Jews constituted over a half of Jewish converts in the Pia Casa.\textsuperscript{85} This

\textsuperscript{84} On Arabic in the humanist curriculum, see Dannenfeldt 1955.
\textsuperscript{85} Of the six, three came from Istanbul, one from Avignon and one from Poland (the sixth was of unknown provenance).
suggests that it was not so much that Jews were deemed unfit for military service in the eyes of the Pia Casa governors, but rather that local converts had more career paths available to them than foreign-born converts, either Jewish or Muslim.

Like other members of early modern Venetian society, converts faced a highly gendered occupational structure. If most young male converts could expect placement as either apprentices with local artisans or as soldiers and mariners, the overwhelming majority of young female converts became maidservants in Venetian households. But it was neither gender nor religious provenance alone which determined converts’ trajectories, but their intersection. Thus, only half a dozen Jewish women converts are documented as having become maidservants, compared with over a hundred Muslim women. Similarly, although monachization was often women converts’ only viable alternative to marriage or domestic service, of the sixteen documented monachized women converts none seems to have been a Moor.

Of course, career paths were determined not only by governors’ wishes and perceptions of the transformative potential of different types of converts, but also by converts’ own inclinations and resources. Yet the paucity of cases of converts who completely severed their ties with the Pia Casa upon baptism suggests that the ability of the governors to keep converts under their watchful eye remained strong throughout the period.

One powerful incentive for keeping in touch with the House was the distribution of charity, which mirrored, and at times enhanced, the widely uneven trajectories of different kinds of converts. This is well illustrated by the list of recipients of a major bequest of 4,000 ducats left to the Pia Casa by the patrician Tommaso f. Andrea
Mocenigo in 1626. For two and a half decades the governors engaged in constant litigation with various magistracies which administered the funds, and in those years its moneys were distributed only sparingly and for specific ends. But starting in 1652, interest revenue from the bequest was distributed annually to between 15 and 30 converts, who received 30 ducats each. Technically, all converts baptized through the Pia Casa after 1626 were eligible, by order of their baptism date, as long as they came to register on designated dates with their baptismal certificate in hand. However, the recipients’ profile diverges considerably from that of the overall convert population: Of the 28 Jewish children baptized from 1630 to 1670, 21 (75%) became beneficiaries. Four out of the seven who did not were foreign born, or the children of newly arrived foreigners. In comparison, of 140 Muslim children baptized in those years, only 59 (42%) became beneficiaries. This suggests that local-born Jewish children converts stood a much greater chance than did foreign-born Muslim ones of staying in Venice through adulthood, and thus benefiting from the Pia Casa’s charity. Similarly, although women constitute only 28% of those baptized in the Pia Casa in this period, they account for 46% of beneficiaries of the Mocenigo bequest. A similar pattern emerges for another major bequest, left to the House by the patrician Vincenzo Garzoni in 1592, which provided a lifelong stipend of 50 ducats a year to 20 converts, with new recipients added as older ones passed away. Of 34 recipients documented up to 1670, 18 (53%) were Jews, and 19 (56%) were women, of whom 11 (a third) were Jewish—compared with only 6% Jewish women in the total convert population.

86 AIRE, CAT E, F. 8, c. 3v.
87 These requirements clearly advantaged children over adult converts, as the wait period for the Mocenigo bequest could last as much as a couple of decades after baptism.
88 They hailed from Split, Amsterdam, Parga in the Epirus and North Africa.
A strong incentive for women converts to stay in Venice was the prospect of marriage negotiated and funded by the Pia Casa. Since non-Christian marriages were automatically dissolved if only one of the spouses converted, governors of the Pia Casa did not shy away from seeking to match even previously married converts with new spouses. In particular, governors actively sought out eligible husbands for female converts of childbearing age. Although the surviving records do not give a complete picture of convert marriages, they do indicate that the bulk of converts who got married in Venice did so with fellow converts or with local artisans. For example, in 1593, the governors sought to bring about the marriage of two converts, a former Jew named Girolamo, and a former Muslim named Isabetta, as long as the dowry could be limited to 90 ducats.\textsuperscript{89} I found no records of Venetian converts in this period who married into the citizen class, hardly surprising in light of this estate’s self-conscious endogamy. Nor did I find any evidence for converts obtaining even the lesser status of Venetian citizenship de intus, despite the bull \textit{Cupientes iudaeos}, issued by Pope Paul III in 1542, which guaranteed converts from Judaism citizenship in their place of baptism.\textsuperscript{90} Without the economic privileges granted by citizenship, marriage to a fellow convert or to an artisan could only rarely guarantee financial independence, and thus furthered the couple’s reliance on the House for continued support. For example, despite a substantial dowry of 600 ducats provided by her adoptive parents and by her godfather, Father Francesco dell’Orio, upon her marriage to the Venetian tailor Francesco ai Servi in 1597, the

\textsuperscript{89} The wedding did not materialize, due to the groom’s illness and eventual death. AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 18v (May 13, 1593).

\textsuperscript{90} On the Papal bull, see Pullan 1983: 251–52. A late eighteenth-century decree by the Venetian Senate only mentions converts’ eligibility for Venetian subjecthood (sudditanza): Compliazione delle Leggi, b. 294, c. 263v (“Sulla capacità de Neofiti agli Ecclesiastici Benefici,” April 8, 1785).
convert Marina still relied on the Pia Casa for charity for over twenty years, i.e. during her entire marriage and into her widowhood. Christmas Charity for her is noted in the House records as late as 1620. Marina’s case was hardly unique, as several other women converts made repeated appearance in the House records as regular recipients of charity.\footnote{AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 69v, (June 27, 1597), c. 79r (Sept. 4, 1597), c. 86r (May 28, 1598), c. 86v (June 4, 1598), c. 87v (July 9, 1598); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 37v (Dec. 15, 1611), c. 45r (March 15, 1611), c. 56r (Sept. 27, 1612), c. 57v (Oct. 25, 1612), c. 77v (Dec. 19, 1613), c. 83v (June 5, 1614), c. 88r (Jan. 15, 1614 m.v.), c. 89r (March 5, 1615), c. 89v (April 9, 1615), c. 97r (Dec. 12, 1615), c. 100r (March 24, 1616), c. 110r (Dec. 22, 1617), c. 124r (July 19, 1618), c. 141v (March 21, 1619), c. 158v (Oct. 17, 1619), c. 163r (Jan. 23, 1619 m.v.).}

As students of early modern conversion policies have recently noted, the provision of dowries for young female converts was of crucial importance in facilitating their transition from one community to another.\footnote{See Allegra 1991 for Turin; Van Boxel 1998 for Rome.} Here, the usefulness of godparents is visible once again, as they not only provided employment opportunities, but also vouched for their godchildren’s merit and interceded on their behalf when appealing to the Pia Casa to finance their dowry. Indeed, the distribution of dowries was shaped by and makes manifest the divergent types of patronage available to Jewish and Muslim converts. Many formerly enslaved Muslim converts depended on a master’s support to secure the House’s endorsement of their marriage and provision of a dowry. For example, in 1639, the patrician Paolo Capello approached the Pia Casa on behalf of his maidservant, Zaneta, who had been baptized a decade earlier, and whose marriage he was negotiating at the time. Thanks to his efforts, the governors decided to increase the House contribution towards Zaneta’s dowry from twenty to forty ducats.\footnote{Zaneta’s ties to the Pia Casa did not end there: Three years later, widowed and with a baby daughter, she approached the House again, to have her child sent to a nursemaid so she could take up a position in the household of Tommaso Morosini. The governors approved her request, and decreed a monthly stipend of 6...}
converts, on the other hand, sometimes had previously-converted relatives who could arrange their marriage and turn to the governors for assistance in financing a dowry. In 1654, Fra Angelico, a Jewish convert turned monk, asked the governors for assistance in securing a dowry for his relative, Angelica alias Bona, who had been baptized and adopted by a Venetian shoemaker at age four in 1639. Her prospective husband, a goldsmith, an only child and “a person of means and good customs” from Ancona, was himself a Jewish convert. The governors stepped in and promised 160 ducats from the House treasury towards the substantial dowry of 300 ducats asked for. While the governors endorsed the marriages and contributed towards the dowries of both Zaneta and Angelica, the scale of their contributions, the marriage alliances themselves and the patronage networks that their negotiation cemented were quite different.

ADOPTION AND OTHER TIES

If baptism provided converts with a set of spiritual kin, and matrimony with a set of affinal kin, adoption was to supplant, rather than supplement, converts’ birth kin. It was part and parcel of the efforts to sever converts’ former family ties and insert the Pia Casa governors themselves into key roles in converts’ reconfigured kinship networks.

Beyond the strong conceptual links between adoption and baptism in both Western and

__lire__ for her daughter’s upkeep for as long as Zaneta held her job with the Morosinis. Finally, in 1661, Zaneta was among the lucky converts to receive a lifetime stipend of 50 ducats a year from the bequest of Vincenzo Garzoni. ACPV, BdC, 3, c. 2v (March 4, 1629); AIRE, CAT E 8, cc. 17r–v (June 9, 1639), c. 21r (Oct. 18, 1642); ACPV, BdC, 19, cc. 1r and 5r (Dec. 1, 1661). On Garzoni’s bequest, see degli Avogadro 1857: xxvii.

94 The sum was to be paid in part by Angelica’s and her brother Iseppo’s 30 ducat shares each of the Mocenigo bequest, and in part by the House’s general treasury, which had provided dowries of 100 ducats in other, similar cases. The union, however, did not materialize, and a year later Fra Angelico approached the congregation again and received their approval to use the funds as dowry for Angelica’s marriage to another eligible subject, the Friulian Antonio f. Luca. AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 44v–45r (Sept. 24, 1654) and c. 47r (May 11, 1655).
Byzantine patristic and liturgical writings, adoption also provided an important venue for the placement of young converts. Yet, it is hard to speak of converts’ adoptions, as mediated and recorded by the Pia Casa, as a unified practice. The sixteen cases of adoption documented in the Pia Casa archives for the period 1570–1670 concern eight girls and eight boys, both Jewish and Muslim, ranging from newborns to young men and women. The records themselves range from brief references to a child having been taken by so-and-so as “soul son” or “soul daughter” to elaborate, notarized contracts detailing parents’ obligations towards their adoptive child, as well as sanctions to be taken by the Pia Casa should parents fail to meet their obligations. Some contracts focus on the commitment to nurture an adopted child and provide for her. Others highlight instead the future inheritance awaiting the child once the adoptive parents die. Some only stipulate that the child is required to love and honor her parents, while others clearly require that the child serve her parents and nurse them in their old age. Some pledge to provide dowries upon an adopted daughter’s marriage, others when she joins a monastery. Several contracts include additional contributions to the Pia Casa itself.

The range of assumptions about financial and affective obligations between adoptive parents and children manifest in the documents is equaled by the wide range of social status and wealth of adoptive parents, and their presumed motivations in adopting a convert child. While none explicitly pledge to make their adopted child a legal heir, we may wish to qualify historian Christiane Klapisch-Zuber’s conclusion that adoption

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95 On the relationship between baptism and adoption, see Macrides 1999: 309–10.
96 For examples of the latter: AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 33v–34r (Oct. 16, 1572), cc. 34v–35r (Jan. 26, 1576 m.v.), cc. 35v–36r (March 2, 1577), cc. 69v–70v (Nov. 16, 1591).
became “impossible” in early modern Italy.97 As the examples below show, the range of affective ties possible between adoptive parents and children did not depend on legal endorsement.

Some adoptive parents were artisans and professionals, like the Greek tailor Zordan Prosdocimo and his wife Margarita, who in 1577 adopted Marina, an eleven-year-old Muslim convert, or the physician Pietro Cazzi, who in 1632 adopted his godchild Paolo Ignazio, alias David Cohen from the ghetto.98 Some explicitly mentioned their wish to pass on their trade to a child as their motivation for adoption. Doctor Mattio Suriano, physician to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, adopted nine-year-old Carlo Francesco in 1616 “so that he can instruct him in medicine.” The merchant Stefano Pironi adopted fourteen-year-old Giovanni Battista Pironi alias Schiaus, his godchild, in 1633 “so that he learns the trade of silk weaver.” According to the entry in the Pia Casa’s register, Stefano was to keep Giovanni Battista “as a son, and according to his behavior so will he be well kept, and treated, [and] no mention of a salary was made.”99 In 1654, the Bishop of Kotor Vicenzo Buchia and his nephew, the abbot Marco Buchia, asked and were given twelve-year-old Paolin alias Giosef, promising to “raise and educate him to lead him to become a priest at the time God pleases.” Up to that point, Paolin, who had been baptized as a toddler, had been raised in the Pia Casa, and “educated to become a monk.” Both he and his mother were consulted and agreed to the Bishop’s offer.100

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97 Klapisch-Zuber 1999.
98 AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 35v–36r (March 2, 1577); ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 16v (April 18, 1632).
99 For Carlo Francesco’s adoption: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 98r (Jan. 28, 1615 m.v.). For Giovanni Battista’s: ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 17r (May 10, 1633).
100 AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 44v (Sept. 24, 1654); ACPV, BdC, 19, cc. 13v–14r. Paolin had received 30 ducats from the Mocenigo bequest two months prior to his “adoption” by the Bishop. See ACPV, BdC, 3, c. 9r (July 18, 1654).
The wish that emerges from the above cases to raise a child to follow his or her adoptive parents’ trade suggests that adoption and apprenticeship were often conflated. Other adoption contracts also specified the parent’s material obligations to the child. A different type of adoption involved wealthy patrician women, like the widow Leonarda Cumena, owner of extensive fields in the Este region, who in 1591 adopted Nicolosa, a teenaged convert from Lepanto. Cumena followed a pattern documented elsewhere in early modern Europe as well: a childless widow, who exerted control over her own lineal property, sought to continue her family line by passing on that property to her adoptive child. Perhaps she also sought to secure nursing in her old age.

Both boys and girls could be adopted to fulfill a host of affective, spiritual, and nurturance needs, providing an important mechanism of social reproduction in the absence of natural progeny. Given the limited surviving documentation of convert adoptions, it is hard to gauge the extent to which parents’ expectations in such adoptions were gender-specific. Here I can only provide some preliminary observations. The adoption of boys more often than that of girls served as a kind of apprenticeship, with the adoptive father passing a trade on to his child. Conversely, girls’ adoptive parents more often expressed a commitment to their moral, Christian upbringing and promised to provide a suitable dowry, or other forms of sponsorship. Yet social reproduction and the preservation of artisanal identity were not entirely absent from girls’ adoptions either,

101 AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 69v–70v (Nov. 16, 1591).
102 Gager 1997. Adoption contracts which referred specifically to services to be rendered by the adoptee have been documented elsewhere in early modern Europe, for example in Florence. See Fubini Leuzzi 1994: 883–84.
103 For a survey of these functions in a cross-cultural perspective, see Goody 1969.
104 On the cross-cultural significance of apprenticeship and sponsorship in adoption, see Goody 1982; on the nexus of adoption and apprenticeship for foundling boys and adoption and domestic service for foundling girls, see Gavitt 1990: 243.
as demonstrated by the above-mentioned case of Marina, who was adopted by a tailor and his wife, and, two decades later, married another tailor, Francesco ai Servi. Upon Francesco’s death, Marina became known as “the tailor” (“la sartora”) herself. She still depended on the Pia Casa’s charity throughout her life.\footnote{For Marina’s marriage to Francesco ai Servi, and the dowry provided by her parents and by her godfather, Father Francesco dell’Orio: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 69v, (June 27, 1597), c. 77r (July 10, 1597).}

The adoption of both girls and boys could also be cast as intended to fulfill primarily affective, rather than practical or financial ends. In 1577, an elderly, childless couple, a cobbler named Bortolo and his wife Maddalena, approached the Pia Casa with the explicit request to adopt a child “for consolation and solace in their old age.” They were given Catterina, a seven-year-old Muslim convert, whom Bortolo immediately took in [his] arms and kissed paternally, and promised to keep by him in his house as an adopted daughter, and treat her as such, educate her in good customs, and in the holy Christian religion, in the same manner they would have treated her if she were conceived and born to the couple.\footnote{“Pigliata quella nelle braccia, et basiata paternamente, et promettono quella tenir appresso di se In casa sua come figliola adottiva, et come talle trattarla, educarla in bonj costumi, et nella s.ta religione X’ptiana In quel modo istesso che la trarebbono se fusse concetta et natta de loro Jugali”: AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 34v–35v (Jan. 26, 1576 m.v.).}

Whereas Catterina’s adoption followed a path familiar to us, in which a childless couple approaches a welfare institution and adopts a relatively young child previously unknown to them, other adoptions were quite different. In 1572, Matteo q. Andrea Dragacich, a Bosnian clerk in the Venetian Arsenale, and his wife Franceschina, brought to the Pia Casa a nine-year-old Muslim slavegirl named Stana, whom they had acquired in the region of Zara. A few months later, upon Stana’s baptism in the parish church of San Salvatore, the couple professed to be childless and offered to adopt her “as their true daughter… and treat her and marry her as such.”\footnote{“Atteso che non si attrovando loro figlioli, detto Mathio si offeriva, come si offerìe di accettarla in}
Osman was adopted by his eponymous godfather Pietro Garofalo. The adoption took place after Garofalo had expressed his wish to keep the godchild “in his house, next to him, and take care of him as his own son.” The adoptee was twenty-two years old at the time. As these cases suggest, legal adoption was only occasionally contracted between strangers, with the Pia Casa as both legal guardian and broker. In many other cases, it was the culmination of long periods of cohabitation between adoptive parent(s) and child, often under a different header, such as domestic service.

The line not only between adoption and apprenticeship, but also between adoption and domestic service was sometimes blurred. Nicolosa, while adopted by a wealthy, patrician widow, was not to become heir to the bulk of her mother’s possessions. Her case, more than any other reviewed above, resembles an employment contract between a lady and her waiting maid; but it should be emphasized that the stipulation of services to be rendered in exchange for future inheritance was not entirely absent from other cases as well.

While governors were attentive to adoptive parents’ needs, in at least some cases they put the child’s interests (as they understood them) first. In 1612, a hat maker named Chiara, who had served as a baptismal godmother to a young Muslim convert, sought to adopt him. After much deliberation, and with several governors expressing concern that

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*propria figliola, insieme con detta sua Consorte, et come tale trattarla, et maritarla*: AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 33v–34r (Oct. 16, 1572).

**ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 17v** (Feb. 15, 1633 m.v.).

**Instead, she was only guaranteed 200 ducats in inheritance, and her use of the funds was severely restricted. Specifically, upon her adoptive mother’s death, Nicolosa was to receive fifty ducats to dispense as she pleased, and additional fifty ducats to pass on to her blood relations. In the absence of such relations, the money would go to the Pia Casa. Another one hundred ducats would only become available to Nicolosa as a supplement for her religious dower, should she choose to join a monastery. In exchange, the girl was obligated to accompany her adoptive mother if and when she decided to pursue her plan of joining a Jesuit monastery.** AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 69v–70v (Nov. 16, 1591).
such a move will be “contrary to [the child’s] wellbeing,” Chiara was granted her wish, only to have the child taken away the following week and, eventually, placed with a haberdasher in the parish of San Moisè.  

Chiara’s wish to adopt her godchild should be understood within a larger context where the line between kinship, guardianship, and ownership was often crossed regardless of conversion, especially when slaves and servants were concerned. Affective ties between masters and servants were channeled to a variety of practices, ranging from the provision of dowry and various types of financial assistance, to concubinage and adoption. We should not assume that affective ties across ranks somehow undermined the power structures in which they were embedded. Rather, as historian Dennis Romano has shown, such ties often helped cement power relations, and were part and parcel of the patriarchal logic of Venetian housecraft and statecraft.  

A case in point, illustrating masters’ attachments as godparents and as patrons to their convert slaves, is the relationship between Zamaria Schietti and his slave Fumia. In 1619, Schietti committed in writing to give a fifty ducat dowry to his fourteen-year-old slave Fumia, whom he had purchased in Istanbul, on condition that she be accepted as “daughter of the House.” A week later, Fumia was introduced and accepted as a catechumen. Despite rumors of her “falling down” with a mariner the following month, she was eventually baptized, with Schietti serving as her godfather.  

Schietti’s relationship with Fumia presented, at least to the governors, a model of Christian charity. After purchasing her from infidels, 

\[10\] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 57r (Oct. 19, 1612), c. 57v (Oct. 25, 1612), c. 58r (Nov. 2, 1612), c. 67r (March 14, 1613).

\[11\] Romano 1991; Romano 1996. For a broader discussion of intimacy as a space for the articulation of social boundaries and hierarchies in imperial settings, see Stoler 2004.

\[12\] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 138v (Feb. 21, 1618 m.v.), c. 139r (Feb. 28, 1618 m.v.), c. 141r (March 21, 1619), c. 142v (April 11, 1619).
Schietti brought the girl to Venice, where he guaranteed the salvation of her soul by admitting her to the Pia Casa to be catechized and baptized. Moreover, by agreeing to pay for her dowry, he offered her the prospect of respectable, if humble, marriage.

As these records suggest, the dyadic relationship between masters and their convert slaves was complicated by the Pia Casa’s unequivocal claim to guardianship over converts. The governors exercised this guardianship by watching over converts’ masters, and, in some cases, removing converts from households when suspicion of maltreatment arose. Indeed, the Pia Casa’s custodial claims over converts did not terminate even after their legal adoption. All adoption contracts in the House archives contain clauses specifying the governors’ right to intervene and retrieve the child from her adoptive parents in cases of maltreatment or failure to provide appropriate dowries. For example, in April 1618 the child convert Orsola was placed with a Venetian jeweler named Lorenzo, with the prospect of legal adoption. Several weeks later, the governors of the Pia Casa called the parish priest of San Polo to intervene on Orsola’s behalf and protect the child from the jeweler. The following week, the governors decided to visit Orsola themselves, accompanied by the women governors “to make sure she is treated well by the jeweler.” A few weeks later, the parish priest again was instructed to “visit the child consigned to the jeweler… see how she is treated, and, if necessary, remove her.” Apparently, the visitors were satisfied with what they had found, for they ultimately decided to sign a written contract with Lorenzo for Orsola’s adoption.¹¹³

Many other convert children placed with masters or adoptive parents outside the House were visited periodically by the governors, who, even after the adoption had been

¹¹³ AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 117r (April 9, 1618), c. 118v (April 24, 1618), c. 123v (July 12, 1618), c. 125v (Aug. 9, 1618), c. 127v (Sept. 21, 1618).
cemented contractually, still treated the adoptee as a “child of the House.” The bond between a convert and the Pia Casa was believed to take precedence over other kinship ties forged throughout a convert’s life, whether prior to baptism or after.

Fear of concubinage may have led the governors to remove young female converts from patrician households where they had been placed as servants, but where they might also cohabit with unmarried men. Yet, the governors’ ability to control and prevent such cases was clearly limited, as repeated allusions to scandals do crop up in the archives. The prevalence of concubinage between female slaves and their Venetian masters is also indicated by a number of cases of young children brought to the Pia Casa to be baptized and promptly returned to their masters’ homes. For instance, in 1580 the baby son of Mariana, a converted Moorish slave, was consigned upon baptism to his father—Mariana’s master, the physician Sempronio Maltempo—who promised to “educate [the baby] out of charity, and return him [to the Pia Casa] at the request of the governors, without asking for any expenses, and without any exceptions.”\(^{114}\) How widespread concubinage really was between Venetian masters and their slaves is difficult to determine. Some cases do suggest that conversion became a channel for legitimizing and supervising otherwise-problematic intimate ties between Venetian patricians and citizens and the Muslim slave children and women in their households.\(^{115}\)

Finally, we should note that the governors’ concern for converts’ sexual morality was highly gendered, and involved, in the case of women, a certain element of protection. Whereas the cohabitation of female converts with men to whom they were not legally

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\(^{114}\) AIRE, CAT C 1, c. 41v (Aug. 4, 1580).

\(^{115}\) Sally McKee’s work in progress on sex slaves in medieval Venice promises to be important contributions to this field. On concubinage in Venice, see also Cowan 1999; Cowan 2003; Byars 2005.
married was strictly forbidden, when it came to male converts, governors seem to have been far less troubled. On November 11, 1629, the Pia Casa’s departure register notes that “Signor Zacomo Martin, formerly Lazaro the Jew from Padua, left the House on the day he was baptized, and went to live in the street of Santa Sofia, in the house of the Venetian Signora Alba, whom he wants as a wife.”\footnote{“Il sig.re Zacomo, et Martin alias Lazaro hebreo da padua l’isteso giorno fu battizato se parti di casa, et andó ad habitare in casa della sig.ra Alba Venetiana in strada di santa Sofia, quale la volse per sua mogliere”: ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 14r (Nov. 11, 1629).} No mention is made of chastisement or any attempt to prevent Zacomo from moving in with his lover.

**SURVEILLANCE**

I noted above that financial assistance provided a strong incentive for converts to settle in Venice and meet governors’ moral standards. Indeed, as a precondition for any assistance from the Pia Casa, converts were asked to present not only their baptismal certificate, but also a letter from their parish priest to ascertain \textit{vita & moribus}, i.e. good Christian behavior and periodic confession.\footnote{AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 23.} In 1613, the governors decided to threaten Lucia-Sultana, a convert and a longtime recipient of the House’s charity, with discontinuing her stipend unless she moved out of the house where she was then living, and refrained from her habit of visiting homes that were “scandalous and contrary to the Catholic faith.” Earlier inquiries after Sultana’s morality and poverty seem to have satisfied the governors, and she was given a small stipend throughout 1611–1612. Ultimately, in 1615 Lucia-Sultana joined the pinzochere tertiary sisters of San Stefano and became a nun. The Pia Casa provided her with a stipend for rent, clothing and food for the first year, later extended for a second year “or until some other funding source
came up.\footnote{AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 71r (May 23, 1613), c. 91r (May 29, 1615), c. 102r (June 3, 1616). See also \textit{ibid.}, cc. 13r–v, 17r, 19r, 29r, 33r, 38r, 45r, 54r, 55v, 56r, 58v, 63v, 66r, 76r.} In another case in 1615, the governors gave twelve lire and twelve soldi in charity to the convert and commercial broker Andrea “upon proof of confession and communion.” Andrea had been baptized twenty years earlier, in May 1595.\footnote{AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 47v (April 12, 1595), c. 48r (May 12, 1595); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 87v (Jan. 8, 1614 m.v.).} In 1623, all neophytes departing from the House were additionally required to report their whereabouts every three months.\footnote{ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 7r (Feb. 16, 1622 m.v.).}
How effective supervision by parish priests and periodic head counts were in inducing converts’ proper behavior is hard to gauge. Yet the very notion that governors should keep track of neophytes for decades after their baptism suggests the extent to which the institution’s relationship with former charges was understood to be lifelong, rather than limited to the period of catechization in preparation for baptism. Conversely, the attempt itself to exercise lifelong disciplinary control over neophytes was hardly unique. The Tridentine Reform was a project of comprehensive “social discipline,” a reorganization of parishioners’ daily life and its subjection to close supervision by parish clergy.\textsuperscript{121} In that sense, neophytes seemed particularly suitable subjects of ecclesiastical injunctions, which were applied in this period to other populations as well.

Another way for the governors to keep in close touch with neophytes was to employ them within the Pia Casa, including for tasks requiring a high level of trust. In 1613, the governors elected a Jewish convert, Giovanni Battista Malipiero, as the House bookkeeper, pledging to pay him ten ducats a year in return for keeping the register, and arriving in the house periodically to note down the governors’ decisions.\textsuperscript{122} In 1615, they appointed as solicitor Iseppo Strassoldo, who had converted with his son and two daughters some years earlier. His task was to collect money owed the Pia Casa from credits and legacies. On other occasions, Strassoldo was entrusted with keeping the keys to the House archives, and sent on a fundraising mission to Rome—both highly responsible assignments.\textsuperscript{123} As noted above, converts were regularly sent as alms-collectors for the House to various parts of the Venetian state, with a percentage of the

\textsuperscript{121} On Tridentine emphasis on parochial conformity, and on “social discipline” in early modern Italy more broadly, see Bossy 1970; Prodi and Penuti 1994; Prodi and Reinhard 1996; de Boer 2003.
\textsuperscript{122} AIRE, CAT B 6, 64v (Jan. 24, 1612 m.v.).
\textsuperscript{123} AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 90r (April 23, 1615), c. 90v (April 30, 1615), c. 94v (Oct. 15, 1615).
money collected to be kept by the collector as a means of supporting himself and his family.

Hiring poorer members of a congregation to perform tasks previously undertaken by volunteers from among the membership was a typical development of late sixteenth-century Venetian confraternities. Such arrangements allowed the Pia Casa, in addition to minimizing its expenses, to use its funds as an extra carrot for inducing converts’ good behavior. In 1612 the convert Geronima took into her house young neophyte Orsetta and another convert’s two newborn babies, who were to remain in her custody for the next decade. The monthly stipend paid her for keeping these neophytes in her household supported both her and her convert husband Francesco, a builder. Francesco himself, like other converts who had already established themselves as artisans, was assigned a young neophyte apprentice with a contract, after the latter had quit an earlier assignment to a vocational school for dealers in secondhand clothes.

If governors clearly considered it their duty to secure shelter and employment for neophytes upon baptism, not all their charges welcomed such efforts. The records, brief as they may be, allow us a glimpse of at least some dissenting converts, who did not welcome governors’ disciplinary interventions. In 1595, two Jewish neophytes, accused of leading a “bad way of life,” and consorting with a “bad sort of women,” were threatened with removal of the House’s protections and the revoking of their stipends. When these threats did not meet with any results, the governors asked the Archbishop of Split to strongly admonish the two, and also decreed that until they behaved like good

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125 AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 61v (Dec. 14, 1612), c. 63v (Jan. 18, 1612 m.v.), c. 84r (June 12, 1613), c. 85v (Sept. 4, 1614). References to young neophytes kept by Geronima appear in the register up to its end in 1619.
Christians, the wayward neophytes were to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, confess to the Jesuit friars at the church of Umiltà, and be prevented from leaving the house unless accompanied by the prior. If all failed, they were to also be denied bread and milk. Only after they had been threatened with being removed from the House altogether did the disobedient neophytes come to meet the governors’ demands, and were unceremoniously led to the Patriarch for their reconciliation ceremony.\textsuperscript{126}

Some converts were more resolute in rejecting governors’ efforts to determine their future. In March 1619, a neophyte named Antonio \textit{alias} Assan from a village near Skopje, left the Pia Casa to join his friend Michiele, another convert baptized 12 days earlier. Both had decided to go to Mestre to join a cavalry company. As the House prior noted, Antonio left

\begin{quote}
without wishing to wait for the Congregation to procure accommodation, and said he wanted to go… nor did he wish to heed my admonitions as Prior, in which I begged him and begged him again to stay, attend confession and communion for Easter, and let the Venerable Congregation provide for him, and showed him that his [actions] were a temptation and a clear sign of wishing to be a bad Christian; to which he did not respond other than [by saying:] I give you my word that I want to go away, and so he left, or rather he went to Ca da Mula in the parish of San Vio, where the aforementioned Michiele lived, and they left together.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

Much to the House prior’s chagrin, Antonio and Michiele rejected the spiritual and financial security promised by the institution to those who stayed in Venice and under the governors’ watchful eyes. The governors intended to place Antonio in the service of

\textsuperscript{126} AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 48v (May 18, 1595), c. 52r (July 20, 1595), c. 52v (July 24, 1595), c. 53r (Aug. 3, 1595), c. 53v (Aug. 10, 1595).
\textsuperscript{127} “Senza voler aspettar la Cong.ne la quale procurava accomodarlo, disse voler andar à Mestre p[er] entrar in una Compagnia di Cavalli, ne volse accettare le amonitioni fatteli da me Priore, q’le lo pregai, e ripregai à voler fermarsi, co’fessarsi, e co’municarsi p[er] Pasqua e lasciarsi provvedere dalla Venerabil Cong.ne mostrandoli esser la sua una Tentatione, e segno manifesto di voler esser poco buon christiano; alche altro no’ rispose seno’ datemi la mia fede, che voglio andar via, e così se n’andò, anzi andò à cha da Mula à San Vio dove si era accommodato il retroscritto Michiele, lo sviò, e se n’andorono insieme”: ACPV, BdC, 2, cc. 4r–v (March 23, 1619); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 134v (Dec. 20, 1618).
Ottavio dall’Oglio, who later employed several other converts, whereas Michiele had already been placed in the house of the patrician Alvise da Mula. Instead, the two opted for employment away from the city, among fellow converts. This case may have inspired others. Only three days later, another convert, Francesco *alias* Suliman similarly decided to try his luck as a soldier in Padua, rather than wait for the Pia Casa “to provide for him, even though his godfather and the scribe of the ship Mascherina who had brought him to the house wished to place him in a trade,” as the prior lamented.

As these records suggest, governors understood the institution’s role as not merely to catechize its charges and then set them up with means of supporting themselves, but rather to socialize them as morally upright and economically productive members of Venice’s metropolitan society. Sometimes, this warranted disciplinary action. In 1631, Giovanni Giacomo *alias* Mustafà from Izmir, who had been baptized the previous year and posted onboard ship, was sent away. When he returned less than a month later, the governors declared him a scurrilous person, foulmouthed and obstinate, and banished him “so that he does not hurt the other children of the house.” Conversely, only rarely were disciplinary measures taken against neophytes simply for holding unorthodox beliefs. In May 1598, a neophyte named Marco, a catechumen for the previous six months, was removed from the House for eight days with a small stipend “in order to see if he is straightened from his contempt for the Holy Mass and for the veneration of sacred...
images.”[^131] I could not find indications of similar measures taken against any neophytes already baptized. The overall laxity in enforcing converts’ doctrinal conformity (as opposed to their socially normative behavior) fits a larger pattern in Venice, where, as a rule, theological heterodoxy was curbed primarily when it might lead to public scandal. It further suggests how in this context conversion was intended to produce loyal juridical and social subjects, rather than merely to save souls.

**CONCLUSIONS**

For both (primarily local) Jews and (primarily immigrant) Muslims, becoming Catholic in early modern Venice entailed a prolonged process of social transformation and insertion into new social relations of patronage and surrogate kinship. In this sense, baptism marked the beginning, rather than the end, of a transformative process. Furthermore, precisely because aptitude for self-transformation was understood to be heavily dependent on a convert’s moral, physical, and intellectual qualities, a radical break with his or her previous life was only seldom attempted, and even more rarely achieved. Instead, converts’ preexisting social networks were crucial in determining their itineraries after baptism. Local Jewish converts, especially those male adults who commanded Italian, had a trade, valued intellectual skills, or some prior contacts among Venetian commercial and cultural elites, were less dependent on the Pia Casa to provide them with employment, and thus define the terms of their insertion into society. Muslim converts, whose only available career paths were often domestic service (especially for women) and the military (for men), frequently with their pre-baptismal masters,

[^131]: “Per veder se si corregge dal disprezzo per la messa e per la devozione alle sacre immagini”: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 86r (May 28, 1598).
depended much more on the Pia Casa’s patronage in the long run. A strong incentive to maintain good ties with the Pia Casa was further provided by the prospects of marriage with local artisans or fellow converts, financial support, and employment opportunities facilitated by the Pia Casa and by one’s godparents. These practices and the hierarchical relations they helped cement were rooted in converts’ original status as immigrant servants and slaves.

More broadly, conversion in early modern Venice operated as a mechanism for the transformation of Muslims and Jews, two prototypical others of the Venetian state, into properly-constituted Catholic subjects, capable of filling normative kinship and institutional roles in metropolitan society. Besides producing such subjects, converting non-Christians also brought moral prestige to converts’ patrons, who thus participated in a more general, imperial enterprise of projecting Venice’s self-image as a Christian republic beyond its frontiers.

Following Simmel’s famous definition of strangers as full-fledged, organic members of the groups to which they are inorganically appended, this chapter considered Muslim and Jewish converts to Catholicism as organic members of early modern Venetian metropolitan society. Not only was converts’ position determined by the multiplicity of shifting social relations in that society, but their very insertion in society shaped Venetian social relations, as well as that society’s boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, conversion through the Pia Casa operated not only to transform non-Christians into loyal subjects of the Venetian state, but also to define the mutual obligations of different kinds of subjects within metropolitan society, and between metropolitan and colonial subjects. Through the guardianship and spiritual kinship of
converts, the Pia Casa articulated an important self-understanding of Venetian patrician and citizen elites as disinterested guarantors of the Republic’s common good. At the same time, through the administration of bequests, and the negotiation of dowries, adoption, employment and apprenticeship contracts, governors wove dense horizontal and vertical networks of patronage and clientage, with both converts and governors themselves as nodal points for the distribution of money, power, and affect. In other words, individual patricians and citizens could thus further their private interests while exercising forms of charity that constituted them as moral persons and as political subjects. By partaking in a ritualized ideological victory over the Ottomans, the Pia Casa’s governors and benefactors became executors of the common good of the Republic. At the same time, by casting this ideological victory in terms of religious conversion, and by collaborating with both Jesuits and locally-appointed patrician clergy, the Pia Casa championed Venetian claims to Catholic orthodoxy in the face of Roman criticism. Finally, through practices such as alms-collecting campaigns throughout the Venetian Terraferma, and the resettlement of converts in various colonial outposts, the Pia Casa also participated in the process of empire-building.

In her path-breaking study of conversion in the Victorian British Empire, postcolonial literary critic Gauri Viswanathan has forcefully urged us to see conversion “as an act akin to the forces of modernity in its appeal to personal (rather than collective) choice, will, and action […] conversion posits a severe challenge to the demarcation of identities set by the laws that govern everyday life and practice.”132 In a similar vein, Lucetta Scaraffia has defined early modern Mediterranean renegades as the paradigmatic

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articulators of modern individual identity: Because of their exterior status in both
Christian and Muslim communities, she argues, renegades had to “produce their own
values and norms, based on their individual choice.” In this study, I have sought to
present a different view. Rather than as the epitomes of individual “free choice,” I have
shown how converts—and their interlocutors—operated within specific institutional
constraints that shaped their social relations, subjectivities, and, indeed, the very category
of “convert.” In early modern Venice, what counted as being fully converted to
Catholicism was clearly depended upon one’s long-term ability to appear as a moral
person. Counting as moral strongly depended on being a productive, settled member of
Venetian metropolitan society, the terms of which, in turn, depended on gender, place of
origin, and social status prior to conversion. Rather than the heralds of modern identity
politics, I suggest, converts renegotiated the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, but
through a process that was heavily mediated by imperial institutions and their respective
assumptions about subjecthood and its transformative potential.

PART III: TRANSLATION

CHAPTER VI

THE MAKING OF VENETIAN DRAGOMANS

The very essence of translation consists of correctly reporting in one language that which was written in another.

—Leonardo Bruni

A Pera ci sono tre malanni: peste, fuoco e dragomanni

In Pera there are three misfortunes: plague, fire, and dragomans

—“A popular saying”

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1588, Giovanni Moro, the Venetian bailo in Istanbul, sent a secret report to the Heads of the Council of Ten, the highest security authority in Venice.

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3 The history of the institution of the Venetian bailo in Istanbul goes back to the Byzantine period. The Venetians were granted a complete exemption from customs in Byzantium as early as 1082. The title of
Attached to the report was a transcript of the interrogation of some sixteen people, mostly current or former employees resident in the bailo’s house. Their testimonies revolved around a scandal, which the bailo was determined to keep from Ottoman officials’ ears: a love affair that had blossomed between two men under his employ. Witnesses described in vivid detail the ongoing love affair between Gianesin Salvago, an Istanbul native in his twenties who was serving as an apprentice dragoman (diplomatic interpreter), and Gregorio, the bailo’s Venetian barber-surgeon. Beyond an intriguing vignette about early modern perceptions of same-sex love, intimacy, and domesticity, the transcript of the interrogation opens a window onto the bailo’s complex of relationships—as the representative of a state, but also as a patrician head of a household—with his non-patrician Venetian and Ottoman employees, as well as with Ottoman state institutions. The fact that Gianesin was an Istanbul-born Latin (i.e. Catholic Ottoman subject), that he had already lived in the bailo’s house for thirteen years, and that his grandfather and father had been dragomans in Venetian service their entire lives, were crucial in defining his professional, social, and familial trajectories in the aftermath of the scandal. Whereas Gregorio, after threatening to convert to Islam, was sent in chains to Crete, where his tracks were lost, Gianesin, although reprimanded, was soon re-admitted to the bailo’s house. Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo’s relazione of 1590 makes no mention of the scandal, and defines Gianesin as “of very lively spirit; he knows the languages of the Turks, the Greeks, and the Franks, and therefore will bring great results.”

bailo, or bajulus, was first conferred on permanent Venetian representatives to Byzantine Constantinople in 1265. In 1575 the position was juridically equated to that of a regular ambassador, and the authority to appoint baili was transferred from the Venetian Great Council to the Senate. Coco and Manzonetto 1985: 13–14. On the history of the institution of bailo in Istanbul, see also Bertelé 1932; Dursteler 2006.

4 “Di spirito molto vivo; ha la lingua turca, greca e franca, e però farà ottima riuscita”: Bernardo 1996:
father’s position as Road Dragoman upon the latter’s retirement. In that position he was in charge of accompanying Venetian diplomats on their trips to and from Istanbul. Other important assignments followed.\(^5\)

By situating Gianesin’s career in a broader discussion of the formation and transformation of the Venetian dragomanat—the corps of diplomatic interpreters employed by the bailo in Istanbul—this chapter explores the relationship between translation, claims to cultural expertise, and the production of trans-imperial kinship networks in the European-Ottoman contact zone. I show that dragomans’ multiple provenances and modes of recruitment, training, and employment between Istanbul and Venice belied neat distinctions between “local” and “foreign,” and informed their evolving practices of translation and mediation. In addition, dragomans also “provided institutional memory and continuity of procedure to the embassy” through their long-term, usually life-long service.\(^6\)

Unlike the relatively unstudied cadres of commercial brokers and religious converts, subjects of the first and second parts of the dissertation respectively, dragomans in the service of foreign powers in early modern Istanbul have attracted considerable scholarly attention, in the form of prosopographical studies of individual dragomans,\(^7\)

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\(^5\) In 1599 he was entrusted with a mission to the Morea (Peloponnese), and delivered a report in Zante upon his return. On another occasion, he traveled on an official mission to Buda and Belgrade. In 1600 his services as Road Dragoman were valued enough by the Venetian Senate to warrant a dramatic increase in his annual salary, from 94 to 150 sequins. His annual salary was further raised to 200 sequins in 1604. For the initial Senate decree to admit Gianesin as apprentice dragoman, see Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371, unpaginated (Sept. 20, 1575). On Gianesin’s appointment as Road Dragoman in 1596, see Bertelè 1932: 416. On his later career milestones, see Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, cc. 172r–175v (Oct. 17, 1599); MCC, Cod. Cicogna 2709, c. 44 (undated); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371, unpaginated (June 16, 1600 and July 29, 1604).

\(^6\) Berridge 2003: 137.

\(^7\) Cordier 1911; Paladino 1917; Babinger 1927; Neck 1950; Pippidi 1980; Lesure 1983; Zele 1990; Hering 1994; Infelise 1997; Pál 2000; Conley 2002; Findley 2002; Luca 2003a.
reconstructions of dragoman lineages, surveys of policies related to the dragomans of specific embassies, or appraisals of the functions of dragomans in a particular sphere of administrative activity.

Yet, as Alexander de Groot recently noted, much of this scholarship remains compartmentalized and undertheorized, providing case studies without a larger context. Rather than offer a synthetic overview of Venice’s dragomans in Istanbul, in this chapter I explore the social composition of this professional group in order to highlight how trans-imperial trajectories were at the heart of dragomans’ recruitment, training, and performance. I also suggest the role of dragomans as the precursors (and sometimes both the biological and intellectual ancestors) of the budding orientalist scholars of the Enlightenment. I consider how the dragoman’s role as an intermediary between the Ottoman Empire and a growing reading public in Venice and beyond was shaped by specific familial and professional contexts. Both Venetian official diplomatic correspondence and dragomans’ own writings (their petitions, reports, and translations of Ottoman texts) allow me to reconstruct the emergence of a highly endogamous and powerful group of dragoman families, related to Venice’s colonial nobility and citizen class, as well as the Latin (local Roman-Catholic) community of Istanbul. I then explore dragomans’ evolving discourse about the Ottomans as it relates to their sense of place within and ties to both Ottoman and Venetian bureaucratic elites.

Before considering the specifics of dragomans’ recruitment, training, and employment, a few words are in order about the roles of dragomans in certain key genres and institutions of knowledge production in the European-Ottoman contact zone. Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of early modern forms of news circulation, and particularly of seventeenth-century *avvisi*, the precursors to the newspaper, for the gradual emergence of reading and debating publics. Istanbul, with its high concentration of foreign diplomats, was a center of information not only about things Ottoman, but about events in other parts of Europe as well. And Venice was the node through which this information was transmitted and circulated further. Indeed, the crystallization of two genres of writing by Venetian diplomats in Istanbul, the *relazioni* and the *dispacci*, has been identified as a crucial moment in the history of the emergence of news-consuming publics.11

One of the most important genres through which the Venetian baili in Istanbul reflected on their work and life in the Ottoman capital was the *dispacci*, the weekly and sometimes twice-weekly dispatches sent to the Senate. Unlike the highly formalized and erudite *relazioni*, which officials composed and read to the Senate upon their return from Istanbul after a multiyear sojourn, the *dispacci* provided mundane, detailed accounts of events in the bailo’s house, in the Ottoman capital, and beyond. They often included reports of conversations held by staff members both among themselves and with various Ottoman officials and foreign diplomats. A systematic reading of this extensive textual output reveals the extent to which Venetian patrician knowledge of the Ottomans relied

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11 On *avvisi*, see Dooley 1999; Infelise 2001; Infelise 2002; on *relazioni*, see Valensi 1990; Valensi 1993; on *dispacci* and on Venice as the center of knowledge production about the Ottomans, see Preto 1975; Höfert 2003: 124–42; Meserve 2006.
on the mediation of dragomans. The *dispacci* indicate that dragomans were frequently sent unaccompanied for audiences in the divan (Ottoman imperial council) and to other meetings with high-ranking Ottoman officials. They also report in great detail on dragomans’ frequent missions to provincial rulers, their conversations with friends and relatives (many of whom worked for other foreign embassies), and their translations of Ottoman official correspondence.

While some Venetian diplomats acknowledged it more openly than others, it is hard to overstate the degree to which they all relied on dragomans’ interpretive work for current knowledge of Ottoman politics and society. Dragomans were fundamental actors in the production and circulation of news in Istanbul. It was, for example, with some degree of pride that bailo Almorò Nani wrote to the Senate in 1616 of his secret contacts with a Hungarian dragoman, who had been able to debrief him about events in the Imperial court, as well as in Dalmatia, a region of key importance to the Venetians.\(^\text{12}\)

Another dispatch by Nani a few months later reported on two of his dragomans, Giuliano Salvago and Barnabà Brutti, sent on missions to the Ottoman governor (*luogotenente*) of Bosnia and to Ibrahim Agà, the military governor of Buda, respectively. The dragomans’ letters to him, which Nani then reported in abridged form in his own dispatch to the Senate, included detailed diplomatic, military, commercial and ethnographic information concerning a number of provinces within the Ottoman Empire.\(^\text{13}\)

The bailo’s ability to inform the Venetian government in real time about developments in the Ottoman Empire clearly depended on the labor of his dragomans, and this dependency was often lamented. In his *relazione* of 1576 to the Senate, bailo

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\(^{12}\) Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 81, c. 18 (March 19, 1616).

\(^{13}\) Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 81, cc. 343r–345r (Aug. 20, 1616).
Antonio Tiepolo complained at some length about dragomans’ mediation, and his inability to establish direct lines of communication with Ottoman ministers,

From which follows that because the difficulty of interpretation is so great... the bailo can never do anything by himself, as he cannot express his own reasons as effectively as is necessary. Therefore in the absence of this efficacy of words, and in the absence also of the virtue of that skill which the bailo uses in reasoning, from which the Pasha will understand neither cowardice nor fear, but proper respect, the result is that the dragoman, who is often impeded by the difficulty of interpreting, and even more by not being gifted in apprehending not only the things, but the bailo’s mode of impressing these things, weakens the arguments and exhibits that timidity which is never the bailo’s share; for which reason if he is not aided by the bailo, in what to say, and with a face full of confidence and with a steady voice, the Pasha might dare to refuse or make difficult that which would have been most simple in itself. This disadvantage of the bailo, or rather of Your Serenity is augmented when negotiating in the divan, where it is not customary for the bailo to go; because the dragoman, while Christian, because he is nonetheless a Turkish [i.e. Ottoman] subject, is fearful by his nature, and even more so for having neither the talent nor the experience to negotiate as would be needed in matters of any import.14

It is precisely because early modern diplomacy was so deeply rooted in humanist notions of eloquence that the ambassador’s forced reliance on the mediation of dragomans in his communications with Ottoman officials came to be seen as such an insurmountable problem.15

Tiepolo’s complaint about dragomans’ mediation focuses on their role in face-to-face oral interactions between foreign and local officials who did not share a common

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14 “Donde aviene che essendo grandissima la difficoltà dell’interpretare... non possa mai il bailo satisfar a sé stesso non potendo distesamente esporre la sua ragione con quell’efficacia che maggiormente bisogna. Onde mancando questa efficacia di parole, e mancando ancora la virtù di quella destrezza che usa il bailo nel ragionare, donde comprenderia il pascià non viltà nè paura, ma conveniente rispetto, avviene che il dragomanno ben spesso impedito dalla difficoltà d’interpretare, e più ancora dal non aver tanto ingegno che intenda non solo le cose, ma il modo che tiene il bailo per ben imprimerle, snerva le ragioni e mostra quella timidità che non è mai nel bailo; per la qual cosa se non si aiuta il bailo, siccome dissi, e col volto pieno di confidenza e con voce salda, prende ardire il pascià di negare e dificultar quello che siaria facilissimo per sé stesso Questo disavantaggio del bailo, anzi della Serenità Vostra si fa maggiore quando occorre trattar negozio in divano, dove non è solito andar il bailo; perché il dragomanno sebben cristiano nondimeno suddito turchesco, trema per sua natura, ma più ancora per non aver ingegno né esperienza per trattar come bisognerebbe negozj d’alcn momento”: Quoted in Bertelè 1932: 122–23.
15 On early modern diplomacy and its humanist origins, see Mattingly 1955; Mallett 1994; Biow 2002; Hampton 2006.
language, and also as representatives of one power to the officials of another. But
dragomans’ powerful position as intermediaries was not due only to their knowledge of
the Ottoman language and court affairs. Thanks to their lifelong service in Istanbul,
dragomans were much more familiar with Ottoman diplomatic protocol than Venetian
baili, who usually spent only two years in office. It was this familiarity which granted
authority to their pronouncements on “custom” and “tradition.” For example, in 1580,
three Venetian dragomans, Marco di Scassi, Marchio Spinelli, and Matteo Marucini,
deposited in the bailo’s chancellery a notarized document, in which they described the
“ordinary” (i.e. customary) nature of certain slave-ransoming practices.16 By that point,
Marucini and Spinelli had been employed by the embassy for thirteen years, and Scassi
for five. An even better example of the power of dragomans to speak in the name of
tradition is bailo Andrea Badoer’s report of an encounter between dragoman Mateca
Salvago and an Ottoman provincial governor in 1573. Upon arrival at the governor’s
residence, the governor asked Salvago whether he had brought him his gift. Salvago
responded in the positive, saying that, as usual, it consisted of garments of silk and fine
cloth.17 The governor exclaimed: “But where are my one thousand sequins?”18 Salvago,
according to Badoer’s report, asserted that giving monetary gifts was not customary.
Moreover, when the governor exclaimed that giving clothes as gifts was not customary
either, and demanded to see the bailo himself, Salvago retorted that this would be
“superfluous,” since even the bailo himself could not give him money as a gift, adding that the

16 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 263, fasc. 2, c. 15v (Aug. 25, 1580).
17 Garments were indeed customary gifts in foreign diplomats’ visits to Ottoman officials. See, for
example, Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated (Jan. 10, 1663 m.v.).
18 The sixteenth-century Ottoman sequin coin was roughly equivalent to the Venetian gold ducat, with
which it agreed in weight (3.5 grams).
governor “could not say what was not true.”19 If Antonio Tiepolo’s above-quoted complaint suggests that Ottoman subjects made timid and complacent dragomans, Salvago’s dealing with the governor implies the opposite. It was the dragomans’ claim to expertise on customary diplomatic practice which allowed them to represent Venice to Ottoman officials. And some baili certainly recognized this. In 1553, bailo Bernardin Navagero praised Gianesin Salvago for his long and loyal service, and the respect he had earned in the divan. Not only did Salvago “understand very well the humors of that nation [i.e. the Ottomans]” but “he is most obliged to the Pashas, and especially to Rüstem, with whom he has become very close, and [shows] such familiarity that he speaks without respectful address, and laughs with him.”20

As with all memory-work, however, dragomans’ assertions about how things should be done, and how they have been done in the past, were clearly shaped by the exigencies of the present. Just like other ambassadors to the Porte, most Venetian baili in this period knew little, if any, Turkish; for instruction in the language was not available in Venice on a regular basis in this period.21 Given baili’s short terms in office in Istanbul, which were often preceded by and following assignments in other European capitals, they had few opportunities or incentives to learn the language. Evidence suggests that few

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19 “Che no’ poteva dir quello che no’ era, et che era ancor superfluo che ne facesse parola con noi, perche no’ glieli potevimai dare”: Capitolo del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciati, Costantinopoli, b. 4, c. 102r (July 20, 1573). On the circulation of Italian silken cloth among Ottoman elite households, see Mackie 2001.
20 “Intende molto bene gli umori di quella nazione. È gratissimo alli pascià, ma especialmente a Rustan, con il quale ha preso tanto animo e tanta domestichezza che parla senza rispetto e ride con lui”: Albèri 1839: 104. Rüstem Pasha was the grand vizier and son-in-law of Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520–1566).
21 Plans for the first school of “oriental languages” in Venice were proposed by bailo Giambattista Donà in 1692. The designated instructor was Ibrahim Achmet, a convert from Albania. The school reopened its doors only in 1706, under the direction of Salomon Negri, a Greek from Damascus. See Preto 1975: 106–7. The situation was similar in other European metropoles. In London, for example, as late as 1838 only one man taught Turkish. Cunningham 1961: 94.
other staff members in the bailo’s house, save for the dragomans, spoke, read, or wrote Turkish. Dragomans, then, maintained one of the main, if not exclusive, channels of communication between the bailo’s house and the surrounding society.\textsuperscript{22} Even apprentice dragomans (known as \textit{giovani di lingua}, lit. “language youth”) could serve as young but powerful intermediaries between two large empires. If anything, the unique routes of recruitment into their ranks, to which I now turn, strengthened their power.

\textbf{RECRUITMENT}

The cultural turn in interpretation studies has yielded in recent decades a number of studies focusing on the power-laden formation of interpreters, and their key roles as intermediaries between colonizers and colonized on Europe’s imperial frontiers.\textsuperscript{23} Michael Cronin’s synthesis of the subject of imperial interpreters distinguishes between “heteronomous” and “autonomous” systems of interpretation, the first premised on the recruitment of local interpreters who are taught the imperial language, the latter on colonizers who train their own subjects in the languages of the colonized.\textsuperscript{24} Venetian diplomats and colonial administrators recognized, of course, the important implications of interpreters’ political subjecthood for loyalty and trustworthiness, traits as important to the interpreter’s performance as his command of foreign languages. However, Cronin’s neat distinction between colonizers as political subjects and colonized as non-subjects, highly problematic in the case of modern empires, is completely untenable in the case of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Although it should be kept in mind that Galata and Pera had a large population of Greek- and Italian speakers, and that many Ottoman high officials were \textit{devshirme} Christian recruits from Rumeli (i.e. the Balkans). At least some of them commanded other languages besides Turkish, such as Greek or Serbian.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Cronin 2002: 55.
\end{itemize}
medieval and early modern ones. Venetian subjecthood came in many shades, had varying political and economic implications, and was by no means reserved to “colonizers.” On the other hand Venetian citizenship, as scholars have long acknowledged, was conferred and practiced differently in Venice, in different parts of the Venetian state, and in the non-Venetian territories where Venetians lived and traded.25 Moreover, the very notion of an overlap between linguistic and political boundaries implied by Cronin’s binary would have made little sense before the emergence of the nation-state. For example, Venetian interpreters in Istanbul formed a cohesive, endogamous group despite (and perhaps precisely because of) their widely varying linguistic skills, places of provenance, and political status in both the Venetian and Ottoman states. To neatly separate “Venetian subjects” from “indigenous people” in Istanbul or in any other part of the Mediterranean in this period would thus be teleological and anachronistic.

In recruiting dragomans for their embassies in Istanbul, all early modern foreign powers were faced with the same problem: the dearth of their own citizens who commanded spoken and written Turkish or understood the pragmatics of Ottoman diplomatic protocol. While the problem was perennial, and would endure well into the nineteenth century, each power sought to overcome it by different means. In particular, the solutions attempted by Venice and by France—the two main “trend setters” for foreign diplomacy in Istanbul in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—reflected divergent visions of Ottoman Otherness and how to overcome it. France was the first to open a school for Oriental Languages on its own soil in 1669, and to recruit Istanbulite

youth to attend it. The Venetians never entirely renounced the practice of recruiting their own citizens and subjects to serve as dragomans in Istanbul. Yet, they thought of the pragmatics of diplomatic interaction—rather than the command of Turkish per se—as the key component in dragomans’ successful performance. They thus came to value apprenticeship *in situ* over linguistic training in Venice. Accordingly, Venetian apprentice dragomans, regardless of provenance, were kept in the bailo’s house in Istanbul separate from their familial environment, but with some degree of interaction with larger Ottoman society. Venetian recruitment of local dragomans again contrasted with the French, English, and Dutch; for it showed a strong preference for Catholic subjects who could trace their roots back to Genoese/Venetian settler families of the Fourth Crusade, usually avoiding Greeks, Armenians and Jews, who regularly served the embassies of other nations.26

We can identify three main sources of recruits into the ranks of Venetian dragomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most prominent was the Latin-rite *Magnifica Comunità* of Pera, which traced its roots back to the Genoese and Venetian settlers of Constantinople in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade (1204). Despite declining economic and political power, this group still enjoyed substantial autonomy and wealth in the Ottoman capital. By guaranteeing employment to members of several Latin families over many generations, the Venetians reproduced on a small scale.

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26 Although at least one Jewish dragoman, Aaron Levi, is recorded as serving as second dragoman under the Venetian consul in Izmir in 1621. See Goffman 1990: 86. See also the Senate deliberations regarding the candidacy of the Armenian Giovanni Molino for a vacant dragoman position upon Brutti’s death in 1629: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, cc. 61v–62r, 74v–75r (Sept. 29, 1629). Greek and Armenian dragomans were regularly employed by the French and English consulates. See Ter Minassian 1997; Goffman 1998: 16; Eldem 1999b. On Dutch employment of Jewish dragomans, see De Groot 1978: 126–7, 176 and passim.
scale the strategy applied to their own *cittadini originarii* of guaranteed positions in the state bureaucracy, thus forging alliance, and securing goodwill and collaboration.\(^\text{27}\)

This strategy also gave the Venetians access to the centers of power in Pera, an affluent, predominantly Christian suburb of Istanbul where many foreign embassies were located. Venetian dragomans customarily held prominent positions in the Latin community. Between 1580 and 1670, they or their immediate kin served as priors or sub-priors of the *Magnifica Comunità* 32 times, for a total of 88 years. Some, like Giovanni Antonio Grillo, the Venetian Grand Dragoman, who was appointed procurator of St. Frances in 1626, also served in the various Catholic churches of Galata. That same year, two members of the Piron dragomans’ family, Matteo and Bartolomeo, became procurators of St. Peter and St. George, respectively.\(^\text{28}\)

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\(^{27}\) On the exclusive command of the Venetian civil service by cittadini originari, see Neff 1985; Zannini 1993; Galtarossa 2003 and the bibliography therein.

Venetian patronage of leading members of the Latin community may have been especially important in the tumultuous decades spanning the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These decades saw significant struggles over authority in the Magnifica Comunità. Its shrinking population and declining economic and political position in the Ottoman polity were not helped by the growing intervention in its internal affairs by foreign powers, notably the Papacy and the French monarchy, through Jesuit and Capuchin missions, respectively.29

For the Latin youth of Pera, the most popular and readily available route of entry into dragoman apprenticeships in the bailo’s house was through family ties—in recruiting apprentice dragomans, clear preference was given to the sons and nephews of acting and deceased dragomans.30 In fact, some of the most distinguished Latin families of Pera, including Grillo, Salvago, Navon, Piron, and Parada, had at least one son employed as a Venetian apprentice dragoman at almost any given moment throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These families came to rely on Venetian employment not only for a steady income, but also as a source of authority within the shrinking, conflict-riddled community. The position also served as a form of legal protection, since foreign powers who obtained capitulations from the Porte could pass on to their local employees immunity from Ottoman law.31 When a member of the Latin community employed by

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30 As I will show in chapter 8, this practice was not adopted in the recruitment of Public Dragomans in Venice until the 1660s, and even then it was the result of repeated petitions by the then acting Public Dragoman, Pietro Fortis, who was himself born and trained in Pera.
31 On the complex issue of the ahd-names, later known as capitulations, see Faroqhi 1986; Theunissen 1998.
the bailo passed away, the Venetians were immediately petitioned to take another one in. For example, when Ippolito Parada died of the plague only a few months after beginning his apprenticeship in 1637, his family immediately asked that his younger brother, fifteen years old at the time, replace him. Bailo Alvise Contarini, who forwarded their request to the Senate, was in favor, claiming that “Your Serenity could not do a greater work of charity than this.” On another occasion, the dragoman Giovanni Battista Navon, whose father Pasquale and brother Tommaso had also served in the office, petitioned to have his son Alessandro admitted as an apprentice dragoman in the bailo’s service. Navon did not fail to mention his father-in-law, Marcantonio Borisi, who had been executed by the Ottomans while in Venetian service, and the stipends enjoyed by his now deceased wife and her sisters in recognition of Borisi’s merits. In response, the bailo cited the long service of both families, and recommended admitting Alessandro in service so that “excited by this stimulus of public kindness he will have the diligence to occupy himself and be instructed with the proper faith and devotion of his house.”

Within a couple of generations, the dragomanat was populated overwhelmingly by members of the Latin community of Pera. Despite its name, and its leading families’ claims to direct descent from the Genoese and Venetian crusaders who had sacked Byzantine Constantinople in 1204, by the early seventeenth century the Latin community of Pera was fully bilingual (and often trilingual), with Greek as the primary language of daily interaction. In fact, telling Latins and Greeks apart became increasingly difficult, so

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32 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, c. 611r (Oct. 17, 1637). Michele Parada, Ippolito’s brother, served as a Venetian apprentice dragoman at least from 1641. Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpaginated (June 17, 1641).
33 “Ecitato da questo stimolo della benignita pub. habi ad impiegarsi et instruersi la diligenza che conviene con la fede e devotione propria della loro casa”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpaginated (May 5, 1641).
34 See appendix 13 for details on over one hundred dragomans in Venetian service from c. 1550 to c. 1670.
much so that in 1614 the Roman nobleman Pietro della Valle (1586–1652), who had sojourned in Istanbul for over a year, claimed that “there remain in Pera few families of ancient times, they are all Greek in their clothes and customs, and preserve the Latin rite and Italian language, concurrently with the Greek idiom.”\(^{35}\) The Parma-born traveler Cornelio Magni (1638–1692), in a letter sent from Galata in 1672 and published a decade later, noted that even young children were trilingual, instructed in Greek by their mothers at home, in Italian or Latin by their missionary (Jesuit, Capuchin or Franciscan) schoolmasters, and in Turkish by local Turkish language instructors, who were hired to prepare them for the dragomanat. Perhaps with some hyperbole, Magni suggested that these trilingual youth then went on to master Arabic and Persian, and sometimes an additional European language, if employed by the French, Dutch or English.\(^{36}\) Such widespread plurilingualism proved extremely useful for diplomatic service, but it also posed the problem that these apprentice dragomans from among the Latin community often required instruction not only in Turkish, but in Italian as well. I will return to this point below, in discussing dragomans’ training.

A second route to the dragomanat was through the Venetian chancellery. The initial law of 1551 that regulated the training of apprentice dragomans in the bailo’s house in Istanbul stipulated that two notaries from the chancellery, or, in their absence,

\(^{35}\) Quoted in Belin 1894: 180.

\(^{36}\) Magni 1682: 65–66. There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that Venetian apprentice dragomans did learn at least rudimentary Arabic. See, for example, bailo Marino Cavalli’s praise in 1558 for the progress that apprentice Gabriel Pizzoni had made “in speaking, writing, and reading not only the Turkish language, but the Arabic one as well.” Senato, Dispacci Costantinopolis, b. 2/b, fasc. 29, cc. 73r–v (Oct. 12, 1558). Quoted in Lucchetta 1989: 22. Almost a century later, in 1642, Michiel Pizzari, in his application for employment as interpreter in Crete, claimed he had learned not only Turkish, but the “Moorish” language too, so he could be better fit for public service: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 32, unpaginated (Nov. 6, 1642).
other young Venetian citizens, should be sent to Istanbul for that purpose. Throughout the period under investigation here, the Venetian government made repeated attempts to supplant Istanbul-born Latin dragomans with Venetian citizens. Since service in Istanbul was generally considered a stepping stone to more prestigious employment in Venice, numerous citizen families, with a long tradition of supplying secretaries to the ducal chancellery, were willing to send their sons into apprenticeship in Istanbul. For example, Sebastian del Cortivo and Lodovico Marucini, both entry-level bureaucrats in the Venetian ducal chancellery, were sent there as apprentice dragomans in 1550 in order to learn Turkish. The former was the son of a secretary; the latter—the son of a physician. This experiment proved quite successful, and Marucini became a poster child for later baili as they called on the government to apprentice more Venetian citizens as dragomans. In 1566, bailo Giacomo Soranzo recalled that

from experience it has now become very clear how much greater is the service rendered to the cause of Your Serenity by employing in this office of dragomans her own [citizens], as is Mr. Lodovico Marucini, rather than mercenary extras, receiving from him service not only as a most capable dragoman, but also as a most loyal secretary, thus being able to commit to him and consult with him on any most secret and important matter…

Marucini’s services were appreciated precisely because of his unquestionable status as a Venetian citizen, rather than a “mercenary” (i.e. a local Latin dragoman from Pera).

Several other Venetian citizen recruits followed in his footsteps. Vincenzo degli Alessandri, likewise of a Venetian citizen family, was sent to Istanbul in 1563, where he

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37 Senato Mar, filza 37, unpaginated (Feb. 21, 1550 m.v. and Dec. 31, 1551) and filza 238, unpaginated (Feb. 21, 1550 m.v.).
was trained until 1570, and then dispatched as a special envoy to the Safavids in Persia. He eventually found a position as a notary in the Venetian ducal chanceller y. In 1582, the Senate approved Secretary Gasparo Alberti’s request to have his twenty-one-year old son Girolamo sent to Istanbul as an apprentice dragoman. Alberti, whose secretarial skills were much appreciated by bailo Girolamo Capello, was to serve in Istanbul for seventeen years, until his request to return to Venice to attend to family matters was finally granted. Later, he became secretary to the Venetian Provveditor General in Crete. In 1611, another Venetian citizen, Francesco Scaramelli, was elected an apprentice dragoman. His father Giancarlo had served in the ducal chancellery for many years, including a sojourn in Istanbul in 1590–1591 as secretary to Girolamo Lippomano. Scaramelli would later become the first Venetian-born citizen to be appointed Public Dragoman, the chief interpreter for the Board of Trade.

As with the Latin families of Pera, Venetian citizen families also came to expect dragoman apprenticeships to be passed down through the generations. In 1567, Lodovico Marucini, by then Venetian Grand Dragoman in Istanbul, petitioned to have his younger brother Matteo sent over from Venice so that “under the discipline and diligence of his brother…, he could learn not only how to read and write that language [Turkish], but also how to negotiate, so that in not too many years he himself might render useful services as

39 For Alessandri’s brief biography, see Berengo 1960.
40 For Capello’s appraisal of Alberti’s skills, see Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, c. 265r (Jan. 10, 1599 m.v.). For the various stages of Alberti’s career in Istanbul and Crete, see Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 263, fasc. 2.1, cc. 168r–v (March 10, 1582); Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 6, cc. 98r, 127r–v (Aug. 22, 1588 and Nov. 17, 1591); Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 28, cc. 481r–482r (Feb. 11, 1588 m.v.); Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, cc. 20r, 23r–25r (Sept. 4, 1599); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 275, fasc. 1, cc. 41r–v, 147r–v (Aug. 23, 1605 and Jan. 25, 1607 m.v.)
41 Bailo a Costantinopoli b. 277, reg. 397, cc. 1v–2r; cited in Dursteler 2000: 173, n12.
42 See chapter 8.
dragoman." Eight years later Matteo had apparently acquired enough written Turkish to prepare the official translation of the new capitulations granted to the Venetians by the Porte, although his title and salary level were still those of an apprentice.

These examples suggest long and fruitful careers for secretaries’ sons sent to Istanbul as apprentice dragomans. But one of the recurring problems with the Venetian citizens who served in the office was that they ultimately either left Venetian service, or preferred to return to Venice. In either case, they did not establish families in Istanbul who maintained long-standing ties to Ottoman officials. This clearly limited their usefulness to the Venetian government. In fact, citizens’ apprenticeships were frequently terminated prematurely in order to allow the apprentices to assume secretarial positions either in Venice or in the bailo’s house in Istanbul. In 1592, Gabriel Cavazza, who had served as secretary to bailo Niccolo Barbarigo in Istanbul in 1579 and who had later become de facto ambassador, arranged for his three nephews, Francesco, Girolamo, and Gabriel, to be sent to Istanbul as apprentice dragomans. All three eventually served in the Venetian embassy at the Porte, but in secretarial capacities, rather than as dragomans. In 1612, the Senate appointed as an apprentice dragoman Faustino, son of Simone Tosi, who had returned shortly before from serving as accountant to bailo Simone Contarini in Istanbul. Tosi disappears from the records thereafter. Alvise Velutello, who was sent to Istanbul as apprentice dragoman in 1599, was appointed three years later as extraordinary secretary in the Venetian chancellery, then as assistant

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43 Senato Mar, reg. 38, cc. 13v–14r (March 24, 1567).
44 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 6, c. 166r (Aug. 18, 1577). For Matteo Marucini’s translation of the 1575 Capitualtions, see Theunissen 1998: 530–46. Baldissera Marucini’s 1577 petition on behalf of his brother Matteo requested that he either be discharged from service and allowed to repatriate in Venice, or have his salary increased.
secretary and eventually as secretary to baili Ottaviano Bon and Simone Contarini in
Istanbul, where he served until 1612.\(^{47}\) Dragoman apprenticeships thus circulated among
the Venetian citizen class not unlike other bureaucratic positions, and in fact served as
one preparatory route for chanceller\(i\)y offices. Consequently, over the years fewer and
fewer Venetian citizens completed their apprenticeship to become dragomans.

Preference for Venetian citizen in the recruitment of apprentice dragomans would
continue throughout the period, although with limited results. Even in 1670, when the
bailo could choose from a large pool of local dragomans’ sons, who were already living
in Istanbul, had been trained in languages by their fathers or uncles, and were expecting
to be recruited into service, four more citizens were sent from Venice to be apprenticed.
None figure later as dragomans.\(^{48}\) Moreover, efforts to recruit and train Venetian citizens
as dragomans in Istanbul saw very low retention rates. Quite a few young apprentices got
seriously sick en route or in plague-infested Istanbul, others became bored, or succumbed
to other opportunities in the city.\(^{49}\) Some left and went home prematurely, others
converted to Islam.\(^{50}\) But most Venetian youth sent to Istanbul just seem to have shown

\(^{47}\) Dursteler 2000: 191.
\(^{48}\) The four were Iseppo Balanza, Vicenzo Lui, Giovanni Alvise Vincenti, and Giovanni Rodolfi: Cinque
Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Nov. 24, 1670).
\(^{49}\) Ludovico Fontana died while in Istanbul as apprentice dragoman in 1568: Senato, Dispacci
Costantinopoli, b. 3, c. 360 (Jan. 7, 1568 m.v.). Two other apprentice dragomans sent to Istanbul in 1627,
Zuane Vico (the brother of bailo Sebastian Venier’s secretary) and Camillo Garzoni, got a serious eye
decease and “a very weak complexion,” respectively: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 160r
(May 1, 1627). The following year Garzoni was convicted for an unnamed crime (possibly the fact he had
left Istanbul without the bailo’s permission), exiled to Zadar for three years, and barred from public office
for life: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 21, unpaginated (April 20, 1630).
\(^{50}\) This too was far from unique to the Venetian case. The French, who in 1626 established a Capuchin
school in their Istanbul embassy to train young apprentice dragomans, suffered from similar problems.
\(\text{Enfants de langue} 1995: 21–41.\) For the cases of Venetian apprentice dragomans Colombina and Fontana,
who both converted to Islam fifty years apart, see Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori,
Costantinopoli, b. 5, c. 88 (June 18, 1579); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, cc. 23r–v (May
26, 1629). The same year of Fontana’s conversion, another Venetian-born apprentice dragoman, Antonio
Torre, converted, leaving behind him a long list of creditors. Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19,
little inclination for study. In his report to the Senate of 1627, Bailo Sebastian Venier recommended that all three apprentice dragomans recently sent from Venice be returned home, “if each for different reasons.” Bernardin Zon, for example, “really shows to have come here for any other reason but to learn the Turkish language, [Yet] I do not wish to get unnecessarily into greater detail so as not to upset Your Excellency.” A report by bailo Girolamo Trevisan over a decade later suggested even greater chaos among apprentice dragomans, and outlined some possible solutions. These remained largely on paper.

And yet, despite the perennial problems in their training, the presumed loyalty of citizen apprentices featured prominently in baili’s assessments of the dragomanat. Two years after Trevisan’s report, bailo Giovanni Soranzo reflected that

The best solution will be to arrange to have youth from our Citizens, who by nature and interest carry with them love towards the Fatherland [Patria], whereas by contrast this house, stuffing itself with those of the country does not yield that suitable food which could nourish well this body in all the parts of public service.

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c. 95v (Jan. 24, 1629 m.v.); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371, c. 25 (ca. 1630, includes a list in Turkish of Torre’s creditors and an inventory of his possessions). Torre had previously served as a bombardier in the Venetian army in Bergamo. Upon his arrival in Istanbul in 1627 he was immediately faced with financial troubles, as his small stipend as apprentice dragoman, 5 ducats a month, could not be supplemented by family gifts, customary among his peers. See his petition for financial aid: Collegio, Suppliche commesse ai Savi, b. 530, c. 38 (June 2, 1627); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 20, unpaginated (April 4, 1629). A similar case of apostasy and debt evasion occurred on the Venetian island colony of Zante in 1630, where the local-born interpreter of Turkish, Salvador Costanzi, ran away to the Ottoman Empire to avoid his creditors and turned Muslim, perhaps at the behest of his brother Acmet Bei, who had apparently converted earlier. Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, fasc. 2, c. 13r (April 16, 1630).

51 “Dimostra veram.te esser venuto quà p[er] ogn’ altra cosa più tosto che per imparar la lingua Turca, non voglio discendere à magg[ior] particolari senza necessità per non recar noia all’Ecc[ellen]ze VV”: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 160v (May 1, 1627).

52 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpaginated (June 17, 1641).

53 “La miglior risoluzione sarà in procurar d’haver giovani de n[ost]ri Cittadini, che p[er] natura, et interesse portino con loro l’affetto verso la Patria, come per il contrario riempendosi q[ue]sta Casa di quelli del Paese non si dà certo alimento proportionato che possi ben nutrire q[ue]sto corpo in tutte le parti del servizio pubblico”: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 124, c. 117r (March 28, 1643).
The bodily metaphor in reference to Venetian public service is quite revealing. Rather than focus on the narrowly linguistic needs of the consulate in Istanbul, Soranzo conceived of dragoman apprenticeships as training ground for Venetian public service as a whole and highlighted the patriotic qualities of Venetian citizens, which were lacking in non-citizen foreigners.

For Soranzo, significantly, there was no intermediary category between “Venetian citizens” and “those of the country,” that is, Ottoman subjects. But if the recruitment of either Venetian citizens or Istanbul-born Catholic Ottoman subjects was fraught with problems, a third source of dragomans, Venice’s colonial nobility in the Adriatic and Eastern Mediterranean, proved more promising. According to Andre Pippidi, Serbians and Albanians of the seigniorial class were particularly prone to accept such employment. In the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, many Balkan families, who had formerly been Venetian subjects, sought refuge in Venetian territories or in Venice itself. Pippidi links the propensity of such families to serve as Venetian dragomans to their “knowledge of the Turks” and fluency in the languages of the Ottoman grand viziers (who in this period, it should be recalled, were themselves more often than not of Balkan Christian provenance). Rather than premised on any “natural propensity,” service as dragomans offered these families specific opportunities for social and economic advancement, and fit well both with their notions of honorable service to a sovereign and with Venetian ideas of colonial loyalty.

Two of the leading long-term Venetian dragomans in Istanbul in the seventeenth century, Cristoforo Bruschi and Cristoforo Tarsia, attest to how a Venetian colonial

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54 Pippidi 1980: 135.
background and service in Istanbul could be transformed within a few generations into noble status, awarding access to the top echelons of the European aristocracy. Cristoforo Brutti was the descendent of Bartolomeo Brutti, who served in 1413 as the captain of Durazzo (Durrës in Albania). After the Ottoman conquest of this Venetian colony in 1501, the family went into exile in various Venetian colonies, including Dulcigno (Ulcinj in Montenegro) and the Venetian colonial town of Capodistria (Koper in Croatia), where Cristoforo was born. His father Giacomo was the captain of a slave ship, his mother Bradamante da Verzi, a daughter of Capodistria’s Count Palatine. Cristoforo Tarsia was also born in Capodistria, the son of Count Agostino Tarsia of Istria (the family acquired its noble title from the Holy Roman Empire in 1478) and Angela Bruttì, dragoman Cristoforo Bruttì’s sister.\textsuperscript{55} In 1618, the young Tarsia arrived in Istanbul specifically to be apprenticed as dragoman in the Venetian bailo’s house, under his uncle’s tutelage.\textsuperscript{56} Within a few generations, the Bruttis and Tarsias were marrying into the top families of Pera, as well as into the Habsburg and Polish nobility.\textsuperscript{57}

The stellar careers of the Bruttis and Tarsias was not shared, of course, by all Venetian colonial subjects. Many had far more modest aspirations in sending their children to be apprenticed as dragomans in the bailo’s house in Istanbul, sometimes following years of service in the colonial administration of Dalmatia, Crete, or Cyprus. For some families, sending a son to be trained as an apprentice dragoman offered the

\textsuperscript{55} It is very likely that Tarsia was the descendant of the Venetian Laura Capello and the Capodistrian Giovan Domenico Tarsia, a translator and orator, who in the 1540s published in Venice several translations from Latin, and later enjoyed a government stipend as public orator in Triest. Stancovich 1828: 183. For Laura Capello’s will, see Notarile, Testamenti, b. 710, fasc. 119 (Aug. 7, 1562).

\textsuperscript{56} See bailo Almoro Nani’s dispatch of 1620 prompting the Heads of the Council of Ten to officially admit Tarsia into the ranks of apprentice dragomans after two years of the latter’s residence in the bailo’s house and instruction in Turkish by the hoca and by his uncle Cristoforo Bruttì: Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 7, c. 129 (Oct. 22, 1620).

\textsuperscript{57} See appendix 14 for a detailed genealogical chart.
opportunity of finding favor with Venetian administrators. For example, Giacomo
Balsarini, who inherited his father’s position as (honorary) Venetian consul on the
Ottoman island of Chios, sent three of his sons to be apprenticed as dragomans in the
bailo’s house.58 Through his sons’ service, Balsarini sought to strengthen his alliance
with Venice, despite his juridical status as an Ottoman subject, and a descendant of
Genoese colonizers. Moreover, by positioning his sons as links between Venetian and
Ottoman officialdom, Balsarini was replicating on a smaller scale the long-standing
position of the island of Chios as a Catholic stronghold in the Ottoman Mediterranean, as
well as the local Latin community’s continuous dependence on foreign protection.
Although Giacomo’s sons ultimately dropped out of the bailo’s house, the family’s
alliance with Venice was long-term. In 1694 the island’s Latin bishop, Leonardo
Balsarini, served as an informer to the Venetians, facilitating their shortlived occupation.
He was exiled from the island in 1696.59

For other families, sending a son to be apprenticed as a dragoman in Istanbul
followed logically from a father’s long career in Venetian colonial administration. In
1568, for example, Marchiò Spinelli became apprentice dragoman, while his father
Gasparo was still employed in Cyprus, where he would eventually die while serving as

58 Carlo Balsarini lasted in service from 1637 to 1643. His utter failure to learn Turkish and tendency to get
involved in violent fights with other apprentice dragomans prompted the Senate to grant his eventual
request to leave the service, and occasioned bailo Soranzo’s call to give preference to Venetian citizens in
filling dragoman apprenticeships, quoted above. A certain Giacomo Balsarini, perhaps Carlo’s younger
brother, was listed on the bailo’s payroll in 1654. A third Balsarini, Domenico, died in Dalmatia in 1685,
where he was sent to serve under Provveditor General Antonio Olivieri, as part of his dragoman
apprenticeship. Senato, Disacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, c. 311r (May 23, 1637); Senato, Disacci
Costantinopoli, b. 124, cc. 115r–v, 117r, 118r (March 28, 1643); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg.
27, fasc. 2, cc. 14r–v (May 11, 1543); Senato, Disacci Costantinopoli, b. 138, c. 127r (Sept. 25, 1654);
Cinque Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, unpaginated (July 23, 1685).
59 W.M. 1937: 169; Van Droffelaar : 100–102. On Chios as a Genoese “company town” under the Maona
Giustiniani (1347–1566) and as an Ottoman colony (1566–1694; 1695–1912), see also Argenti 1958;
grand chancellor. Marchiò, who had grown up on the island, was, according to his
employers in Istanbul, fluent in Greek as a mother language. His efforts to learn Turkish
were somewhat less successful.\textsuperscript{60}

For yet other families, long employment of one family member as a dragoman in
a colonial post eventually facilitated the admission of another into service as a dragoman
either in the same locale or in the bailo’s house in Istanbul. For example, in 1553,
Giovanni Aggiondrite from the island of Modon was appointed dragoman of Greek in
Cefalonia instead of his deceased father Andrea, even though the Venetian board of trade,
when asked to authorize the appointment, determined that the son’s command of the
language was somewhat lacking. It nevertheless approved his appointment on the
condition that he “should not engage himself in anything but simple interpretation.”\textsuperscript{61} In
this case, at least, employment was granted by virtue of birth, despite dubious
qualifications. On another occasion, the Senate was quick to approve, \textit{post factum}, a
decision by the \textit{rettori} of Zara (Zadar in today’s Croatia) to appoint a certain Giovanni
Britanico as “interpreter of the Slavic language” in place of his deceased father Simon.\textsuperscript{62}
Perhaps in view of bad experience with unqualified interpreters who had inherited their
jobs by virtue of birth alone, when Girolamo Pace, who had been employed as dragoman
of Turkish in his native town of Split from 1621, petitioned the Venetian government in
1636 to place his son Marco as apprentice dragoman, he was asked for additional

\textsuperscript{60} For Marchiò Spinelli’s petition for a raise at the wake of the loss of Cyprus, and a letter of endorsement
by his employers, the ambassador Giacomo Soranzo and the baili Antonio Tiepolo and Giovanni Correr,
extolling his loyal service and native fluency in Greek, but also suggesting his limited command of
Turkish, see Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 4, cc. 228–29 (Aug.
27, 1575). Marchiò’s nephew Gasparo Spinelli was later to serve as a secretary to bailo Capello in
Istanbul. Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, cc. 272r–276v (Dec. 30, 1599).

\textsuperscript{61} Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 137, cc. 95v–96r (Nov. 12, 1553).

\textsuperscript{62} Senato Mar, reg. 38, c. 39 (Sept. 1, 1567). “Slavic” could at that time refer to Serbo-Croatian as well as
to Slovenian. Cadorini 2005.
information about the son’s age and aptitude (“attitudini”). Five years later we do find Marco as apprentice dragoman, first in Istanbul, then in Zadar and Kotor.\(^{63}\) A similar request for additional information on aptitude and age was presented to apprentice dragoman Giovanni Piron upon his request for promotion in 1643.\(^{64}\)

Other dragomans sought to secure their sons’ or brothers’ succession as early as the time of their own employment. In 1649, Silvio Dragazza was appointed as dragoman of the “Illyrian” language (probably Albanian) in the Adriatic coastal town of Traù (Trogir, in today’s Croatia), along with his eldest son “in case of early death.”\(^{65}\) Another job applicant, the Candiot Jew Samuel Romano, asked the Board of Trade to appoint him as the Republic’s dragoman in the Egyptian town of Rosetta (Rashid) for life, and to have the position transferred to his brother upon his death. The Board declined the request on technical grounds, claiming that appointment to the position was administered by the Consuls in Alexandria. It nevertheless recommended that his long service be recognized in some other way.\(^{66}\)

The discussion above suggests a simple, tripartite division of the dragomanat into Latins from Pera, Venetian citizens, and colonial nobles. This division is in line with the logic of early modern states, which distinguished between citizens, subjects, and non-subjects, each possessing a supposedly-inherent and fixed degree of loyalty to the sovereign, and a willingness to put the latter’s interests before one’s own. As we saw, the recruitment of Venetian citizens and colonial subjects as apprentice dragomans was

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\(^{63}\) Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 13, cc. 151r–v (April 13, 1621); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 26, unpagedinated (Nov. 22, 1635); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 23, fasc. 2, c. 30v (July 9, 1636); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpagedinated (June 17, 1641 and Aug. 5, 1641).

\(^{64}\) Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 7, fasc. 2, c. 25v (Aug. 14, 1643).

\(^{65}\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 154, c. 104r (Jan. 24, 1648).

\(^{66}\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 153, cc. 115v–166r (May 1, 1644).
intended precisely to counteract the proverbial disloyalty of Ottoman dragomans. It was, in other words, an act of boundary maintenance. In the eyes of the bailo Paolo Contarini in 1583,

there is no doubt that the service of one’s own [subjects] is more advantageous and has more public dignity than that of Turkish [i.e. Ottoman] subjects, because the [former], who do not fear the respect [of their interlocutors], speak with daring, while the Turks are afraid to do it.67

But other baili may not have shared Contarini’s sentiment. Sebastian Venier, for example, placed little hope in Venetian youth sent to his house to be apprenticed as dragomans:

Those [Venetians] who are of tender age, either their parents do not permit them to come here, or if they do little can be done to prevent them from falling prey to a thousand strange accidents; if they are of mature age, beyond their inability to learn languages, they have been brought up not in what I would call liberty, but rather in such license, that they cannot be molded to the customs here, and not disturb the house of the poor baili…68

If distance from home and difficulty accommodating to local customs made Venetian youth unruly apprentices, Venier saw clear advantages in admitting local, Perot youth to the dragomanat:

Those who are born in these regions, although not absolutely all of them, because trained from infancy, have customs that are suitable to the place, and can behave appropriately; and they have nearby their closest relations, who lend them great aid through their care and presence.69

67 "Non è dubio che il servizio de’ suoi propri è più vantaggioso e con più dignità pubblica che quello de’ sudditi turcheschi, perché quelli non temendo li rispetti parlano con ardire, mentre li turchi temono farlo": Quoted in Lucchetta 1989: 25.
68 "Quelli di cotesta Città se sono di età tenera, ò non permettino li loro che se nè venghino, ò venendo non si può far tanto che non ristino sottoposti à mille strani accidenti; se sono in età matura, oltre che sono inhabili ad’ apprender lingue, sono allevati non dirò con libertà, ma con licenza tale, che è impossibile si accommodino alli costumi di qui, et non perturbino le case de poveri Baili": Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 160v–161r (May 1, 1627).
69 "Quelli che nascono in queste parti per non dir tutti assolutam.te, perché hanno qualche principio sin dalle fascie, sono di costumi proportionati al parte, si possone reggere come si deve, et hanno li loro più prossimi, che con l’assistenza, e con la sollecitudine li prestano molto aiuto": Ibid., c. 160v (May 1, 1627).
Different baili, then, disagreed on the specific qualities of different kinds of dragomans, but none challenged the very existence of these “kinds.” Yet even by the early seventeenth century the very division of the dragomanat into Venetian citizens, colonial nobles, and Catholic Pera residents had been much eroded in practice, and the boundaries between Venetian citizens and subjects and the local Latin community became increasingly difficult to maintain. Several factors contributed to this process. Venetian merchants and adventurers who had resided for centuries in the Ottoman capital and its other centers of commerce left progeny who might boast of their Venetian parentage but who were de facto Ottoman subjects. Several dragomans, including Andrea Bon, Pietro Fortis, and Domenico Sanguinazzo were such Ottoman-born descendants of Venetian citizens. When Bon’s petition to become apprentice dragoman was approved in 1630, the Venetian Senate emphasized the need to elect to that post “youth dependent on the Republic.”70 Bon was an Ottoman subject, but his grandfather and father had served as Venetian dragomans in Aleppo for over forty and thirty years respectively.71

More problematic from the perspective of Venetian officialdom, even Venetian subjects and citizens sent to Istanbul specifically for the purpose of learning Turkish could “turn native” in ways unforeseen and unappreciated by their employers: Some embraced Islam, quit the service, and sought employment elsewhere in the Ottoman capital, others took local concubines or lovers, while others were absorbed through ties of marriage into the Latin community of Pera. The high degree of intermarriage among the three groups, discussed in greater detail below, led by the mid seventeenth century to the

70 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, fasc. 2, c. 57v (Sept. 11, 1630).
71 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 32, unpaginated (Nov. 28, 1641).
establishment of veritable dragoman dynasties more or less permanently settled in
Istanbul. In this way, young apprentices or dragomans who were Venetian citizens or
subjects, also acquired affines among more senior dragomans. For example, in 1644 the
Venetian citizen and dragoman Paolo Vecchia married the daughter of Pera-born Grand
Dragoman Giovanni Antonio Grillo. In his petition to the government on the occasion
of his matrimony, Vecchia suggested that the sole purpose of the marriage was to let him
“stay in the country and devote [him]self until the last breath to the service of Your
Serenity.” Ottoman law viewed a foreign resident’s marriage to a Christian Ottoman
woman as one of the clear indications of intent to naturalize. Curiously, Vecchia made
no reference to his wife or to any potential children in his will in 1659; nor are they
mentioned in any document after his father-in-law’s execution by Ottoman officials in
1649. Yet in his petition of 1649, lamenting Grillo’s tragic death, Vecchia not only
mentioned living in his father-in-law’s house, but claimed that Grillo “with all tenderness
wanted to be able to love me with affection exceeding that of a father.” In addressing
the Venetian authorities, Vecchia therefore downplayed his affective ties with his
Catholic Ottoman spouse, thus implicitly acknowledging the potential hindrance such ties
might pose to a dragoman’s undivided affect for and loyalty to his country. At the same
time, his professed affection for his father-in-law invoked the oft-repeated trope of
cohesiveness among dragomans themselves (mediated, no doubt, through their spouses,

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72 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 35, unpaginated (Dec. 20, 1644).
rissolutione che hò pur fatta per potermi fermar nel paese, e votar sin gl’ultimi sospiri al servito della
74 Faroqhi 1986: 367.
75 “Tramontato infine p[er] me l’amore d’un Suocero, che tutto tenerezza haverebbe voluto saper amarmi
ci[n] affetto eccedente à quello di Padre”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 40, unpaginated (June 18,
1649).
daughters, and sisters), which was both capitalized upon by dragomans, and seen by their employers as vital to their successful operation in the Ottoman capital.

Like Venetian citizens, dragomans of colonial background were also absorbed into the local Latin Community of Pera through marriage and ritual. In fact, even if memory of their patria in once-Venetian territories remained strong, upon arrival in the Ottoman capital some Venetian colonial subjects quickly sought and obtained high positions in the Latin community. The Venetian dragoman of Albanian and Istrian origins, Cristoforo Brutti, was appointed sub-prior of the Community in 1623. Three decades later, in 1652, another Venetian dragoman, Brutti’s Capodistria-born nephew Cristoforo Tarsia, became the Community’s prior.76

Yet while the Tarsias, Borisis, and Bruttis were working for the Venetians, their immediate kin were otherwise employed in Istanbul. Some became dragomans for the Holy Roman Empire, others married Frankish merchants and physicians, and yet others married into other immigrant noble families. Moreover, while some dragoman families tied their destiny with Venice, others sent different sons to work for different embassies.

In my previous discussion of commercial brokers I emphasized the extent to which early modern states defined foreigners by their lack of relational resources. Yet dragomans were both ‘foreign’ by virtue of serving foreign embassies, and ‘local’ by virtue of their numerous relations in the Ottoman capital and provinces. And they often conflated this distinction even further by extending their kinship networks over embassy walls. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, members of the Olivieri family

worked for embassies of both France and Venice.\textsuperscript{77} A certain Nicorosio Grillo, relative of the Venetian Grand Dragoman Giovanni Antonio, was employed by the Dutch ambassador Haga in 1616.\textsuperscript{78} Other local families, the Navon, Piron and Parada, also had sons who worked not only for the Venetians, but also for the French, the British, the Dutch and the Imperial embassies and consulates. During the War of Crete (1645–1669) Venice enjoyed the services of dragoman Pasquale Navon, whose nephew Tommaso Navon was an apprentice dragoman with the French. This family connection proved useful when the uncle was able to interrogate his nephew about the content of a conversation held between the French ambassador Blondel and Ottoman officials regarding a possible peace treaty with Venice.

For the leading Latin families of Pera, work for foreign embassies guaranteed both a measure of extraterritoriality and a steady income. In 1660, dragoman Cristoforo Tarsia threatened to send his son Tommaso, then an apprentice in the bailo’s house, to serve as dragoman to the French consul in Egypt, unless he were promoted to the position of dragoman. Secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino, who at the time ran the bailo’s house and acted as de facto ambassador, wished to avoid conflicts with the French ambassador, and thus approved Tommaso’s departure. At the same time, he emphasized to Cristoforo that his son would always be welcome back. In reporting the exchange to the Senate, Ballarino added that given the shortage in dragomans for the French, English, and Imperial embassies, it was crucial to keep Venice’s dragomans well satisfied, since “nothing but danger and damage” would come out of their going to work for other foreign powers. He ended his dispatch by reporting that the son of another dragoman had

\textsuperscript{77} Enfants de langue 1995: 53.
\textsuperscript{78} De Groot 1978: 192.
just been hired by the English consul in Patrasso (Morea), after being denied a position as apprentice dragoman in the bailo’s house.\textsuperscript{79}

Officially the Venetians, like the English and French, feared espionage, and thus disapproved of having their dragomans’ immediate relatives employed by other powers. However, the employment of relatives of dragomans working for other foreign embassies offered convenient access to local and international espionage, and thus often proved beneficial to all parties, especially when informal negotiations were concerned. The dragoman Panagiotti, for example, who served the Holy Roman Empire in Istanbul, appears to have maintained a decades-long relationship with Venetian dragomans, such as Ambrosio Grillo, as well as their employers the baili, providing much-needed information on political maneuvers in the other embassies and in the chambers of the grand vizier himself. In 1660, thanks to his friendship with the English dragoman Giorgio Draperis, Venetian dragoman Giovanni Olivieri informed his employers of attempts by an Ottoman minister and affine of the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, to shut down the Venetian embassy.\textsuperscript{80} Other embassies also realized the potential of such family connections. In 1626, for example, the Dutch hired as dragoman Abraham Cormano, Istanbul-resident son of Isaac, the Jewish agent of the Spanish embassy, with the explicit hope of intercepting imperial diplomatic correspondence. Abraham had previously been employed by the Bohemian envoys to the Porte, and was to serve the Dutch embassy till 1647.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 144, cc. 130r–131v (Aug. 24, 1660).
\textsuperscript{80} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 133, c. 700r (April 10, 1650) & b. 144, cc. 118r–121r (July 15, 1660); Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated (Jan. 15, 1658 m.v. & Oct. 6, 1661).
\textsuperscript{81} De Groot 1978: 176. Other foreign powers were less enthusiastic about such ties. Britain tried to replace its native-born dragomans with British ones in the 1640s, but failed, and a new attempt was undertaken at
A clear indication of the political usefulness of members of the local Latin elite is their decades-long employment as entry-level apprentice dragomans, even when they displayed dubious linguistic skills. In an extensive report of 1641 on the performance of dragomans, baili Pietro Foscarini and Alvise Contarini cautioned against discharging any dragomans or apprentices from service, regardless of poor performance, since they would immediately be taken into service by the French or English consulates. A dispatch by Secretary Ballarino in 1655 confirmed that the aging Giovanni Piron, who had been employed as apprentice dragoman for twenty years, had finally mastered some languages, and endorsed his petition to be promoted to the level of dragoman. The promotion did not take place, however, and in 1664 Piron, aged 75, was still being paid as an apprentice. According to Ballarino, for the previous six years Piron had appeared in the bailo’s house only at Easter and Christmas, but considering his brother Antonio’s position as dragoman for the English, and Giovanni’s close friendship with Draperis, the English Grand Dragoman, Ballarino regarded his absence from duty an advantage: it kept the disgruntled apprentice from disclosing secret information to Venice’s commercial rivals. Other dragomans’ junior family members were kept on the bailo’s payroll for decades for similar reasons. Christoforo Tarsia’s younger brother Ruggiero had, by 1652, served the Venetians as an apprentice dragoman for 24 years, for example; so too

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82 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpaginated (Aug. 5, 1641).
83 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 138, cc. 546r & 547r-548v; Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated (Jan. 15, 1658 m.v. & July 20, 1664). Ballarino’s memorandum to the Heads of the Council of Ten considered both the advantages and dangers involving in keeping Piron on the payroll. Ballarino suspected that Giovanni’s brother Antonio, who had been seen on the scene when Ottoman officials broke into the Bailo’s house and arrested the ambassador and secretary, was responsible for the debacle. Ibid., Sept. 11, 1664.
Domenico Sanguinazzo, a Pera-born descendant of Venetian merchants, was an apprentice for at least 22 years before being promoted to the rank of dragoman in the early 1660s, possibly in recognition of his loyalty to Secretary Ballarino during the dragomans’ unionization attempt (see chapter 7), rather than for any professional achievements.84

In view of the abundance of dragomans pro forma among the local Latin community and the subjects of foreign powers, the Ottomans tried to limit the number of dragomans employed by foreign embassies to the Porte. Decrying the large number of foreign residents who had acquired wives and property in the city but could claim exemption from taxes by virtue of foreign employment, a decree issued by the Grand Vizier in 1617 limited to three the number of tax-exempt dragomans permitted to the embassies of France, England, Venice, and Holland, whether foreign or Ottoman subjects.85 These quotas do not seem to have been observed by the Venetians at any point.

TRAINING

As the name suggests, most giovani di lingua (lit. “language youth,” a direct translation of the Turkish dil oghlan) started their apprenticeship in their (early) teens, although the initial legislation of 1551 set their minimum age at 20.86 Teen-age employment in early modern diplomatic service was far from unusual. The average age

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84 For Tarsia, who eventually was promoted to the rank of dragoman, see Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 43, unpaginated (Sept. 18, 1652), and b. 46, unpaginated (Nov. 16, 1655). For Piron, see Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated (July 20, 1664).
85 For an Italian translation, see Correr, Cod. Cicogna 2709, cc. 107r–108v (July 4, 1617).
86 Senato Mar, reg. 31, c. 93r (Feb. 21, 1550 m.v.); Sturdza 1983: 565.
of French apprentice dragomans upon arrival in Istanbul was 17 to 19, and the initial decree signed by Louis XIV’s minister Colbert had envisioned an even earlier start, at 9 or 10.87 Employment at youth was customary in other settings as well. The historian Mark Burkholder, who has studied the colonial administration of seventeenth-century New Spain, has observed a tendency beginning in the 1630s, to take on very young employees. Despite their lack of experience and maturity, he contends, young bureaucrats offered the advantage of long years of future service.88 This was vitally important in the case of Venetian dragomans in Istanbul, whose lengthy linguistic training and upkeep were particularly costly.

Apprentice dragomans’ youthfulness nevertheless posed challenges. During their initial sojourn in Istanbul they had to be provided not only with language training, but with general education as well.89 Various baili sought different solutions to the problem of apprentices’ general education. In 1577, bailo Giovanni Correr endorsed a proposal by the Turkish language instructor in his house to go to Venice, to train young children there before they were sent to Istanbul.90 In a dispatch to the Heads of the Council of Ten a few years earlier, bailo Antonio Tiepolo went so far as to suggest that the two apprentice dragomans in his house at the time, Matteo Marucini and Marchiò Spinelli, be sent to live outside the bailo’s house, “in the house of one of the Turkish dragomans,” so they could have better opportunities to practice the language. Tiepolo does not elaborate on the identity of the proposed foster family, but the very idea of sending Venetian youth to live

87 Enfants de langue 1995: 20, 41.
88 Burkholder 1998: 86.
89 On the limited educational resources available to Catholic children and youth in Istanbul in this period, and the perennial rivalry between French- and Venetian-sponsored missionary institutions, see Dursteler 2004.
outside the bailo’s house was novel (although “Turkish” here is curious, it should probably be understood as meaning local Christians rather than Muslims, or ethnic Turks). Tiepolo suggested that in this way the two youth might gain command of the language in a year or two. 91 This estimate is interesting, since by that point Marucini and Spinelli had lived in Istanbul for over six years. Yet the proposal, endorsed by the two apprentices themselves, was apparently rejected by the Venetian authorities. Later proposals to send apprentices to be schooled in an Armenian college also remained unfulfilled, although the Senate did endorse the idea in 1623, suggesting it would be beneficial for apprentices themselves “because staying in a place where one only speaks, reads and writes in Turkish, it is to be believed that the fruit hoped for will be produced faster.” 92

When two apprentice dragomans, Bernardin Zon and Camillo Garzoni, were elected by the Senate in 1625, the same decision to have them attend an Armenian college in Istanbul was repeated verbatim. 93 Yet there is no indication of any Venetian apprentices ever actually attending the Armenian colleges in either Istanbul or Izmir. In fact, after Venetian dragoman apprenticeship in Istanbul was instituted by law in 1551, all apprentices were strictly confined to the bailo’s house for the duration of their apprenticeship, which normally lasted at least seven years, and often much longer. This was true even for apprentices whose families lived close by. In a sense, in order to become dragomans, they had to be re-socialized as Venetians. Venetian baili seem to

91 Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 4, c. 159r (Jan. 15, 1574 m.v.).
92 “Perche stando in luogo dove non si parla, ne legge, et scrive, se non in Turco, si può crederre, che con presteza maggiore, si habbia da ricevere il frutto, che si deve giustamente spettare”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, cc. 145r–146r (Feb. 21, 1622 m.v.).
93 Senato Mar, reg. 83, c. 185 (Oct. 21, 1625).
have been acutely concerned with the perceived dangers lurking outside their house when it came to Perot youth. In a dispatch in April 1625, bailo Giorgio Giustinian warned the Senate of what he perceived as concerted efforts by Jesuit missionaries
to alienate the souls of the inhabitants [of Pera] from their ancient natural leaning toward the Republic, which they still maintain […] [and] to alienate the Perots from their usual old dependence on the [bailo’s] house, and filling the youth, whom they teach, with pernicious concepts, and to spread here and write elsewhere notices which are prejudicial to our interests, to infiltrate with bad objectives even among our merchants, to suggest to the French ambassador all these prejudicial novelties, which they air; so that it seems that they have nothing more entrenched in their souls than to harm us, and what is to be greatly considered they begin to teach the youth whom they introduce to their Religion [i.e. order] the Turkish language, so they can introduce them also to the places of grandees under pretexts which they know very well how to find.94

In a later dispatch, bailo Giovanni Soranzo decried the limited space in the bailo’s house, which had prompted him to send several apprentice dragomans to sleep elsewhere at night.95 The problem was remedied, and two months later apprentices were formally prohibited from leaving the house at night, and instructed to “live with respect as is appropriate, and avoid confusions and scandals.”96

Formally, then, an apprentice dragoman’s training began upon entry into the bailo’s house. In reality, however, many if not all apprentices had started training long before. Venetian citizens were often trained as secretaries in the ducal chancellery in St. Mark’s square for several years prior to their first trip to Istanbul. Pera-born youth,

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94 “Per alienargli animi di quei habitanti dall’ antica natural loro propensione alla Rep[ubbli]ca, che ancora conservano […] van procurando di alienar i Perotti dall’ antica solita loro dipendenza da q[ue]sta Casa, et inhevendo la gioventù, che insegnano di perniciosi concetti, et spargar qui, et scriver fuori avisi pregiudicia ai n[ost]ri interessi, insinuarsi con mali fini anco con n[ost]ri Mercanti, sugerir all’ Amb[asciato]r di Francia tutte le novità pregiudiciali, che va[n] ventando; si che pare no habbino cosa più fissa nell’ animo, che il nuocerci, et quel ch’ è grandem[en]te considerabile cominciando essi à far insegnar à giovani che s’introducono alla loro Religione la lingua turca per poter come sogliono introdursi anco alle parte de Grandi sotto pretesti che sano molto ben ritrovar”: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 99, cc. 130r–v (April 11, 1625).
95 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 124, c. 82r (Feb. 26, 1642 m.v.), b. 123, cc. 67r–v (June 21, 1642).
96 “Vivano col rispetto che conviene e divertiscano le confusioni, et li scandalì”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 27, fasc. 2, c. 10v (April 11, 1643).
especially the sons and nephews of dragomans, were instructed in several languages by their parents before they were formally admitted to the ranks of apprentices. In a 1700 petition, dragoman Giacomo Tarsia, the son and younger brother of several dragomans in Venetian service, described how his two sons, 18 year old Cristoforo and 13 year old Giovanni Battista, had already been instructed in several languages at home. Cristoforo, the proud father, argued with perhaps a tinge of hyperbole, already commanded Italian, Latin, French, Greek, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. Giacomo himself had been instructed in languages at home by his father Cristoforo in the 1660s.

The 1551 decree regulating apprentice dragomans’ training entrusted their instruction to a local Catholic resident of Pera, Pietro Maruffo. But very soon the bailo hired a Muslim Turk to serve as cozza (from Turkish hoca, school-master) for several hours a day. The baili’s accounts of apprentices’ instruction suggest only partial success, in part because the teacher and his students often did not share any language in common; in part because of the instructor’s personality and pedagogical shortcomings (drinking problems and a reluctance to force unwilling students to attend classes were among the recurring problems cited by the baili). In 1577 bailo Giovanni Correr reported that the hoca had good command of Italian and pleasing manners. Yet the hoca also seems to have been in perennial debt. A power of attorney granted by dragoman Matteo Marucini to Girolamo Alberti in 1581 authorized the latter to recover from hoca Mehemet Celebi a debt of 2100 aspers he owed Marucini. Dragoman Stefano di Gioveni’s 1599 will

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97 Bailo a Costantinopoli, Cancelleria, b. 371, fasc. 3, unpaginated (July 3, 1700).
98 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 61, unpaginated (Jan. 21, 1663 m.v.).
100 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 11, fasc. 23, cc. 135r–v (June 8, 1577).
101 Bailo a Costantinopoli, Cancelleria, b. 263, fasc. 2.2, unpaginated (Aug. 18, 1581).
mentions that the *hoca* owed him 6000 aspers. In later decades things seem to have gone from bad to worse. A dispatch from early 1643 reported that due to space shortage the *hoca* had no place to hold classes. He had therefore adopted the practice of arriving in the house only around lunchtime and leaving shortly thereafter. A 1641 report on the performance of dragomans by bailo Girolamo Trevisan praised the Turkish teacher for his erudition, knowledge of Ottoman law, and refined Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.

But he also acknowledged that the *hoca*

Does not understand any Italian or Greek. Thus he would not be fit to teach the beginners, because they will not understand each other, but for those, who have some foundations he is very useful in perfecting them when they apply themselves to it. He visits the house, but does not have a designated room in which to hold classes; no such room is available, [therefore] whoever comes to him he teaches, those who don’t are neither reproached, nor sought by him; he is not without his great faults; he is dedicated to wine to the extent, that he is often overcome by it, and with age, which advances, this vice always grow. He dresses like a Dervish, which is like a religious habit, but he is not scrupulous at all about his law, and it is widely agreed, that he doesn’t care much about either [law or religion], which is why, in the many years he has served the House he has never said a word to any of his students regarding matters of religion, or any Muslim persuasion, as anyone very zealous could easily have done.

A letter to the Senate by baili Pietro Foscarini and Alvise Contarini two months later stressed even further the shortcomings of apprentices’ current training:

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102 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, cc. 272r–276v (Dec. 30, 1599).
103 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 24, c. 82r (Feb. 2, 1642 m.v.).
Because the youth of language, especially those of the country, have a great need
to learn to speak good Italian, with which they could then more easily improve
their Turkish, since the Cozza [hoca], otherwise valorous in the Turkish, Persian,
and Arabic languages, does not understand Frankish [i.e. Italian], and so neither
one nor the other knows the validity of words, and their true signification, the
youth lose their first two or three years of studies, or spend them with very little
profit: We remind you with all reverence, how necessary overall it is, to provide
these youth with a person, who will instruct them in the Italian language, and will
also teach them to write, with good phrases, and characters, which is very
important for the translation of letters, and other writings, which are sent from
Venice, and the ones that the baili write: This person could be either the Chaplain
of the current Excellent Bailo, with some increase in salary, or one of the
Franciscan, or Dominican Fathers, which are sent to Istanbul, which as [Venetian]
subjects also receive some annual monies, which the Cottimo fund of Your
Serenity pays them; and it could in that case be asked of their superiors to send for
that effect someone experienced in belle letters, and in the most appropriate
conditions of such a position.105

A room was finally found to accommodate hoca Omer Effendi and his students, for in
1655 Secretary Ballarino’s account books mention both expenses for fitting the room and
Turkish books purchased by apprentice dragomans Brutti and Leonardo Tarsia.106

Yet the problems with apprentices’ training did not consist only of space and
teaching materials. As the baili’s dispatches suggest, the mastery of Turkish was but one
component of the apprentices’ required training. The youngest of them, barely literate in
any language, needed basic schooling. Local-born youth especially required instruction

105 “E perche hanno grand[emen]te bisogno li Giovani di lingua, massime quelli del Paese, d’apprender
bene il parlare Italiano, co’l quale poi più facilmente si perfettionano nel turco, essendo, che il Coza, per
altro valoroso nell’Idioma turco, Persiano, & Arabo, niente intende il Franco, e così non sapendo ne’l uno,
ne’l altro la forza dei vocaboli, et il vero loro significato, vengono li giovani à perder li due ò tre primi anni
dei loro studij, ò li passano con poco profito: Raccordiamo con ogni riverenza, per com[mand]am[en]te
necess[ari]o, il proveder essi Giovani di soggetto, che gl’instruisca nella lingua Italiana, et gl’insegni anco à
scriver con buona frase, & carattere, che molto importa per le traduttioni di lettere, et altre scritture, che si
Capellano dell’attuale Ecc[ellentissi]mo Bailo, con qualche augumento di salario, ò alcuno dei Padri
Franciscani, ò dominican, che si mandano à Const[antinopoli], che come sudditi godono anco certo annuo
den[erlo], che gli paga il Cottimo di V[ost]ra Ser[enità]; Et potria in tal caso nell’espediti[no]nì ricercar li
superiori, che à q[u]esto effetto ne mandassero alcuno versato partic[olarmen]te in belle lettere, & nelle più
proprie cond[iti]one per tal ministerio”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopolì, filza 32, unpaginated (Aug.
5, 1641).

106 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopolì, b. 139, c. 614v (Sept. 23, 1655), b. 140, c. 132v (Nov. 23, 1655) & c.
133r (Dec. 13, 1655).
in Italian and Latin as much as in Turkish. Most critically, unless they had arrived from the Venetian chancellery, apprentices also had to master the basics of diplomacy, letter-writing, and secretarial work.

Part of the solution was found in the apprenticeship system: substantial on-the-job training (by following senior dragomans on their daily runs, observing, and imitating) and appointments to less prestigious posts, largely in Venice’s Mediterranean and Adriatic colonies. This is suggested by much anecdotal evidence from apprentice dragomans’ petitions for promotion. For instance, in his 1652 petition to be appointed dragoman, Ruggiero Tarsia detailed his lengthy career as an apprentice for 24 years. According to Tarsia, after taking up Turkish, he was posted in Crete, Corfu, and in the Navy. He participated in 11 trips to Istanbul to accompany Venetian baili Girolamo Trevisan, Pietro Foscarini, and Alvise Contarini on their trips to and from the Ottoman capital, substituted for Grand Dragoman Grillo when the plague struck his house, accompanied road dragoman Giovanni Battista Salvago on his trips to Venice to assist bailo Niccolo Delfino on his trip to Istanbul, and also served as public interpreter in Venice while there on official duty, as well as under Captain General Foscolo in Sibenik and Dalmatia.107

It is remarkable that the Venetian government never established a school for Turkish instruction in Venice. An appeal by the Senate to bailo Antonio Erizzo (1555–1557) to ship to Venice Turkish books to enable training at home was declined on the grounds of the high costs of Turkish manuscripts.108 Two decades later, in 1577, it was actually the bailo, Giovanni Correr, who enthusiastically relayed to the Senate the Turkish teacher’s proposal to establish a school in Venice and to relocate there. Correr

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107 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 43, unpaginated (Sept. 18, 1652).
endorsed the proposal, arguing that since children were quicker to learn languages, by
offering language instruction in Venice young students would be able to “learn Turkish
as their maternal language.” Correr added that the teacher had good manners and was
fluent in Italian. Furthermore, the costs of his upkeep in Venice would not be any higher
than the expense of keeping the apprentices in Istanbul. But the Senate never approved
the move. Fifty years later, in 1627, the Senate decreed that a Turkish instructor to
instruct young apprentices in Venice should be sought, specifying, however, that he must
be Christian, perhaps Greek or Armenian. Such a person was never found. Instead,
throughout the period studied here, in order to become dragomans Venetian-born
apprentices had to spend much of their youth in Istanbul.

The Venetian practice of sending young apprentices for long sojourns in Istanbul
stands in sharp contrast to the French effort to recruit Ottoman subjects to the Collège
Louis-le-Grand, established in Paris in 1700 to train apprentice dragomans. The French
institution was established at least in part as a response to the perceived shortcomings of
the Venetian method of language training. In the course of the eighteenth century,
many Istanbul-born French apprentices were sent to Paris.

109 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 11, fasc. 23, cc. 135r–v (June 8, 1577).
110 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 18, unpaginated (Sept. 2, 1627).
111 Until then, and from 1626, French apprentice dragomans were trained in the Capuchin school adjacent
to the French embassy in Pera, where between 8 and 12 students were enrolled annually. Similar schools
operated at the time in the Polish legation, and possibly in the Dutch and other embassies as well. A late
seventeenth-century attempt by the English Levant Company to send several Greek Ottoman subjects to
Gloucester College, Oxford, to learn English, with a view to employing them as dragomans on their return
was not repeated. Enfants de langue 1995: 21–5; Sturdza 1983: 566; Wood 1925: 430.
112 This method of training officers in the metropole bears close similarity to later colonial policies, both
French and other. The Dutch, for example, sought to inculcate “loyalty” and channel the emotional
attachments of the East Indies-born children of colonial officers to the metropole and away from Java, by
forcing parents to send their sons to be educated in the Netherlands for many years before they were
allowed to return to Java and assume a government position there. The French in Algeria, on the other
hand, sought to establish local schools modeled on Islamic schools (medreseh), where the sons of urban
notables could be trained for careers in the colonial administration and promote a “Franco-Islamic
As the following sections will show, dragomans’ extensive training on the job, and long sojourn in Istanbul and in Venetian colonies rather than Venice proper had direct consequences for the development of practices of translation and mediation in the European-Ottoman contact zone.

EMPLOYMENT

As the discussion above has already suggested, dragomans’ activities included diplomatic, consular, and commercial duties, and entailed the development of a complex network of alignments and loyalties in Istanbul, in Venice, and, as importantly, on the Venetian-Ottoman frontier.

Several Venetian dragomans were sent on missions to far-flung provinces of the Ottoman and Safavid empires. Michiele Membré, the Cypriot-born future Venetian Public Dragoman, was sent to the Safavid Shah Tahmasp in 1539–1542; another dragoman, the Venetian secretary Vincenzo degli Alessandri, was sent there in 1570.113 Giovanni Battista Salvago, whose 1624 mission to the Barbary regencies will be discussed in detail in chapter 7, was followed in 1633 by another Pera-born member of a dragomans’ family, Ippolito Parada.114 All four left detailed *relazioni* of their missions.

Other dragomans’ careers also entailed extensive traveling, as periodic assignments to new posts were customary. For example, the Pera-born dragoman’s son Stefano di Gioveni, who had served the Venetian consul in Alexandria, Egypt, since

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113 On Membré’s mission, see Scarcia 1969; Morton 1993; on degli Alessandri’s, see Berengo 1960.
114 Parada was sent to Algiers by bailo Cappello in order to recover the possessions of ambassador Cornaro in Spain. He became an apprentice dragoman four years later, and died of the plague a few months thereafter. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 149, c. 54r (May 10, 1633); Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, c. 611r (Oct. 17, 1637).
1581, was recalled to Istanbul five years later, to assume the position of dragoman upon the death of Ambrosio Grillo.¹¹⁵ Other dragomans were stationed for many years in various colonial posts in the Mediterranean and Adriatic before assuming more prestigious positions in either Venice or Istanbul.

Unlike today’s interpreters, face-to-face simultaneous interpretation between Ottoman and Venetian officials occupied relatively little of dragomans’ time. More often, they engaged in independent visits to the divan and to the residences of Ottoman officials, where they themselves acted as sole Venetian representatives. Such interactions with Ottoman officials yielded much valuable information, which then circulated further, whether within the bailo’s house or beyond, through personal contacts and via written dispatches and other kinds of correspondence. Friendly ties and informal conversations between Venetian dragomans and Ottoman officials often proved crucial for keeping Venetian diplomats abreast of political development at the Porte. For example, while attending church services during his visit to Istanbul in 1583, the Provveditor General in Candia (Crete) Luca Michiel was approached by dragoman Pasca (probably Pasquale Navon). According to Michiel, the dragoman, under oath of secrecy, informed him of a conversation with a Pasha, who claimed the Ottomans would refuse to return Antivari and Budua (both in today’s Montenegro) to Venetian hands. The dragoman pleaded with him to leave the city as soon as possible, advice Michiel followed.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 7, cc. 27v & 38v (Jan. 11, 1585 m.v. & May 10, 1586). See also Gioveni’s petition for a raise two years later, where he narrates his father’s accomplishments: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 28, cc. 67r–68v (Sept. 24, 1588, endorsed by the Senate on March 11, 1589). On dragomans serving the Venetian consulate in Alexandria in the Mamluk period, see Christ 2006: 99, 150.

¹¹⁶ Senato, Dispacci, Provveditori da Terra et da Mar, bb. 731–2, unpaginated (Jan. 22, 1583 m.v.).
Personal ties between dragomans and Ottoman officials were useful not only for informal information-gathering, but also for dragomans’ own promotion. In 1582, bailo Giovanni Francesco Morosini reported to the Heads of the Council of Ten news of his decision to employ dragoman Cristoforo Bruttì, one based on a warm recommendation by the schoolmaster of grand vizier Sinan Pasha. Sinan was a family friend of the Bruttis, who originated from Dulcigno (Ulcinj in Montenegro). Such friendships, by no means uncommon, point to the perennial problem, from Venetian officialdom’s perspective, of dragomans’ “turning native.”

“GOING NATIVE”

In a programmatic essay written in 1997, the historian Nora Şeni emphasized the centrality of matrimonial strategies and of employment in the dragomanat to the constitution of the Latin community of Pera. In that context, it is interesting to consider how newly-arrived apprentice dragomans were incorporated into the Latin community through marriage to local women, and how long-term kinship strategies and their attendant patronage networks strengthened the Latin community’s hold on the profession. As I show, trans-imperial marriage, baptismal sponsorship, and gift-giving shaped dragomans’ and their Venetian employers’ sometimes-contradictory understandings of their relationship with one another, as well as with political elites in both Istanbul and Venice.

117 Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 6, c. 51 (Dec. 22, 1582). On the friendship between Sinan Pasha and the Bruttis, see Pippidi 1980: 135.
In 1605 Grand Dragoman Marcantonio Borisi had been employed by the Venetian bailo in Istanbul for twenty years. When he appeared that year in the divan of one of the viziers, Ragusan emissaries referred to him as “the Albanian,” and as an Ottoman subject. Marcantonio had been born in the Venetian colonial town of Capodistria. His father Pietro was an exiled nobleman from Antivari (in today’s Montenegro); his mother, Giacoma Brutti, an Istrian noblewoman and Venetian subject, was also the sister of at least three dragomans in Venetian service: Benedetto, Bartolomeo, and Cristoforo, to whom Borisi owed his arrival in Istanbul in 1585. Later, Marcantonio’s brother Francesco would become a Venetian Count in Istria, while two other brothers, Bernardo and Marin, became businessmen in Istanbul and in the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities. Another sister seems to have married one of her maternal cousins, a Bruci. Another cousin of the Borisi siblings, Barnabà Bruci, had also served as Venetian dragoman in Istanbul. In recognition of his services there he later received the distinguished honorary title of “Cavalier of St. Mark’s,” became the beneficiary of the revenues of the fiscal chamber of Modena, and eventually a notary in the chancellery of Verona. Barnabà married first a Venetian, Maria Civran, and then a noblewoman from Cesana in Piedmont. His sister, Catarina Bruci, married Lucrezio Gravisi, a Polish ennobled dragoman. A third sister, Angela, married Count Agostino Tarsia of Istria.

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119 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 61, c. 117r (April 30, 1605).
120 In 1630 the Bruci-Borisi couple appealed to have their son, less than ten years old at the time, accepted as apprentice dragoman in Venetian service. The request was granted precisely due to the child’s pedigree. Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, cc. 57r–v (Sept. 11, 1630).
121 On the Borisi and Bruci families, see Paladino 1917: 185; Pippidi 1980: 135; Sturdza 1983: 572–3; Luca 2003b: 244. Pippidi and Sturdza include partial genealogical charts, which are integrated and updated in appendix 14. The Brucis were not only Venetian colonial nobles, but also family friends of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha, from whom Cristoforo Bruci received a letter of recommendation in 1582. See also Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 6, c. 51 (Dec. 12, 1582); Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 9, c. 88v (March 19, 1630).
whose title had been conferred by the Holy Roman Empire in 1478. Their son Cristoforo Tarsia would eventually become Venetian Grand Dragoman in Istanbul in the seventeenth century.

Within three generations, then, the Borisi-Brutti clan had spanned three empires and over half a dozen locales. But their network extended even further. After his love affair with a Turkish woman had met Venetian disapproval, Marcantonio Borisi married first Cassandra Piron, a Capodistrian noblewoman and a relative of several dragomans in Venetian and English service in Istanbul, then Caterina Olivieri, the daughter of Olivier Olivieri, a key figure in the Latin community of Pera and a dragoman in the French embassy. In 1619, well established as Grand Dragoman, Marcantonio sought the Venetian government’s permission to wed one of his daughters to the recently elected Moldavian prince Gasparo Graziani. Although the marriage may not have ever materialized, its intended purpose of consolidating alliances between the Moldavian principality, Venice, and the Ottomans, is clear. Twenty years later, another of Marcantonio Borisi’s daughters, Franceschetta, was wedded to the Sultan’s (as well as the bailo’s) physician, the Dane Hans Andreas Skovgaard, further consolidating ties among a group of intermediaries between the Porte and the Republic. A third daughter, Cecilia, was married to a Chios nobleman of Genoese origins, Pantaleone f. Michel Mamuca della Torre. Through this marriage the Borisis became affines of one of the most powerful Latin families of the Ottoman Empire. Cecilia and Pantaleone’s son

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122 On Marcantonio’s love affair with a Turkish woman, see below.
123 Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 7, c. 101 (Feb. 16, 1618 m.v.). The well-connected Croatian Graziani was instrumental in negotiating a peace treaty between the Ottomans and the Austrians in 1616, and was granted the title of prince of Moldavia precisely in recognition of his services to the Porte. See also Pippidi 1980: 148–49; Luca 2002: 110–12; Luca 2003.
124 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, unpaginated (March 31, 1641).
Marcantonio would later become dragoman for the Holy Roman Empire, and would marry his cousin, Giustiniana Tarsia.\textsuperscript{125}

This sample from a very complex genealogical tree reflects some of the mechanisms through which dragomans in diplomatic service in Istanbul became a unified, cohesive group, regardless of their diverse origins. The forging of kinship networks that crisscrossed geographical, ethnic, and estate divisions furthered not only the group’s internal cohesion, but also its alignment with a truly trans-imperial aristocratic milieu.

Yet dragomans, foreign diplomats, and Ottoman officials often diverged in their notions of cohesiveness and localness. Foreign embassies in particular sought to carefully distinguish their employees from surrounding Ottoman society through spatial segregation and by fostering the legal fiction of dragomans’ extraterritoriality. I will consider each of these mechanisms in turn, as well as one of the main mechanisms that was \textit{not} employed, sending Latin youth to the “mother country” for training, which was contemplated and eventually realized by the Serenissima’s major rival in the Eastern Mediterranean, France.

I mentioned above how, upon arrival in Istanbul, émigré Venetian dragomans quickly aligned themselves through marriage with powerful local (“Latin”) or previously localized (“Frankish”) families. The matrimonial strategies of the Borisi-Brutti-Tarsia dragoman clan, all of Venetian colonial noble descent, reveal a remarkable degree of intermarriage into the Latin community of Pera, including four other dragoman families: the Piron, Mauca della Torre, Grillo, and Carli. In the century between 1570 and 1670,

\textsuperscript{125} Sturdza 1983: 572.
five generations of the Tarsia-Brutti-Borisi clan, and a total of at least 13 men, worked as Venetian dragomans in Istanbul.126 As we saw, through their wives, daughters, and sisters, these Venetian dragomans became linked to the dragomans of other embassies as well.

As the Brutti-Borisi-Tarsia case suggests, marrying into the local Latin community was a key strategy in forging and extending dragomans’ kinship networks. So much so, that after Marcantonio Borisi’s execution in 1621, his widow Caterina Olivieri-Borisi, a dragoman’s daughter herself, was married to another Venetian Grand Dragoman: Giovanni Antonio Grillo.127 While her case was particularly tragic, with both husbands executed by order of the Porte some 28 years apart, it was hardly unique. Other dragomans’ daughters similarly helped link the different Latin families of Pera, and the locally-established Latin families with more recent arrivals from the Venetian-Ottoman frontier, as well as from Venice itself, such as dragoman Paolo Vecchia.128 On his deathbed, the Pera-born Venetian Grand Dragoman Stefano di Gioveni, who had worked first for the Venetian consul in Egypt and then for the bailo in Istanbul for over 18 years, recommended Tommaso Navon as husband for his niece Bartolomea.129 Tommaso, born in Pera to a distinguished local Latin family, was the descendent of many dragomans in Venetian service, including his father Pasquale, and was employed as Venetian

126 See appendix 14.
127 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 139, c. 371r (Sept. 16, 1655).
128 For example, Marie de Fortis Salvago, who, as her name suggests, was a descendent of both the Fortis and the Salvago families, both of whom had a long tradition of sending their sons to work as dragomans in Venetian service, married Francesco Testa (1627–1709), another Pera-born Latin in Venetian and Dutch service. De Groot 1994: 149.
129 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 50, cc. 272r–276v (Dec. 30, 1599).
“protogero,” low-level dragoman in charge of naval and commercial affairs, until his death in 1629.  

The significance of such unions for both parties cannot be overstated. For Venetian men, marriage to the Latin women of Pera provided access to local relational resources, to powerful fathers- and brothers-in-law, and, broadly speaking, to local community institutions. At the same time, it opened for their in-laws a route to employment in the embassy and to the extraterritorial status such opportunity conferred on Ottoman subjects. At least in theory, marriage to a Venetian also accorded these families access to Venetian citizenship or subjecthood, and to the geographical and social mobility such status carried.

Another mechanism through which Venetian dragomans fostered ties to their local colleagues and their families was the exchange of legal favors, well attested to in notarial deeds conserved in the bailo’s chancellery archives. Dragomans frequently served as each other’s witnesses, commissioners, executors, agents and factors in business matters that spanned Venice and the major commercial hubs of the Eastern Mediterranean. They also served as witnesses to the notarial deeds of other merchants in Istanbul, both Ottoman subjects and Franks. In 1581, Matteo Marucini appointed Girolamo Alberti as his commissioner to recover from Mehemet Celebi, the house Turkish instructor, 2,100 aspers owed him, as well as to receive Marucini’s salary from

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130 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, c. 60v (Sept. 13, 1629).
131 They were not unique: French dragomans were expected as part of their mission statement to assist subjects of the king in civil cases against Turks. Gautier and Marie de Testa 1993: 13. What is interesting, though, is how Venetian dragomans, at least, were rather indiscriminate in whom they chose to assist, Venetian subjects or not.
A few months later, Marucini and Cristoforo Bruschi, another Venetian dragoman, served as witnesses to a power of attorney issued by Mateca Salvago to Vivian Viviani to recover goods from the Venetian Treasury, the *camerlenghi di comun*.

In 1662 Pera-born Venetian dragoman Giorgio Girachi recruited several friends, including dragoman Cristoforo Tarsia, to testify in support of his petition to the Venetian government to reimburse him for expenditures incurred after Ottoman officials had broken into his house in 1654 in search of Venetian runaways, and taken him prisoner.

Dragomans also exchanged legal services with colleagues serving in other embassies. In 1606, two Venetian dragomans, Gianesin Salvago and Tommaso Navon, served as witnesses to a notarial deed signed by two dragomans in French service, Domenico Fornetti and Olivier Olivieri, and notarized by the Venetian bailo. A few months later, Salvago and Agostin Grillo, another Venetian dragoman, were witnesses to a power of attorney granted by Carlo Olivieri and Domenico (Fornetti?) of Pera to two English merchants resident in Tripoli, William Pate and William Dawes, to recover from the Venetian chancellery in Tripoli 500 piasters deposited by Olivieri. The following year, Salvago appointed Olivier Olivieri to act as his proxy in any family business “in

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132 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 263, fasc. 2.2, e. 55r (Aug. 18, 1581). The wages were recovered only in part, and Marucini, who went back to Venice in 1582, later petitioned the government to receive the money owed him so he could pay back his debts. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 7, c. 254r (April 26, 1584). See also Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 275, fasc. 1, cc. 41r–v (Aug. 23, 1605) for a power of attorney given by Gasparo Spinelli, bailo Octaviano Bon’s secretary, to secretary Girolamo Alberti, to recover his salaries from the Fiscal Chamber of Candia.

133 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 263, fasc. 2.2, cc. 37v–38r (Nov. 15, 1581). Viviani was to be paid by Salvago for his services from money owed Salvago by Cesare Soardo, the bailo’s majordomo.

134 Bailo a Costantinopoli, Cancelleria, b. 371, unpaginated (Aug. 31, 1662).

135 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 275, fasc. 1 (Feb. 15, 1605 m.v.). The act gave power of attorney to the papal Patriarchal Vicar to Istanbul, Fra Cherubino Cherubini, to act on Fornetti and Olivieri’s behalf and recover a debt “in Italy.” Perhaps this is why they chose to have the document notarized by the Venetian, rather than the French consul.

136 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 275, fasc. 1, cc. 60v–61r (April 17, 1606).
case any property is sold by my brothers,” thus canceling a previous power of attorney granted to his brother Benetto. Any money recovered was to be placed in the hands of Marcantonio Borisi. 137

If kinship and the exchange of legal services successfully bound immigrant and local dragomans to one another, other means, including ritual sponsorship and gift exchange, helped insert the baili themselves into the patronage networks of local Latin families. A list of the bailo’s expenditure on wages and other items, compiled by Secretary Ballarino in 1654, mentions two garments purchased for the sister of one of the local apprentice dragomans, Michiel Parada, upon her wedding, in which Ballarino was invited to serve as witness (compare).138 The expenditure register also lists a gift for dragoman Giovanni Olivieri’s wife, who had invited Ballarino to attend her daughter’s baptism.139

Beyond formal sponsorship and godparenthood, the bailo often strengthened his patronage of local employees by contributing towards their daughters’ and sisters’ dowries. For example, in 1589 the Senate decreed to give dragoman Pasquale Navon, one of the leaders of the Latin community of Pera, 150 sequins on the occasion of his daughter’s wedding, in response to his request for assistance in financing her dowry.140 In 1655, upon Battistina Grillo’s marriage to Costantino Guliano, the bride’s mother Catarina, widow of Grand Dragoman Grillo, received from Ballarino 500 ducats, authorized by the Senate as contribution towards Battistina’s dowry. The bailo further

137 Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 275, fasc. 1, cc. 124r–v (May 14, 1607).
138 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 138, c. 376r (Oct. 21, 1654) and b. 139, c. 614v (Sept. 19, 1655).
139 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 139, c. 616r (Oct. 17, 1655).
140 Senato Mar, filza 104, unpaginated (June 24, 1589); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 7, c. 183r (Jan. 20, 1589 m.v.).
financed flowers, clothes, and 50 white slabs “to fix the windows” of the widow’s house for the occasion.\footnote{Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 140, cc. 132r–v (Nov. 21, 1655).} Although the identity of the prospective husbands in these unions is unknown, it was customary for dragomans’ daughters and female kin to marry prominent members of the Latin community of Pera, mostly physicans and wealthy merchants. Dowry contributions thus gestured towards prominent segments of the community, and no doubt extended the bailo’s local ties. Such gifts were sometimes reciprocated by dragomans’ families, as when dragoman Ambrosio Grillo’s wife sent Secretary Ballarino a “large cake following local custom” in early 1656.\footnote{Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 140, c. 136v (Jan. 25, 1655 m.v.).}

Gifts were also given as tokens of friendship to dragomans in Ottoman service. In 1587, the Senate decreed to give 500 sequins as a gift to Orimbei, a renegade from Lucca, on the occasion of his only daughter’s marriage. Orimbei was the Ottoman Grand Dragoman, but also a former Venetian dragoman who remained on the bailo’s payroll for the valuable information he passed on.\footnote{Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 7, c. 71r (July 25, 1587). On Orimbei’s lingering ties with the Venetian bailo, see Bertelè 1932: 105.}

**COMPORTEMENT**

The eighteenth-century dragoman Charles Fonton, who was employed by the French ambassador to the Porte, emphasized the importance of dressing *a la Française*:

> No doubt oriental clothing confuses [our dragomans] with the Rayas [tax paying Ottoman subjects], and makes them seem what they are not. The authorities always misapprehend this outward appearance, and very few of them know, very few even want to believe, that our Dragomans are truly French. […]
> One has often seen Dragomans detained for the Carach [tribute], and when the Carachy was assured that they were French and exempt from the tribute, he was
satisfied to claim that it was a mistake, and that after all one cannot read on the face of a Frenchman dressed *a la turque* either his name or his country.  

Fonton cast the uncertain identification of the clothed person as “French” as opposed to “Turkish” as a problem of imperial governance, of mistaken claims by a foreign sovereign’s agents. But for many of Fonton’s colleagues, the challenge was just as much to “be” and “act” as French (or Venetian), to have one’s alliances and affect directed appropriately. This was a particularly serious challenge given the pervasiveness of intermarriage among the Latin community of Pera. As we saw earlier, few locally-born dragomans were not directly related to the dragomans of most other foreign embassies at the Porte. In theory, being “French” was a direct result of working for the French ambassador. But in practice, such Frenchness was often in tensions with other claims—by family and church, to mention but two of the most obvious cases—to one’s loyalty. Since dragomans’ extraterritorial juridical status was neither fixed, nor securely premised on the usual markers of ethnicity in that period—lineage, place of provenance, language or name—it required special cultivation and elaboration.

Fittingly, records of the bailo’s chancellery and Senate deliberations on the appointment of new dragomans and dragoman apprentices all meticulously registered the allocation of one to four new sets of clothes per year as part of their “benefits

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144 “Il n’est pas douteux que l’habillement oriental les confond avec les Rayas, et les fait regarder pour ce qu’ils ne sont pas. Les Puissances se méprennent tous les jours à cet extérieur, et très peu d’entre eux savent, très peu même veulent croire que nos Drogmans sont véritablement Français. […] On a vu souvent les Drogmans arrêtés pour le Carach et quand le Carachy s’est assuré qu’ils étoient François et exempts du tribute, il s’est contenté d’alléguer que ç’a été une méprise, et qu’après tout on ne peut lire sur le front d’un François habillé à la turque son nom ni son pais”: Quoted in Testa and Gautier 1991: 20–21.

145 As Alexander de Groot writes, locally-born dragomans “were only seemingly binational because of the status they had acquired of protégé of a foreign capitulatory power. But this status had, after all, to be granted by the Ottoman Porte upon the request of the foreign ambassador concerned. De Groot 2000: 16.
Expensive clothes were not simply an incentive for dragomans, but understood as part of their professional identity, perhaps the most crucial element in the making of dragomans. The phrases “un paro di vesti per regalia” and “regalie di vesti e di denari” appear in many deliberations for dragomans’ salary increase, as well as in baili’s lamentations about the costs of keeping apprentices and dragomans in their service.147  A Senate decree of 1630 authorized the bailo to provide two sets of clothes to an Armenian dragoman, Giovanni Molino, in recognition of his service.148  A dispatch by bailo Nicolò Barbarigo in 1579 described a visit by his secretary and dragoman to the residence of a pasha, carrying a gift of gerfalcons. He specifically emphasized that the two were “dressed honorably.”149  Honorable dress was seen as a defining feature of their performance. A relazione by returning bailo Almoro Nani in 1622 emphasized that

In appearing in the Divan, and at the doors of the Magnates of Istanbul, [dragomans] must dress with much expense conforming to the customs of the land, for public reputation, and they must make themselves welcome according to the occasion in order to facilitate the negotiation of public matters.150

Dragomans’ petitions for raise similarly emphasized the requirement to “dress with dignity,” to acquire “the customary clothes for appearing in front of Turkish ministers” and to “survive in Istanbul with a prominent profession especially subject to the wasteful

146 Senato Mar, reg. 37, c. 213 (Dec. 27, 1566); Compilazione Leggi, b. 146, unpaginated (Oct. 21, 1622); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, fasc. 2, c. 57v (Sept. 11, 1630), reg. 23, fasc. 2, c. 51r (Aug. 30, 1636), filza 32, unpaginated (Aug. 5, 1641); Senato, Disacci Costantinopoli, b. 124, cc. 524v, 525r (Oct. 8, 1643), b. 139, cc. 613r–v (1655); Cinque Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Sept. 20, 1695).
147 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 15 (March 29, 1624), reg. 18, c. 78v (Sept. 2, 1627), filza 32, unpaginated (June 17, 1641); Sacerdotti 1937: xi–xiii;
148 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, fasc. 2, c. 8v (April 6, 1630).
149 “Vestiti honorevolmente”: Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 5, c. 73 (April 9, 1579).
150 “Dovendo nel comparire nel Divano, et alle porte de Grandi à Const.li vestire con molta spese conforme all’uso del Paese, per publica riputatione, et per haver l’ingresso facile al trattare li negocij publici, render si grato secondo le occorrenze”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, c. 66r (July 26, 1622).
manner of the court” as particularly costly. One dragoman insisted in 1643 that his four sets of clothes “barely suffice to meet what is proper for the appointment I hold of public servant and minister.” It is probably not accidental that the same supplicant, the Venetian citizen Paolo Vecchia, also lamented in the same petition his 21 years of “service rendered in the lands of barbarians.” The extravagant dress code of Ottoman officialdom thus becomes symptomatic of the Empire’s overall excess and despotism.

Typical dragoman outfits were quite colorful, and frequently made of expensive satin. A list of expenditures on the occasion of a special embassy to Istanbul of Giovanni Capello in 1654 detailed the colors of each dragoman’s satin dress (crimson, aquamarine, silver, white, yellow-brown “Isabella color” and marble-white “pavonazo”), as well as their twill outer robes in olive green, amber and gold (“nefti”), “florid wine-color,” and rose-pink.

Given the meticulous sartorial regimentation in both the Venetian and Ottoman empires, it is small wonder that dragomans’ dress was the subject of extensive codification throughout the period under study. When Giovanni Battista Salvago was issued a safe-conduct by the Ottomans in 1642, a key element of it was a permission to

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151 “L’obligo di vestir degnam[en]te”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 18, unpaginated (Oct. 18, 1627). “Le veste ordinarie [per] comparir davanti ministri turchi”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 26, unpaginated (Nov. 22, 1635). “Difficilmente posso durar in Costantinopoli con profession cospicua all’ uso dispendioso di Corte”: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 124, c. 539v (Oct. 8, 1643). See also Ibid. (Jan. 25, 1627 m.v.); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 263, fasc. 2.1, c. 80v; Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, c. 65v (July 26, 1622); Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 171r (May 12, 1627), b. 118, c. 727v (Jan. 9, 1637 m.v.), Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 34, unpaginated (April 10, 1643).

152 “Quattro vestiti, che pure vagliono à corrispondere al decoro della carica che sostento di pub[li]co Ser[vito]re e Ministro”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 40, unpaginated (June 18, 1643).


154 On Venice, see, among others, Johnson 2005. For an overview on the regulation of dress through sumptuary law in early modern Italy, see Hughes 1983.
don a turban like a Muslim.\textsuperscript{155} This is quite remarkable, as in contemporary legal opinions (fetva) the donning of the turban by a non-Muslim effectively meant conversion to Islam.\textsuperscript{156}

Yet the Ottoman system of sartorial codification was not limited to a distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim dress, but also distinguished specific ethnoreligious and professional groups, as well as urban and rural folk. These sartorial taxonomies were much celebrated outside the Ottoman Empire as they were popularized in costume albums (of which \textit{De gli habiti antichi}, first published by the Venetian Cesare Vecellio in 1590 was arguably the most popular in this period). In this way, Ottoman sartorial hyper-distinction and lavishness became themselves indexical signs of Ottoman imperial grandeur (or, from another perspective, excess and decadence). The meticulous registration of gradations of cloth allocated to different dragomans thus accentuated their partaking in an Ottoman—rather than a Venetian—semiotic system. After all, Venetian ideologies of male sartorial codification insisted on simple, unified black garb across the patrician and citizen elite.\textsuperscript{157} Dragomans, on the other hand, were expected—not least by their Venetian patrician employers—to wear “fanciful” clothes in order to be deemed respectful and respectable when interacting with Ottoman officials.

Garments served not only to mark their wearer’s station, but also as diplomatic gifts, true “signs of recognition,” and, as Webb Keane has argued, not without their real

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{155} Documenti Turchi, b. 13, fasc. 1485 (April 1–10, 1642). According to Maria-Pia Pedani, the first permission for Venetian interpreters to dress as Ottoman subjects while on mission was granted during the War of Crete (1645–1669), further highlighting the unprecedented nature of Salvago’s safe-conduct. Pedani 2002: 92.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Tijana Krstic, personal communication.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Although Venice had its fair share of fanciful dressing, and the meticulous elaboration of social and moral boundaries through feminine sartorial codes. On Venetian dress in general, see Newton 1988; on the social semiotics of clothes in early modern Venice, see Allerston 2000.
\end{itemize}
In 1660, at the height of the War of Crete, Secretary Ballarino sent one of his dragomans with four sets of clothes to be gifted to the Ottoman minister Ibrahim Pasha, notorious for his anti-Venetian sentiments, in the hope of appeasing him. Ibrahim not only refused to accept the garments, but exclaimed: “The slaves of our Emperor have no need to be dressed by those who make war with him.” As Ballarino himself later admitted in his description of the fiasco to the Senate, he had meant the garments as tokens of friendship, substitutes for more lavish gifts which he was not in a position to send given his long curfew and empty coffers. The garments, he reported, had been handed “with expressions of appreciation to [Ibrahim Pasha’s] merit, and hope of allowing him to test in due course with livelier effects the sincere disposition of the Serene Republic towards him.” Ibrahim too clearly understood that the garments stood for other future gifts, but, more importantly, for the good intentions of the Republic. In declining the gift he thus refused to recognize the sincerity of intention behind it.

If the risky business of clothing was part and parcel of the trans-imperial economies of affect that underwrote dragomans’ performance of mediation in early modern Istanbul, other semiotic practices were not without their hazards. “He has proven himself as full of affect and of loyalty, as of value.” Thus the Venetian Senate urged bailo Pietro Foscarini to promote the Pera-born Latin Giovanni Antonio Grillo to the position of Grand Dragoman in 1636. As we saw, “affect” and “loyalty,” when

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158 Keane 1997b. On the importance of attending to the materiality of textiles as part of analyzing their place in any representational economy, see also Keane 2005.
159 “Li schiavi del nostro Imperatore non hanno bisogno d’esser vestiti da chi fà guerra seco”: Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, c. 144, c. 18v–19r (July 15, 1660).
161 “Si è dimostrato oltrettanto pieno di affetto e di fede, che di valore”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 23, fasc. 2, c. 58r (Sept. 17, 1636).
properly invested in the Venetian Republic, were deemed key to the performance and advancement of dragomans. But while generous towards dragomans who had proven themselves properly affectionate towards the Republic, the Venetian authorities acted harshly in cases where they deemed the affect to be “misplaced,” i.e. invested in the wrong objects, and thus transgressing the boundaries of the moral community centered on the bailo’s house.

The most conspicuous cases of dragomans’ misplaced affect involved treason, espionage, and double-dealing, charges to which at least four dragomans in Venetian service in Istanbul were subject in the last half of the sixteenth century. It seems as if actual or imagined treason was potentially a useful component in a successful dragoman’s career in that period. However, Venetian officials often envisioned dragomans’ betrayal or disloyalty not so much in the realm of high politics and inter-imperial espionage, but of their very households. Frequently, dragomans’ misplaced affect was conceived of and read from their intimate household arrangements—whom they lived with, and how. As scholars of modern empires have repeatedly argued, domestic and affective ties between colonizers and colonized, and their perceived challenge to established racial hierarchies, were of great concern to imperial governors.

162 These were Michele Cernovic, Bartolomeo Bruti, Mateca Salvago, and Giovanni Antonio Grillo. On the Venetian failed attempt to assassinate Cernovic during his trip to Rome, see Lesure 1983; Preto 1994: 113 and passim. According to Spanish sources, Bartolomeo Bruti served as a Spanish spy in Istanbul from 1574 to 1579 while employed as a Venetian dragoman. See Sánchez Padilla et al. 2004: 24; see also Pippidi 1980: 138. I have found no references to Bruti’s alleged double-dealing in any Venetian sources. On the Venetian plot to poison Mateca Salvago, once a praised and highly regarded dragoman, see Consiglio X, Parti segrete, b. 25, unpaginated (June 3, 1592, Nov. 12, 1593, & Nov. 18, 1593). See also Archivio proprio Costantinopoli, b. 8, cc. 243r–244v; Capi del Consiglio dei X, Lettere di Ambasciatori: Costantinopoli, b. 6, fasc. 153, unpaginated (Nov. 8, 1593); Collegio, Relazioni, b. 4, Relazione di Lorenzo Bernardo, cc. 76v–81v (May 9, 1592). I thank Eric Dursteler for these references. On Grillo’s alleged treason, see Inquisitori di Stato, b. 416, unpaginated (Feb. 15, 1607 m.v.).
Attempts to define the contours and internal divisions of colonial societies by policing the distribution of affect were the hallmarks of many colonial societies.\(^{163}\)

It is thus hardly surprising that foreign powers did not look favorably upon unions between their employees and Ottoman subjects. In 1720, the French went so far as to ban the marriage of French subjects residing in the Levant. While dragomans were exempt from this rule, on the understanding that they lived there their entire lives, their requests to marry still had to be submitted for approval by the minister of foreign affairs and the ambassador.\(^{164}\) Similar attempts to regulate and control dragomans’ marriage were undertaken by Venice on several occasions. In a Senate resolution of 1629, the Venetian legislators acknowledged the impossibility of legally banning dragomans’ marriages, but elaborated on the need to “divert their affect,” and focus it on the bailo’s house:

> Without doubt it will be beneficial to our service, that our dragomans not have another dependence, except the house of the baili, and freed of the obligation of matrimoniy, attend to their required service […] We cannot see how it could justly be prohibited that [dragomans] marry, but to divert their affect as much as possible we consider convenient, and profitable to your service, so that the dependency [on local in-laws] is removed, and all souls are united in obedience to our baili, without being distracted from it on another occasion.\(^{165}\)

It seems that some took to heart the baili’s dislike for dragomans’ “excessive” integration into the local community. Unlike the relatively rapid and thorough “indigenization” in Pera of dragomans of Venetian colonial background, for Venetian citizens, long years of service in Istanbul and even the occasional marriage with local

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\(^{163}\) Stoler 2002; Stoler 2004.

\(^{164}\) Enfants de langue 1995: 91.

\(^{165}\) “Senza dubio riusciria giovevole al n[ost]ro servitio, che li Dragomani n[ost]ri non havessero altra dipendenza, che q[ue]lla della Casa de Baili, et sciolti dal obligo del Matrimonio, attendessero al loro dovuto servitio […] L’impedire, che egli, ò altri non si amoglino, non vedemo come si possa far giustamente, ma divertirne l’effetto in quanto si possa, io stimiamo conve’ niente, et profficuo al medesimo v[ost]ro servitio, perché si levino le dipendenze, et siano tutti li animi uniti alla ubidienza dellì n[ost]ri Baili, senza distraersene per altra occasione”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 19, cc. 60r–v (Sept. 13, 1629).
Latin wives generally meant only a temporary hiatus in their lives back in Venice. For those dragomans, repatriation led to almost complete severance of ties in Istanbul. A case in point is that of Matteo Marucini, who returned to Venice some time in the late 1580s, after over two decades of service in Istanbul. In his will, he left his few possessions to an illegitimate son, Lodovico, “whether or not he is my son, as a sign of love.” Lodovico was apparently named after Matteo’s eldest brother, the Grand Dragoman. His short will makes no reference to any of Matteo’s acquaintances in Istanbul, nor, for that matter, to the very fact of his long sojourn in the Ottoman capital.166

A similarly taciturn will was produced by dragoman Paolo Vecchia in 1659. Vecchia, a Venetian citizen, had worked as dragoman in the bailo’s house and in the navy for over 27 years, from 1628 to 1655. His will, however, made only a passing reference to his long sojourn in Istanbul and to his wife and in-laws there. After offering various bequests to Venetian charitable institutions, as was customary among the citizen class, and appointing various Venetian patricians as executors and commissioners of his will (an equally common practice among citizens), he made small gifts to various Venetian friends and relatives. Finally, in a single sentence, he asked Bortolo Sonzin, the bailo’s accountant, to take care of any unsettled debts or credits he might have with the Grilllos (his in-laws) or with anyone else in Istanbul.167 Even in 1655, when he retired from

166 Notarile, Testamenti, b. 10, fasc. 324 (Nov. 26, 1590).
167 “Al Clar[issi]mo Bortolo Sonzin Ragg[iona]to in Constantinopoli lascio il mio reliquiaren[o] d’oro con dentro il segno della S[antissi]ma Croce tengho resservato in piziolo scatolino grosso del mio Bauletto picolo pregandolo a far esito di tutto quello si ritrova del mio nelle mani et fatto Danari habbi da vedere li conti trà me e la casa Grilla sodisfacingosi se anderano credit[oi]ri di loro come altri”: Notarile, Testamenti, b. 261, cc. 131r–132r (Nov. 21, 1659). I thank Federica Ruspio for bringing Vecchia’s testament to my attention.
active service in Istanbul, Vecchia’s petition sought to secure a pension for his sister Cassandra, but made no mention of any support for his wife, Grillo’s daughter.\footnote{The Senate approved a lifelong monthly stipend of 10 ducats for Cassandra Vecchia: Senato Mar, filza 419, unpaginated (Feb. 14, 1654 m.v. and June 26, 1655).}

Since loyalty was as important as linguistic skills to dragomans’ successful operation, Venetian officials repeatedly sought to limit their ability to “turn native” by policing potentially “misplaced” affect and desire. If marriage into local families could be justified—as in Paolo Vecchia’s case—by appealing to the potential alliance with a powerful local father-in-law, other liaisons were not so easily tolerated. Two cases stand out in this context: Marcantonio Borisi’s youthful love affair with a Turkish woman in 1596, and apprentice dragoman Gianesin Salvago’s love affair with the bailo’s barber in 1588. In both cases, the bailo, in his position as the representative of Venetian authority, fashioned himself as a father figure, seeking to divert affect from unwarranted objects (Muslims, same-sex persons), but at the same time to retain the infractors’ goodwill.

The offense in Gianesin’s love affair with Giorgio, the bailo’s barber, was not only that he transgressed the boundaries of heteronormative morality, but that he undermined the familial, desexualized organization of space that enabled homosociality in the bailo’s house, as well as its juridical and estate based distinctions.\footnote{On the bailo’s household as family, see Dursteler 2000: 169.} Salvago was not a Venetian subject but an Ottoman one. Moreover, he had the backing of the Latin community of Pera, where his father was a person of great authority. His lover, on the other hand, was a Venetian subject, possibly a citizen, but more likely a member of the lower, popolano estate. Officially he belonged—together with the dragomans, apprentice dragomans, and the bailo’s secretary, assistant secretary, accountant, chaplain and...
doctor—to the *famiglia alta*, as opposed to the servants who made up the *famiglia bassa*.

But the fact that he shared a room with the baker, and the milieu of mostly cooks and servants in which he moved, suggests he might have come from a modest background.¹⁷⁰

Unlike Gianesin Salvago’s love affair, which left a detailed record, only few traces of dragoman Marcantonio Borisi’s love affair with a Turkish woman were left in the archives. Due to its potentially fatal implications (Ottoman law did not tolerate interreligious concubinage between Christian men and Muslim women), the Venetians dealt with this matter in secrecy. One of the most extensive discussions of the affair appears in a letter by doge Marino Grimani to bailo Marco Venier, instructing him on the recommended course of action. The letter offers a glimpse into the logic of affect and boundary maintenance at work in the operation of the bailo’s house:

We have been extremely upset to learn that Borisi, while making a mistake meriting a much greater reprehension, since as our dragoman and official he should have known very well the manner in which one should live in a Muslim country, has put in danger the entire house by causing those travails and troubles that mixing with Turkish women should cause. [In this he] then also inconsiderately allowed himself to be moved to offend your service… In order that in the future he will know to behave himself within the proper limits, we instruct you with the Senate, that you order him to appear before you, and you should tell him in the name of the public with a grave sort of words, that for the good will with which we have always held his person, and household, and for the signs [of that good will] that we have given on various occasions, we would expect this sort of dealing from anyone but him, an action which, ever since the Republic has learned about it, has given much trouble to the soul, so we should have given him a greater cause to repent, if the memory of the trust, and merits of his ancestors had not had the power to make us forgive him this juvenile legerity, holding as absolutely certain that until now he has acted wisely, and feels himself in pain for having given you cause to form an opinion and a judgment contrary to that, which we have made in the past of his previous circumspect and diligent service, [so] in the future he will wish with much more studying, and assiduity, to merit the grace, which we now show him in excusing the mistake he has made, and render himself worthier of the good will which we show toward him, proceeding with that respect which becomes his debt toward you, our principal

¹⁷⁰ On hierarchies within the bailo’s household, see Dursteler 2000: 171.
Representative. With said admonition which should frighten him a lot you should make him continue to serve as he has done before, telling him, that he should obey you and that you will inform us of any exceptions. We should also tell you that we made the same admonition to his brother, who is here in this city, so that he will write it to him in our name.171

The kind of “psychological warfare” the government recommended that the bailo use with Borisi recalls the admonition of a wayward believer by a confessioner:

reminding the sinners of their positive past behavior to assure them of God’s forgiveness despite the gravity of their recent actions, then embarrass them by emphasizing the great inconvenience their actions caused to others, and finally induce them to correct their ways as penance.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I argued that it was not any single feature of dragomans’ provenance and training, nor simply the nature of their employment in the European-

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Ottoman contact zone, which constituted them as specialists possessing intimate knowledge of the Ottomans. Rather, it was the combination of all these aspects, i.e. their diverse (and increasingly mixed) provenance from among the Venetian citizen class and colonial nobility, and from the local Latin community of Pera, their predecessors’ lifelong employment in the service of the Republic, their decades of residence and training in the bailo’s house, their extensive sojourns in Venice and frequent trips back and forth between Venice and Istanbul, and their apprenticeships in the colonial administrations of Dalmatia, Cyprus, and Crete, and as assistants to Venetian merchant consuls in various locales in the Eastern Mediterranean, which informed their complex sense of the Venetian and Ottoman empires, their boundaries, and the world beyond them.

The Venetian state, and especially its baili, viewed the dragomanat of Istanbul as a useful set of aides at the Sublime Porte and brokers of diplomatic knowledge, a cadre whose very in-between status posed a potential threat to Venetian interests and face. The dragomans were indispensable diplomats taken from Catholic families, who had sufficient expertise of and contact with Ottoman imperial life to write detailed and authoritative ethnological accounts of Ottoman custom. At the same time, their non-Venetian kinship structure occasionally allowed them to forge suspiciously close ties to non-Venetian powers. Furthermore, this cadre could exploit their ambiguous juridical status to promote their own career interests, even against their employers.

The state attempted to control the potentially dangerous elements inherent in its reliance upon the dragomanat by emphasizing loyalty and trustworthiness, rather than the command of languages, as the defining traits of a successful dragoman. This set clear boundaries on dragomans’ legitimate affective ties. Dragomans of Venetian citizen or
colonial background who married into the local Latin community of Pera were never met with the approval of Venetian authorities, although the latter often turned a blind eye on specific unions, as these were believed to enhance the cohesiveness of the dragoman corps. Other intimate arrangements, whether concubinage or same-sex love between Venetian dragomans and Ottoman subjects, were severely censured.

If the potential transformation of Venetian subjects into Ottoman ones was a perennial threat, the reverse process was actively encouraged. The alchemy of comportment believed to result from long residence and employment in the bailo’s house was such that several dragomans with only tenuous claims to Venetian citizenship were able to relocate eventually to Venice and obtain government positions there. Dragomans’ clientage ties to the numerous baili under whom they served, who often assumed upon their return from Istanbul high position in Venetian politics, certainly helped. In chapter 8 I will discuss in some detail the cases of Ottoman subjects who became powerful Public Dragomans in Venice after years of service in the bailo’s house in Istanbul and in various Venetian colonies in the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Some of them even obtained Venetian citizenship. In this sense, too, dragomans epitomize trans-imperial subjects, whose career paths and kinship and patronage networks crossed political and social boundaries between empires, between Venetian citizens and colonial subjects, as well as between different estates within metropolitan Venetian society. Before considering further their trans-imperial trajectories, let us look at some of the texts these dragomans produced, and the claims they made about Ottoman society, history, and state.
PART III: TRANSLATION

CHAPTER VII

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF OTTOMAN OTHERNESS

TRANSLATION PRACTICES

In addition to diplomacy and interpretation, much of dragomans’ time was spent in the translation of Ottoman documents into Italian. These were in several genres: *firman* (imperial edicts), ‘*arz* (petition rescripts), *mühimme* (orders dispatched by central authorities to local authorities in Istanbul and the provinces), *ahd-nâme* (the so-called “capitulations,” lit. books of peace, and other bilateral agreements), official correspondence, and later also chronicles and literary pieces. While some translations were commissioned by the bailo, others were clearly undertaken at dragomans’ own initiative. In general, the significance of the translation enterprises of Venetian dragomans in Istanbul, precursors to the budding Orientalist scholarship of the Enlightenment, cannot be overstated. These translations merit a much more detailed discussion than I can offer here. Instead, I wish to highlight the ways in which Venetian
dragomans’ translations of Ottoman texts were informed by their professional trajectories and biographical circumstances.

The translations produced by early modern Ottoman dragomans have recently been the subject of Orientalist Bernard Lewis’ short piece, “From Babel to Dragomans,” where he devotes almost a fifth of the text to the question of Ottoman dragomans’ “mistranslation” of official correspondence. According to Lewis, the purpose of translation “is not to evoke aesthetic appreciation but accurately—and in some but not all situations unequivocally—to convey the meaning of the original.”¹ But as translation studies scholars have long acknowledged, any translation is by definition an aesthetic and interpretive act (and itself open to multiple readings), premised on culturally-specific assumptions about translational faithfulness and the very translatability of foreign concepts and terms. A translated text’s relationship to the original is not—and can never be—one and predetermined. Rather, translations are themselves the site of struggle over meaning and the products of specific power relations.²

Seventeenth-century dragomans and officials were themselves highly aware of the power-laden nature of translation and interpretation. An undated translation by dragoman Giovanni Battista Salvago of a fatwa by the mufti of Istanbul concerning dragomans reads:

Translation of

A Fatwa a propos of interpreting

If Costantin sued Pietro, who does not know Turkish, claiming: I had a credit with Giacomo who is absent, for the value of much merchandise, and while claiming and requesting it from him, you remain bound and required, in his absence, to pay

² For a useful overview of postcolonial theories in translation studies, see Robinson 1997.
the debt; now in the absence of that Giacomo, given your word of honor and obligation, it is up to you to pay his debt, on one side: and on the other side Pietro denies [these charges]. If Mehemmet and Mustafà, even though they do not know Pietro’s language, testify that Antonio, in translating, said these things, that Pietro will remain Giacomo’s bound principle payer, should he be absent; in vigor of these testimonies, can Costantin have anything from Pietro?

The Mufti responds

He cannot

Translated by Salvago.  

The names of the protagonists in this hypothetical case represent different ethnolinguistic communities: Costantini is presumably Greek, Pietro and Giacomo Italian, whereas Mehemmet and Mustafà are Turks. Antonio, the dragoman, is possibly a local-born Latin, bilingual in Italian and Greek. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine why the Mufti ruled that the debt claim was invalidated. Was it because the (Turkish) witnesses were evidently unable to comprehend the language(s) in which the deal was contracted? Was it because it was concluded through the mediation of a dragoman? Why does the case redundantly emphasize that Pietro does not speak Turkish, in addition to specifying that the Turkish witnesses do not know Pietro’s language? What was the context in which Salvago was asked (or took the initiative) to translate the fatwa into Italian? And what does the very fact of signing this translation (as most other translations

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3 “Trad[utio]ne di Fetfà in proposito di Dragomanare.
Se Costantin faceesse lite contra Pietro ignaro della lingua Turca, asserendo io havevo un credito con Giacomo absente per valuta di tante robbe, mentre lo pretendeva, et addimandava da lui, tù sei rimasto pregio di vista, et absentandosi, tu sei obligato di pagar il debito; hora mancando esso Giacomo, stante la tua pregiaria, et obligatione, à te si convien pagare il suo debito, dall’una: dall’altra negando Pietro, se Mehemmet, e Mustafà, benche non sapino il linguaggio di Pietro, testimoniassero però, che Antonio Dragomanando havesse detto essi presenți, che Pietro restò piegio, e principal pagadore di Giacomo, se si absentasse; in vigor di tali testimonianze può Costantin haver alcuna cosa da Pietro?
Il Mufti risponde
Non può
Trad[otto] dal Salvago”: Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371, unpaginated, undated.
by Venetian dragomans) tell us about consciousness of the non-transparency of translation? These multiple layers of mediation bring to the fore the metalinguistic practices presupposed and reenacted by any act of translation. They underscore the cultural specificity of assumptions about the power of verbal communication to commit people legally, i.e. about the efficacy of promises, and about the role of interpretation in conveying and consolidating these assumptions between people who do not share a language.⁴

To understand these issues in greater detail, and the extent to which they themselves were subject to dragomans’ added levels of mediation, let us compare two translations prepared in 1594 of a letter by Sultan Murad III to Doge Pasquale Cicogna.⁵ Sultan Murad’s letter concerned a raid by Barbary corsairs on a Venetian galley in Ottoman territory in the Adriatic earlier that year, and was sent in response to formal Venetian complaints. One translation of the letter, prepared in Istanbul by Venetian-born dragoman Girolamo Alberti, was enclosed to a dispatch sent by bailo Marco Venier to Venice via Kotor in early June. A second translation was produced in Venice about a month later by Giacomo de Nores. De Nores, a Cypriot-born nobleman, had spent his childhood and early teens in Ottoman captivity before arriving in Venice in 1588 and becoming Public Dragoman with the Board of Trade.⁶ There is no indication that de Nores was aware of Alberti’s translation when he set out to prepare his. While the

⁴ On the supposed primacy of oral evidence in the Ottoman legal system, see Ergene 2004.
⁵ Both translations, along with the original Ottoman text, are in Documenti Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1057–1059. See appendix 15 for a partial reproduction of the original letter and for transcripts of the two translations. My deepest gratitude to Vera Costantini for taking photos of the Ottoman letter (with the kind assistance of ASV State Archivist Michela dal Borgo), and to Miri Shefer and Tijana Krstic for their help in reading the document. For more information on the archival series of Documenti Turchi in general and on the specific events that led to the diplomatic exchange between Sultan Murad III and Doge Pasquale Cicogna, see Pedani Fabris 1994.
⁶ For a fuller biographical sketch of Giacomo de Nores, see chapter 8.
overall structure and content of the two translations are the same, significant variations in morphology, syntax, and lexicon suggest the two dragomans’ differing understandings of what constitutes faithful translation and what typifies and thus defines the difference between Ottoman and Venetian authority, agency, and voice.

On several counts, De Nores remains closer to the style of the original Ottoman text. De Nores’s translation of the Ottoman appellation of the Sultan’s abode as “felice Porta” (“felicitous Porte”) and “felice mia residenza” (“my felicitous residence”) are almost word-for-word translations of the original Ottoman terms used in the Sultan’s letter to the Doge, destgahimiz (“our chief seat,” “our capital”) and ‘asitane-yi sa’adet (“threshold of felicity” or “felicitous threshold”). Alberti prefers more classical honorifics, such as “Ecc[ellentissim]a Porta,” (“most excellent Porte”) and “mia Cesarea Maestà” (“My Imperial Majesty”), though de Nores too uses similar constructions, “l’eccelsa mia Corte Imperiale” (“my excellent Imperial Court”) and “sublime Corte Imperiale” (“Sublime Imperial Court”) later on. Although classicizing, imperial terminology was certainly current at the Ottoman court, Alberti’s translation, in this as in other instances, seems to make greater use of idiomatic glosses rather than the word-for-word translation preferred by de Nores.

On other occasions too de Nores exhibits greater orthographic and stylistic “conservatism.” On two occasions he transcribes the title of an Ottoman official as begh, a letter-for-letter rendition of the Ottoman original. Alberti writes bei, which provides a closer Italian equivalent of the Ottoman term’s phonology, though not its orthography. Conversely, Alberti’s rendering of the Croatian island and village where the raid had
taken place, Ragosniza, is much closer to the original name, *Rogosnice*, than de Nores’s (Racusice).

In addition to style, de Nores also indexes his deep understanding of things Ottoman through lexicon. For instance, he calls the three corsair vessels that attacked the Venetian ship “Muslim galleys” (“Galere Mussulmane”), following their original designation as “Musulman,” as opposed to Alberti’s “Galee turchesche.” Although late sixteenth-century Venetian readers would have taken “turchesche” to be “Muslim” as much as “Turkish,” de Nores’s use of “Musulmane” follows the original intention, avoids the ambiguity of the admittedly more common “turchesche,” makes clear that the corsairs were not ethnically Turkish (and possibly not even Ottoman juridical subjects), and underscores his own consciousness of the fraught relationship between the Ottoman court and the corsairs of North Africa.

In a similar vein, de Nores gives clear preference to retaining indigenous Ottoman titles. In discussing Sinan Pashâ, the Ottoman Lord Admiral, both de Nores and Alberti translate his Ottoman title of kapudan pasha literally, as “Cap[itan]o del Mare” (Alberti) or “Capitano da Mare” (de Nores), thus pointing to its equivalence with the Venetian office of the same title. But whereas Alberti glosses Sinan’s office simply as “Consiglierio,” (in line with his broader tendency to translate Ottoman titles into Venetian ones) de Nores maintains Sinan’s Ottoman title of Vizier (*vezir*, minister), and his specific jurisdiction in the matter as “custode d’Alger” (again, following the original letter). De Nores thus signals awareness of Sinan’s elevated position, as second only to the Grand Vizier in the Ottoman hierarchy.7 Similarly, whereas Alberti calls the lesser

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7 Lo Basso 2001a: 2.
Ottoman officials addressed in the matter “Sig[no]ri del Mare” de Nores uses an Ottoman-Venetian mix: “sanzachi dà mare,” an Italian grammaticalization of the Ottoman *sancakbeglere* (dative plural of *sancakbeg*, or provincial governor). Finally, it is de Nores who makes greater efforts to interpret for his readers Ottoman cultural content, for instance by glossing the letter’s Muslim date (“14 della luna di saban, ciò è alli 4 di Maggio”), which Alberti leaves without a gloss.  

Whereas de Nores tends to retain Ottoman titles and honorifics, it is actually Alberti who displays a deeper understanding of Ottoman diplomatic conventions. For example, de Nores calls the Sultanic decree which had ostensibly been violated by the corsairs’ attack a “conventione della pace, et promessa, che è fra ambi le parti” (“a covenant of peace, and agreement between the two parties”). Such notion of bilateralism was completely foreign to contemporary Ottoman diplomacy. In fact, the original letter refers to the corsairs’ attack as a violation of an *ahdname-yi hümayun*, i.e. an imperial letter of oath, and as “contrary to the peace and those who are at peace.” This much more unilateral Ottoman understanding of the *ahdname* is well rendered by Alberti, who calls the document “giurati Imp[eria]li Capitoli” (“sworn Imperial Articles”). Whereas de Nores “re-translates” the official title of the Venetian administrator assaulted by the corsairs back to its Venetian original (“Rettore”) Alberti maintains the Turkish title of “Bei” (*beg*). Alberti uses the original Ottoman term *‘arz* to refer to the Sultanic order sent to the provincial governor Piri Bei in response to the attack; de Nores transforms it to “notitia et aviso” (“notice and announcement”). The Sultan’s domains, which the

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8 The use of explanatory glosses with textual markers such as “that is to say” in order to compensate for presumed gaps in readers’ knowledge of the context described was a common strategy among Renaissance vernacular translators of Latin antiquity. See Denton 1998: 70–71.

9 On Venetian-Ottoman ahd-names, see Theunissen 1998.
original letter calls *memalik-I mahruse* are rendered by de Nores as “custoditi nostri paesi” (“our well-protected lands”) and by Alberti as “mio Custodito dominio” (“my well-protected domain”). Although de Nores is both grammatically and lexically closer to the original, it is Alberti’s use of “dominio” as opposed to “paesi,” which suggests greater familiarity with legal concepts underwriting Venetian-Ottoman diplomatic relations in the Dalmatian borderlands. Here, Alberti’s more systematic training as a dragoman apprentice in the bailo’s house may have provided him with a clearer set of translation practices for glossing Ottoman diplomatic vocabulary. De Nores’s more piecemeal training “on the job” in Venice would have exposed him far less to the intricacies of Venetian-Ottoman diplomacy. After all, his bread-and-butter employment was not in translating diplomatic correspondence, but in negotiating commercial disputes among merchants and brokers.

In terms of syntax too, de Nores and Alberti exhibit two divergent translation strategies. Whereas de Nores frequently uses the first person (both singular and plural) for verbs and pronouns referring to the Sultan’s actions (“datami,” “hò subito fatto,” “data da mè con carattere di mio proprio pugno regio,” “felice mia ressidenza,” “l’inclita n[ost]ra Corte,” “l’Imperial nostra Armata” and so forth), Alberti prefers verbs in the third person singular, combined with ample passive constructions (“essendo stato fatto copiosamente intendere q[ue]sto negotio al Piede dell’Imp[eria]l Sede,” “l’ecc[el]sa Porta,” and “la Imperial Armata,” although he too sometimes uses the first person singular, as in “mio Imp[eria]l ordine”). The original letter uses primarily the first person plural to refer to the Sultan’s person, but also resorts to impersonal constructions when referring to the Sultan’s interactions with other persons.
This brief comparison suggests some important differences in the two dragomans’ translation strategies. Initial evidence indicates that the patterns identified above also hold for other translations produced by de Nores, for example a translation he prepared in June 1595 of a letter to doge Cicogna by the newly enthroned Sultan Mehmet III (1595–1603). A comparison of de Nores’s translation with that prepared in Istanbul the same month by Grand Dragoman Marcantonio Borisi reveals again de Nores’s tendency to “Christianize” and “Italianize” Ottoman terminology. For example, what Borisi translates, in keeping with Ottoman idiomatic expression, as “Nation di Gesù,” de Nores translates as “Christiani.” Borisi’s “sultan Murat Kan,” again, in keeping with Ottoman honorifics, becomes in de Nores’s translation “Sultan Amurat,” following the Italian rendition of the Sultan’s name.10

In order to determine how systematic these divergent patterns are in different dragomans’ translation practices a larger corpus of translations needs to be examined. It would also help to know more about dragomans’ access to humanistic scholarship, and specifically to debates concerning sense-for-sense vs. word-for-word translation, and the Questione della lingua, i.e. the fierce arguments among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century academicians regarding the place of Florentinisms, Venetianisms, and other regional dialects in formal Italian composition.11 To what extent can we extrapolate from de Nores’s translations (a few others are available in the archives) about his (limited) linguistic competence in Italian, a language he had learned in his late teens, virtually “on the job,” after being enslaved by the Ottomans on his native Cyprus and spending his

10 Documenti Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1080, 1081. See appendix 16 for transcripts.
11 On humanist theories and practices of translation, see Baldassarri 1999; Botley 2004.
infancy and early teens traveling across the Ottoman Empire with his Turkish master?12 Can a metapragmatic analysis of his translations (specifically his use of deictics and honorifics) shed light on his efforts to prove his loyalty to his new employers and patrons in the Venetian metropole? Conversely, to what extent could Alberti’s and Borisi’s translation strategies, which exhibit deeper understanding of Ottoman legal concepts, and greater adherence to normative translation practices in Venetian-Ottoman diplomacy, be read as a reflection not simply of their rigorous training in the bailo’s house? Could they also indicate their “ease” and less ambiguous position vis-à-vis their patrician patrons as a Venetian-born citizen and a noble colonial subject, respectively? I will repeatedly return to these questions throughout the chapter as I discuss other varieties of texts produced by dragomans in Istanbul and in Venice, and the distinct perspective they articulate on things Ottoman.

PETITIONING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Unlike the petitions by commercial brokers, discussed in chapter 2, which were usually submitted to the College by supplicants themselves, dragomans’ petitions were often appended to (and endorsed in) the bailo’s weekly dispatches to the Senate.13 Beyond the specific request explicated in the petition (most often for a promotion, a raise, or one-time financial aid), petition-writing also provided an opportunity to reiterate one’s loyalty, both a general loyalty to the Republic and a specific loyalty to one’s immediate

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12 One hint for de Nores’s belated acquisition of Italian is his use of archaisms, such as the Spanish-derived “tampoco” (compared with Alberti’s use of the more standard “ne meno.”

13 Or by other Venetian officials under whom dragomans happened to work. For example, dragoman Ruggiero Tarsia appended to his 1655 petition for a raise a letter of endorsement from his then employer, the Provveditor General in Zadar, Giovan Antonio Zen: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 46, unpaginated (Nov. 16, 1655 for Tarsia’s petition, Oct. 24, 1655 for Zen’s letter of endorsement).
employer, the bailo. Each petition thus helped reaffirm and consolidate the ties of patronage between dragomans and the bailo, and often occasioned the bailo’s reappraisal of the supplicant’s—and sometimes the entire dragoman corps’—performance. On such occasions, dispatches often included long paragraphs describing the supplicant’s performance and providing additional information about the operations of the bailo’s house. Petitions and dispatches, in other words, formed two interlinked and mutually-reinforcing genres through which loyalty, skill, and merit—dragomans’ as well as baili’s—were reiterated and gauged. Without a bailo’s endorsement, a dragoman’s petition stood less chance of a favorable reading in the Senate. At the same time, dragomans’ petitions enhanced a bailo’s standing as an intermediary and arbiter between the state and its clients in the Ottoman capital. As I show below, while most petitions invoked the individual concerns of specific dragomans, a few were written collectively, by the dragomans, and sometimes the Latin community of Pera, as a whole. The practice of collective petition-writing thus bolstered the standing of dragomans as patrons of the community and as clients of the Venetian state, further legitimating individual dragomans’ claims to be the community’s authorized representatives. To understand the different logics of individual and collective petitioning, I will examine several dragomans’ petitions in turn. In this I will build on my previous discussion of the structure, contents, and rhetorical devices of trans-imperial petitions in chapter 2.

As in the case of commercial brokers, some dragomans emphasized in their petitions “merit,” rather than any putative linguistic skills. Such “merit” could consist of any combination of pedigree, past services rendered to the Republic (by either the supplicant or his ancestors), or harsh circumstances, e.g. poverty or past captivity. In his
petition for a raise in 1567, Cypriot dragoman Filipo de Ambrosio cited the death of his father Ambrosio Ceroyco in service of the Republic while building the fortifications of Nicosia.  

The same logic was shared by the Venetian Senate. In its decision to appoint Piero Colivan of Modon as interpreter on the island colony of Monemvassia (Malvasia) in 1522, the Senate cited his virtues and the many hardships he had endured there rather than any linguistic qualifications. Similarly, according to the early sixteenth-century diarist Sanudo, the raise in the salary of Girolamo Civran, one of the first documented interpreters of Turkish in the Venetian chancellery, was prompted precisely by his past Ottoman captivity. Similarly, the Senate’s letter to bailo Girolamo Trevisan in 1642, concerning the apprentice Paolo Vecchia’s petition to be promoted to the level of regular dragoman, listed the following grounds for endorsing his request: “the length of service, which he has provided there [in Istanbul] for the course of 13 years, his advancement in knowledge of the languages, the conditions of his birth, and the satisfaction attested by You several times…”

The baili themselves were acutely aware of the need to reward Venetian subjects for their services as interpreters. When two colonial subjects, Adam of Corfu and Vassili of Parga (a town in the Epirus region of Greece), died unexpectedly en route to Istanbul,
bailo Simon Contarini, who had employed them as informal interpreters, was quick to write to the Senate, urging it to reward their impoverished descendants.18

While petitioners usually made specific requests (an appointment, a promotion, a raise), the writing of a petition was also in and of itself a means of furthering one’s status within the ranks of dragomans, by occasioning the bailo’s careful attention to one’s plight, and possibly a reappraisal of one’s status. Petition-writing thus occasioned the narration not only of merit, but quite often of an entire life history, with special emphasis on long service in the bailo’s house. Thus, for example, Paolo Vecchia’s petition of 1643 opened quite dramatically with a long narration of family misery caused by his brother Andrea’s exile from Venice. But it ultimately focused on comparing Vecchia’s status with that of his colleagues in the bailo’s service, in order to request a new set of clothes conforming to what, with applause to the great liberality of Your Serenity, has been conferred not only to our seniors in service but also to the other dragomans, Cristoforo Tarsia and Andrea Bon, who are of my age [i.e. of the same cohort of apprentices], so as to show the public approval of and satisfaction with their loyal service.19

Vecchia did not fail to remind the Senate, in this petition as in others, of the fact that he was a Venetian citizen, unlike all other dragomans, who were “natives” of the land, and thus able to take care of their domestic affairs in person. Vecchia not only attempted to elicit compassion for his long sojourn in public service away from home, he actually ascribed his character and faithful service to the very fact of his Venetian citizenship, suggesting that

18 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 99, c. 54v (March 5, 1625).
19 “conforme sin hora, co’ applauso della grande liberalità della Ser.tà V.a, sono state conferite (oltre alli maggiori del nostro ordine) à gli altri Drag.ni ancora, Christofolo Tarsia, et Andrea Boni miei coetanei, per dimostrazione del publico gradimento, et sodisfatione del loro fedel servitio…”
if on my part the will remains deprived by the weakness of my aptitude, and talents, my conscience remains, however, fully satisfied, in having fulfilled the debt by my loyalty, assiduous application, and pure mind, these conditions being proper and necessary to that disposition which I hold of a Citizen subject of Your Serenity, which I bear with me [i.e. inherit] from both my parents.20

Here we see how dispatches and petitions were mutually reinforcing, partaking in the same discourse of citizens’ inherent aptitude for service, honor and loyalty. In another petition in 1647, Vecchia again compared his status to that of eight other dragomans and apprentice dragomans, and complained that he alone was forced to support himself out of his own pocket. Moreover, Vecchia claimed, he was the only one of nine Venetian citizens ever sent to serve in Istanbul to “suffer this long and voluntary exile.”21

Given the importance of pedigree for securing dragoman apprenticeships, the prospect of future employment in the bailo’s house or in the colonial administration, dragomans’ petition-writing became a self-conscious documentary practice, and entailed the reconstitution of one’s genealogy and career. After 14 years of service as dragoman of Turkish and “Slavonic” under the Provveditor General in Dalmatia, for example, the Dalmatian dragoman Girolamo Pace petitioned the Senate for a raise. To justify it, Pace detailed his numerous trips to Bosnia, Hungary, and the cities of Zadar, Sibenik, Trogir, Kotor, Belgrade, Lika, Klis, Split, Novi, and so on. His petition, which reads like a

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20 “se dal mio conto resta defraudata la volontà nella debolezza di attitudine, et di talento, resta però pienamente soddisfatta la mia consienza, nell'haver adempito in tutti i numeri il debito della mia fedeltà, assidua applicazione, et incontaminata mente, essendo queste condizioni proprie, e dovute à quel carattere che tengo di Cittadino suddito della Ser.ta V.a portate meco sin dal ambidue miei genitori.” Ibid.

21 “Di otto Drag.mi che si ritrovano ammessi à questo servitio, et altre tanti Giovani di Lingua io solo di p'nte soccombo all'aggravio di alimentarmi di propria borsa, e pure in riguardo alle mie tenui fortune (che nulla corrispondono all'a'io) niuno è men atto à poterlo fare di me […] frà il numero di nove sudditi Cittadini di questo Ser.mo Dom.mo che in più volte furono spediti ad essercitarsi in Costant.li in questo ministerio, unico mi ritrovo ch'habbia sofferto la durezza d'un lungo volontario essilio,” Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 38, unpaginated (Dec. 20, 1647).
veritable résumé, also lists every Venetian official he had ever worked under, and every
Ottoman official he had ever met.²²

Petitions for apprenticeship, employment, promotion or salary increase thus
helped document one’s rank and accomplishments, and were kept by the bailo for future
reference. A particularly illuminating example is the removal from the bailo’s general
archives of correspondence of about a dozen petitions which refer to five members of the
Salvago family spanning the years 1539–1634. These, along with a chart detailing the
five dragomans’ family relationship and career milestones, were then collated in the
series of “most important documents.”²³ The documentary and performative functions of
petitions encouraged some dragomans to become “serial petitioners.” More than attempts
to achieve specific rewards, their petitions could be read as periodic reminders of their
merit and a means to sustain their reputations—aimed at local readers within the bailo’s
house as much as at patrician senators in Venice.

Another important strategy employed by dragoman petitioners was distancing
themselves from the Ottomans, and implicitly arguing for their affinity with Venice.
Some examples of this are to be found in a petition for financial help which dragoman
Cristoforo Tarsia submitted in 1649. The occasion was the aftermath of a bitter civil trial
in which a Venetian merchant in Istanbul, in debt to an Ottoman official, falsely accused
Tarsia of being the official’s true debtor.²⁴ Tarsia claimed that during the trial
“witnesses, as is customary in this country, affirm what they please, and not what is true”

²² Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 26, unpaginated (Nov. 22, 1635).
²³ Baio a Costantinopoli, b. 371, fasc. 3. On the bailo’s chancellery archives, see Migliardi O’Riordan
²⁴ For background information on the trial, see Senato, Dispacci Costantinopolim b. 133, cc. 277r–278r
(July 31, 1649). For Tarsia’s petition, see below.
and warned that without the government’s help, he would turn into “food for the voracity of these barbarians.”

Tarsia’s recourse to “Turkish barbarity” as part of a rhetoric of self-justification would reappear a decade later, in his effort to mobilize more junior colleagues into collective bargaining. While this attempt was crushed shortly after its inception, it left an indelible impression, forcing the Venetian authorities to take dragomans’ interests into consideration and to acknowledge more fully their collective power. This case highlights the way in which dragomans, who by then had become thoroughly localized members of the Latin community of Pera regardless of individual provenance, sought to play on Venetian fears of alleged Ottoman corruption and brutality to achieve their own ends. It thus allows us to examine the articulation of discourses about Ottoman otherness by precisely those who could claim to know Ottoman society from the inside.

By the mid seventeenth century the Venetian dragoman corps in Istanbul consisted more or less exclusively of Pera-born Latins and descendents of Venetian colonial subjects who had married into the local community. The project of bringing Venetian citizens to be apprenticed in the bailo’s house, if not wholly abandoned, yielded no qualified persons who could be promoted into the dragoman ranks. At the same time, economic crisis due to the ongoing Venetian-Ottoman war of Crete (which broke out in 1645) made conditions in the bailo’s house difficult. The depth of the financial and administrative crisis in which the bailo’s house found itself in the late 1650s, when a sense of impending doom colors much of the official correspondence, is very graphically conveyed in a long dispatch of 1658 by Secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino, the de

25 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 132, cc. 756v & 757r (Feb. 28, 1648 m.v.).
facto Venetian Ambassador in Istanbul (illustration 7.1). In ten pages Ballarino laments the utter impoverishment of the embassy, as well as his own debts, helplessness, physical and emotional collapse.\textsuperscript{26} This lament clearly added another level of mediation to the way in which his dispatches were read in Venice.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Illustration 7.1} Giovanni Battista Ballarino. From the inside flap of Marco Trevisan’s \textit{L’Immortalità di Gio: Battista Ballarino} (1671).

This was the context in which, in mid July 1660, Secretary Ballarino discovered his dragomans’ and apprentices’ plan to unionize. A secret document in Greek, signed by nine of the bailo’s dragomans and apprentices a month earlier, had obliged all signatories to protect each other’s interests, to refuse work in case any one of them was dismissed from Venetian service, and to report to the others any secret payments or information divulged to them in private. Infractions were to be met with violence: One of the explicit

\textsuperscript{26} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 142, cc. 135r–139v (June 27, 1658).
\textsuperscript{27} On the context of Ballarino’s dispatches from Istanbul and Edirne, see also Eickhoff and Eickhoff 1970: 174–76.
threats was to falsely accuse the infractor in front of the Ottoman Bostanci Basha (lit. head gardener, the Ottoman chief executioner) with plotting to bribe Ottoman officials to promote Venetian interests.\textsuperscript{28} Given the state of war between Venice and the Ottomans, such a move was almost guaranteed to lead to severe penalties, if not death.

As Ballarino soon discovered, the main force behind the unionization attempt was dragoman Cristoforo Tarsia, who had by then been in Venetian service in Istanbul for over 40 years. In earlier decades Tarsia had experienced great success. After being promoted to the rank of dragoman in 1641, he was elected prior of the Magnifica Comunità of Pera in 1652. His two younger brothers and three sons were all learning languages in preparation for their eventual hiring by the Venetians. Yet a series of misfortunes in the following decade left Tarsia impoverished and disaffected. As we saw above, false accusations of embezzlement by a Venetian merchant resident in Istanbul led to Tarsia’s arrest. To release him from prison, his wife Battista Guinetti had to spend much of her dowry. Whatever was left of the family fortune was burned in the great fire of 1660.\textsuperscript{29} Tarsia, who had long unsuccessfully aspired to the title of Venetian Grand Dragoman, found himself with six children and mounting debts. The recent death of his eldest son Leonardo, shortly after his appointment as dragoman, and after years of training in languages at home and in the bailo’s house, reduced whatever hopes Cristoforo may have had of improving his lot. Worse still, his own unconcealed desire to finally accede to the rank of Grand Dragoman was met with little enthusiasm by Secretary Ballarino, without whose endorsement chances of promotion were dim. His

\textsuperscript{28} Reported in Ballarino’s letter to the Heads of the Council of Ten of Aug. 16, 1660.
\textsuperscript{29} On the fire, and the change in Ottoman policy towards the Latin residents of Galata in its wake, see Baer 2004b.
rival for the position was none other than his son-in-law, dragoman Ambrosio Grillo, the son of the martyred former grand dragoman Giovanni Antonio Grillo, executed by the Ottomans in 1649.

Tarsia’s plan was ingenious. Under a pretext of ending his long rivalry with Grillo, he invited all eight dragomans and apprentices then in the bailo’s service to sign a document of friendship and allegiance. In addition to Grillo, this group included Giovanni Olivieri (in Venetian service for at least 25 years), Pasquale Navon (in service for 19 years), Giorgio Girachi (the “protogero” in charge of assisting Venetian merchants for the past 24 years), Michiel Parada (in service for 19 years), Cristoforo Bruttì (in service for 19 years), Leonardo Tarsia (Cristoforo’s eldest son, an apprentice dragoman for the past five years), and Domenico Sanguinazzo (an apprentice dragoman for at least 6 years). As this list suggests, all the signatories were long time Venetian employees.

It is significant therefore that the person to disclose the plot to Ballarino was Domenico Sanguinazzo, the most junior member of the group, save for Tarsia’s son. According to his and other testimony, the eight were shocked to discover that the document Tarsia forced them to sign spelled out a secret plot to prevent the Venetians from making any changes to their dragoman corps, and required an oath to frame anyone who disclosed its details to their employer.

While Ballarino’s tone in reporting the affair to the Council of Ten and to the Senate implied a deep sense of betrayal by his employees, he nevertheless conveyed a fatherly understanding of their motivations and desperation in the face of economic crisis and ongoing war. It is hard to determine to what extent he seized on the affair as a desperate opportunity to convince the government to increase the house’s funds, which
decades of war and inflation had severely depleted. As usual in his communications, Ballarino did not fail to highlight his own prompt response and success at curbing a potentially disastrous course of action by his dragomans.

The Secretary’s sense of betrayal is worth dwelling on. After all, dragomans’ service was premised precisely on the assumption of their selfless loyalty to the Republic, their willingness to sacrifice everything to protect Venetian interests. As I demonstrated above, both dragomans’ rhetoric in their petitions and reports and their everyday practices of much independent work, whether in meeting Ottoman officials or in translating Ottoman texts, pre-supposed their loyalty and trustworthiness. As Theo Hermans suggests, the very notion of “fidelity” in the history of translation developed from interpreters’ presumed fidelity to their rulers: “[T]he term [fidelity]... gestures towards political reliability in a context of competing interests. The faithful interpreter is the one who is on our side and serves our interests.”30 It is not the purely linguistic fidelity of a translation to the “truth” and “meaning” of an original text. A proposal by the governor of Crete (the “Duke of Candia”) in his relazione of 1540 to recruit “a good and loyal interpreter of the Greek language who, however, was also Italian, who could always serve as needed…” underscores Venetian perennial fear of colonial disloyalty.31

Loyalty, then, was not just a highly desirable trait in a dragoman, but a constitutive element of his job description. The disloyalty exhibited by the dragomans’ unionization attempt was made worse by the fact it was collective. All previous cases of

31 “Bon et fidel interprete della lingua Greca che però fusse ancor lui Italiano del quale se ne potesse servir sempre che gli occorresse”: Eufe 2003: 28. See chapter 8 for a discussion of Venice’s policy of “importing” colonial low-level officers from other colonies, and preventing metropolitan colonial administrators from settling in their posts or marrying locally.
disloyalty had been individual, leading to the prompt dismissal, or worse, of the suspected dragoman. Here, however, it would be unthinkable for the Venetian embassy, besieged and beleaguered, to dismiss its entire dragoman corps.

Yet Ballarino was not the only one who acted out of a sense of deep betrayal. The original document authored by Tarsia explicitly mentioned betrayal by the Venetians as what allegedly drove the dragomans into action.\textsuperscript{32} Dragoman Giorgio Girachi’s conference with Ballarino after the plot had been revealed likewise suggested a deep sense of frustration at the poverty forced on dragomans by Venice’s withholding of salaries. After years of loyal service, the argument ran, dragomans expected at least what was customary among Turks: a creditor who does not receive his pay may tear his debtors’ clothes and force him to pay in the divan.\textsuperscript{33} By invoking local custom, Girachi insinuated that although Venetian rule prevailed inside the bailo’s house, the dragomans, as Ottoman subjects, were always free to take their case to Ottoman courts, where their plight might be better heard.

Later, the other dragomans, in expressing their repentance for having signed the document, similarly mentioned their sense of betrayal by Tarsia, the most senior member of their group. In fact, Ballarino might have never found out about the plot had it not been for his carefully cultivated patronage of dragomans, his frequent meetings with each of them individually, and promptness in forwarding their petitions to the Senate.

\textsuperscript{32} Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated letter by Ballarino (Aug. 22, 1660).
\textsuperscript{33} Reported in letter by Ballarino to the Heads of the Council of Ten, Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated (July 20, 1660).
Besides writing petitions, dragomans also articulated their ideas about the
Venetian and Ottoman empires and their own place in them by producing longer texts,
sometimes accompanied by images, on Ottoman society, history, and politics. It is to two
such texts that I now turn. The first, by dragoman Giovanni Battista Salvago, is a
relazione of his mission to North Africa in 1625. This text allows us to address
Salvago’s efforts to fashion himself as an educated Venetian and to develop a vocabulary
for the cultural translation of Ottoman notions of ethnicity and status into Venetian ones.
It allows us to address some broad questions about how Venice’s Istanbul-based
dragomans came to assume subject positions and to develop cultural categories which
closely allied them with Venice’s patrician ruling class. The second text features a series
of Ottoman miniatures with an extensive handwritten Italian gloss. My analysis of this
codex underscores the key role of dragomans in the Mediterranean contact zone, through
their skilled manipulation of Ottoman and European-wide genres of representing
Ottoman history, society, and culture. It is their command of these multiple genres which
ultimately allowed dragomans to assume a trans-imperial perspective, claiming both
intimacy with the Ottoman world and at the same time distance from it.

SELF-FASHIONING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTACT ZONE:
GIOVANNI BATTISTA SALVAGO AND HIS AFRICA OVERO BARBARIA (1625)

In Istanbul the Anatolian Turks are done for as uncouth and rustic in comparison
with the Europeans. These are considered by the Ottomans valorous while the
former are considered vile, and are therefore not admitted to the Porte, neither to
the military nor among the ministers. In Barbary, nonetheless, they have the
majority and preeminence. From this difference it can be believed that the Turks
of Barbary harbor a gut hatred for the Ottoman Porte, their repudiator. And
therefore, abandoning their native huts and the plow, they rush to ennoble [distinguish] themselves in Barbary, where they can marry Moorish women. Their sons, called Culogli, that is, sons of soldiers, succeed their father but, due to their ties to their Moorish mother, [because they are] spurious in a certain way and degenerate, they are not esteemed as much as the renegades and the primitive Turks. This mixing [mistione] of renegades and Turks creates a third species of Turks who speak Italian and Castilian. The renegades do not understand Ottoman grandeur which they have never seen, and the Turks expect from [the Porte] neither honors nor offices, and therefore it is little wonder if they lack in effective obedience, which is professed by mouth only.34

This passage from Venetian dragoman Giovanni Battista Salvago’s *relazione* from Barbary (1625) captures some of the complexities of the author’s efforts to establish himself as a cultural intermediary between Ottoman and Venetian political elites. As a native of Istanbul and descendant of a dragoman dynasty which had served the Venetian bailo, Salvago was ideally positioned to claim expert knowledge of Ottoman society, history, and culture. At the same time, his broad education and extensive sojourns in Venice allowed him to couch his observations of things Ottoman in the classicizing language of humanist learning. Salvago’s efforts to fashion himself as an educated metropolitan Venetian entailed the recalling of humanist and medieval tropes of Turkish otherness, but also tacit acknowledgement of the complexities and contradictions of the Ottoman system of social and ethnic distinction. It both reinforced a binary view of “Europeans” vs. “Ottomans” and undermined it.

34 “Li turchi Asiatici, spacciati in Costantinopoli per rozi e rustici a paragon d’Europei, cimentati questi da gli Ottomani per valorosi e quelli per vili, non sono per ciò alla Porta ammessi, nè tra le militia nè tra li Ministri, in Barbaria, con tuttociò, avendo maggioranze e preminenze. Da tale differenza si può credere che nasca in Turchi Barbareschi un odio intestine colla Porta Ottomana loro ripudiatrice, e però, abbandonando i Turchi le natie capanne e l’aratro, corrono in fretta a nobiliarsì in Barbaria ove possono con More accasarsi et i suoi figli detti Culogli, cioè figli di soldati, subentrano al Padre ma, per la correlazione della madre Mora, come spuri in un certo modo e degeneri, non sono pregiati quanto i rinegati et i Turchi primitive. Questa mistione di rinegati e Turchi fa una tertia spetie di Turchi che parlano in Italiano e Castigliano. Li rinegati non capiscono la non vista grandezza Ottomana e li Turchi non aspettano da quella né honorì né cariche, onde non è meraviglia se mancano di obbedienza effettiva, in bocca sol professata”: Salvago 1937: 78.
The passage above suggests Salvago’s acute historical and proto-psychological analytical skills. In one brief passage, he captures some of the fundamental contradictions of colonial societies in general, and of Ottoman North Africa in particular, addressing processes of social mobility and reproduction at the intersection of ethnicity and gender, perceptions of “mixing,” and the historical transformation of both metropolitan and colonial elites. His harnessing of historical analysis to the service of the Venetian empire is particularly intriguing given the author’s own ambiguous, peripheral position in the budding republic of letters. His distance from humanist milieus was not only temporal, but spatial as well.

By the time of Salvago’s birth in the last decade of the sixteenth century, his family, of probable Genoese origin, had resided in Pera, Istanbul for generations, and was part of the prosperous local Latin-rite community. His grandfather Gianesin had been the Venetian Grand Dragoman as early as 1539. His father Mateca and older brothers Gianesin and Giuliano had been similarly employed as Road Dragomans between Venice and the Porte. As was customary, Giovanni Battista was admitted to the bailo’s house as an apprentice dragoman in his early teens, around 1610. Nine years later, already fluent in Greek (probably his first language), Italian, Turkish and Latin, he was appointed Road Dragoman in place of his brother Giuliano, who had died of the plague a few

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35 Bertelè 1932: 416. Mateca was appointed dragoman in the late 1550s or early 1560s, during the residency of bailo G. Ferro. The latest record of his service in the bailo’s archives dates to 1596. Mateca’s eldest son, Gianesin, was nominated giovane della lingua in 1575, and appointed dragomanno da strada (“road dragoman”) in 1596 in place of his father, despite his scandalous love affair with the bailo’s barber in 1588, discussed above. He died in 1619. Mateca’s second son Giuliano became dragoman around 1595. In 1605 he was sent to Aleppo to serve as the dragoman of the Venetian merchant community there. In 1619 he was back in Istanbul, and was appointed dragomanno da strada in place of his recently deceased elder brother Gianesin, but he died of the plague the same year. Cinque Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, (Sept. 5, 1605).

36 Sacerdoti 1937: xi.
months earlier. Giovanni Battista continued to work as Road Dragoman until 1645, when war broke out over the island of Crete between Venice and the Ottomans. He died shortly thereafter.

At a time when travel between Venice and Istanbul took a month or two to complete, Salvago, as a road dragoman, physically crossed the borders between the Ottoman and Venetian empires dozens of time, to accompany Venetian baili and ambassadors on their way to Istanbul and back. He thus made the trip between Venice and Istanbul much more frequently than any of the baili under whom he served. His sojourns in Venice were often prolonged by unexpected complications, when newly-elected baili had to be replaced due to illness or resignation, when new recruits could not be found among the chancellery secretaries to take up the position of apprentice dragomans in Istanbul, or because of military conflicts along the route or due to other considerations. Salvago thus served as a crucial link between two metropoles, often carrying news and material objects from one city to the other. His repeated trips between Istanbul and Venice helped him forge ties not only in both capitals, but also with provincial elites along his route. In 1625, the Senate ordered the powerful Board of Trade to employ his services in delicate negotiations with residents of the recently opened Fondaco dei Turchi, who protested the poor housing conditions and the harsh treatment they had received from locals. Salvago’s service on that occasion warranted an acknowledgement from the Senate as “a subject very experienced in negotiating with Turks, from whose experience and virtue our Signoria can expect fruitful service.”

37 It was customary for new apprentice dragomans to join the bailo in his trip to Istanbul, rather than to venture the trip on their own.
38 “Soggetto molto versato nel trattare con Turchi, et dalla isperienza, et virtù del quale si può la Sig.ria
Within a few months, in March 1626, Salvago was commissioned by the Board of Trade to test the language skills of Giovanni Francesco Scaramelli, the son of a Venetian chancellery secretary, who sought nomination as dragoman.\textsuperscript{39} In 1627 Salvago was back in Istanbul, translating from Turkish a letter to the bailo by Khalil Pashà.\textsuperscript{40} Shortly after, he appeared in Dalmatia, negotiating border disputes with Ottoman officials.\textsuperscript{41} In 1642, as the route between Istanbul and Venice became more dangerous, he acquired a safe-conduct from Sultan Ibrahim, which permitted him not only to dress as a Muslim and don a turban while on the road, but also to carry arms.\textsuperscript{42}

Salvago’s initial annual salary as dragoman was set at 110 ducats, and was periodically raised in following years, indicating his employers’ satisfaction with his performance.\textsuperscript{43} But Salvago was not only a valued dragoman; he was also the bailo’s landlord. From the 1570s on, his family’s palace in Pera was transformed into the bailo’s residence, a household of over 200 people.\textsuperscript{44} This fact shaped in important ways Salvago’s relationship with the Venetian government. Despite his obvious good reputation as a dragoman, Salvago constantly ran into conflicts with the bailo regarding responsibility for the house’s much-needed renovations.

Nothing is known about Salvago’s education beyond his language training in the bailo’s house. But from 1622 to 1624 he was stranded in Venice, waiting for the newly

\textsuperscript{39} Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 147, cc. 4r–v (March 26, 1626).
\textsuperscript{40} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 549r (1627).
\textsuperscript{41} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, cc. 605r–v, 612r–615r (October 17, 1637).
\textsuperscript{42} Documenti Turchi, b. 13, fasc. 1485, (April 30, 1642). Salvago acquired another similar safe-conduct in March 1645, although he apparently never used it.
\textsuperscript{43} Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371 (September 29, 1619); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, R. 15 (March 29, 1624); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371 (September 29, 1626); Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371 (March 2, 1634); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, Filze, b. 32, (Aug. 5, 1641).
\textsuperscript{44} Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 104, c. 174r–175v (May 12, 1627).
elected bailo Michele Foscarini to recover from illness. It is possible that during these two years he was able to further his education, either in Venice itself, or in the nearby University of Padua. He must have acquired some reputation for his studies, for in 1631 he was sent to the Ottoman Kapudan Pasha (Lord Admiral), who had expressed his interest in cosmography, and who had asked the bailo for a person knowledgeable in cartography with whom he could discuss some maps he owned.45

Salvago was an inventive character, and frequently approached the Venetian government with various proposals. In 1624 he composed an “epigraph” and a “sonnet” in praise of Doge Francesco Contarini.46 In 1626 he submitted an extensive report on the history of Dalmatian border negotiations, which was deemed by the bailo important enough to be re-sent to the Senate a decade later.47 In 1637 he suggested a tax reform that would increase government revenue by raising taxation on inheritances and weddings.48

Salvago was also an unusually prolific writer, producing a variety of translations and adaptations of Turkish religious, legal, and historical texts, including “Of the Death of Muhammad, Prophet of the Muslims,” taken from “The lives of saintly fathers and martyrs, including Hassan, Hussein, and others,” “The institution of the Muslims of Crying Out on their Towers,” “On the Oration of the Muslims,” “On the form of the Litanies of the Muslims,” and “The Unfortunate Life, and Unhappy Death of Sultan Osman, Son of Sultan Ahmed, and Nephew of Sultan Mustafa, the Current King of the

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45 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, f. 111, c. 257b (February 4, 1630 m.v.). I thank Giorgio Rota for the reference.
46 Donazzolo 1928: 207.
47 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, cc. 605r–v & 612r–615r (Oct. 17, 1637).
48 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, cc. 213r–214v, 217r–219r (March, 1637).
Turks” (1622). Unlike his translations of official Ottoman documents, these adaptations-translations of religious and historical texts seem to have been undertaken on his own initiative. They suggest his great interest in recent Ottoman history as well as in Muslim ritual practice. While their diverse intellectual genealogies warrant further investigation, Salvago’s narrative concerning the deposition of Sultan Osman II in 1622, as well as his portrayal of Muslim ritual practice suggest his potential ties to heterodox dervishes in Istanbul.

If some of Salvago’s texts experimented with classical Ottoman genres and themes, others were more unequivocally Venetian in their perspective. Shortly before his death, in 1645 Salvago composed two large narratives. One was a report on the Ottoman navy; the other an account on the War in Crete. In both texts Salvago, although an Ottoman subject, aligned himself squarely with the interests of the Venetian state. The same embrace of a Venetian perspective underwrites Salvago’s account of Barbary, to which I now turn.

In October 1624, rather than return from Venice to Istanbul, Salvago was entrusted with another diplomatic mission. He was to travel to the Regencies of North Africa as the Senate’s official representative, to negotiate the release of twenty Venetian subjects captured by Barbary corsairs the previous June off the shores of Venetian Dalmatia. Upon his return from North Africa he submitted his Relazione to the Senate.


50 I thank Tijana Krstic for discussing with me Salvago’s potential heterodox Muslim connections. On the historiography of the deposition of Osman II in 1622 and its links to contemporary political and intellectual factions, see Tezcan 2002; Piterberg 2003; Hagen 2006.

51 Documenti Turchi, b. 13, fasc. 1501 (16 fols.) and fasc. 1502 (11 fols.).

52 The full text of Salvago’s relazione, based on the copy preserved in ASV, Relazioni degli Ambasciatori.
The *relazione*, which consists of 48 folios 10”x10” in size, as well as pen drawings of “the famous cities” of Algiers, Tunis, and Bizerte (map 7.1), is kept in the Venetian State Archives as part of the series of *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori veneti* (B3). This classification as an ambassadorial *relazione* is significant. It was customary for Venetian patricians to present an oral report to the Senate upon their return from diplomatic missions, and then deposit their manuscripts with the Senate. Theoretically confidential, these reports circulated both in Venice (where patricians sometimes acquired copies for their libraries) and abroad. At least one copy, possibly an autograph, of part II of Salvago’s *relazione* from Barbary survived outside the Senate’s archives, and is now located in the Museo Civico Correr.\(^5^3\)

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\(^5^3\) MCC, MSS Morosini-Grimani, b. 547, fasc. 12. See appendix 17 for a reproduction of an excerpt.
As Lucette Valensi argues, by the sixteenth century Venetian ambassadorial *relazioni* became so standardized as a literary genre that even non-patrician citizens, who did not hold ambassadorial positions and who were not required to present reports to the Senate, wrote them.\(^{54}\) The circulation of these texts grew once they were printed, first in 1589 as *Il tesoro politico* (Cologne), and then in Bologna (1595, 1598) and Milan (1600). Additional parts of the *tesoro*, printed in the early seventeenth century, were translated into Latin and French.\(^{55}\) According to Valensi, the popularity of the genre among European political elites lay with its ability to “observe and read the political realities of their day” through an “admirable grid”:

Following a codified order, they described and measured the limits of each state, its human, material, and financial resources, its army and its navy; they evaluated the government in power, took inventory of the alliances it maintained, the conflicts in which it was engaged; and they indicated what advantage Venice could gain from the existing situation. The reports offered not daily news, not facts and dates […], but careful analysis.\(^{56}\)

Salvago’s *relazione* from Barbary certainly adheres to many of the rules of the genre regarding the ordering of information. It consists of three unequal parts, which correspond to the three sets of questions which Salvago had been asked to address in writing in his letter of appointment of October 14, 1624.\(^{57}\) The first part describes his negotiations with officials in Barbary regarding the ransoming of slaves (pp. 20–52), including a section on the corsairs’ objections to the Venetian position (pp. 34–36); the provisional agreement reached (pp. 36–38); and a translation of a response to the Doge’s letter by Chusref Pashà, the Regent of Algiers (pp. 50–52).

\(^{54}\) Valensi 1993: 14; see also Mallett 1994 on ambassadors, their writings, and their audiences.


\(^{56}\) Ibid.: 15.

\(^{57}\) Salvago 1937 [1625]: 7–9.
The second part of the *relazione* is a description of Barbary (pp. 53–90). It includes, in addition to an historical overview of North Africa since Roman times (pp. 53–55) and a discussion of the evolution of the corsairs’ naval technologies (pp. 56–65, 78–79), appraisals of the Regencies’ political institutions (pp. 65–72), material culture (pp. 69, 73, 76, 81–83), and ethnic composition (pp. 75, 77–78). It ends with physical descriptions of the cities of Algiers (pp. 83–85), Tunis (pp. 85–86), and Bizerte (pp. 86–87) as well as cursory mentions of other urban centers along the North African coast, including Cairo, Tripoli and Fez.

Finally, the third, and shortest, part of the *relazione* (pp. 91–98) provides details on the Venetian slaves held in Algiers and Tunis, including their numbers, places of provenance, previous professions, and current employment.

Some scholars have suggested that travel writing might have the potential of deconstructing difference, either by bringing the readers into close encounter with “the Other,” or by inscribing subjectivities whose relationship to their objects of observation can never be fully pre-determined.58 This is clearly not what Salvago attempts in this text. Rather, he repeatedly distances himself from the people he observes along the way, and, by extension, from the Ottomans, their allies. He achieves this distance through several strategies.

First, Salvago assumes a decidedly Venetian perspective, one that views the corsairs, the Ottomans, and their Western allies, chiefly the Dutch, French, and English, as equally distant. Not surprisingly, these Atlantic seaboard powers also happened to be Venice’s fiercest commercial rivals in the early seventeenth century, and Salvago

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repeatedly reminds his readers that if it weren’t for them, the Barbary corsairs would be long gone. It is through cunning and violence, but also through friendship, Salvago suggests, that the Barbary corsairs have obtained from “the Ponentine nation” not only vital artisans, but professionals as well (p. 75).

Second, as I suggested above, he portrays the societies of Barbary as “mixed,” using a hodgepodge of religious, social, historical and climactic explanations to account for their composition. He distinguishes between many ethnic groups: Africani, Barbareschi, Turchi, Turchi primitivi, Turchi nativi, Turchi asiatici, Mori, Mori terazzani, Mori bianchi, Arabi, and, finally, Culogli—a Turkish term meaning the sons of soldiers, who, according to Salvago, are the offspring of Turks and the “cittadine bianchissime,” or “very white women town-dwellers” of Barbary. This consciousness of the great ethnic diversity of Barbary, and of “Turk” as an ethnic, rather than a juridical descriptor, is particularly noteworthy. According to Maria-Pia Pedani, the first use in Venetian documents of “turco” to describe ethnic affiliation rather than membership in the Ottoman dynastic ruling family dates to a 1637 relazione by Secretary Angelo Alessandri. In that text, Alessandri distinguishes between “turchi” and “turchi nativi,” as well as between “impero ottomano” and “ottomani,” recognizing that the state was Ottoman, not Turkish.59 Salvago, whose relazione predates Alessandri’s by over a decade, was one of Alessandri’s chief dragomans during the latter’s term of service in the bailo’s house in Istanbul in the late 1630s. This suggests the role of dragomans in introducing Venetian diplomatic and bureaucratic elites to the ethnic diversity of the Ottoman Empire and in elaborating a terminology for discussing this diversity.

59 Pedani 2002: 95.
At the same time, like many of his Venetian predecessors, Salvago too occasionally conflates Turkish with Ottoman. Ultimately, he presents the Turkish element as what unifies the Barbary Coast’s ethnic diversity, and credits the Turks with no less than creating Barbary:

The corsairs of the province are called Barbarians [=of Barbary], but in reality they are a mass and a gang of ruffians of many races and progeny. The founders were Turks and they instituted a new militia of Janissaries in Barbary, ordaining that, in addition to Moors, Gypsies and Jews, all the Nations should be admitted.60 If Salvago credits the Turks with being the “founders” (originarii) of Barbary while recognizing that other peoples—Moors, Gypsies, and Jews—were there first, chronologically speaking, it is because for him it is Turkish law which reigns in Barbary.61 Yet the nature of the legal and political relationship between Barbary and the Ottomans in Salvago’s account is far from simple. In fact, the passage above continues with a characterization of the Turks who arrive in Barbary as “evil-doers, transgressors, murderers, assassins, swindlers, dropouts, forgers, vagabonds and wanderers,” that is, marginals and outlaws, hardly representative of the political core of the Ottoman Empire. These marginals are assisted, in Salvago’s account, by renegades and adventurers from Christian Europe.

This ethnic heterogeneity functions in Salvago’s account as a denial of any sense of continuity with the region’s Roman past. Algiers and Tunis may have been Roman cities, but their current inhabitants are all parvenus: Turkish criminals, Muslims exiled

60 "Chiamansi i corsari dalla provintia habitata Barbareschi, ma in effetto son una massa et una masnada di molte razze e generationi. Gli originarii furono Turchi e questi istituirono nuova militia di Gianiceri in Barbaria ordinando che, da Mori, Cingani et Ebrei in fuora, fossero ammesse tutte le Nationi”: Salvago 1937: 77.
61 Here, as elsewhere, the issue is further complicated by the conflation of “Turkish” and “Muslim,” which was shared almost universally by Salvago’s non-Ottoman contemporaries. On this conflation, see chapter 9.
from Granada, merchants from East (the Levant) and West (the Netherlands, England and
France), and renegades from Italy. This composition also accounts in Salvago’s eyes for
what little industry exists in Barbary. In fact, he credits no inventions to locals, strictly
speaking (p. 75). Manufacturing gunpowder and building harquebuses are the only
technologies Salvago assigns to the Moors (p. 76). But even these technologies, he
doesn’t fail to mention, came from Fez, where the Moors had learned them from their
brethren expelled from Granada. It is these immigrants who had introduced metal
foundries to Barbary, but “with little success, and it is believed they will not make much
profit.”62

Salvago denies Barbary not only industry and innovation, but indeed any form of
civility. It is on this issue that his divergence from Leo Africanus, by far the best-read
early modern authority on North Africa, becomes most clear.63 In Leo’s narrative, binary
oppositions operate to define his Africa—white, urban, socially stratified and culturally
Arabized—as a site of civilization, as opposed to the nomadic, tribal Berbers lurking
outside city walls, as well as the unknown black tribes populating sub-Saharan Africa.
Port cities, for Leo, are the sites of civility and civilization, they are nodes that connect
the North African shores of the Mediterranean with larger networks of exchange,
encompassing both Europe and Arabia. To his contemporary European readers,
everything in Leo’s description of Algiers and Tunis would have invoked a sense of
familiarity and orderliness. In describing Algiers, for example, Leo mentions beautiful

62 Ibid.
63 An early sixteenth-century Muslim ambassador from Fez, Leo Africanus was captured by corsairs and
brought to Rome, where he converted to Catholicism and befriended a group of Christian and Jewish
intellectuals. For Leo’s most recent and complete intellectual biography, see Davis 2006. See also Hall
strong walls made of large stones, pretty houses and well-ordered markets, each for a
separate trade, many taverns, a large and beautiful temple overlooking the sea, gardens
and orchards, windmills, and so on.64 Leo even describes how, while staying in the house
of the Algerian ambassador to Spain, his host showed him 3,000 Arabic books he had
purchased in Valencia.65 Algiers, in other words, is not only the site of social order and
economic prosperity, but also a link between Arab and European high learning.

Past or present Arab letters, or any sense of a larger cultural sphere in which the
societies of Barbary operate, are largely absent from Salvago’s account. For him, Africa
“in ancient and modern times, whether due to celestial influence or to natural antipathy,
has always been in various guises inimical and troublesome on the opposite side of
Europe.”66 Salvago’s binary opposition, then, is between Africa and Europe, rather than
between the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa, as for Leo Africanus, and, we may
add, for the many classical authors on whom he built, including Pliny.67 For Salvago, the
networks that connect Barbary with the outside world are only those of corsairs who raid
the opposite shores of the Mediterranean to capture slaves.

For Leo, clothing can be a sign not only of civility, but also of keeping up with
international fashion. In his elaborate, 56-page-long description of the city of Fez, Leo
mentions that “the inhabitants of the city, that is, the nobles, are really civilized people,

65 Ibid.: 298. This is also an interesting inversion of the humanist lament over the destruction of books
during the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In Leo’s account, Muslims are the guardians of
learning endangered by the Christian re-conquest of Granada. On humanists’ laments over the fall of
Constantinople, see Bisaha 1999: 190.
66 “L’Africa... ha ben nella rivolution de superni giri successivamente mutato e forma e signoria, ma non
già mai essentia né natura, poiché ne gli antichi et ne’ moderni tempi sia o per influenza Celeste o per
antipatia naturale, fu sempre in varie guise infesta e molesta all’opposta parte dell’Europa”: Salvago 1937:
53.
67 Although it was Pliny who was responsible for the idea of Europe as the most industrious.
and in winter they wear clothes made of foreign wool.”

For Salvago, the same wool is the mark of simplicity: “The corsairs, both great and small, wear absolutely nothing but woolen cloth and never silk, very differently from the superb dress of Constantinople.”

Lest Salvago’s comparison of corsairs’ woolen cloth with the lavish silk of Istanbul may seem to celebrate Ottoman civility, it should be emphasized that he shows little interest in integrating his account of Barbary into any larger contemporary Ottoman framework. In fact, he gives much greater attention to the corsairs’ ships, military might, and trafficking in slaves than to their social hierarchies or political structures. The latter, rather than contextualized within the contemporary Ottoman polity of which they clearly formed part, are described through a classicizing vocabulary as a “popular republic” and a “military democracy” (Algiers, p. 69) or a “republic” now turned into a “despotic regime” through the “tyranny” of the Dai (Tunis, p. 71).

These classicizing gestures are central to Salvago’s self-fashioning as a learned man of letters. Moreover, they form a fundamental rhetorical strategy in his narrative, allowing him to position the Ottomans as the ultimate Other and the main—if often implicit—referent of his account. As another example, here is how Salvago introduces the “Turks” in his narrative, collapsing widely disparate temporal and spatial units into a supposedly coherent and cohesive account of origins:

New Thracians, native Tartars, people of Gog and Magog, summoned in the Apocalypse by the Divine Historian St. John, and so entitled with occult mystery; these, renouncing in the Caspian Mountains the pastoral life, with the desire to rule, had formerly left Scythia, commonly called Tartary, and came to occupy Thrace, after the moderns Romania, a place where for the duration of centuries,

69 “Vestono i Corsari, e grandi e piccolo, positivissimamente di solo panno e non mai di seta, molto diversi dal superbo vestir Costantinopolitano”: Salvago 1937: 69.
not of lustrums and years, [they] had contact with all sorts of civil people, still they have not yet acquired any kind of urbanity, that is they have not fallen off [degenerated, dissented] from the harsh Scythian and from the ferocious Thracian, and in every way maintain the original rustic harshness and the inborn savagery, which was never relinquished nor forgotten.\(^{70}\)

Seventeenth-century Turks, then, are the crystallized form of barbarity, combining the Biblical, Greek, Roman and Medieval tropes of Otherness of Gog and Magog, the Scythians and the Tartars.\(^{71}\) And, despite centuries of contact with the civilized world of Christendom, they are impermeable to change, as barbarity runs in their blood. Since Salvago, a native of Istanbul, had numerous friends among Ottoman elites,\(^{72}\) the fact that he saw it necessary to frame his account of Barbary through a lens of Turkish barbarity tells us little about his understanding of the Ottomans or of Africa. It more likely indicates what he thought his Venetian readers expected to hear, and how much he trusted their propensity to buy wholesale such a biblically and classically-inflected Othering of the Turks.

In fact, by invoking the image of Turks as barbarians and Scythians, Salvago was drawing on a familiar humanist trope.\(^{73}\) The identification of barbarians with Tartars, Gog and Magog was also a favorite trope in late medieval Europe.\(^{74}\)

\(^{70}\) “Traci novelli, Tartari oriundi, popoli di Gog e Magog, nell’Apocalissi chiamati dall’Historico Divino San Giovanni, e così con occulto mistero intitolati; i quali, rinontiando a Monti Caspii la vita pastorale, con brama di signoreggiare, usciti già dalla Scithia, volgarmente Tartaria, et venuti ad occupar la Tracia, appò moderni Romania, posto che per processo di secoli, non che di lustri e d’anni, pratichino con tutte le sorti di gente civile, non havendo però ancor acquistato spetie d’urbanità, punto non tralignanti posteri del duro Scita e del feroce Trace, tuttavia conservano l’original durezza rustica e l’insita ferità non mai deposta nè dimenticata”: Salvago 1937: 54.

\(^{71}\) On Gog and Magog in medieval thought, and the significance of the “blurred” and unspecific nature of this category, see Westrem 1998: 56, 70. On medieval myths of Turkish origins See also Meserve 2000.

\(^{72}\) This was openly recognized by the Venetian senate: in Salvago’s letter of commission of October 18, 1624 the Senate lauded “la prattica che tieni con turchi,” urging him to make good use of it during the negotiations with the regents of Barbary (Salvago: 14).

\(^{73}\) According to Nancy Bisaha, it was Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) who drew the connection between the Turks and Scythians in his \textit{Cosmographia} (1458–1460). See Bisaha 1999: 194.

signaling the Turks’ barbarity, then, Salvago was indexing here his own worthiness as an “acculturated” Venetian subject, fully immersed in classicizing, proto-Orientalist humanist thought.

INTIMACY, SUBJECTHOOD, AND TRANS-IMPERIAL PERSPECTIVE:
CICOGNA CODEX 1971

Cicogna Codex 1971, an illustrated manuscript now housed in the Museo Civico Correr in Venice, offers a rare articulation of a trans-imperial perspective on Ottoman history, society, and culture by seventeenth-century Venetian dragomans in Istanbul. My research suggests that this codex, which features a series of Ottoman miniatures with an extensive Italian gloss, was assembled in the bailo’s house in the early 1660s, through collaboration between a Venetian diplomat and his dragomans, Ottoman miniaturists, and European draftsmen.75 I argue that it was intended by long-time Venetian secretary and de facto ambassador to Istanbul, Giovanni Battista Ballarino, as a handbook on Ottoman society for his hoped-for replacement and as a cautionary tale about the vital importance of dragomans for Venetian diplomacy at the Porte.

The codex contains 59 folios, the recto of each featuring a miniature in water colors, frequently gilded, which is mounted on the page with an Italian gloss preceding and following it, and sometimes “spilling over” onto the verso.76 The miniatures can be

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75 Cicogna codex 1971 was bequeathed to the city of Venice by amateur Venetian historian Emmanuele Cicogna (1789–1868) as part of his enormous collection of 40,000 volumes and 5,000 manuscripts, all now housed in the Correr. Cicogna probably acquired the manuscript around 1828. A reproduction of the manuscript’s miniatures (albeit with skewed colors), and a partial transcript of the gloss are available in Istituto Italiano di cultura di Istanbul 1995. On Cicogna and his collections, see Preto 1982; Romanelli 1995.

76 See appendix 18 for a table of contents of the codex.
divided roughly into three broad themes: (1) Sultans’ portraits (fols. 1–16); 77 (2) genre scenes, major architectural monuments, institutions, and boats (fols. 17–34 and 50–54); and (3) scenes from the Venetian-Ottoman War of Crete (1645–1669) (fols. 35–49 and 55–59). 78

Through several means—the use of the first person plural to refer to Venetian collective action, a heavy emphasis on Venetian-Ottoman relations, and a pre-supposition of readers’ prior knowledge of the history of these relations—the narrative marks its intended audience among the Venetian political elite and erases any gap between the narrator’s voice and such authorized readers. For example, the codex opens with a series of 16 iconic representations of Ottoman sultans, accompanied by a narrative of their military accomplishments and relations with Venice. Such a chronology of Ottoman political and military milestones was considered part of the necessary education of any foreign diplomat arriving at the Porte. Unlike either its Ottoman or humanist models, however, the chronology in the Cicogna codex is abbreviated enough to suggest it was intended as a mnemonic device for someone already familiar with that history (as, indeed, would have been any Venetian diplomat sent to Istanbul), rather than as an introduction to the subject for the layperson.

In order to appreciate the extent to which the Cicogna codex was a product of the early modern Mediterranean contact zone, I will briefly discuss some of the genres from which it borrowed its representational techniques. Several of these genres, as will become evident below, were typical articulations of a contact zone in at least two senses.

77 These appear more or less in chronological order, save for three missing sultans: Ahmet I (1603–1617), Osman II (1619–1622) and Murad IV (1623–1640). A portrait of Mustafa I (1617–1618) appears last.
78 Of these, fols. 35–44 and 49 focus on the mistreatment of Venetian diplomatic representatives by Ottoman officials; fols. 45–48 describe battle scenes; and fols. 55–59 depict Ottoman fortresses.
First, they were engaged in ongoing cross-fertilization that traversed political and linguistic borders, as humanist learning proliferated in the Ottoman court and Ottoman manuscripts circulated outside the Empire. Second, they highlighted and celebrated Ottoman ethnic diversity, and objectified Ottoman difference vis-à-vis other polities and societies. Significantly, even if tantalizing was part of these artifacts’ intended effect on their viewers, they were not created as “bazaar art,” as some art historians suggest. Rather, their production, whether by local artists with strong connections to the Ottoman court, or by European artists attached to diplomatic missions, should be understood in the context of sustained interaction. It was part and parcel of an evolving structure of diplomatic engagement, rather than merely an exoticizing gesture towards an anonymous, uninformed marketplace.


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80 On the Ottoman court atelier and the diffuse category of “court art,” see Fisher and Garrett Fisher 1985.
The use of serial sultanic portraiture as the means for a political-military chronology was common to several Ottoman genres, such as the *silsilname* (genealogical sultanic portraiture), *shahname* (Lives of the Sultans), *kiyafetname* (physiognomy studies), and their immensely popular humanist equivalents, such as the “Lives of the Sultans” produced by the likes of Paolo Giovio, Francesco Sansovino and Pietro Bertelli.\(^8\) If Giovio’s sultanic portraiture project had strong connections to Ottoman conventions of sultanic representation, Ottoman artists themselves were well familiar with the works of Italians such as Gentile Bellini and Costanzo da Ferrara, who had created sultans’ portraits during their sojourn at Mehmet II’s court.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Giovio 1541; Sansovino 1573; Bertelli 1599. On Paolo Giovio’s role in the humanist revival of the Roman genre of *elogium*, a brief biographical explication of portraits in genealogies of illustrious families, see Le Thiec 1992: 812–13. For an overview of Giovio’s diverse narrative sources, both oral and written, see Parry 1962: 283–89. On his relationship to emerging Orientalist discourses in Europe, and to broader historiographical trends in late Italian humanism, see Rave 1959; Majer 1991; zur Capellen 1991; Zimmermann 1995; Majer 2000a; Wilson 2003.

\(^8\) Babinger 1962; Babinger 1965; Byam Shaw 1984; Raby 1987. On Bellini’s role in developing an
Ottoman artists also drew portraits of European rulers, such as the French king Francis I and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, copied from prints “which [had] arrived in Istanbul with some diplomatic embassy.”\(^{83}\) Regardless of the degree to which European and Ottoman sultans’ portraits shared their models, they served some similar purposes. As architectural historian Gülru Necipoğlu argues, the genre was intended in both milieus as a historical device, celebrating dynastic continuity as well as providing an opportunity to narrate the Ottomans’ major territorial achievements through their embodiment in specific rulers.\(^{84}\)

Indeed, the Ottoman genre of “Lives of the Sultans” bore close links to courtly historiography. Many of the “books of kings” produced in the Ottoman court were collaborations between the official court historiographer (Shah-nameh-çı) and an artist or artists. Their material, unlike their Persian prototype, was derived from “the lives of their imperial patrons, as they recounted the Sultan’s accomplishments in war and in peace, particularly his foreign conquests to the West.”\(^{85}\) As I argued above, the Cicogna codex too uses sultans’ portraits as a hinge for narrating a political-military chronicle of specific events concerning Ottoman-Venetian relations.

\(^{83}\) Binney 1979: 24. Binney’s catalogue includes reproductions of Ottoman portraits of the two European rulers, numbered 12a & 12b, now in the Harvard University Art Museum. On the multidirectional interaction between Ottoman, Venetian, and other artists who sojourned in early modern Istanbul, see Rogers 2005.

\(^{84}\) Necipoğlu 2000: 51. On Ottoman sultanic portraiture in general see also the other excellent essays in Orbay 2000.

\(^{85}\) Sims 1978: 749.
A closely related genre, *Kiyafetname*, had its roots in the science of physiognomy. *Kiyāfet* in Arabic means “to follow a person or his traces.” In common Ottoman usage, kiyāfet also came to signify “dress, attire, costume, resemblance and features.” One branch of this science engaged in determining the age or sex of people, horses, and other living beings by observing the traces of footprints left on the roads or paths they tread. But another was concerned with deducing moral and psychological tendencies of a person from the study of his physical appearance. Here, the genre of kiyafetname came quite close to that of serial sultans’ portraiture. One of the most famous Ottoman works in this genre, court eulogist Seyyīd Loḵmān Čelebī’s *Kiyāfetü ’l-Insāniyye fī Şemāīli ’l-’Osmāniyye* (known as the *Şema’īnlâme*), combined the two, and provided a miniature portrait for each sultan, accompanied by accounts of his conquests and other great deeds. Interestingly, Naḵḵāṣ ‘Osmān, the artist who created the portraits for Loḵmān’s work, claimed to have done so after studying portraits of the Sultans made by European painters that had been kept in the palace.

A third Ottoman genre, *Muraqqa’*, literally means “that which is put together from several pieces,” was by definition an eclectic genre, premised on the compilation and re-entextualization of disparate images and texts. According to art historian Aimée Froom,

> Each work in a *muraqqa’* was customarily mounted on a page and embellished with decorated margins. These mounted and decorated pages were then bound together in a book [...] Pages used to form a *muraqqa’* could come from a wide

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86 Seyyīd Loḵmān Čelebī 1987: 11.
87 Ibid.: 10.
89 Robinson 1999: 602b.
variety of sources, such as other albums, war booty, books or gifts. In addition, works were often directly commissioned for a muraqqa’ by a royal patron.90

Perhaps the most significant feature of the muraqqa’ is its functioning as “an open system where folios were both added to and taken away after its presentation.”91 The eclectic nature of the genre, and its emphasis on the composition of a new book through the compilation and juxtaposition of existing artifacts from diverse provenances, closely resembles the German Stammbuch and album amicorum. These sketch-books prepared by scholars or travelers to present to their friends back home upon their return gained European-wide popularity by the seventeenth century, and were well-known in Venice with its large German population.92 As I show below, the Cicogna codex was similarly a potentially open-ended artifact, in which stock images were combined with especially-

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90 Froom 2001: 2.
91 Ibid.: 5; Ünver 1963.
commissioned ones. The technique of mounting a gilded miniature on a page and adding a gloss to accompany it and give it a new context also closely resembles muraqqa’ and *album amicorum* production techniques.

The Cicogna codex shows affinity with another genre, Ottoman military manuals. The galleass and galleys depicted on fols. 53–54 (illustration 7.5) closely resemble in shape and color scheme boats depicted in classical Ottoman manuscripts (illustration 7.6). Moreover, its naval scenes (for example, illustration 7.7) approximate Ottoman siege plans (for example, illustration 7.8) in set up, elevation, and juxtaposition of camps.

![Illustration 7.7. Destruction of the Ottoman Navy near the Dardanelles. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 45r.](image)

![Illustration 7.8. Naval Battle. From the *Shahname-i Nadiri* or Conquest of Hotin (c. 1622). Reproduced from Atasoy and Çagman 1974: plate 45.](image)

Descriptions of architectural monuments in the codex bear strong affinities with Ottoman visual and narrative conventions of representing architectural space. As Walter Denney suggests:

In such works [...] of city-description, either in travelers’ accounts or in compilations of architectural monuments [...] the concern is in enumerating long lists of buildings, in some arbitrary order, whether alphabetical, chronological, or by size, location, or degree of holiness; each building on the list is often given a brief note as well. The provided
information rarely, if ever, deals with an architectural description of the
building’s form except in poetic metaphor or hyperbole; rather, in the
same enumerative tradition, the treatise will discuss the number of
minarets, the number and type of dependencies, or will provide anecdotes
about the designer of the stained glass or the inscriptions, together with
information on the founder and the burials at the mosque.\textsuperscript{93}

Similarly, the Cicogna codex often dwells on the social functions of specific
architectural structures. For example, it clearly distinguishes between hans and
caravanserais.

\textbf{Illustration 7.9 An Open Caravanserai.} MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 32r.

The frontal view of a generic “open caravanserai” on fol. 32r (illustration 7.9) is
given the following gloss:

This is the open caravanserai, with the door, seen in sequence [da catena]
with the fireplaces and fire for the convenience of travelers, whose
weapons are seen hanging on the wall, with the horses downstairs, in the
same place, where all sorts of Turks stay, in the same manner that in
Christianity taverns are used.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{93} Denny 1970: 51. On Ottoman representation of architectural space, see also Johnston 1971; Necipoğlu
1986; Rogers 1987.

\textsuperscript{94} “Q[ue]sto è il Cavarsera aperto, con la porta, guardata da catena con li camini, et il foco p[er] com[m]odo
di viaggianti, le cui armi pure si veggon’ affisse al muro, con li cavalli à basso, dentro il luogo med[esi]mo,
ove capita ogni cond[itio]ne di turco, nel modo stesso che nella Christianità si usano le hosterie”: Cicogna
1971: 32r.
The gloss not only provides an explanation of how the building is used, but also suggests a calque, “tavern,” as a familiar, “Christian” equivalent institution. Hans, on the other hand, are similarly given a generic visual representation (illustration 7.10) and textual explication. Both are almost identical to those of the open caravanserai, but with an important additional reference to their urban character:

Hans also feature in the codex as the sites of specific historical events. A han is first mentioned on fol. 15v, as the place where Venetian ambassador Giovanni Cappello was held in custody. The same han is then visually represented on fol. 44r (illustration 7.11) and identified as “the first Han of Edirne.”

Illustration 7.10 The Caravanserai in Istanbul. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 19r.

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95 On the distinction between caravanserais and hans, see Ersoy 1999.
Two other hans are visually and textually represented in the codex: the Büyük Valide Han on fol. 22r (illustration 7.12), and another han of Edirne on fol. 49r (illustration 7.13). In describing the Büyük Valide Han, the author does not only identify the structure’s patron, valide (sultan’s mother) Kösem, but also adds that “it is built of marble with great skill and expenditure; inside are many rooms, to keep the belongings of merchants; in the center, a mosque for prayer, and a fountain for washing and drinking.”

By recalling the mosque in the courtyard of the Büyük Valide Han, and specifying its ritual and mundane functions, the author is pointing to the great social importance of hans as nodal points in urban life, rather than as mere tourist attractions.

Significantly, the view of Istanbul which emerges from the codex is decidedly secular. Two mosques are briefly mentioned (the one in the courtyard of the Valide Han on fol. 22r, and the “Mosque of Santa Sofia” on fol. 34r), but they are not the focus of...
either text or image. Nor is explicit reference made to Islam or Christianity in the narrative. Another characteristic feature of the codex’s selection of architectural views is the striking absence of any monuments from the “classical period” of Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520–1566). While some monuments recall Istanbul’s deep past, either Roman and Byzantine (the aqueducts, the hippodrome), or early Ottoman (Rumeli Fortress, the Fortress of the Seven Towers), others were mid-seventeenth-century constructions: the Büyük Valide Han in Istanbul and the Valide Han in Edirne (built in 1650 and 1651 respectively) and the Grand Pavilion (whose construction began in the 1620s and continued throughout the seventeenth century). No reference, however, is made to the multiple impressive building projects carried out under Süleyman the Lawgiver, such as the vast Suleymaniye complex which was completed in 1557.99

Illustration 7.12 The Han of the Validé. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 22r.

Illustration 7.13 The Han of Edirne. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 49r.

As this brief overview suggests, the Cicogna codex deftly merges Ottoman and European-wide genres in the composition or style of specific miniatures, as well as in their overall organization and sequencing. The heavy thematic, structural and stylistic reliance on multiple genres distinguishes this codex and defies its clear categorization in

any singular tradition. Crucially, the codex does not simply integrate different genres, but insists on the crucial interpretive role of its author(s) in making sense of the visual material presented to the reader. Whereas most early modern Ottoman costume albums compiled pictorial anthologies with only brief captions, the Cicogna codex conjoins Ottoman miniatures with an extensive accompanying Italian gloss. Indeed, its lengthy narratives are sometimes only illustrated by the miniatures, rather than the other way around. By superimposing a narrative gloss on miniatures predicated on multiple genres, the codex simultaneously proclaims the images’ unintelligibility or limited intelligibility on their own, as the products of a foreign world, and assumes the voice of their only authorized “interpreter.” The act of cultural mediation thus becomes metonymic of the very role of Venetian diplomats and dragomans at the Porte.

Whereas the first part of the codex chronicled key moments in Venetian-Ottoman relations through the medium of sultanic portraiture, its second part uses genre scenes to discuss various aspects of contemporary Ottoman urban society. But it does so in a way that diverges dramatically from the most popular genre of representing Ottoman society at the time, namely costume albums. These visual “surveys” and “catalogues” of the various peoples under Ottoman rule, in which costumes functioned as iconic signs of ethnic diversity, became hugely popular in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century among Ottoman sultans and European publics alike.\textsuperscript{101} In contrast, the Cicogna codex

\textsuperscript{100} On the appearance of scenes from everyday life in Ottoman albums during the reign of Ahmet I (1603–1617), see Atasoy and Çagman 1974: 65.

\textsuperscript{101} Haase 1991: 228; Majda 1976; Schick 1999; Majer 1999. On European albums, see Sims 1988; Wilson 2004. According to Rogers et al., the Şehnâme-i Nâdirî, which was devoted to part of the reign of Osmâni II (1618–1622), was the last illustrated Ottoman annals, and few other historical works of other kinds were illustrated in subsequent decades. Instead, courtly art moved towards more intimate figure-studies of social and ethnic types, and scenes from daily life. See Rogers et al. 1986: 251. See also Stchoukine 1971: 37, 118, who identifies seventeenth-century Ottoman artists’ desire to give individual character to personages
features no portraits of ethnic types, and in fact includes no individual portraits of ordinary Ottoman subjects at all. Although some of the costumes in its miniatures do stand for different kinds of persons (Muslims, Franks and Latins, court officials and street vendors), the figures wearing them are always situated in genre scenes rather than appear as stand-alone, individual portraits. They are not prototypes but interactionally-defined persons.

Unlike costume albums, the Cicogna codex engages surprisingly little in the objectification of social types through the elaboration of dress codes. The only explicit textual reference to dress in the entire codex concerns the hastily drawn shoes on fol. 21r (illustration 7.14). Significantly, however, the gloss does not present the shoes as belonging to any particular order of society, nor as metonyms of gendered wearers. Instead, they are simply “varied sorts of slippers, that is shoes, boots, and ankle-boots, used by Turkish men and women.”

Illustration 7.14 Varied Sorts of Slippers. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 21r.

as a “European influence.”

102 “Varie sorti di papuzze, cioè scarpe, stivali, stivaletti, usati da huomini, e doñe turche”: Cicogna 1971, c. 21r.
The conspicuous lack of ethnic elaboration in the Cicogna codex gains added meaning once we consider another series of miniatures which I suggest had been initially part of the same manuscript. The whereabouts of the miniatures in question is now lost, although their last owner, the German orientalist Franz Taeschner, did publish a facsimile edition in 1925 under the somewhat inaccurate title “Court and Folk Life of Old Istanbul: A Turkish Miniature Album from the Seventeenth Century.”

Unfortunately, Taeschner’s facsimile edition did not reproduce the miniatures in full color (a few were poorly re-colored). Even though Taeschner indicated in his brief introduction that the miniatures were accompanied by a text in Italian, he did not include a transcript. Instead, he gave each miniature a caption in German. Whether these captions were translated from the original Italian or were Taeschner’s own interpretation of the scene depicted remains uncertain.

My hypothesis that Taeschner’s and Cicogna’s codices were initially one is supported by several facts. First, the only two sultanic portraits included in Taeschner’s album (Osman II on p. 5 and Ahmet I on p. 9) are precisely two of the three sultans whose portraits are missing in the Cicogna codex (the third one being Murad IV, 1623–1640). Second, Taeschner’s album includes at least five genre scenes (pp. 1–4, 10), three Venetian diplomatic scenes (pp. 51–53) and one battle scene (p. 14) that bear very close resemblance to their parallels in the Cicogna codex.

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103 Alt-Stambuler Hof- und Volksleben: ein türisches Miniaturenalbum aus dem 17. Jahrhundert: Taeschner 1925. Taeschner purchased the manuscript from General von Bötticher, who had it displayed at the Exhibition of Islamic Art in Munich in 1910. In 1937 Taeschner gave the manuscript on loan to the Berlin Staatsmuseum, from which it was removed by Soviet soldiers in 1945. Its whereabouts since have been lost. On Taeschner and his manuscript collection, now at the Leiden University Library, see Schmidt 2002.

104 That Murad IV’s portrait was included in the original manuscript is evinced by a reference to sultan Ibrahim at the opening sentence of fol. 14r as “the brother of Murad.”
That the diplomatic scenes in Taeschner’s album tell a benign story of peaceful relations (“the bailo accompanied to audience,” “the bailo at audience with the Grand Vizier,” and “the bailo perfumed by the Grand Vizier during audience”) as opposed to the acrimonious story told by the Cicogna codex, may suggest that the scenes depicted in Taeschner’s album had initially appeared early in the narrative sequence but were then excised either by the author or by a later owner who considered them inappropriate. If indeed these images were actively excluded from the Cicogna codex as a conscious editorial move, rather than simply originated in a separate commission for a separate manuscript, then the virtual absence of “social type” portraits from the codex, compared with the preponderance of such miniatures in the Taeschner album raises some interesting questions: Who decided to exclude them from the manuscript and why? Could this be a clue as to the codex’s intended audience and purpose?

Several indications suggest the Cicogna codex’s provenance within Venetian diplomatic circles in Istanbul, and its intended use as a practical handbook. Two oversized and highly detailed plans of Ottoman fortresses, drawn in sepia and black pen according to up-to-date European perspectival conventions, are appended at the end of the codex (illustrations 7.17 & 7.18).
The artist(s) entrusted with executing these plans commanded not only the Italian language (as evinced by the detailed legend which accompanies the plan on fol. 59r), but also up to date Venetian conventions of visual representation of architectural space. The plan on fol. 59r, in black ink, measures 43 X 60 cm, and is signed by “Antonio Prinsaji,” who remains unidentified. Its striking similarity to a plan of the same fortress drawn by Vicentine artist Francesco Scarella c. 1685 has already been noted by Franz Babinger.

That the two plans were originally included in the codex is clearly indicated on an earlier folio, where the author tells us that “a description of the two other fortresses, renovated, is on another page, done by a very careful hand, and will be in the back of this book.” This underscores the original integrity of the codex, and suggests its intended

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105 On topographic drawings of Istanbul produced for Venetian military purposes, see Curatola 1999.
106 Babinger 1960: 156.
107 Babinger 1960; see also Mango 2000.
use as a practical handbook, perhaps even for military purposes, rather than as a mere souvenir.\textsuperscript{109}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{castle.png}
\caption{Francesco Scarella’s \textit{The Castle of the Seven Towers} (c. 1685). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Reproduced from Mango 2000: fig. 8.}
\end{figure}

As already suggested, some of the miniatures in the codex, especially the sultans’ portraits and certain genre scenes, have strikingly similar, almost identical counterparts in other miniature albums produced in Istanbul in the mid seventeenth century (see illustrations 7.20 and 7.21).\textsuperscript{110} On the other hand, those miniatures depicting the

\textsuperscript{109} Later, in the eighteenth century, the Venetians’ need for expert visual-military knowledge of the Ottoman Empire led to the sojourn in the bailo’s house in Istanbul from 1723 to 1727 of Giovanni Francesco Rossini as military attaché. Rossini, who had extensive prior experience in creating topographic reliefs, produced several drawings of the city, including “Hydrographic and Topographic Description of the Dardanelles completed in the year 1726,” and “View of Constantinople from the garden of the Palace of Venice.” See Curatola 1999.

\textsuperscript{110} For a list of these albums’ measurements and current locations, see Renda 1998: 171. A few miniatures from several such albums were recently reproduced in full color: In addition to the portrait of Sultan Ibrahim from an unidentified costume album now in the Naval Museum in Istanbul (illustration 7.21), see Rochard 1992: 131 for portraits of Sultan Ibrahim and of an unidentified sultana from a manuscript in the
misfortunes of Ballarino and his dragomans during the Venetian-Ottoman War of Crete (1645–1669) were unlikely to have been generic products, as their value for individuals not directly connected with the Venetian embassy must have been limited.  

Illustration 7.20 Sultan Ibrahim. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 14r.


The stylistic differences between the codex’s generic and custom-made miniatures correspond to its thematic divisions. The by-now mostly faded captions on

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Eric Grünberg Fine Arts gallery in Paris. A whole series of miniatures from an unidentified album is available in full color online, at: http://www.os-ar.com/kiyafet/. Black and white reproductions of two miniatures from another such album are in Binney 1979: 99. The miniatures are a “portrait of an officer of janissaries wearing a high aigrette” and a “portrait of a seated woman, her face hidden by a red veil.” While Binney dates them to the early eighteenth century, they bear striking similarity to other such miniatures, including the ones in the Cicogna manuscript, which all date from the mid seventeenth century.

At the same time, the relative stylistic cohesion of all the miniatures (in terms of physiognomy, color schemes, and the representation of architectural space) precludes the possibility that they originated from widely different stocks. Rather, a Venetian patron may have either specified a list of miniatures to be painted in one commission, or purchased some generic pre-existing miniatures and then commissioned from the same artist or workshop additional miniatures to fit a specific narrative. For details on late sixteenth-century Ottoman miniature album production, which frequently involved more than one artist even for a single commission, see Renda 1976.

As I suggested above, the first section of the codex functions as a stand-alone narrative sequence a la
the back of the sultans’ portraits contrast with the rest of the codex miniatures, which show no evidence of previous Ottoman captions. The golden frames of the sultans’ portraits likewise contrast with the orange, brown or black frames of most other miniatures.\textsuperscript{113}

The contrast between the lengthy texts which accompany the sultans’ portraits and the Venetian diplomatic scenes, on the one hand, and the much shorter glosses of most other miniatures, also suggests that some images were custom-made, and thus justified textual elaboration, whereas others were understood as more generic and self-explanatory.

\textit{Illustration 7.22} Sultan Beyazid II. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 8r. 

\textit{Illustration 7.23} Execution of the Ambassador of Prince Giorgio Rákóczi II of Transylvania. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 20r.

\textquotedblleft lives of the sultans," although the text accompanying Mehmet IV’s portrait is then elaborated in later diplomatic and military scenes. The second section representing buildings and social institutions again can be read separately from the final, more historical section.\textsuperscript{113} The captions and gilded frames could also suggest different conventions of sultanic representation and a concern with potential misidentification of individual sultans.
In any case, it is not so much the provenance of the miniatures per se, but rather their relationship to the narrative, which provides important clues as to the author and approximate date of this codex. In chronological terms, the last sultan whose portrait is included in the codex is Mehmet IV (ruled 1648–1687). Mehmet acceded to the throne at age 7, and his early portraits frequently presented him as a beardless youth, as does his portrait in this codex (fol. 15r). The narrative accompanying Mehmet IV’s portrait ends in 1660, even though he ruled until 1687. The latest firmly dated events mentioned in the codex as a whole are the Ottoman conquest of Varadino (fol. 15v) and the great fire of Istanbul (fol. 34), both of which also took place in 1660. There is no mention of the conclusion of the Ottoman conquest of Crete in 1669, a momentous event in the history of Venetian-Ottoman relations. Another event that is not mentioned in the codex, an important change of the guard which occurred in the bailo’s house in the mid 1660s, helps date the codex to the early 1660s. In 1660 Ballarino, still in Edirne (where the consulate was re-located intermittently from 1652 to 1664), was elected Grand Chancellor of the Venetian Ducal Chancellery—the highest position open to members of the non-patrician citizen class.114 By 1660 Ballarino had spent over 11 years in the Ottoman Empire.115 His dispatches to the Senate and private correspondence express an

114 The appointment as Grand Chancellor often followed service as secretary to the bailo in Istanbul: Of the five people elected Grand Chancellors from 1630 to 1660, four had served in Istanbul. Dursteler 2000: 177. On secretaries in the Venetian civil service in general, and on the importance of Grand Chancellors in particular, see Trebbi 1980; Neff 1981; Trebbi 1986; Zannini 1993; Grubb 2000; Galtarossa 2002.
115 Ballarino’s extensive career in the Venetian civil service began at age 19, following his graduation in philosophy from the University of Padua, when he was elected extraordinary secretary in the ducal chancellery. It consequently included several lengthy sojourns outside the lagoon as secretary to provveditore Francesco Molino in Candia (Heraklion, Crete) from 1627 to 1631, as secretary to provveditore Francesco Zeno in Dalmatia from 1632 to 1634, and as Resident in Vienna from 1635 to 1638. In 1639 he was appointed secretary to the Council of Ten, and in 1643 he reached the delicate position of secretary to the Inquisitori di Stato. In Istanbul, Ballarino had first served as a secretary to ambassador Simone Contarini and bailo Giorgio Giustinian from 1624 to 1626, then as secretary to ambassador Giovanni Soranzo while the latter was held captive by the Ottomans from 1648 to 1650, and then, from
anxious desire to return to Venice to assume his new and prestigious post as Grand Chancellor. This he never accomplished. The war delayed his departure from Istanbul, and he died in Macedonia on his return trip to Venice in 1666. Yet, it is likely that upon receiving news of his election as Grand Chancellor in late 1660, he expected to leave for Venice soon. He may have initiated production of this codex at that time as a handbook for his successor.

That Ballarino is the likely author of the narrative is also suggested by a slip of the pen on fol. 35v. It concerns the rumor of an impending death order for Ballarino, issued by the Ottoman Grand Vizier. Whispered to Ambassador Giovanni Cappello by his French counterpart, it was overheard by the apprentice dragoman Tarsia. The phrase “mia morte” (“my death”) is crossed out and replaced with “la morte di Ballarino” (illustration 7.24). This is the only place in the entire narrative where Ballarino discloses his identity, for a brief moment, only to immediately resume the first person plural of a generalized Venetian collective. Ballarino was not so much hiding his identity (the word “mia” is crossed out, but remains easily legible). Rather, he may have considered the third person to be a more appropriate register, which would strengthen the sense that he intended the work not as a personalized object to take back to Venice, but rather as a professional diplomatic guide to be given to his successor.

Illustration 7.24 MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 35v (excerpt).

1653 on, as an aide and de facto replacement to the old ambassador Giovanni Cappello upon the latter’s attempted suicide in 1654. See Torcellan 1963: 570 as well as Trevisan 1671, Ballarino’s extensive biography written by his lifelong friend, the patrician Marco Trevisan.
As my analysis of Salvago’s *relazione* from Barbary already suggested, Venetian dragomans—much like Ballarino himself—were sometimes highly educated individuals with a humanist training and extensive ties within the Venetian elite. Unlike Ballarino, dragomans were also fluent Turkish speakers, with access to Ottoman artists and scholars, as well as familiarity with those diverse Ottoman genres of representing genealogy, history and society on which this codex is so evidently based. Dragomans’ involvement in the production of this codex is further suggested by the prominent place it assigns—visually and textually—to dragomans and dragoman apprentices. These are mentioned by name in four of the ten folios devoted to Venetian diplomacy and are visually represented in two others, in ways that subvert the official Venetian order of precedence. For example, on fol. 43r (illustration 7.25), the dragoman (identifiable as a local Latin through his dress) is depicted riding a horse flanked by two Ottoman officials *ahead of* secretary Ballarino, his assistants and dragoman apprentices. The dragoman’s visual alignment with—and enclosure between—Ottoman officials, and his separation from the rest of the Venetian contingent behind, also suggest his hinge status, as simultaneously Ottoman and Venetian. His visual positioning may also represent his imagined or actual elevated status in the bailo’s house, against the official order of precedence which subordinated him to Ballarino.116

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116 On the Venetian consulate’s order of precedence, see Dursteler 2000: 172.
The dragomans’ perspective is also reflected in the sequencing of a series of visual representations of alleged Ottoman executions of Venetian representatives, starting with the strangling of Grand Dragoman Giovanni Antonio Grillo in 1649 (fol. 38r, illustration 7.26), and moving through the hanging of Grand Dragoman Marcantonio Borisi in 1620 (fol. 39r, illustration 7.27) to the undated hooking and impalement of two letter carriers (fols. 40r–41r, illustrations 7.28 & 7.29). Archival evidence suggests that Borisi’s death in 1620 stemmed not from Ottoman caprice, but rather from a secret plot by the Venetian State Inquisitors, who suspected that he had spied for the Spaniards. Placing Borisi’s execution in a series of Ottoman atrocities against Venetian diplomatic employees (rather than in the equally long list of Venetian dragomans suspected of treason) could thus be read as an effort to fix his memory as a loyal, martyred Venetian subject, an ominous precedent for Grand Dragoman Giovanni Antonio Grillo’s execution 29 years later.

117 Impalement in particular became a sign of Ottoman cruelty. Luigi Bassano devoted a whole section in his Costumi et modi particolari della vitade ‘Turchi’ (Rome, 1545) to a very graphic description of Ottoman executions by impalement (Bassano 1963 [1545]: 39v–40v). Boerio’s Venetian dictionary even defines “impalar” as “infilare alla turchesca.” See Boerio 1960 [1829]: 326.  
118 Inquisitori di Stato, b. 148, fasc. 27, (June 6, 1620).
Even more significant for our understanding of how dragomans’ perspective shapes this codex is the role ascribed in both image and text to dragoman apprentice Tarsia in preventing his Venetian employers, bailo Giovanni Soranzo and secretary Ballarino, from exacerbating an already precarious situation during their interrogation by the Ottoman Grand Vizier in 1649.\footnote{On this interrogation, see Trevisan 1671: 92–95.} On fol. 35r (illustration 7.30) Tarsia visually figures as the person situated \textit{in between} the Ottoman interrogators, who are standing to
the right, and the Venetian diplomats Soranzo and Ballarino, who are seated to the left. His in-between-ness is conveyed in terms of his location higher and more centrally than his employers; while his bright orange cloak and distinct, fur-lined headgear single him out as neither Muslim nor “Frank,” but rather a “Latin.” The text refers to him obliquely as “giovane della lingua Tarsia,” and therefore does not allow us to determine his exact identity. As we saw above, the future Grand Dragoman Cristoforo Tarsia, a noble from the Venetian colony of Capodistria had lived and worked in the bailo’s house from 1620. His two younger brothers and three sons were all either born or raised there. In the late 1640s, when the events described took place, several Tarsia family members were employed as apprentice dragomans in the bailo’s house.\footnote{The person in question could have been one of Cristoforo’s brothers, Marco and Giacomo, or sons, Leonardo, Tommaso, or Giacomo, who were all in Venetian service at some point during the war. On Cristoforo Tarsia, see Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 7, c. 129 (October 22, 1620); Senato, Dispatchi Costantinopoli, c. 521r–521v, 525r (Oct. 8, 1643); Senato, Dispatchi Costantinopoli, b. 138, c. 128r (25, 1654); Senato, Dispatchi Costantinopoli, b. 144, c. 130r–131v (July 24, 1660); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 61, (Jan. 21, 1663); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, Registri, b. 34, cc. 34r–36v, 105v (January 7, 1678). On Ruggiero Tarsia, see Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, Registri, b. 23, c. 71r-v (August 21, 1635); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 43 (September 18, 1652); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 46 (November 16, 1655). On Marco Tarsia, see Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, Filze, b. 32 (June 17, 1641 and Aug. 5, 1641). On Leonardo Tarsia, who was born c. 1631, and who died of the plague while in Ballarino’s service in Edirne in 1660, see Senato, Dispatchi Costantinopoli, b. 124, c. 299r (July 6, 1643); Senato, Dispatchi Costantinopoli, b. 139, c. 613r (Sept. 1, 1655) & 614v (Sept. 19, 1655); Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, (Feb. 1, 1664). Tommaso Tarsia (b. 1641) worked in the 1660s for the English and French as well as the Venetian embassies in Istanbul. At age 30 he was already a public dragoman in Venetian service in Dalmatia. In May 1671 he was transferred to Istanbul, and was promoted to the office of Grand Dragoman under bailo Pietro Civran (1679–1681), in which position he served until 1706. Tommaso composed several texts, including a report on the Ottoman siege of Vienna which he published in 1683. See Paladino 1917: 199. The youngest brother, Giacomo (Giacometto) Tarsia, who in 1663 was still living with his father Cristoforo, later became an accomplished interpreter and translator. In 1675 he completed an Italian translation of a chronicle by the Baghdad-born Ottoman historian Hasan Vecihi (1620–1661). Tarsia’s autographed translation, the 360-page Successi dell’Impero Ottomano, is preserved in the Marciana library in Venice: BNM, MSS It. VI 84 (6053). On Giacomo’s earlier career, see Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 61, unpagedinated (Jan. 21, 1663 m.v.); Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418 (December 22, 1668).}
of this politically-charged narrative and image, and his crowning as the savior of
Venetian diplomats, suggest family involvement in producing this codex.

Illustration 7.30 Ottoman Officials Come to Interrogate Bailo Soranzo. MCC, Cod. Cicogna 1971, fol. 35r.

In other ways too, this codex reflects dragomans’ trans-imperial, rather than
metropolitan view on the Ottoman world, a perspective which is consistently Venetian,
and therefore external to its objects, yet claims intimate knowledge of it. Several
mechanisms are at work in producing this trans-imperial perspective. First, the narrative
repeatedly wavers between admiration for and critique of the sultans by interspersing the
chronicle of their accomplishments with anecdotes invoking their cruelty.\textsuperscript{121} In addition
to their dramatic effect, such anecdotes reinforce distance from their objects, which are
otherwise depicted in a rather admiring tone. It could be argued that emphasis on cruelty
might serve to enhance the dramatic effect of the narrative rather than to paint the

\textsuperscript{121} For example, Osman was “of vile birth, but sagacious and valorous, struck great terror and advanced
violently (fol. 1r). Beyazid I “robbed” (svaliggiare) “Bosnia, Dalmatia, Albania, Croatia, and Wallachia”
(fol. 4r). Mehmet I caused the “emptying out” (insecutione) of Christians, who were “forced to run away
from his violence” and leave Serbia, Walachia, and parts of Dalmatia (fol. 5v). Beyazid II had the
Venetian bailo dismissed and all the Venetian merchants imprisoned and robbed (fol. 8v). Selim I
exercised “many cruelties” during his war against the Holy League (fol. 11v).
Ottomans in a particularly negative light. Yet in addition to generic cruelty, both text and images pay special attention to personal atrocities the Ottoman rulers committed against their political rivals. In particular, the codex rarely fails to specify—both verbally and visually—the exact form of death applied against such rivals, impalement featuring most prominently.\footnote{122 The complete list is as follows: The Serbian despot was “killed cruelly” by Murad I (fol. 3v); Murad II “harassed the Serbian despot,” taking out the eyes and genitalia of his two sons (fol. 6r); Mehmet II “had his brother strangled and buried in his father’s tomb, saying that this way, neither of them will have the displeasure of staying by himself” (fol. 7); Mehmet II also had Venetian bailo Girolamo Minio murdered, and two Venetian diplomats, Erizzo and Barbaro, impaled (fol. 7v); and, under pretense of peace, he had the prince of Misnia (Meissen) come visit him, and then had him skinned alive (scorticare) (ibid.); Selim I killed his brother as well as the captain of Cappadocia (fol. 9r), had one Mamluk sultan strangled and the other hanged (fols. 9r-9v); Selim II exercised “the cruellest acts of barbarity,” having skinned alive Marcantonio Bragadin (the Venetian commander of besieged Famagusta, Cyprus) and having had another Venetian, Lorenzo Tiepolo, hanged, and many other private masters and cavaliers decapitated or enslaved (fol. 11v); Mehmet IV had Venetian Grand Dragoman Grillo strangled by order of the Grand Vizier (fols. 15r, 38r); the ambassador of Prince Ragozcy of Transylvania was decapitated in the Divan (fol. 20r); Venetian Grand Dragoman Grillo was strangled in 1649 (fol. 38r), while Grand Dragoman Borisi was hanged by the throat (fol. 39r) and two Venetian letter carriers were hooked and impaled (fols. 40r & 41r).}

I suggested above that the onset of the War of Crete saw an increase in emphasis on Ottoman barbarity in petitions addressed to Venetian officialdom by trans-imperial subjects, particularly dragomans. As the historian Lucette Valensi has shown, emphasis on Ottoman whimsical cruelty, and especially on the sultan’s despotism, was one of the key tropes of an emerging early modern anti-Ottoman discourse.\footnote{Valensi 1993.}

Yet, parallel to its emphasis on Ottoman cruelty, the codex also makes noticeable, and repeated, gestures to Ottoman-Venetian parity, not only military, but political, economic, and artistic as well. First, while the text points out some cultural differences (as in the form of musical instruments used to accompany the sultana to the sultan’s chambers, fol. 24r), other differences are subjected to acts of cultural mediation so that
they seem less insurmountable. For example, on fol. 32r the caravanserai is said to be used “in the same mode that in Christendom taverns are used.”

Initially, the text emphasizes the sultans’ military prowess, especially in describing the early sultans, up to Mehmet II, whose “great exploits” during 32 years of rule are readily acknowledged on fol. 7v. This emphasis eventually gives way to discussions of Ottoman urban life, where great appreciation is expressed, among other things, for the abundance and variety of fruit in the fruit-sellers’ stands (fol. 26r), the size of rooms and quality of decorations in the sultan’s summer pavilions (fol. 25r), and the quality of materials, mastery and expense of the Validè Khan (fol. 22r). By the mid-seventeenth century, Venetian open praise for Ottoman cultural was by no means standard. Especially in light of Ottoman military might and its ongoing threat to the integrity of the Venetian empire, the codex’s visual and textual gestures toward the comparability, commensurability, and mutual influence of Ottoman and Venetian urban styles, cultural achievements, and economic systems is an important indication of the intimate understanding of things Ottoman, from a Venetian perspective, that the author(s) sought to present.

As I mentioned, the sense of intimacy with the Ottoman world is also achieved, in part, through the particular juxtaposition and merging throughout the codex of several visual and textual genres. The skilled manipulation of these genres reinforces the sense that a successful diplomat must be able to assume a very particular perspective, integrating knowledge that emerged from cultural centers that were distinct, but, as I have shown, not a priori unrelated. It is exactly in such acts of mediation by those in-between, both overtly and tacitly, that the interdependence as well as the boundaries between
Venetian and Ottoman cultural centers were established. The dragomans’ perspective places the intermediary in the center of the text, and by so doing, subordinates Ottoman narratives to Venetian ones. Here then, we see the production of a trans-imperial perspective on the Ottoman world.

The ability to manipulate multiple genres, both Ottoman and European-wide, and merge them into a unique, individualized whole, gains ironic additional meanings here. Like the sultan’s muraqqa’, this codex is a “diplomatic gift,” which celebrates the Ottomans, yet also its author’s own power of discernment and ability to outwit the Ottomans, through the help of his dragomans to be sure, as in the scene on fol. 35r where apprentice dragoman Tarsia advises Ballarino to remain silent to avoid incurring the Grand Vizier’s wrath.

To conclude, as the codex’s presumed author, Ballarino exercises his chief right of selecting and re-organizing the visual material. By adding a detailed gloss, rather than mere captions, he makes explicit his own remarkable knowledge of things Ottoman. His occasional deletions, corrections and additions between the lines serve the same overall purpose, by amplifying his extensive knowledge, and his position as ultimate arbiter of the text’s authority, accuracy, and completeness. At the same time, by granting such extensive narrative and visual space to dragomans’ accomplishments, Ballarino acknowledges their own specialized knowledge and unique perspective, without which his own authority would be greatly undermined.

124 For example, on fol. 7v, an additional line was inserted, providing information about territories conquered by the Ottomans from the Venetians in 1470 and about the impalement of two Venetian diplomats; on fol. 8v, Beyazid’s twenty-six year long reign is acknowledged above the line; on fol. 14v a date is added above the line for a major Venetian loss during the War of Crete. Many more examples are to be found throughout the manuscript.
CONCLUSIONS

Intermarriage between the foreign dragomans’ families and the Ottoman ones produced a cosmopolitan, so called “Levantine,” class of cross-cultural middlemen [...] the dragoman community retained still a more or less balanced share of Oriental Ottoman as well as Western civilization, expert knowledge and mental outlook. As such they were able to function optimally in translating the two cultures meeting in the Levant into each other.¹²⁵

What is left out of Alexander H. de Groot’s series of otherwise fascinating and meticulous studies of the dragoman dynasties of Pera, is a discussion of how these families did not simply exist between two pre-defined “Oriental” and “Western” civilizations, but had a key role in establishing what are “Oriental” and “Western” and how to tell them apart. My analyses of the dragomans’ petitioning campaigns and unionization attempt, Salvago’s relazione from Barbary and the Cicogna codex have all underscored the importance of intimacy in the articulation of cultural categories, but also its unstable nature. While intimacy with things Ottoman is certainly a precondition for these texts’ claims to knowledge, they ultimately insist on distance from their Ottoman object. The dragoman’s assertion to be “in-between” should thus be seen as a professional stance and a claim to authority, a shifting position rather than a pre-given condition. How in-betweenness itself shifted historically (along with the categories it purports to mediate) is the subject of the next and final part of this dissertation.

PART IV: ARTICULATION

CHAPTER VIII

ARTICULATIONS

Turcimanno. Interprete. Quegli, che parla o risponde, in vece di colui, che non intende il linguaggio. Lat. interpres.

[Dragoman. Interpreter. He who speaks or responds instead of him, who does not understand the language. Lat. interpres.]

—Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1612)

INTRODUCTION

In 1608 a rather unusual petition reached the Venetian Senate: Teodoro Dandolo, a convert and a commercial broker, born under the Safavids in the Uzbek city of Bukhara, asked to be appointed interpreter of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and “Indian.”

Around 1600, Dandolo had traveled from Bukhara to Aleppo, where he had met Vicenzo Dandolo, the Venetian consul there from 1598 to 1602. At the consul’s behest, he traveled to Venice, where he was baptized. Shortly after, he moved to Rome, and spent the next four years in the household of Cardinal San Giorgio, Cinzio Aldobrandini
Now, upon returning to Venice, the convert Dandolo sought employment as dragoman so that he could support himself. The members of the Board of Trade, to whom the case was referred for consultation, were divided. Two of them doubted Dandolo’s skills as a translator and writer in Italian. But given his precociousness (“essendo lui de spirito vivo, et de ingegno pronto”), they recommended that he be placed under the tutelage of Giacomo de Nores, the acting Public Dragoman for training. A third member of the Board was far less enthusiastic about employing Dandolo in the delicate position of dragoman:

having been born a Muslim, even though he has become Christian, he could always have some greater inclination towards his nation, and since he is not Your [i.e. Venetian] subject, and has lived for many years in the house of the Illustrious Signor Cardinal San Georgio, it could be feared that he might continue to serve, and have affection for him, and from what can be understood from the outside he is not very stable in his actions.

Although the Board continuously struggled to find qualified dragomans, it could not agree on Dandolo’s merit. While some of its members challenged Dandolo’s linguistic skills, others questioned his trustworthiness. Neither his conversion nor his linguistic precociousness sufficed to assuage fears over his Muslim birth in a faraway country, foreign juridical status, and Roman patron. Like many trans-imperial subjects, Dandolo was embedded in extra-Venetian networks of patronage, that were both essential for his ability to act as intermediary, and cast a perennial doubt about his loyalty.

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1 Aldobrandini was the nephew of Pope Clement VIII, a Spanish sympathizer and an influential courtier in Rome. See Rota Unpublished: 2 and passim for this and other details of Teodoro Dandolo’s biography. I thank Giorgio Rota for sharing with me this unpublished paper and much information about Dandolo.

2 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 142, cc. 83v–84v (June 23, 1608 & Aug. 18, 1608).

Although his initial arrival in Venice and conversion to Catholicism were facilitated by his eponymous patron, the Venetian consul in Aleppo Vicenzo Dandolo, Teodoro’s ties to another patron, the Roman cardinal Aldobrandini, made his allegiance to the Venetian state less than secure in the eyes of at least one Board member.

Four months after its initial report, the Board of Trade’s composition changed, and the new members decided to appoint Dandolo as interpreter, citing the frequent absence of acting Public Dragoman Giacomo de Nores from the city, and a successful occasion on which Dandolo assisted the Board to communicate with a group of Armenian merchants.\(^4\) Dandolo’s appointment, however, does not appear to have ever materialized. His name does not show up again in the Board of Trade’s archives until 1615, when his request to become commercial broker “of Turks and Levantines” was endorsed.\(^5\) The brevity of the Board’s response to his 1615 petition, a response which repeated almost verbatim its 1608 one, suggests that Dandolo had not been in its service in the intervening period.

The case of Teodoro Dandolo, a convert-turned-commercial broker who failed to become Public Dragoman, brings to the fore fundamental questions about the nexus of ethno-religious and juridical transformation in the trajectories of trans-imperial subjects in early modern Venice. Why was the Board of Trade hesitant to appoint Dandolo as dragoman, but quite willing to make him a commercial broker? What differing assumptions about skill, embeddedness in local and extra-local networks of patronage

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\(^4\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 142, cc. 95r–v (Dec. 6, 1608).
\(^5\) Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 31r–v (Feb. 14, 1614 m.v.); Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 8, c. 76 (Sept. 23, 1615). He was soon provided with a booklet in which to keep record of all his transactions with “the Turkish, Greek, and Jewish nations, and other Levantine merchants”: Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 4, fasc. 47, unpaginated (Sept. 28, 1615).
and affect characterized the two professions? And, finally, how did the two interrelated professions and their trans-imperial practitioners come to shape Venetian notions of Ottoman otherness in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

The first three parts of the dissertation each focused on one group of trans-imperial cultural intermediaries between the Venetian and Ottoman empires: commercial brokers, religious converts, and dragomans. This chapter and the next look at the multiple interactions between these three partly-overlapping cadres. By examining their interactions, I wish to highlight both the varied nature of practices of trans-imperial community membership and boundary-making in the early modern Mediterranean and their embeddedness in specific institutions and genres. In particular, by revisiting two key genres discussed throughout the dissertation, the supplica (petition) and risposta (official response), these two final chapters explore the role of trans-imperial subjects in shifting the semantic range of the categories “Turchi” and “Levantini,” and their impact on Venetian discourses about Ottoman difference.

**BROKERS, DRAGOMANS, AND THE STRUGGLE OVER THE TERZO (PART I)**

Whether due to the growing presence of Muslim Ottoman merchants in Venice, or to the standardization of diplomatic protocol between the two Adriatic empires, by the early sixteenth century dragomans became ubiquitous in Venice’s official dealings with Ottoman subjects on its own turf. While studies abound on dragomans’ work in various Ottoman contexts, virtually nothing has been written about dragomans in Venice. Yet it is precisely there that an important distinction emerged—in practice though not always in terminology—between “interpreter” and “dragoman.” Interpreters were employed
throughout the Venetian maritime empire, where they facilitated communication with non-Italian speaking populations. Interpreters for Greek and Serbo-Croatian especially were in great demand in Venice’s Adriatic, Mediterranean, and Aegean colonial chancelleries. Some of the interpreters employed there, though themselves Venetian colonial subjects, were foreign to the locales in which they served. This was in line with Venice’s general colonial policy, which, in an effort to prevent the consolidation of potentially-rebellious local bureaucratic elites, discouraged the employment of settlers in the colonial administration. At the same time, the (often handsomely salaried) office of interpreter was one of the benefices through which the Venetian administration sought to maintain the good will of powerful local families.

The term dragoman (from Arabic: tarjuman and Turkish: tercüman), once it entered Venetian usage, denoted a narrower realm of activity. Although it was occasionally employed to refer to colonial interpreters, the term “dragoman” came to be
associated particularly with service either in the bailo’s house in Istanbul, or in Venice. In the latter case, dragomans mediated not between the rulers and the ruled as in the colonies, but between government officials and Ottoman and Safavid sojourners, whether diplomatic envoys or merchants. Thus, while in the Ottoman context dragomans dealt with both subject populations and foreign dignitaries of all provenances, in Venice they dealt primarily with foreigners. Moreover, at least from the late fifteenth century on, most of the Venetian government’s translation and interpretation needs were met by chancellery secretaries. The only specialized interpreters recorded were for Turkish and Greek.¹⁰ The very association of the presumed foreignness of Ottoman sojourners with special linguistic needs thus became institutionalized in Venice in ways that, say, the foreignness of German- or French-speaking merchants was not.

The duties of Public Dragomans in Venice were multiple: to translate letters sent to the Doge by the Sultan; to accompany Ottoman dignitaries on official audiences and produce authoritative reports on such occasions; to travel to the Ottoman frontier to negotiate in border disputes; and, most frequently, to assist Ottoman and Safavid merchants in Venice on their interactions with often less-than-scrupulous merchants and commercial brokers. The Public Dragoman’s position can thus be summarized as two-pronged: He was a civil servant, expected to keep tabs on Ottoman and Safavid foreigners and report their whereabouts to his patrician employers, the Senate and the powerful Venetian Board of Trade; at the same time, he was charged with safeguarding

¹⁰ Neff 1985: 60.
Ottoman merchants’ interests, under the assumption that they were vulnerable and in need of special protection due to a to their lack of connections in the city.\(^{11}\)

This two-pronged position is well illustrated by the career development of the first Venetian Public Dragoman, Girolamo Civran. Civran was born in the late fifteenth century in the small port town of Modon, at the western tip of the Peloponnese peninsula, to a Venetian citizen family who had been sent there to found a Venetian colony.\(^{12}\) In 1500 Modon was occupied by the Ottomans, and Civran learned Turkish while in Ottoman captivity.\(^{13}\) Upon his release and arrival in Venice, he pursued a career as a chancellery secretary, and from 1515 on he is recorded serving as interpreter of Greek and Turkish during Ottoman officials’ visits.\(^{14}\) From 1524 to 1531 he was sent numerous times to Dalmatia, where he interpreted in border negotiations between the Venetian Piero Zen and Vincenzo Zantani, and Ottoman officials, including the military governor of Bosnia.\(^{15}\) Civran’s duties were greatly expanded in 1534, when he was charged by the Board of Trade to attend all commercial transactions involving Ottoman merchants in the city.\(^{16}\)

Although it was only retroactively that Civran’s position at that point was entitled “Public Dragoman,” his two-pronged diplomatic and commercial duties and his newly-

\(^{11}\) On the early modern legal doctrine of foreigners’ “lack of relational resources,” see Cerutti 1995.

\(^{12}\) Scarcia 1969: lxiii. Other members of Civran’s family settled in various parts of the empire to attend to their commercial affairs. Civran’s will of 1548 provides only one clue to his colonial ties: Other than his wife Semaritana and their children (including an illegitimate son, Michele), a fellow chancellery secretary and a friar from the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, it mentions a priest from Coron, Paulo de Signa, who served as the chaplain of the church of San Zaccharia: Notarile, Testamenti, b. 1209, fasc. 539 (Jan. 8, 1547).

\(^{13}\) Sanuto, Diarii, vol. 29, p. 425 (257) (Nov. 28, 1520). On the war and its captives and refugees, see Doumerc 2002.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., vol. 25, p. 52 (26) (Oct. 28, 1517); vol. 26, p. 249 (133) (Dec. 10, 1518).

\(^{15}\) Neff 1985: 595.

\(^{16}\) Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 22, cc. 153v–154r (Dec. 15, 1534).
established association with the Board of Trade were to characterize the careers of all his
successors in that position throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This
duality was also at the heart of endless struggles between brokers and dragomans
revolving around the tax of terzo. The tax of one third of brokerage fees (hence terzo)
was established in 1534 to fund Civran’s services, and was levied on all brokerage fees in
transactions involving Ottoman merchants. The Dragoman, in turn, was required to be
present at the deal’s conclusion, help interpret for Ottoman merchants, guarantee the
fairness of transactions and register their details in a special log to be kept by the Board
of Trade.

Technically, the terzo was a commission for services rendered. But as the
services were mandatory regardless of merchants’ actual needs or wishes, and implied
brokers’ insufficiency in assisting their clients and safeguarding their interests, litigations
soon ensued, revolving around several issues: Did all Ottoman merchants really need the
Public Dragoman’s linguistic assistance and protection in their dealings with brokers and
Venetian merchants? Were all brokers as fraudulent as the legislation implied? Were all
dragomans as efficient and conscientious in providing services as they claimed to be?
Were there no other ways of replenishing the Serenissima’s dwindling coffers? Were
there no other persons more capable than public dragomans to assist foreigners?

With time, the groups whose commercial transactions were subject to the terzo
grew to include Safavid (both Muslim and Armenian) and Jewish merchants as well,
casting greater doubts about the tax’s rationale. At the same time, the struggle over the
terzo was colored by the experiences and aims of specific dragomans and their
adversaries within the guild of commercial brokers. As both dragomans and brokers
were overwhelmingly trans-imperial subjects, their specific trajectories and lingering ties in the Ottoman Empire shaped their competing ideas about foreignness, linguistic skill, merit, and loyalty, all at play in these struggles.

After Civran’s death in 1550, the Board of Trade appointed in his stead Michiel Membré, a powerful and well-traveled Cypriot, whose long tenure as Public Dragoman (almost half a century, from 1550 to 1594) decisively shaped the office. By looking at how Membré came to dominate the institution of the terzo, and how other groups sought to undermine his power, it is possible to see how commercial activity became a central node for defining the relation of Ottoman merchants, trans-imperial brokers, and the Venetian state.

Born in 1509 to a prominent Cypriot family, Membré grew up on the island, where he was initially employed in the Venetian chancellery. He soon caught the attention and patronage of the Cypriot noble and merchant Bernardo Benedetti, to whom he was related through his maternal grandmother. Membré traveled as Benedetti’s representative on numerous business trips in the Levant, and, on the latter’s recommendation, in 1538 he was sent as the Republic’s envoy to Shah Tahmasp’s court in Isfahan. Back in Venice in 1642, he was soon sent to Istanbul, to serve as dragoman to Venetian ambassador Stefano Tiepolo. His appointment as Public Dragoman in 1550, upon the death of his predecessor Civran, was thus in recognition not only of

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17 On the Benedettis, see Rudt de Collenberg 1982a: 27.
18 His memoirs of that trip were published upon his return in 1542. See Membré 1969.
19 Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli, b. 1, c. 182a (Sept. 15, 1545); Compilazione Leggi, b. 146, c. 786 (June 29, 1547). See also Scarcia 1969: lxii. In his petition for Venetian citizenship in 1565 Membré claimed to have been living in Venice continuously since 1542. Remarkably enough, the Board of Trade denied his request for citizenship de intus et extra, since he was a year and a half short of the twenty-five-year residency requirement, and only approved his citizenship de intus tantu. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 1, c. 188 (Oct. 23, 1565); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 135, cc. 127v–128r (Nov. 19, 1565).
Membré’s proven linguistic skills, but also of his long diplomatic services to the Republic, and strong connections among Ottoman and Safavid elites.\textsuperscript{20}

These connections, and the extensive knowledge of Ottoman and Safavid societies he acquired through his travels, served Membré in his private enterprises as well as in his work as Public Dragoman. In 1550 Membré collaborated with the Venetian cosmographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio and the Piemontese printer Giacomo Gastaldi in producing a map of Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. In 1559 he helped translate into Turkish the text of a world map, following a 1553 Senate order to print such a map for the Ottoman prince Selim. It was possibly the same printable woodcut heart-shaped map which in 1568 Marc’Antonio Giustinian, governor of the island of Cephalonia, tried to produce for the Ottoman market, again with Membré’s assistance.\textsuperscript{21} These cartographic enterprises combined commercial and political interests. By harnessing the specialized linguistic skills he had acquired in Istanbul and Persia to the service of Venetian commercial, scholarly, and colonial milieu Membré, a seasoned entrepreneur, stood to benefit handsomely.

The same business savvy also served Membré well throughout his long career as a civil servant. As a Public Dragoman with the Board of Trade, Membré enjoyed, in addition to an annual salary of 220 ducats, a third of the brokerage commission of all transactions involving Ottoman merchants, just like his predecessor Civran. This commission was substantial indeed. In 1587, the Board of Trade estimated the annual

\textsuperscript{20} For example, his personal friend Ibrahim, the Ottoman Grand Dragoman of Albanian ancestry, informed him in letters from Ragusa in 1567 of the latest Ottoman victories in Hungary, and of various commercial enterprises of Ottoman merchants in Venice. Conley 2002: 265; see also Bombaci 1948.

\textsuperscript{21} Arbel 2002; see also Ménage 1958; Fabris 1989; Casale 2005.
terzo revenue at 5,000–6,000 ducats, a true fortune.\textsuperscript{22} Although Membré did not receive the entire sum, he did take home large portions of it. His legendary wealth became the target of many brokers’ envy.\textsuperscript{23} Not only had they had to put up with his presence and surveillance (and, some suggested, corruption), but to pay him a third of their fees.

Brokers were not the only ones dismayed by Membré’s growing fortunes. Many merchants were equally disgruntled, as the burden of the terzo was often passed on to them, even though officially it was levied on brokers alone. Repeated decrees forbade them from making their clients shoulder the tax in any way, but these repetitions only confirm the prevalence of the practice. Some merchants sought to avoid the extra burden by convincing the government that they did not require the Public Dragoman’s services, as they all spoke perfect Italian.\textsuperscript{24} Others tried to appoint a separate dragoman specifically for their needs. This was the case of the Armenian nation, which in 1582 petitioned collectively to appoint a certain Armenian named Zorzi as its authorized dragoman, to whom the commission of terzo would be paid. The Board of Trade warned that conceding to the Armenians’ request would open the door to much trouble and complaints by the brokers’ guild. Instead, recognizing Zorzi’s past services in Istanbul, they recommended that he be appointed commercial broker instead.\textsuperscript{25} As in other cases, rather than disrupt Membré’s monopoly, and set a dangerous precedent for particularistic collective rights, the Board sought to maintain the status quo and extend its patronage network to a worthy individual.

\textsuperscript{22} Although three years later it was estimated at “only” 2,000 ducats. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 138, cc. 17–19 (Sept. 28, 1587).
\textsuperscript{23} His three surviving wills all suggest his wealth, and leave handsome bequests to relatives and charities around the city: Notarile, Testamenti, b. 394, fasc. 625 (July 14, 1591); \textit{ibid.}, b. 1245, fasc. 561 (Oct 20, 1594); Ospedali e luoghi pii diversi, b. 86, fasc. GG (Nov. 1, 1594).
\textsuperscript{24} See, for example, Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 41, unpaginated (March 9, 1650).
\textsuperscript{25} Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 137, cc. 71v–72r (Aug. 18, 1582).
This was the context in which, in 1587, Giulio Torquato, an old commercial broker and a former mariner who had sojourned in the Ottoman Empire for over a decade in his youth, petitioned the Senate to have the terzo abolished altogether. Claiming to speak on behalf of “other brokers of Turks,” Torquato blamed Membré not only of greediness, but of embezzlement. Membré, he suggested, often turned a blind eye on corrupt brokers prone to cheat their clients and the state, in order to receive his fat commission. The Board of Trade concurred with Torquato on the shortcomings of Membré’s service, although it suggested the dragoman’s less-than-perfect performance was due rather to his old age and failing health. A few months later, instead of abolishing the terzo, the Senate recommended that two more interpreters be appointed to assist Membré. I will return to these two interpreters shortly.

Another effort to abolish the terzo took place upon Membré’s death in 1594. That year, two brokers petitioned the government on behalf of 24 of their colleagues who dealt with Ottoman clients, and asked that instead of the terzo they be required to contribute to the government every year 1500 ducats collectively. Within a few weeks, another anonymous petition promised the government a sure method of curbing “the many frauds, and deceits, which Turks suffer” in the hands of cunning brokers. In return, the authors, who later identified themselves as Zuan Domenico di Zorzi and Antonio Cigoto, asked to receive the terzo revenue for 25 years, from which they would give the government an annual commission of 1,500 ducats. They also offered to employ a

26 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 138, cc. 17–19 (Sept. 28, 1587).
27 Compilazione Leggi, b. 146, c. 786 (Jan. 29, 1587 m.v.). The two were finally elected a few months later, on August 28, 1588, with a combined annual salary of 300 ducats. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 138, cc. 98r–v (Jan. 13, 1589 m.v.), 110v–111r (March 31, 1590).
28 Senato Mar, filza 128, unpaginated (Dec. 9, 1594).
dragoman and an accountant, to whom they would pay out of pocket an annual salary of 500 and 120 ducats, respectively.29

Not surprisingly, the Board of Trade rejected the petition to completely abolish the terzo. According to the Board, once new regulations had been instituted in 1587, requiring brokers to register with the Board of Trade all transactions involving merchants subject to the tax, no complaints had been filed, although merchants were otherwise “quick and ready to complain about trifles.”30 At the same time, the majority opinion on the Board endorsed the brokers’ request to pay a reduced, collective tax, citing their large and needy families. The minority opinion, drafted by Board members Andrea Gussoni and Girolamo Giustinian, suggested that in fact there were still many frauds committed against Ottoman merchants, and that it might thus make sense to endorse Zorzi and Cigoto’s proposal and entrust them with supervising brokers. Curiously, neither the majority nor the minority opinions addressed explicitly the relationship between the appointment of dragoman assistants in 1587 and the alleged decline in brokers’ fraud. Yet, the Board did combine its response to the terzo-related petitions with its assessment of two petitions by Membré’s assistants seeking to inherit his position as Public Dragoman. As will become evident below, this suggests once again that in the eyes of the Board members, the Public Dragoman’s identity and his ability to curb brokers’ infractions were closely interlinked, and premised not only on linguistic skill, but on loyalty as well.

29 Senato Mar, filza 128, unpaginated (on or before Jan. 7, 1594 and Jan. 11, 1594 m.v.).
30 “Ne sentitoli alcuna loro lamentatione con tutto che siino pur troppo facili, et pronti p[er] ogni minima cosa à co[n]dolersi…” Senato Mar, filza 128, unpaginated (Dec. 9, 1594).
INHERITANCE BATTLES

To understand how the position of Public Dragoman was shaped by assumptions about skill and loyalty that were forged during Michiel Membré’s long tenure, as well as by the trajectories of his two assistants (and soon-to-become successors), let us compare the petitions submitted by the two in 1594.\(^1\) Giacomo di Nores and Andrea Negroni had both served as Membré’s assistants in the last few years of his life, monitoring transactions between brokers and Ottoman merchants.\(^2\) Both had been involved in repeated litigations with Membré for his failure to pay their salary in a timely manner.\(^3\) And both produced lengthy petitions upon his death, in an effort to convince the Senate of their suitability for the position (and superiority over each other). They were both appointed Public Dragomans in 1594. Their arguments, however, were strikingly different.

Giacomo de Nores’s petition was a textbook case of colonial merit. Giacomo was born ca. 1570 in Nicosia, the capital of the Venetian colony of Cyprus, to two of the island’s most distinguished families. The de Nores were old Latin feudatories, whose roots on Cyprus extended back to the Crusades. The Podocataros were members of the Cypriot nobility, who had converted to Catholicism. Giacomo’s eponymous paternal grandfather, the Count of Tripoli, was killed while defending Nicosia during the Ottoman siege. Giacomo’s maternal grandfather, Livio Podocataro, lost all his possessions with the Ottoman conquest. Several dozen members of both the de Nores and the Podocataro

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1. See appendices 19 & 20 for transcripts and translations of the two petitions.
2. Their annual salaries of 150 ducats each were paid by Membré, out of the revenue he derived from the terzo. Senato Terra, filza 105, unpaginated (Jan. 29, 1587 m.v.). I thank Maartje van Gelder for the reference.
families—including baby Giacomo himself—were enslaved and sent to Istanbul, Chios, Rhodes, Algiers, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Most of them were eventually ransomed and moved to Venice, Spain, Rome, and other Christian territories. But a few, including one of Giacomo’s aunts, chose to remain Muslim. Her two daughters later became sultanas to Mehmet III.\footnote{Rudt de Collenberg 1982a: 52, 60–61.}

Giacomo himself spent his childhood and youth as a slave in the household of bombardier Turan Bali of Scutari (Üsküdar, across from Istanbul on the Asian shores of the Bosporus). In 1581, he traveled with his master to the Safavid frontier, where in all probability he learned some Persian. Eventually, he was ransomed by a Cypriot merchant, Dimitri Gonneme, whom his mother, Maria Podocataro, appointed as her agent in 1581. The ransom paid to Turan Bali was 260 ducats.\footnote{Notarile, Atti, b. 32, cc. 41r–42v (Feb. 17, 1591 m.v.). The notarial deed signed by Maria Podocataro and Dimitri Gonneme for the ransoming of de Nores is discussed in Corazzol 1994: 776. The author does not identify de Nores as a future dragoman.} At the time of his release and arrival in Venice in 1587 de Nores was thus a young man of 17 or 18, with no experience in Venetian service, and rather limited command of Italian.\footnote{I thank Maria-Pia Pedani for emphasizing these issues (personal communication).}

De Nores begins his petition by centering on loyalty stemming from juridical subjecthood, which, as we will see below, implicitly sets him apart from Negroni. He dwells at length on his noble ancestry and the blood spilled by his ancestors in defense of the lost colony of Cyprus. His distinguished ancestry reaffirms his ties to Venice, underscores his noble status, and might have helped overcome concerns about his loyalty, given his many years in Ottoman service. It also reminds his patrician interlocutors of their commitment to his wellbeing under the old feudal system. At the same time, de
Nores does not shy away from capitalizing on his Ottoman sojourn. He refers to his long
Ottoman captivity both to induce sympathy for his plight, and to lend credibility to his
claim to deep linguistic and cultural knowledge of the Levant.

After discussing his personal merits, de Nores reverts to the first person plural to
juxtapose “our” customs with “theirs” (i.e. the Turks’), thus emphasizing his instrumental
role as an intermediary:

since it is no less useful for that task to be accustomed to the habits of the Turks,
to their inclinations and to their manner of negotiation, which are very different
from ours, Your Serenity can easily be convinced, that being, I might say, born
among these people… and educated [there], having been involved in their affairs
for many years, and traveled in many and diverse provinces… [emphasis added]

By positioning himself squarely within a Venetian moral community, de Nores’s long
sojourn in Ottoman territory becomes an asset rather than a liability; it foregrounds,
rather than undermines, Ottoman alterity. It is thus that his disenfranchisement by the
Ottomans comes to strengthen his claim about special sensitivity and helps underscore his
antipathy to his former captors.

Unlike de Nores, who in 1594 had little actual experience as intermediary to
speak of, Andrea Negroni was by then already an accomplished interpreter, with some
twenty years’ work experience.37 Accordingly, he begins his petition by narrating at
length his diplomatic role in settling border disputes between Venetians and Ottomans,
highlighting his interpersonal, military, and political mediation. In that narrative he
invokes specialized diplomatic vocabulary, refers to the Ottoman genre of arz, or sultanic
decree, and lists his numerous engagements with Ottoman provincial rulers, including the

37 In the mid 1670s Negroni already served as Imperial representative to the Ottoman court. See the travel
narrative composed by Johann Jacob Amman, Negroni’s physician during a trip through eastern Hungary
powerful Sinan Pasha. The lengthy narrative of his accomplishments takes up two thirds of the petition, and is strewn with a series of active verbs which celebrate his singular agency (“I petitioned… went… handled… wrote down… noted… put an end… stopped… went… did… stated… ordered…”). He continues with a brief reference to his proficiency in Turkish and (quite hyperbolically, no doubt) his knowledge of 12 other languages. Next, he offers the following general observations about the intermediary’s skills, in which he shifts from the first to the third person singular:

it is not enough to speak it, and write it, but to prudently do this and that with which—with singular discretion—the most perceptive and skilled could maintain the dignity of their Prince and avoid offending [his] pride to the advantage of another great Master with whom they happen to negotiate, and in explaining the writing it may end up being useful to demonstrate vigor, and daring [ardimento], and conjointly good mind, and respect, in the ambit of which alone consists the perfection of negotiating.

These observations are general and abstract, pertinent to any negotiations rather than specific to Venetian-Ottoman relations. Here, Negroni reminds the readers of his extensive diplomatic career prior to becoming Venetian interpreter, without explicitly referring to his non-Venetian patrons and potentially raising doubts about his loyalty. These general observations are followed by only a brief reference to the petitioner’s neediness, e.g. his dependent parents, wife, and children. Negroni does not mention his ancestors, probably because he was an Ottoman subject (of possible Greek provenance), with no Venetian pedigree to speak of. His kin are a liability, rather than a resource.

In his petition Negroni thus incorporates both a personal and highly-specific account of his involvement in Venetian-Ottoman diplomatic and military negotiations, and general observations of an impersonal nature. Combined, these elements serve to emphasize his accomplishments, his skills at conflict resolution and his deep familiarity
with Ottoman bureaucratic hierarchy and diplomatic protocol, won through extensive practical experience.

The comparison of Giacomo de Nores’s and Andrea Negroni’s petitions has revealed two competing articulations of accomplishments and loyalty in dragomans’ understandings of their intermediary work at the end of the sixteenth century. For Negroni, skills were for hire, and accumulative from one employment to the next. It was precisely his unattached ability to know both sides which he cast as his greatest merit. Indeed, three years after becoming Venetian Public Dragoman Negroni left the lagoon to again assume a position in the service of the Habsburg Emperor. De Nores, who rather emphasized emotional and familial attachment to Venice as what allowed him to “see like a Venetian” shortly after his ransom, stayed on as a Public Dragoman in Venice until his death in 1617. Evidence suggests that at least some of his children remained in Venice. One of his daughters, Elena, married the patrician Francesco Trevisan, while two others, Tadea and Cecilia, became nuns in the convent of Santa Marta. Other family members, including Giacomo’s sisters Fiorenza and Lucia, his aunt Elena and his nephew Livio, also settled in Venice.

Both dragomans instantiated enduring models of trans-imperial subjecthood in the early modern Mediterranean. The de Nores clan, after establishing themselves as potentate local nobility on Cyprus, insinuated themselves into Catholic ecclesiastical and scholarly networks that extended to Rome, Venice, and Padua. While Giacomo

39 Notarile, Atti, b. 8454 (April 18, 1645), b. 8460, c. 163r (Feb. 4, 1652 m.v.), b. 8465, cc. 87v–88r (Sept. 18, 1657), b. 8470, c. 39v (May 12, 1662).
40 See Elena de Nores Bustrona’s will, taken down by her nephew Livio in Giacomo de Nores’ house in early 1605: Notarile, Testamenti, b. 1177, fasc. 141 (Feb. 23, 1604 m.v.). On his sisters, see Rudt de Collenberg 1983: 46–57 (including a genealogical tree); Rudt de Collenberg 1993: 182.
established himself in Venice, some of his relatives pursued careers elsewhere, including
Ottoman Cyprus. Like them, Andrea Negroni placed his skills in the service of several
patrons, first foreign diplomats and scholars in Istanbul, then the Venetian state, and
finally the Habsburg Emperor. Viewed over several generations, both the de Nores and
the Negroni families “hedged their bets” by weaving dense networks of patronage across
empires. That de Nores emphasized his pedigree more than his skills is particularly
noteworthy in light of the preponderance of scholars and secretaries among his kin, as
well as their dispersion across empires. It was thus not so much his objective difference
from Negroni by way of skill or career path, as the opportunity to harp on Venetian
imperial memories of the loss of Cyprus that prompted him to fashion himself first as a
worthy and loyal subject, only then as a qualified intermediary.

SERIAL PETITIONING AND TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTHOOD

If de Nores and Negroni highlighted two components of the Public Dragoman’s
desired profile, namely accomplishments and loyalty, other crucial elements—

41 In 1647, a certain Calimeris de Nores was active in Larnaca, where he befriended the Venetian consul
there, a Soderini, himself a Cypriot. Other branches of the de Nores family maintained close ties to Venice:
Giacomo’s great uncle, the scholar Jason de Nores (1530–1590) left Nicosia in the wake of the Ottoman
conquest and move to Padua, where he was given the chair of moral philosophy at the university. He
published astronomical, philosophical, and literary works. His son Pietro was involved in a duel with a
Venetian patrician in 1589 and had to flee to Rome, where he served as secretary to several cardinals and
published historical and literary works. Jason’s grandson, Giorgio, born in 1619 in the Venetian colony of
Pula in Istria, published a guide book for secretaries, in which he advocated adherence in writing to “the
rule of good Tuscan language.” Giorgio de Nores also published a historical discourse on the kingdom of
Cyprus, which included genealogies of the leading families of the island. Giacomo’s uncle, Cesare de
Nores, was the bishop of the Venetian colony of Parenzo (in Istria) from 1573 to 1597. Several Podocataro
family members were prominent clergy: Bishop of Cyprus and later Cardinal Lodovico Podocataro (d.
1504) was buried in Rome. Archbishop Livio Podocataro was buried in the church of S. Sebastian in
Venice, where a funerary monument was erected for him by Jacopo Sansovino. Arbel 1989: 187, 189,
personal communication; Scarabelli 1847: xx–xxv; Rudt de Collenberg 1982b: 456–57; on the extensive
ties of members of the de Nores clan to the intellectual and ecclesiastical elites of Venice, Padua, and
Rome, see also Rudt de Collenberg 1983; Rudt de Collenberg 1990.
connections among the Venetian elite, and the establishment of dragoman dynastic
continuity were perfected by their two successors. The Venetian-born, Istanbul-trained
Francesco Scaramelli, whom I will discuss in detail further below, relied on his extensive
ties among the Venetian patriciate and on his command of both Venetian and Ottoman
semitics of honor for his performance of mediation. His successor and the subject of
this section, Pietro Fortis, performed mediation differently, by creating a trans-imperial
immigrant dragoman dynasty that bridged Venetian understandings of the patrimonial
state with Ottoman dragomans’ expectations about patrilineal succession of the position.
Fortis, his brother and sons not only resettled in Venice after two generations in Istanbul,
but trained in languages specifically in preparation for their entry into Venetian service as
dragomans. As noted in chapter 6, this model of familial career development prevailed
among dragoman families in Istanbul, but to the best of my knowledge the Fortis were
the first to import it to Venice. One way to explore their strategy, and the vision of
Venetian-Ottoman mediation it implied, is by looking at the trajectories and petitioning
strategies of a key family member, Pietro Fortis, over three and a half decades from
shortly before his appointment as Public Dragoman in Venice in 1643, to the Senate’s
approval of a monthly stipend to support one of his daughters in 1678.

Pietro Fortis was born in the Istanbul suburb of Pera. He moved into the bailo’s
house as a young child in 1627, and in 1634 began his formal dragoman apprenticeship
there.42 In 1643, while sojourning in Venice, he was appointed Public Dragoman in place
of the recently deceased Francesco Scaramelli.43 Fortis’s meteoric transformation from a

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42 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 34, unpaginated (May 29, 1643). It is unknown what his status was in
the previous seven years, while living as a child in the bailo’s house.
43 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 153 (Feb. 17, 1643 m.v.), cc. 172v–173v (May 10, 1645).
young apprentice in Istanbul into a Public Dragoman in Venice shocked his fellow
dragomans and apprentices in the bailo’s house. Many of them aspired to the position
themselves. In fact, as bailo Giovanni Soranzo intimated in a dispatch to the Senate,
many of them had withdrawn their candidacy only because their most senior member, the
aging road dragoman Giovanni Battista Salvago, had coveted it and was considered to be
the most qualified. When instead of Salvago the Senate elected Fortis, his colleagues in
Istanbul were outraged. Had they known that he had clandestinely submitted his
candidacy, they would have done the same!  

But Fortis had several things going for him. First, he happened to be in Venice
when the Board of Trade made its recommendations for the position. Second, his father
and grandfather had been Venetian citizens, and thus he was technically eligible for
citizenship himself (which he eventually received in 1651). Third, as was mentioned,
he had been raised from infancy in the bailo’s house in Istanbul. His Venetian ancestry
combined with familiarity with Ottoman society and training in the various aspects of the
dragoman’s craft made him an ideal candidate. Finally, his youthfulness, especially
when compared with the aging and ailing Giovanni Battista Salvago, might have been
considered another clear advantage: Unlike Salvago, twenty-something Fortis had many
more years of service ahead of him.

44 Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 124, cc. 598r–v (Nov. 9, 1643).
45 Earlier in 1643 Fortis took a leave of absence in Venice to attend to family matters after the recent death
by plague of his brother and sister. Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 27, c. 5r (March 21, 1642);
Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 123, cc. 35v & 38r (May 19, 1642), b. 124, c. 293r (July 6, 1643);
Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 153, cc. 104v–105r (Feb. 17, 1643 m.v.).
46 Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 10, c. 106r (April, 1651).
47 This was the norm: With the exception of Andrea Negroni, all Public Dragomans in the period 1517–
1682 served for over thirty years (and longer, if their apprenticeship or other services in Istanbul are also
taken into account).
Young Fortis’s ability to convince the Venetian Senate to appoint him as a Public Dragoman set the terms of a long and successful career, during which he also proved himself as a gifted petitioner. In 1651, he was recognized as *cittadino originario*, making him eligible for privileges and revenue reserved for that class, and making him the second dragoman after Michiel Membré to gain Venetian citizenship while in service.\(^48\)

Through his petitions, Fortis increased both his base salary, and, more importantly, his *terzo* commissions, from 5% to 15%.\(^49\) He arranged for his brother Giacomo, already fluent in “Greek, Turkish and Armenian” to work as dragoman.\(^50\) He also secured employment as dragomans for two of his sons, Alvise and Giacomo, whom he offered in 1666 to send to Istanbul to be apprenticed under his brother’s guidance, and whom he clearly expected to inherit his position after him.\(^51\)

\(^{48}\) Fortis was well aware of the advantages of his newly-acquired status: In 1655 he petitioned to inherit along with his sons the revenue of the position of captain on Zante, reserved for citizens, citing the government’s fabled magnanimity towards its *cittadini originarii*. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 46, unpaginated (May 7, 1655).

\(^{49}\) Starting in 1652, Fortis petitioned to increase his commission from 8% to 15% of the *terzo*, similar to the commission enjoyed by his predecessor Scaramelli. The Board of Trade endorsed his requests, but he did not actually receive the commission increase until the 1670s. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 36, unpaginated (April 20, 1645), b. 43, unpaginated (Sept. 12, 1652), b. 50, unpaginated (Aug. 8, 1658), b. 60, unpaginated (July 11, 1663), b. 62, unpaginated (June 5, 1664 & Aug. 8, 1664); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 155, c. 78r (June 21, 1656), cc. 135v–136r (Aug. 22, 1658), cc. 195v–196r (Feb. 14, 1661 m.v.).

\(^{50}\) Where and when the Fortis brothers had learned Armenian remains unknown, but both Pietro and Giacomo had extensive ties to the Armenian merchant community in Venice. In 1644 Pietro helped interpret testimonies in a trial between an Armenian merchant named Zorzi and a Jewish merchant, Isaa f. Isac Camis. In 1652 he served as an interpreter for the will of Armenian Cozà Mezadur q. Baldassar, on whose inheritance he later became a creditor. A1659 notarial document grants one Armenian merchant, Pietro de Battista, power of attorney to represent another, Baina Calili, in litigation against Fortis. This and his other numerous litigations with Armenian merchants in Venice over the years were connected perhaps with their rejected petition of 1650 for *terzo* exemption on the grounds of not using Fortis’s services. In 1658 Giacomo too became involved in litigation with an Armenian merchant, Antonio Bagos, who owed him a great sum of money. This, however, did not end his relations with the Armenian community, and in 1670 he appeared as witness and interpreter in another notarial deed signed by a group of Armenian merchants. AdC, Misto, b. 3015, fasc. 7, unpaginated (1644); Notarile, Testamenti, b. 402, fasc. 201 (Dec. 6, 1652); AdC, Misc. Civil, b. 235, fasc. 2 (April 16, 1654); Notarile, Atti, b. 7467, c. 73r (July 1, 1659), b. 8846 cc. 52r–v (July 30, 1670); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 41, unpaginated (March 9, 1650); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 154, cc. 155v–156r (Sept. 28, 1650), b. 155, cc. 144v–145r (Jan. 21, 1658 m.v.).

\(^{51}\) His request was granted: In 1667 his son Giacomo was appointed notary in the ducal chancellery (a position reserved for *cittadini originarii*) and three years later he was sent to serve as interpreter in
sons to be apprenticed in Istanbul in 1667, Pietro also sought the Senate’s commitment to have the sons inherit his commission of 15% of the *terzo*.52 This expectation was rooted no doubt in his earlier experiences in the bailo’s house in Istanbul, where dragomans customarily passed on their trade to their sons. It was, however, quite a novelty in Venice, where Fortis was the first dragoman to secure similar employment for his progeny.

Other aspects of Fortis’s life also combined practices common among Venetian citizen families and the Latin community of Pera. Like other Venetian *cittadini originarii*, he engaged in charitable activities, including, in 1650, serving as godfather and eponym to a Turkish convert, the twenty-year old Istanbul-born Pietro *alias* Ali.53 Like other Latins of Pera, he produced a large family, which by the end of his career included eight children, who depended on the government for support. In 1676, with two sons placed as apprentices in the bailo’s house in Istanbul, Fortis petitioned to receive some financial help towards the dowry of one of his daughters, citing the custom of

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52 After Membré’s death in 1594, the collection of the *terzo* was farmed out for an annual pay of 2650 ducats, increased by 1617 to 2720 ducats. That year Giacomo de Nores enjoyed, in addition to an annual salary of 800 ducats (an impressive increase from his original 200), one third of the commissions of the trade transacted by “Greeks, Armenians, and other Levantines, excepting those of Turks and Jews.” In 1634, Francesco Scaramelli received, for the same position, only 312 ducats a year and 13% of the *terzo* commission. Upon hiring Fortis in 1643, the Board of Trade recommended that he be given the same salary, but only 5% of the *terzo*. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 148r–v (Jan. 12, 1617 m.v.), b. 153, cc. 104r–105r (Feb. 17, 1643 m.v.); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 43, unpaginated (Sept. 12, 1652).

53 ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 31r (Aug. 21, 1650).
helping other dragomans in similar situation, including an unnamed dragoman who had received assistance for “four or six” of his daughters. Here again, Fortis was relying on precedence in the bailo’s patronage of dragomans employed in his household in Istanbul. His request was approved in 1678, when the Board of Trade authorized a monthly stipend of 10 ducats for his daughter.\footnote{Cinque Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Feb. 6, 1675 m.v. & Aug. 3, 1678).}

That Fortis’s sons carried on in their father’s profession was, as I showed in chapter 6, standard practice among Venice’s colonial interpreters and dragomans in Istanbul.\footnote{In addition to the Borisi, Bruti, Grillo, Navon, Parada, Piron, Salvago, and Tarsia families in Istanbul, we should mention the following father-son dragoman continuities in Venetian service: Giovanni and Andrea Aggiundrito in Cephalonia c. 1553, Simon and Giovanni Britanico in Zara c. 1565, Christoforo and Giovanni Maria Bonà in Aleppo c. 1600, and Girolamo and Marco Pace in Spalato c. 1640.} More noteworthy was the transfer of the position of Public Dragoman in Venice to Pietro’s brother Giacomo. While other chancellery positions certainly circulated within citizen families, the position of Public Dragoman was, until then, reserved for trans-imperial individuals, either Ottoman subjects or Venetian colonial subjects (especially Cypriots).\footnote{Only in one previous case was a Venetian \textit{cittadino originario} appointed to the position: Francesco Scaramelli, Fortis’s immediate predecessor. See table 8.1.} At least in theory, their appointment was based on their specific qualifications and merit, rather than on paternal or filial service as dragomans. That the two Fortis brothers were able to keep the position in their hands for over half a century suggests the power of the combination of recognized Venetian ancestry with long residence in Istanbul.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Provenance</th>
<th>Years in service</th>
<th>Year appointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girolamo Civran</td>
<td>Cyprus, Ottoman captivity</td>
<td>1515–1549</td>
<td>1534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michiel Membré</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1538–1594</td>
<td>1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Negroni</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>1587–1597</td>
<td>1594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giacomo de Nores</td>
<td>Cyprus, Ottoman captivity</td>
<td>1587–1627</td>
<td>1594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Scaramelli</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1611–1643</td>
<td>1627</td>
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<td>Pietro Fortis</td>
<td>Istanbul, Venetian father</td>
<td>1627–1682</td>
<td>1643</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giacomo Fortis</td>
<td>Istanbul, Venetian father</td>
<td>1670–after 1682</td>
<td>1682</td>
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Table 8.1 Venetian Public Dragomans, 1534–1682

How did Fortis’s trans-imperial trajectories shape the horizons of his expectations from the Venetian state? How did he articulate his own position through his numerous petitions? His first petition (1643) was fairly modest. Submitted shortly before his appointment as Public Dragoman, and while on leave in Venice from his position in the bailo’s house in Istanbul, Fortis used the petition to emphasize his loyal service of nine years, the fact he had been raised in the bailo’s house from infancy, and his loyal and arduous effort to learn Turkish so that he could be of greater service to the Republic. He requested a raise that would make his condition equal with that of the other apprentices of his rank, Tarsia, Pace, and Agapito. Significantly, Fortis chose to mention only these three apprentices, who were all colonial Venetian subjects from Dalmatia and Cyprus, and ignored other contemporary apprentices, members of the Latin community of Pera (and therefore Ottoman juridical subjects). In this early petition Fortis implied that he had moved away from his Venetian home and into the bailo’s house specifically to become a civil servant. The private interests that no doubt prompted his ancestors to settle in Istanbul is here seamlessly merged with public service. Yet, in another petition two years later, Fortis reversed his argument, emphasizing his current service “far from my house and relatives,” i.e. away from Istanbul, as grounds for a salary increase. It

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57 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 34, unpaginated (May 29, 1643).
58 “Presto incessante, assidua, devota, e fedele servitù; lontana dalla mia casa, e parenti…” Collegio,
was precisely his unquestionable Venetian ancestry that allowed Fortis more leeway to invoke his Ottoman connections and bifocal trajectories, without putting his loyalty in doubt. His request was endorsed by the Board of Trade. His request was endorsed by the Board of Trade. Like other serial petitioners, Fortis used this medium to constantly remind his employers of his merit. His rhetorical skills and his unique life trajectory, which combined Venetian citizenship with birth and long apprenticeship in Istanbul, enabled him to claim simultaneously both localness and foreignness.

COMMENSURABLE CONVERSIONS:

DALMATIANS, DRAGOMANS, AND DIGNITARIES

The above analysis of the petitions of Giacomo de Nores, Andrea Negroni, and Pietro Fortis suggested different dragomans’ diverging practices of Venetian-Ottoman mediation. To complete the picture, let us now examine how dragomans’ notions of the nature of the units being mediated and their interrelationship shaped their engagement with Venetian and Ottoman elites. The case study below provides such an exploration.

The report to the Senate by Public Dragoman Francesco Scaramelli (in service 1626–1643) is unique in its length and detail, although, regrettably, impossible to corroborate by other types of documentation. It allows us to address Scaramelli’s and other trans-
imperial subjects’ practices of mediation-through-interpretation, as shaped both by individual dragomans’ life trajectories, and by the intersection of commercial, military, and religious interests in Venetian-Ottoman relations in the first decades of the seventeenth century.


In 1621 word reached Venice of the escape from home of the daughter of Ahmed Agà, the Ottoman sanjakbeg, or military governor, of Klis, a strategic fortress in the Pashalik, or administrative unit, of Bosnia (see map 8.1). According to reports by Venetian administrators in Dalmatia, Ahmed Agà’s daughter had escaped along with a servant and arrived in the Venetian-controlled port city of Spalato (modern Split), only six miles to the southwest of Klis. At her request, she was baptized, and then sent to Venice, where she was admitted into the Casa delle Zitelle (illustration 8.1), an institution for elite teenaged girls in danger of “moral corruption.”

60 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, cc. 29r–v (May 13, 1622). The Casa delle Zitelle, which in the 1620s had about 140 inmates, was designed to host girls over nine on ten years old, beautiful and healthy and “in imminent danger of losing their virtue.” It provided inmates with devotional instruction, as well as some practical training in embroidery or lace-making, in preparation for future marriage or the convent. See Pullan 1971: 388–91; Aikema and Meijers 1989: 225–40; Chojnacka 2001: 121–37; Boccazzi Mazza 2005.
Initially, the Venetian Senate reacted to this affair with grave concern, fearing it might lead to a serious diplomatic incident.61 Indeed, a letter from the Sultan, which followed shortly, did not fail to protest the case as alleged kidnapping (rapto). Yet despite dismay at its representatives’ actions in Split, the Senate denied Ahmed Agà’s request to see his daughter. Six years later, he showed up in Venice along with his brother-in-law, some slaves, and a new Sultanic decree urging the girl’s release from her

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61 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 13, c. 218r (Jan. 12, 1621 m.v.).
supposed imprisonment. This time, Ahmed Agà was taken on a carefully-orchestrated tour of the premises of the Zitelle, accompanied by two official interpreters: Francesco Scaramelli, the Venetian Public Dragoman, for Turkish, and the Dalmatian-born scholar Dr. Pietro Matteacci, for Slavic. Scaramelli’s two lengthy reports on the events (transcribed in full in appendix 21) illustrate something about the two interpreters’ complex interactions with the Ottoman dignitary, his daughter, the patrician governors of the Zitelle, and the reports’ addressee, the Venetian Senate.62

By exploring the roles of Scaramelli and Matteacci in this affair I suggest how interpreters mediated between Venetian and Ottoman elites. Specifically, I wish to highlight the ways in which the two interpreters did not simply convey the words of one side to the other. Rather, by focusing on narrative framing devices, language code-switching, and affect, I show how they each articulated different ideas about the nature of the boundary between Venetian and Ottoman societies. While Public Dragoman Scaramelli performed mediation in ways that implied the commensurability but essential separateness of the two societies, Matteacci rather highlighted how they overlapped and coalesced.

The two-pronged duties of Public Dragomans, elaborated above, characterized the career of Public Dragoman Francesco Scaramelli as well. He was born in the last decade of the sixteenth century to a family of original citizens, whose members were fully-conscious of their own self-worth as leaders of the Republic’s bureaucratic elite.

62 The two reports, along with Scaramelli’s translation of the Sultan’s letter, and various decrees and correspondence in the matter with Venetian representatives in Istanbul and Dalmatia are in Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopi, reg. 18, cc. 38r–48v (June 3–11, 1627).
His father Giovanni Carlo entered the chancellery in 1566, at age 17, and pursued a career in government service for 47 years. In 1584 he became an ordinary secretary, in 1590–91 he accompanied bailo Girolamo Lippomano to Istanbul, in 1595 he became secretary to the Senate, and from 1602 to 1604 he served as Venetian ambassador to the courts of Elizabeth and James I to negotiate in the matter of English corsairs in the Mediterranean. He died in 1613, while in the Republic’s service in Milan. This career trajectory, involving long sojourns as secretaries in Istanbul and other capitals, became increasingly common for Venetian cittadini originarii in the sixteenth century, and often served as stepping stones to the highest positions in the ducal chancellery. Indeed, his elevated position enabled Giovanni Carlo both to secure the status of citizen for his illegitimate eldest son, Moderante, and guarantee Modernate’s and Francesco’s entrance into public service. It also facilitated the marriage of his daughter Chiara to a Venetian patrician, Bartolomeo Barbaro.

Paternal intervention indeed proved crucial for the future of Giovanni Carlo’s two sons. Modernate pursued a career as secretary to the Senate from 1606, and even traveled to Zurich in that capacity to negotiate bilateral commercial agreements on behalf

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63 The seriousness with which Giovanni Carlo undertook his professional identity can be gleaned already from an early memoir, which he composed in 1569, at age 20. In it, he criticized Sansovino’s ideas about secretaries’ inferiority, as articulated in his tract Del segreatrio. Based on his own practical experience, Scaramelli recorded the great esteem with the patrician members of the Council of Ten held their secretaries, and the latter’s de facto authority and influence. See Trebbi 1986: 55–56.
64 Brown 1900: lxii–lxix.
66 Years later, in 1645, the by-then widowed Chiara worked as governess for Modernate’s two daughters, and was involved in legal battles over her brother Francesco’s inheritance. The pattern of upper mobility for the family’s daughters through marriage to patricians was repeated in the case of Modernate’s two daughters, Isabella and Laura, who married Giovanni Battista Pisani and Andrea Lippomano, respectively. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 36, unpaginated (Aug. 27, 1645); b. 68, unpaginated (Aug. 25, 1667); b. 69, unpaginated (Jan. 26, 1667 m.v.); b. 73 (Jan. 2, 1669 m.v.).
of the Republic. Francesco too pursued a career in public service and diplomacy. Upon completing his apprenticeship in Istanbul he entered the ducal chancellery, and was eventually hired as a Public Dragoman by the Venetian Board of Trade in 1626. To the best of my knowledge, he was the only Venetian-born citizen to occupy this position in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—all of his predecessors, as well as his successors were either Catholic Ottoman subjects or Venetian colonial subjects from Cyprus. In its endorsement of his appointment, the Board of Trade cited strong recommendations by Giacomo de Nores, the then acting Public Dragoman, and Giovanni Battista Salvago, the long time and highly respected Venetian road dragoman in Istanbul.

Scaramelli, then, was a member of a self-conscious elite segment of Venetian society, and a seasoned diplomat. Shortly before being hired as Public Dragoman by the Board of Trade, he represented the Venetian government in military negotiations with Ottoman provincial officials visiting the Serenissima. Yet in Venice, his position vis-à-vis Ottoman subjects was more ambiguous. Here he was acting not simply as a Venetian representative, but as a Public Dragoman, required to maintain excellent relations with the Ottoman merchant community in the city. This was especially crucial in the 1620s, as the Venetian Board of Trade sought, unsuccessfully, to stop the diversion of Levantine trade from Venice to Leghorn and other Mediterranean ports. As a recently appointed Public Dragoman, Scaramelli was probably keen on not burning any bridges to the Ottoman merchant community.

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67 Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del Maggior Consiglio, reg. 9, cc. 138v–139r (April 11, 1634); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 37, unpagednated (April 30, 1646).
68 Bailo a Costantinopoli b. 277, reg. 397, cc. 1v–2r; Dursteler 2000: 173, n12
69 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 147, cc. 4r–v (March 26, 1626).
70 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 16, cc. 101r–v (Oct. 16, 1625). The specific Ottoman official with whom Scaramelli negotiated was Mehmet Beg, the sanjakbeg of the Hungarian province of Szekszard, and a representative of the Ottoman Paşa of Buda.
The other intermediary involved in the case of Ahmed Agà’s daughter, Dr. Pietro Matteacci, also represented Ottoman merchants in front of Venetian authorities. Unlike Venetian-born Scaramelli, however, Matteacci was the son of Venetian colonial settlers in Dalmatia, and had maintained family ties in that region of proverbially unstable political boundaries. These factors undoubtedly played an important role in the ways the two interpreters mediated in the case at hand.

Another factor shaping the interaction between Ahmed Agà and his Venetian hosts was, no doubt, the wider context of seventeenth-century Venetian-Ottoman relations. As mentioned, the fortress of Klis was strategically vital to the Ottomans, given its proximity to the Venetian-controlled coast of Dalmatia, and to Habsburg-controlled Senj, for a long time the base of the Uskoks’ raiding activities. During the long Venetian-Ottoman peace that lasted from 1573 to 1645, both sides shared an interest in maintaining the status quo in the Adriatic and curbing corsair activity, which often targeted Venetian and Ottoman vessels alike.

In addition to military considerations, religious politics were also at stake. Any Venetian concessions to Ottoman demands regarding the return of their converted subjects were bound to be frowned upon by the papacy. In the seventeenth century, Venice repeatedly resisted Rome’s exhortations to join an anti-Ottoman alliance. It was precisely the Republic’s institutionalized and highly publicized support for Muslim
converts to Catholicism that legitimated its stance. Given the role that religion played in contemporary geo-politics, then, the restitution of a convert to her unconverted kin in 1627 would have been problematic indeed.

For Ahmed Agà, too, religious and political considerations were bound together. As a father, he clearly wanted to see his daughter, whom he believed to have been kidnapped, return home. As an Ottoman official, he recognized the significance of demanding the return of an Ottoman subject. Moreover, in this demand he was bound to an authorized sultanic narrative, which presented the girl’s baptism in Split as a case of forced conversion. According to the Sultan’s letter, the girl had been led to a church, forced to kiss the Cross and “idols,” and given a Christian name, upon which cannons had been fired outside and great festivities had ensued.73 The charge of forcible baptism mirrored the trope of conversion to Islam at sword’s edge, a trope which circulated far and wide in the early modern Mediterranean.74

Before Ahmed Agà could relinquish his demands, he thus had to be provided with an alternative narrative about the circumstances of his daughter’s arrival in Venice, and be convinced of the authenticity of her wish to stay there; in other words, he had to be persuaded of her true transformation from an Ottoman Muslim to a Venetian Catholic. This was crucial for his ability to relate the story back to the Sultan, as well as for his own sense of accomplishment.75

Unfortunately, Scaramelli’s reports do not tell us anything about the girl’s version of the circumstances of her escape from home, arrival in Split, and request to be baptized.

73 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 18, c. 38v.
74 For the genealogy of this trope, see Kedar 1997; Baer 2001; Krstic 2004.
75 I thank Tom Cohn for highlighting this point.
But her frontier hometown had been incorporated into the Ottoman Empire only in 1596, 25 years before her escape. It was to become Venetian 25 years later, in 1646.\textsuperscript{76} Although by the early seventeenth century the Bosnian Pashadom was largely Muslim, at least according to a 1624 report by the apostolic delegate Peter Masarechi it had, in addition to 450,000 Muslims, 150,000 Catholics and 75,000 Orthodox Christians.\textsuperscript{77} The girl herself was far from the first Muslim from Klis to convert to Catholicism. Sometime before 1610, a woman named Sultana arrived in Venice, was baptized and given the name Lucia. She later became a nun and assumed the monastic name of Zuanna. In the 1620s, several soldiers from Klis served in the Venetian army on the Italian mainland. At least four, Ibrahim, Alia, Yusuf and Mehmet were baptized in Venice in 1624–1625, only to return to their posts on the mainland shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{78} Did Ahmed Agà’s daughter meet any soldiers returning from Venice as a child? Did she hear stories about Sultana’s departure the previous decade?

Scaramelli, as I mentioned, remains completely silent on these questions. His reports do suggest, however, how the shift in framing the girl’s past and present from a runaway/kidnapped Muslim daughter to a devout Catholic convert was achieved collaboratively, through the intermediary work of interpreters Scaramelli and Matteacci, and with the help of the girl herself and the governors of the Zitelle.

Not surprisingly, Scaramelli’s reports highlight his own efforts to placate the Ottoman governor by assuring him that his (and his daughter’s) elevated status are well acknowledged in Venice. For example, after Ahmed Agà had been shown the refectory

\textsuperscript{76} Not surprisingly, in the late 1640 and early 1650s at least 24 Muslim children and two adult women from Klis arrived in Venice to be baptized. ACPV, BdC, 2, cc. 22v–32r.
\textsuperscript{77} Malcom 1994: 54.
\textsuperscript{78} ACPV, BdC, 2, c. 11r (Nov. 5, 1624), c. 11v (March 26, 1625).
on the ground floor of the Zitelle, he was taken upstairs, where he was given a vocal concert by veiled and covered young women. In return, the governor expressed his utmost contentment, showing to have received the honor with pleasure, while some idea of mutual satisfaction was interpreted by me, Scaramelli, according to the occasion, the Turkish father always showing himself to be very honored, chiefly for the good manner of words used by the Illustrious Governors.\textsuperscript{79}

By holding a concert for the visitor, and by veiling and covering the singers, the Zitelle governors demonstrated both their trust in the visitor’s ability to appreciate the performance, and the respectability of an establishment where girls are trained in music, but not expected to expose themselves. Veiling, of course, was an important aspect of female monastic piety, and widely practiced among Venetian secular elite women of the time as well. As similar distinctions between honorable and exposed female bodies existed in Ottoman courtly culture, the Zitelle governors here signaled at once their acknowledgement of the visitor’s high status and their concern for his daughter’s moral wellbeing. By repeatedly assuring Ahmed Agà that his daughter was placed in an honorable institution among her peers, namely other girls that are well born (“ben nate”) and governed by “gentildonne principale [sic],” the governors signaled their recognition of the Ottoman official’s self-perception as a man of high status (“buone conditioni”). Their efforts evidently bore fruit as, towards the end of his visit, Ahmed Agà is reported to have closely observed his daughter’s hands, fingers, and nails, and to have noted with great satisfaction that they were “very gentle, and nicer than those of her mother, and that

\textsuperscript{79} “Le fù fatto un concerto di voci da Giovani velate, et coperte, con suo som[m]o contento, havendo dimostrato di ricever l’honore à grado, mentre da me Scaramelli veniva interpretato, secondo le occorrenze, qualche concetto di sodisfazione vicendevole, dimostrando sempre il turco Padre di esser molto honorato, principalm[en]te per le buone forme di parole usatele dall’ILL.mi S[igno]ri Governatori”: Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 18, c. 39v (June 5, 1627).
the good treatment she has received has made her beautiful, healthy, and well taken care of.”

It was Scaramelli’s mediation, however, which conveyed the Zitelle governors’ intentions to Ahmed Agà, and which in return provided a legible gloss of the Ottoman dignitary’s response. It is Scaramelli’s mediation that establishes the commensurability between Ahmed Agà’s status and that of Venetian patricians, and between Venetian and Ottoman signs of female respectability. This commensurability, and the very possibility of mutual intelligibility between the Ottoman visitor and his Venetian hosts, are premised on the assumption of shared scales of status. By repeatedly acknowledging the father’s legitimate concerns, and by approvingly reporting his displays of emotions, Scaramelli makes Ahmed Agà’s narrative of paternal concern and the Venetian one of Christian care for the girl’s spiritual and material wellbeing less at odds with one another. It is primarily through his participation that the two narratives can meet and become mutually intelligible.

But for the interaction to succeed, the parties had to agree on another fundamental issue, namely the girl’s agency. Only once Ahmed Agà recognized that his daughter was not held in Venice against her will, and that in fact she had not been kidnapped from home but rather escaped of her own volition, could his and his hosts’ narrative frames meet. For that to happen, the girl had to inhabit the interactional role of “convert.” Scaramelli’s reports articulate how this role was achieved primarily by controlling affective expression, through code-switching, and by countering her father’s vocabulary.

80 “All’hora guardando le mani, le dita, et le ungie della giovane, disse, che erano molto gentili, et più benne di quelle della Madre, et che il buon trattamento la rendeva benna, sana, et ben governata”: Ibid., c. 43r.
of patriarchal family order with one of spiritual salvation. Let us look at each of these semiotic mechanisms in turn.

Scaramelli’s reports mention Ahmed Agà’s affective gestures, including kisses, hugs, tears and rising eyebrows, at least ten times. The rapid transitions in Ahmed Agà’s mood, from rage at his daughter’s alleged kidnapping and fear for her wellbeing, to contentment and ultimately joy at her good treatment in Venice, are contrasted throughout the reports with his daughter’s much more subdued range of emotional expressions. These expressions are closely linked to how she is positioned vis-à-vis her multiple interlocutors. Indeed, throughout the interaction, she addresses two audiences at once. When approached by her father and uncle, and questioned in Turkish as to whether she would like to be liberated and return home, she not only answers in the negative, but does so in Italian, a language which, as Scaramelli was quick to note, her kinsmen did not understand. Even after the two interpreters repeatedly beseech her “to at least speak in Slavic,” she continues to assert, in Italian, that she is free and “does not wish to leave Heaven for the earth.” When she finally relents and repeats her negative answer in Slavic, she maintains, according to Scaramelli’s report, a “happy, and smiling” posture.81 Her defiance is now made clear: Not only does she speak to her relatives in a language they do not understand, addressing herself to her Venetian interlocutors as much as to her relatives, she casts the conversation in the theological terms of heaven and earth, while their questions are framed by paternal concerns for a girl’s wellbeing away from home. If for her relatives the story is a family drama (replete with tears, kisses, hugs, and references to the desolate mother at home, missing her only child), the girl convert, her

81 Ibid., cc. 40r–v.
Venetian hosts and the designated interpreters seek to present it rather as a story of
spiritual salvation. When her father reminds her that if she were to go home with him she
would be served by noble women, married well, and become sole heiress to his
substantial inheritance, she retorts that she wishes not to “depart from the salvation of the
soul, that she is a noble lady here, and that if her relatives were dead, dying here they
would be saved.” While seeming to reaffirm the commensurability of Ottoman and
Venetian noble status, she also endorses a Catholic claim to spiritual superiority and
absolute assurance in salvation. By contrasting her father’s concern for her worldly
wellbeing with an emphasis on the afterlife she also makes an implicit aggressive gesture,
reminding him of his own imminent mortality. Finally, when her father seeks
compromise by suggesting that at least she move to some convent in Dalmatia, where she
would be closer to her family, she cavalierly responds that she is already used to the city
of Venice. For her, in other words, Venice is a haven and a home, not a prison.

By preferring Italian to either Slavic or Turkish, and by framing her experience
within a narrative of spiritual salvation, she suggests her complete transformation into a
Venetian Catholic subject, and evades her role as a Muslim Ottoman daughter, whether
runaway or kidnapped. Through the narrative framework of conversion, she thus refuses
the role designated for her in her kinsmen’s narrative of family drama, and absolves
herself from any charges of youthful female disobedience. After all, as a convert, her
overriding duty is to God and to her own salvation, rather than to any gendered familial
expectations.

82 Ibid., c. 41r.
Another aspect of the interaction in which the interpreters’ mediation proves crucial is language choice and code-switching. As I mentioned, by refusing to speak Turkish or Slavic the girl signals her conversion and the erasure of her pre-Christian past. Yet she does allow for one exception, when she asks her father, in Slavic: “Do you love me?”—a highly intimate genre of family talk, to which the father is reported to have responded by “raising his eyebrows, looking almost stupefied.” By not speaking to her relatives in languages they understand, the girl thus guarantees the continued presence of interpreters, who provide a gloss even to her relatives’ non-verbal emotional expressions. Forcing the interaction to be mediated, she reenacts her alienation from her kin and her radical break with her past.

Yet the girl is not the only one to masterfully code-switch between languages. Ahmed Agà too switches between Slavic and Turkish, depending on audience and content. He uses Turkish to address the Zitelle governors, and sometimes also to speak to his daughter, especially when the conversation is intended to be overheard by others. The mediated nature of the interaction thus serves his interests, as well as hers. For example, on several crucial occasions he asks his daughter—in Turkish—about her situation and the circumstances of her departure from home six years prior. But much of his—and his brother-in-law’s—interactions with the girl, especially in the absence of Venetian governors—are carried out in Slavic. As much as the girl insists on using Italian to signal her interactional role as a Venetian Catholic convert, her kinsmen’s use of Slavic rather than Turkish reinforces their efforts to fit the interaction into a familial narrative frame and conversational register.

83 Ibid., c. 42v.
Which leads us back to the role of interpreters throughout these interactions. As I mentioned, participants’ frequent code-switching between Italian, Slavic, and Turkish was facilitated by the presence of the two authorized interpreters: Public Dragoman Scaramelli for Turkish, and the Dalmatian-born scholar, Dr. Pietro Matteacci, for Slavic. The appointment of a second, Slavic interpreter suggests consciousness among Venetian officials as to the bilingual nature of Ottoman provincial elites in Dalmatia, and the socio-semiotic potentials of code-switching. Matteacci’s presence and performance also confirm the potential for blurring the Venetian-Ottoman boundary, not only through a shared language, but through kinship ties as well. In fact, Matteacci’s personal connections in Dalmatia prove quite potent when Ahmed Agà asks him, towards the end of his visit, whether the girls in the Zitelle are of noble blood. As a proof that they are, Matteacci mentions a daughter of the Cosača family “of the royal blood of Bosnia,” who, he adds, “was well known” to the visitor. Rather than follow Scaramelli’s vision of Venetian and Ottoman nobilities as commensurable but separate, Matteacci rather suggests their actual coalescence on the Dalmatian frontier. Drawing on the language of kinship he implies not simply that Ahmed Agà’s daughter is surrounded by girls of similar provenance, but that, in fact, Ottoman and Venetian nobilities can on occasion be one and the same.

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84 Bosnia’s rapid and massive conversion to Islam led Ottoman authorities to greater lenience in allowing local elites to preserve their indigenous languages in official communication, and ultimately enabled the development of Aljamiado literature, i.e. Bosnian Slavic literature written in the Arabic script. On Aljamiado, see Hegyi 1979.

85 Ibid., c. 44r. The Cosača family, descendants of the Byzantine royal family of Comneni, ceded their many possessions in Montenegro to Venice in the fifteenth century, and in return joined the ranks of Venetian nobles in 1430. Members of the family appear in various Venetian records throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including three daughters listed as monastic brides in the period 1590–1670. See Tassini 1887: “S. Maria Zobenigo”; Sperling 1999b: 246. For the 1606 correspondence between the Paduan nun Tadea Cosazza and her noble brother Alfonso in Venice, see Cornet 1859: 135–36.
In escorting Ahmed Agà during his visits to the Zitelle, Scaramelli and Matteacci assisted the distinguished visitor with simultaneous interpretation, but also, more fundamentally, by performing cultural mediation in ways that rendered Venetian and Ottoman social categories and scales of value mutually intelligible and, indeed, commensurable. Scaramelli’s performance of mediation was premised on the notion, that both Venetian and Ottoman societies were hierarchical and orderly, and clearly demarcated status through a set of gendered semiotic practices (from noble lineage and proper veiling to clean fingernails), that were either identical, or could be mapped onto one another.

Matteacci’s performance of mediation differed from Scarmelli’s on several levels. Rather than translate between Turkish and Italian, two official languages that indexed mutually-exclusive political communities, one Ottoman, the other Venetian, Matteacci interpreted to and from Slavic, whose language community transgressed these exact same political boundaries. Matteacci’s and Ahmed Agà’s shared provenance on the Dalmatian frontier, capitalized upon during the interaction, produced similar ambiguity about the nature of Venetian-Ottoman boundaries.

At the same time, both Scaramelli’s and Matteacci’s presence reaffirmed the parties’ inability to interact without mediation, and sustained the claims of Ahmed Agà’s daughter to belong squarely on the Venetian side—linguistically, socially, and spiritually. On occasions such as this, interpreters’ intermediary performance entailed both the clear categorization of persons along linguistic, religious, and kinship-based lines of demarcation, and the bracketing—rather than highlighting—of other structural differences. Both interpreters’ implicit understandings of the nature of the socio-political
units being mediated, and their embodied subject positions vis-à-vis these units were crucial in shaping their performance.

Ultimately, the presence of a mediator also signified the presence of a boundary and the limits of commensurability. At least while on Venetian soil, where a police force could be mobilized against them, there were clear limits to what Ottoman subjects—even high-ranking officials like Ahmed Agà—could demand. In other words, there were structural limits to his potential refusal to see the commensurability. In fact, one can suggest that Agà took solace in the fact that his daughter was still being treated as nobility, even though she was no longer Muslim. For lack of a better option for returning her, he still had this to hold on to. The commensurability “worked” because he could not insist on her return without ignoring her spoken will to remain.

**POSTSCRIPT**

A decade after his mediation in the case of Ahmed Agà’s daughter, in 1636 Scaramelli negotiated another sensitive case involving the conversion of an Ottoman subject in Venice. This time, the convert was Giovanni Moro, an Arab Christian from Aleppo, who, according to what he later told Venetian authorities, had been kidnapped by Turks, enslaved, forcibly converted to Islam, and eventually re-baptized upon arrival on the Venetian island of Tinos (in the Cyclades), where he became a servant in the house of the island’s military governor, Venetian patrician Marino Bragadin.86 Giovanni spent two and a half years in Bragadin’s service, relocating with him to Venice, where Bragadin assumed the high position of Avogador di Comun. At that point, Giovanni escaped

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86 Bragadin was the captain of the regiment of Tinos. See Tiepolo 1994: 1010.
Bragadin’s household, where he claimed to have been maltreated, and was lured by several merchants into the *Fondaco dei Turchi*.

There, he was kept under lock and key and was forced to renege Christianity. After several failed attempts by Venetian authorities to retrieve him through the intervention of Turkish-speaking Venetian merchants and commercial brokers, Public Dragoman Scaramelli was appointed to confer with the Ottoman merchants and demand Giovanni’s release. Scaramelli’s efforts fell through, and eventually a police force was called in, found Giovanni’s hiding place, and brought him in front of the Board of Trade, which promptly sent him to be reeducated in the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni.87

Although Scaramelli’s intervention in this case ultimately failed, it is interesting to observe how he understood his task. According to a report issued by the Board of Trade, throughout his negotiations with the Ottoman merchants, Scaramelli kept emphasizing to his interlocutors that as guests they should show respect and obedience in dealing with Venetian authorities. In the Board’s words, he urged the merchants to

not make it necessary for us to use force to make him [Giovanni] appear in front of us, but that they should use the words and respects owed to Princes, who always wish obedience in their own states, giving most effective examples from their government, that we did not want to make Muslims into Christians by force, but that if he was Christian, as is surely known, it wasn’t possible that he should be allowed to renege against the Christian faith…88

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87 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 151, cc. 1–6 (Oct. 6, 1636); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 23, fasc. 2, cc. 64r–66v (Oct. 8, 1636). The only possible reference to Giovanni in the Pia Casa’s archives is an entrance record a few days later: ACPV, BdC, 3, c. 5r (Oct. 9, 1636). Unfortunately, the record states neither his age nor his previous name.
88 “Lo pregava à non volersi metter in necessità di farlo comparire avanti di noi con la forza, mà che usassero termini et rispetti dovuti à Prencipi, che ad ogni modo ne proprìj stati vogliono l'ubbidienza, portando gli esempi validissimi del loro governo, Che noi non volevamo far turchi, Christiani p[er] forza, mà che se costui era Christiano, come certamte si sà, non era possibile permetter che contro la Christiana fede rinegasse…” Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 151, c. 4r (Oct. 6, 1636).
Scaramelli thus emphasized the convergence of economic interests between the Venetian government and the Ottoman sojourners, while also stressing the parties’ power differential. Failure to comply with Venetian demands, he suggested in a thinly disguised threat, would lead to serious measures that would jeopardize their very privileges as foreign merchants in the city. Here, as in the case of Ahmed Agà’s daughter, Scaramelli’s basic strategy of mediation was to emphasize supposed commensurability (in this case, between Christian and Muslim conversion as acts of free will, which should be neither coerced nor revoked). At the same time, clear limits are set on this commensurability, precisely because the interaction takes place on Venetian soil, and with the backing of Venetian armed forces.

The above case also highlights the charged significance of the *Fondaco dei Turchi* as a liminal Muslim space in Venice. Scaramelli’s failure may be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that here, unlike the case of Ahmed Agà’s daughter, he was dealing with Ottoman subjects on what they perceived as their own turf, rather than on the premises of a Venetian charitable institution like the *Casa delle Zitelle*. As will become clearer in the next chapter, Venetian fondacos of foreign merchants remained under constant government surveillance, and never became the semi-autonomous institutions that were ubiquitous in Ottoman port cities such as Alexandria and Aleppo. Still, as this and other similar cases suggest, Ottoman merchants sojourning in Venice sometimes perceived their fondaco as independent from larger Venetian society. It is to the *Fondaco dei Turchi* that we now turn, to consider how the debates surrounding its establishment and operation served as an important site for the calibration of categories of Ottoman difference, namely “Turchi” and “Levantini.”
In the seventeenth century, news periodically circulated in Venice about slaves and servants of Muslim background who had run away from their masters’ households to find shelter in the Fondaco dei Turchi, the Turkish Exchange House, with an eye to returning to Ottoman territory. In 1622, for example, an unnamed woman convert escaped to the fondaco, declaring her wish to return to Islam twelve years after her (allegedly voluntary) baptism. The Venetian Senate warned her hosts in the fondaco that her departure would prompt the government to seek a reciprocal Ottoman gesture towards Christian renegades who wished to return to Christianity. The merchants quickly dropped the case, and the woman was transferred to the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni for further catechization. In another case twenty years later, Lucia, a Bosnian woman, escaped her Muslim husband and kin and arrived in Venice, where she became a servant.
Her relatives managed to abduct her into the fondaco, and eventually to smuggle her out to Dalmatia, onboard a ship. She was discovered by the captain, and in her long and convoluted deposition eventually claimed to have always been Christian and to wish to return to Venice.¹

The *Fondaco dei Turchi*’s perceived position as a gateway to the Ottoman Empire for runaway slaves and servants and as a liminal Muslim space at the heart of Venice made it an abomination in the eyes of many Venetians. Indeed, the stakes in establishing and populating the fondaco were so high that it took almost half a century from the moment the Senate authorized its establishment in 1575, and until it opened its gates in 1621. An anonymous motion submitted to the Senate in 1602 against its establishment conceded that it was crucial to separate the residences of Christians and Muslims. Nonetheless, the motion objected vehemently to the idea of an authorized, Muslim-only space, where residents would surely “build mosques, and other very enormous things, in which with great shame to the name of Christ, they will worship Muhammad, a most pernicious man…”²

Assumptions about what might happen behind the fondaco walls were clearly premised on analogies to institutions already in existence. In chapter 2 we encountered the Greek commercial broker Francesco Lettino, alias Frangia, who, in the aftermath of an inquisitorial inquiry into his complicity in hiding a runaway Bulgarian slave in his attic, proposed to open a fondaco. He likened the proposed establishment to the

“particular hotels that many nations and peoples have in this city,” as well as to the ones “that the Turks have provided in their countries of the Levant for the Christian Nation.”³ Later he suggested taxing the fondaco’s future residents to finance custodial services, “as is customary in Syria in the fondacos of the Christians.” The anonymous motion of 1602 against the establishment of a fondaco brought up two specific analogies: the Jewish ghetto and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the German (and, by some accounts, de facto Lutheran) Exchange House.

Although hardly systematic in their logic, these comparisons shed light on some prevailing analogies in contemporary thinking about Catholic Venice’s various religious Others—Jewish, Lutheran, and Muslim—but also point to the limits of such analogies. Such comparisons underscore the productive power of the lack of distinction in many contemporary European languages, including Italian, between “Turk,” “Ottoman” and “Muslim.” Finally, they suggest the varied roles of trans-imperial subjects—in their capacities as sojourning merchants, landlords, commercial brokers, dragomans, and converts—in evolving Venetian discussions about the fondaco.

In 1573 the Holy Office expressed much concern at Frangia’s Turkish-Muslim tenants who hid a Bulgarian runaway slave in their attic, precisely because of the presence of Frangia’s wife and children on the premises. It was Frangia himself who alluded to the scandalous domestic mixing of Muslims and Christians in his petition to open a fondaco for Turkish merchants the following year. In fact, Frangia’s initial petition not only set in motion the debate about the fondaco, but provided many of its

fundamental presuppositions for years to come, including proto-anthropological claims about the difference of Muslim customs and rituals, the inherent danger of residential mixing, the helplessness of foreign merchants, and their need for special protections. For example, proximity itself underlay the interrogators’ concern about Frangia’s wife and children sharing food with their Muslim tenants. The same idea governs official pronouncements about the need for separate living quarters for Muslim merchants. Frangia’s petition to establish a fondaco in 1574 mentioned robberies, the kidnapping of Christian boys, and sleeping with Christian women as some of the evils inflicted by Turkish merchants in Venice, facilitated by their freedom to live where they pleased. When Frangia’s petition was approved in 1575, the Senate referred to the danger of Turks wandering freely around the city at night and socializing in Christian houses.4

At the same time, both Frangia’s petition and all subsequent official pronouncements on the matter sought to present the establishment of the fondaco as a protective measure serving merchants’ own interests. According to Frangia, under the previous conditions, Turkish merchants had sometimes been robbed and even murdered while staying in Christian households. He further emphasized their peculiar cleansing, eating, and sleeping habits as grounds for a separate lodging.5 Later legislation in the matter repeatedly emphasized how merchants were disadvantaged by their dispersal around the city, which subjected them to fraudulent landlords. The legislation specifically highlighted the many advantages the new fondaco allegedly offered its tenants.

4 Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Oct. 28, 1574 & Aug. 16, 1575).
5 Ibid., Aug. 16, 1575.
This chain of events suggests how claims to experience and knowledge produced through sustained close contact with Muslim clients/tenants allowed Frangia—himself a trans-imperial subject—to elaborate taxonomies of Turkish difference that were then taken up by officialdom, through the Board of Trade and its authorized agents, the Public Dragomans.

The following decades saw a continued debate over residential segregation, already underlying the establishment of the German Exchange House and the Jewish ghettos. In 1588, the Senate ordered commercial brokers under penalty of losing their brokerage license “to direct the Turks who come to this city from time to time” to a makeshift hostel operated by Frangia’s wife, Giulia Moier, and his nephew, Pietro. Despite these decrees, the following year the Senate conceded that the plan to open a fondaco had not materialized and instructed the Board of Trade to locate a new house suitable to host a large number of merchants. Two reports by the Board of Trade in 1601 and 1608 referred back to the mandate it had been given years earlier to locate such a house. But an actual site for the fondaco was finally identified only in 1621. In the intervening decades, some Ottoman Muslim merchants continued to reside in their brokers’ and other private houses. It is ironic that the custodian appointed for the newly-established fondaco in 1621 was none other than Giovanni Battista Lettino, Frangia’s

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6 On the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which was established in 1225, but became the subject of increased government regulation from the late fifteenth century on, see Constable 2003: 320–23; Simonsfeld 1968; Lupriani 1978; on the Jewish ghettos, see Malkiel 1991; Davis and Ravid 2001; Ravid 2003. Significantly, Venice imposed Jewish residential segregation in its maritime colonies from around 1325, almost two centuries before it did so in the lagoon. See Jacoby 1987: 37.

7 “Et siano obligati tutti li sanseri sotto privatione del carico loro à condur li Turchi, che veniranno in questa Città di tempo in tempo in d[ett]a Casa”: Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 1, unpaginated (June 4, 1588).

8 Ibid., March 28, 1589.

grandson; other members of the family continued to run the fondaco for decades thereafter, leading fierce battles (and often invoking Christian morality) against any efforts by Ottoman merchants to extricate themselves from their establishment.

Religious rhetoric legitimated and naturalized economic protectionist measures such as the institution of the fondaco, thus localizing common Mediterranean practices and calibrating them with Venetian reason of state. Yet what came to be seen as natural in the 1620s had been rather contentious only a few decades earlier. Indeed, the author of the anonymous petition of 1602 against the opening of the fondaco presented the confinement of Jews, Germans and Turks as concessions to the groups themselves, rather than as serving the policing objectives of the Catholic-Reformation state. Separate residence, the motion suggested, should serve as a prize for services rendered by worthy and “safe” groups, such as the Jews. Unlike the Turks, Jews were dispersed among the nations, lacking either a powerful emperor or a strong navy. Moreover, Jews provided Venetians with useful services, such as pawning and the sale of drugs, which kept the populace content, while Turks did nothing but export merchandise from Venice for the benefit of Ottoman subjects. While Jews did not use the same name, they did worship the same God as did Christians, and considered Him as their father. Muslims, on the other hand, worshipped a wicked man, Muhammad. The Protestants in the German Exchange House, although no doubt heretics, only performed their heretical rituals clandestinely. The German Exchange House, moreover, had been established well before its residents became heretics, and thus the authorities had no way of predicting what would become of it, whereas the *Fondaco dei Turchi* was to house pronounced enemies of Christ. The author finally warned that designating a separate residence for Turks might set a bad
example, as other nations might soon request the same privileges for their merchants in Venice.\textsuperscript{10}

In the long run, however, this vision of lurking danger behind the fondaco walls, so powerfully articulated in the anonymous motion of 1602, lost out to a competing concern. The latter, already introduced by Frangia in 1574, underscored the “inevitable” and “scandalous” mixing of Christians and Muslims in the absence of total residential separation. It was this concern which led in 1621 to the opening of a fondaco in the former residence of the Duke of Ferrara on the Grand Canal. Once the idea of a Muslim fondaco materialized, the previous, longstanding arrangement of Christian-Muslim cohabitation in brokers’ houses and private residences throughout the city came to be seen as “unnatural” and captivated subsequent legislators’ imagination as the ultimate cause of scandal.\textsuperscript{11}

It is thus only fitting that the first regulations for the \textit{Fondaco dei Turchi}, published by the Board of Trade on May 27, 1621, systematically conjoin religion with reason of state in an effort to institutionalize maximal physical separation between the fondaco’s residents and the surrounding neighborhood.\textsuperscript{12} At least one third of the 33 regulations were concerned with the obstruction of vision and movement, as well as the

\textsuperscript{10} Comparison with the \textit{Fondaco dei Tedeschi} and the Jewish ghettos is also instructive historically. In both these earlier cases, Venetian authorities were much more inclined to accommodate non-Catholic religious practice. Although Catholic preachers were regularly sent to proselytize in the \textit{Fondaco dei Tedeschi}, the authorities also turned a blind eye on Lutheran rituals in the compound. Similarly, Jews enjoyed ritual and administrative autonomy within the ghetto. The government even made special provisions to accommodate Jewish ritual needs outside the ghetto, for example by allowing representatives to observe the preparation of bread in Christian bakeries. No such explicit autonomy was ever granted to Muslim merchants, who enjoyed no recognized, official organizations. Yet the ghetto and the two fondacos also shared important features, chiefly their role in the controlling (and more effectively taxing) of shifting merchant populations. As Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan notes, “the fondaco aided surveillance… [and] provided an efficient means for centralizing customs receipts…” Crouzet-Pavan 2002: 121.

\textsuperscript{11} For a psychological analysis of Venetian fears surrounding the Fondaco dei Turchi, see Özkaya 2003.

creation of internal barriers to prevent vision and movement between the house’s three wings, designated for the residence of Balkan and Anatolian merchants, and the Custodian’s family, respectively. Among other things, open windows and balconies were to be walled up, doors locked, and access from the outside in (during daytime) and from the inside out (after dusk) monitored by armed guards.


As the regulations suggest, the fondaco’s main purpose was to sever its tenants’ “scandalous,” ties to Venetians—i.e., any kind of contacts that went beyond purely economic transaction. The familiarity and intimacy that were believed to grow from physical proximity and the sharing of living space were especially targeted.

It was these same aspects of Muslim merchants’ previous living arrangements in brokers’ houses which made them more skeptical of the new fondaco’s merits, as forced relocation spelled the potential interruption of important networks of support. In particular, many merchants and brokers-cum-landlords saw their close ties as mutually beneficial, and crucial for their continued prosperity. As I showed in chapter 2, these ties
were part of broad, genuinely trans-imperial networks, which often included previously localized Armenian, Greek, and Jewish merchants and brokers, and which helped more recently-arrived merchants overcome helplessness and limited relational resources. Indeed, the complex ties that bound commercial brokers and Ottoman and Safavid merchants together were not severed entirely even after the latter were ordered to relocate to the fondaco. The 1621 regulations specifically referred to an earlier Senate resolution, forbidding anyone from lodging Ottoman merchants, and threatening brokers who might do so with a removal from their post. This longstanding prohibition seems to have mattered little to the brokers and merchants involved. In 1625, the Board of Trade instated a fine of 500 ducats on brokers who were found keeping Ottoman and Safavid merchandise in their homes.13

That the fondaco’s tenants themselves were far from content with the obligation to reside there is also made abundantly clear by their repeated complaints about the facilities. For example, in 1625 a group of fondaco residents complained that the roof was leaking, the neighbors were mean, and the location of the fondaco, near the Church of San Giovanni Decollato, was too far from the market.14 In its response, the Board of Trade dismissed the merchants’ allegations as an attempt to avoid the requirement to reside in the fondaco. This claim may have had a grain of truth to it, as permission to leave the fondaco was granted only sparingly.15

13 Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 3, unpaginated (May 26, 1625).
14 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 146, cc. 212v–213r (Dec. 10, 1625); Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 16, cc. 139v–144r (Dec. 14, 1625).
15 Such permission was granted, for example, in 1623, to a sick merchant, Mehmet Celebi from Croia (Kruja, Albania), who asked to temporarily leave the fondaco and move to the house of his friend, Zuanne Trasardo. The Board consented, as long as he kept paying rent for his room in the fondaco, and without setting precedence. Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 3, unpaginated (April 28, 1623).
The fondaco’s establishment not only radically transformed the patterns of interaction between Venetian and Ottoman subjects and the types of mediation practiced by trans-imperial commercial brokers. Its changing regulations also serve as significant moments in the articulation of categories of Ottoman difference in Venice. The 1621 regulations recognized the institution’s charges as “turchi,” and further distinguished within that category between “Bosnian and Albanian” on the one hand, and “Asiatic” (i.e. Anatolian) on the other. These categories had already been used in preparatory reports commissioned by the Board of Trade from Public Dragomans Michiel Membré and Giacomo de Nores in 1575 and 1620, respectively. The distinction between Balkan and Anatolian Ottoman subjects was conveniently raised by Anatolian merchants themselves on numerous occasions. In 1579, for instance, they protested their forced relocation to Frangia’s hostel, where they were to share their living space with Greeks and Bosnians, suggesting this would inevitably lead to violence. Even in the Ottoman military, they observed, these groups were kept in separate barracks so as to avoid disturbances. Ultimately the Board of Trade denied their request, warning that accepting it would require opening “as many fondacos as their nations.”16 The Board’s unwitting recognition of the supplicants’ plurality of provenances, however, did little to mitigate an overarching sense of their distinctness, for

their life, and customs is [sic] very scandalous, and licentious, and in order to continue thus they search in every way to remain separate, much incited and prompted by brokers, and others… who benefit handsomely, and give them opportunity to live as they do in contempt of our religion, and as a bad example to the whole city…17

16 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 136, cc. 130v–131r (March 21, 1579).
While the Board identified commercial brokers as the main force behind the merchants’ demands, it also recognized an essentialized set of habits and customs that distinguished the supplicants. The trope of Turkish licentiousness was, of course, longstanding. It was part and parcel of early modern discourses about the “Turkish race.” The objectification of the supplicants’ ethnicity was confirmed by Public Dragoman Giacomo de Nores. His report to the Board of Trade in 1620 observed that, while the majority of Albanian and Bosnian merchants in Venice resided in the house of Frangia’s descendants in the parish of San Matteo, the “Asiatic Nation” is dispersed around the city, and is “of different practice and customs” than the rest. A similar logic underwrites the demands set forth by a group of Anatolian merchants (many of whom, it was suggested, came from military milieus, where they had served as janissaries and Sipahi elite cavalrymen) in 1625. This time, they forced an Ottoman dignitary to demand on their behalf a new fondaco, where they would be given separate apartments “to distinguish the nations of Bosnia from those of Istanbul and other regions.”

The above examples suggest the convergence of objectifying categories regarding Muslim Ottomans between the (patrician) Board of Trade, trans-imperial Public Dragomans, and at least some Ottoman merchants themselves. But despite strong pronouncements about the nature of Turkish customs and rituals, telling apart the


18 On the importance of “customs” and religious difference to medieval and early-modern racial thinking, see Braude 1997; Bartlett 2001.

19 Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Nov. 11, 1620).

20 Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 16, c.142r (Dec. 19, 1625). That real tensions between Istanbulite and Bosnian merchants existed is also suggested by a petition by the Istanbulite janissary-turned-merchant Ibrahim Celebi, where her narrated the difficulties he encountered in his dealings with Abaza, the Pasha of Bosnia, in attempting to ship to Venice via Split a great quantity of silk and other kinds of merchandise: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 22, unpaginated (June 21, 1631).
different groups residing in the fondaco sometimes proved rather difficult in actual practice. In 1645, shortly after the outbreak of the War of Crete, a concerned member of the Board of Trade, Girolamo da Ca’ da Pesaro, produced a report based on a “reliable source,” suggesting that merchants in the fondaco were accumulating weapons and, that since the Turks wear clothes that hardly distinguish them from Albanians and Bosnians, and since many of them are very experienced in the city, and well instructed in the language, they can and do show up in the shops, and buy directly from them without [the help of] another interpreter. The other [problem] is that they have close connection with Albanians, people of Perasto, and other people of the armed galleys and ships who buy it for them, and perhaps we could say that the Jews too buy it to give it to them.  

Two entwined problems emerge from Ca’ da Pesaro’s report: first, the difficulty of telling apart the different ethnic groups that reside in the fondaco based on their appearance, and especially distinguishing those that are potentially “Venetian-friendly” (Bosnians, Albanians) from those that are clearly not (Turks). A related problem has to do with merchants’ excessive familiarity with the city and command of the local language, which allow them to interact directly with shop owners, without the mediation and surveillance of brokers and dragomans. Beyond the problem of recognition lurks the deeper problem of misdirected affect. Even those groups considered potentially “Venetian-friendly,” like the Albanians and the people of Perasto (Montenegro), or unaffiliated, like the Jews, might be selling weapons to the Turks, in clear violation of Venetian trust. Remarkably, the category of “Turchi,” which was used unproblematically

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in 1621 to refer to all the fondaco’s intended residents, came to stand only two and a half decades later for a subset of it, and one whose contours were not easily knowable.

The tension between a clear-cut Christian-Muslim divide, rehearsed in religious rhetoric on the one hand, and the complexities of trans-imperial subjects’ shifting classifications by a vigilant state, on the other, became even more apparent in 1662. That year, the Venetian authorities attempted to move all Persian merchants sojourning in Venice into the fondaco. While prior to that point Persian merchants had never been explicitly exempted from the requirement to reside in the fondaco, the ambiguity of the category “Turchi” effectively left them outside it for over four decades. In response to the new demand, a group of Persian merchants suggested not only that the demand was unprecedented, but that ritual differences would make it dangerous for them to cohabit with the fondaco’s Ottoman tenants. The case, which triggered successive petitions, official reports, and a number of Senate resolutions over the summer months, involved many of the trans-imperial groups and individuals studied in this dissertation: several generations of Persian and Ottoman sojourners in Venice; the custodians of the fondaco, descendants of Greek commercial broker Frangia; several Armenian commercial brokers who had lodged Persian merchants in their houses for decades; Public Dragoman Pietro Fortis, who interpreted between the Persian merchants and the government; and, of course, Patrician members of the Board of Trade and the Senate. The Persian merchants’ petition, here translated in full, and the responses and decrees that followed it, encapsulate some of the major themes of the discourse about Ottoman alterity articulated by trans-imperial subjects active in the Venetian commercial sphere in the seventeenth century:
Having petitioned Your Serenity on other occasions we Muslims of Persia to let us keep enjoying our old liberty to be able to stay in the houses of our brokers, since the custodian of the Fondaco of the other Muslims unjustly wants to pester us and make us stay with the other Muslims, who are our enemies, opposed to us in law, religion, and Prince, We cannot do that, because we would kill each other, and our King of Persia will have us beheaded, and if we were to enter the Fondaco we would not be able to go back to our country. This is a novelty, since we are good friends of this Republic, and if we cannot stay remote and distant from our Turkish enemies, who are in said Fondaco, we would have to go to trade in other places, and we ask for nothing else but three months to sell our merchandise, and go away, and give notice to our King, if he concedes that we go into the Fondaco, we would return to Venice, but if he doesn’t so wish, we would not be able to do so, and would rather go to sleep in prison for these three months, or where Your Serenity should please, than in the Fondaco, and we supplicate for piety’s sake that you save our lives in this time, without going to the Fondaco, and suspend an order, that the Board of Trade has reissued contrary to Your Senate resolution of the 10 of this month, [an order] which wishes, contrary to said resolution, to put us in the Fondaco by force, without having taken [into consideration] the [necessary] information, and without examination, and then give us a separate house with a guardian where we Persians could stay, having always come to Venice with our merchandise, more than to other countries. We could not present our arguments to the Board of Trade because we do not have a lawyer, nor a dragoman nor anyone else, since everyone has abandoned us out of fear, and we do not know how to speak [Italian], therefore we supplicate Your Excellency not to abandon us, since you are most Pious masters and in the whole world it is spoken of your good justice.22

22 “Havendo altre volte suplicato la V[ostra] Ser[eni]ta noi Turchi di Persia di lasciarci godere la nostra antica liberta di poter star nelle Case dellì nostri sanseri, perché il Custode del Fontego di altri Turchi contro giust[iti]a vol assediarne, et farne star con li altri Turchi, che sono nostri nimici, contrarij di legge, de Religgione, e di Prencipe, Noi non lo podem fare, perché si amazzaressimo fra di noi, et il nostro Re di Persia ne fara butar via la testa, et scaudremo nel fontego non poderemo piu tornar nella nostra Patria. questa star una novita, che Noi semo boni amici di q[u]es]ta Republica, et quando non potemo star remoti, et lontani dallì nostri nimici Turchi, che sono in d.o Fontego, per forza bisogna andar a negociar in altre parti, et non volemo altro se non tre mesi di tempo di vender nostre mercancie, et andar via, et dar parte al Nostro Re, che se lui concendera, che noi andar in Fontego, noi eseguiremo ancora in Venecia, ma quando lui non vol, noi non lo potemo fare, et contentemo piu meglio andar in una preggion adormir q[u]es]ti tre mesi, o dove piace alla V[ostra] Ser[eni]ta, ma non in Fontego, la supplichemo per pieta salvarci la vita in q.to tempo, senza andar in Fontego, et far sospender un proclama, che hano fato li cinque[ue] Savij di novo contro la vostra parte del Senato delle 10 di q[u]es]to mese, che vogliono contro d[ett]a parte meteci per forza in Fontego, senza haver preso information, et saminar, et poi darci una Casa separata con un Guardian dove possiamo star Noi Persiani, che seguivano sempre in Vineca con nostre mercancie meglio, che in altro paese, Alli 5 Savij noi non potemo trovar nostra ragg.ne p[er]che non havemo un Avocato, ne Dragoman ne nissun altro perché tutti ne hano abbandonato per paura, et noi non saper parlar, onder supplichemo le V[ostre] E[cellenze] non abbandonarci voi, che sete pietissimi sig.ri et intutto il Mondo si dice della vostra bona giust[iti]a”. Collegio, Risposte di Dentro, b. 58, unpaginated (June 19, 1662).
The petition harps on several recurring themes in the discourse about foreign merchants in Venice: their presumed helplessness, linguistic incompetence, lack of relational resources, and confusion in the face of multiple magistracies with which they are expected to deal. The petitioners also play on emerging European ideas about Oriental despotism, by repeatedly insisting that their life would be jeopardized back home should they willingly move in with Ottoman subjects. Against a reductive vision of all Muslims as essentially the same, the petitioners insist on their fundamental difference from Ottoman Muslims. Rather than a religious logic for the confinement of Muslims to a separate residence, they suggest that the historical roots of the fondaco lie in political enmities between the Venetian and Ottoman states. Therefore, given the longstanding alliance between Venice and the Safavid Shah against the common Ottoman enemy, they should not be subjected to similar confinement.

The Board of Trade rejected these claims, and suggested that there’s no doubt, that the commission of the House of the Fondaco was decreed by the Most Excellent Senate for no other purpose but to have the Mohammedan Nations required to live there separately from Christians, as public and private service requires, as does above all the service of Religion, as was considered, and therefore if Persian Muslims would have had the freedom to take shelter wherever they wished, the Fondaco would have been superfluous, as no one would have any longer called himself simply a Muslim, but a Persian Muslim, and to tell them apart and recognize them for what they truly are is not so easy, therefore we consider it necessary to follow the orders established already at the time the Fondaco was built, so that Muslims of any and all conditions should have to live there.24

23 On the trope of “Oriental despotism” in early modern Venice, see Valensi 1990.
24 “Non poter cader in dubio, che la deputatione della Casa del Fontico non sia stata dall’Ecc[ellentissi]mo Senato decretata ad’oggetto, che le Nationi Mahomettane in esso havessero ad habitar Separatam[en]te da Christiani, cosi ricercando il publico, e privato Servitio, e q[ue]llo sopra tutto della Religione, com’è stato considerato, onde quando i Turchi Persiani havessero libertà di ricovrarsi, ove meglio volessero, sup[er]fluo sarebbe il Fontico, mentre ogni uno non più semplicem[en]te Turco, ma Turco Persiano si sarebbe denominare, et il far di questi la distintione, e la vera cognizione non è di cosi facile riuscita, che però la esecuzione de gli Ordeni già stabiliti nella errretionne del Fontico, stimiamo necessaria, aciò li
Using the less ambiguous “Mohammedan Nations” instead of the more common designation “Turchi,” the Board’s response leaves no doubt that a Muslim is a Muslim, and, furthermore, that this vision was shared by legislators 40 years earlier, even if the terminology was new. Both the Board’s response and the Senate’s resolution that was based on it rejected most of the supplicants’ premises. It insisted that the fondaco was meant to separate Muslims from Christians, and that it was quite hard to tell Turkish and Persian Muslims apart. Here, the semantic ambiguity of the term “Turchi” proved extremely productive once again. Although Venetian authorities were well aware of the fact that not all Ottoman subjects were Turks (or Muslims), and that not all Muslims were Turks (or even Ottoman subjects), it was quite “logical” to suggest that it was hard to tell apart different kinds of Muslims.

Contrary to the Board’s claims, evidence suggests that quite a few Persian merchants did in fact reside outside the fondaco prior to 1662. In 1643 a group of Armenian merchants petitioned the Board of Trade to allow two Armenian brokers to continue lodging Armenian and Persian merchants. They argued that the brokers lived elsewhere, and could not be considered “hoteliers” since “they do not provide utensils, nor operate anything the way it is customary for hoteliers, and these nations [Armenian and Persian] come to their houses of their own free will, unlike the Turks in the Fondaco. There is no doubt that if said brokers are obliged to pay hoteliers’ taxes, the burden will fall on merchants themselves, who when aggravated by more expenses will much more easily go to other cities…”\(^{25}\) Their request was endorsed.

\(^{25}\) “Non prestando utensili, nè operando cosa alcuna, come è ord.rio de albergatori et ricorrono queste
Conversely, the 1662 Senate resolution also cited a case from 1629 where special permission had been granted to a Persian to reside outside the fondaco as proof that this had been the exception, rather than the rule. More interestingly, it provided some proto-ethnographic observations in support of its resolution:

These Persian Muslims constantly talk with the other [Muslims] in the Squares, and come to the Fondaco not only on the occasion of the Muslim Bairams [Festivals], but also when someone dies, assisting in their burial rituals and dining and drinking with the Turks, and they even intervene in the negotiation of some of their businesses, or in resolving some other differences; and some of these Persian Muslims have received keys to a room in the Fondaco, and are therefore required to pay rent, although to enjoy the freedom of the others, they reside outside it…

Ultimately, the Senate decided that the six or so Persian merchants then present in Venice were expendable, and that if they were to take their business elsewhere no real damage to the Venetian economy would be done. One of the merchants, the Board suggested, had been living in Venice for years, without engaging in trade at all. The Board was not oblivious to the fact that behind the merchants’ petition stood interested commercial brokers, who profited from their close ties to their Persian lodgers. Here, again, the Board based its response on old notions of merchants’ lack of relational resources and dependency on brokers, oblivious to the ways in which this very dependency had become a rhetorical tool in the hands of localized trans-imperial subjects themselves.

nat[io]ni volontieri in d[ett]e Case non altrimenti che fanno li Turchi al Fontigo Ne hà dubbio che se d[et]ti sanseri foss[er]o ubligati all’Allbergaria, l’aggravio saria de stessi mer.ti, che quanto più fossero tenuti soccomber à spese, tanto più facilm[en]te capiteriano ad altre scale, con pregiud[iti]o del neg[oti]o di q[u]es[ta] Città”; Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 153, cc. 90v–91v (September 29, 1643); Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 4, fasc. 47 parte prima, cc. 11.3–11.3v (July 9, 1650); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 66 (June 30, 1666).

WHO’S A LEVANTINE?

Given its longstanding jurisdictional claims over all Ottoman and Safavid merchants in Venice, and its growing efforts to force all Muslims into the *Fondaco dei Turchi* regardless of provenance, the Board of Trade would seem an ideal institution in which overarching categories of Ottoman and Safavid alterity might have solidified. Yet, in the period 1570-1670 such categories are only nascent in the Board of Trade’s documents, and their use is remarkably inconsistent. Instead, the Venetian Board of Trade and its interlocutors frequently employed specific ethnonyms (Bosnians, Albanians, Greeks, Armenians) as well as more narrowly locale- or region-based group names (Cypriots, Corfiots, Athenians, Perastans, Dalmatians, Istanbulites). Broader categories, such as “Turchi,” and, increasingly, “Levantini,” could also refer to all or part of the Ottoman Empire’s many subject populations, often eliding religious and linguistic specificity.

The plethora of ethnolinguistic categories in circulation in the Board of Trade’s discourse had the effect of magnifying rather than minimizing the Ottoman Empire’s ethnic diversity in the Venetian commercial sphere. For instance, in 1636, the Board affirmed that the *terzo* tax applied to “the nations of Armenians, Vlachs, Bogdans, Moldavians, Persians, and Bosnians.”27 This list includes the obsolete category of “Bogdans”—a medieval name for Moldavians—as well as a series of ethnonyms of

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27 “Le Nationi de Armeni, Valachi, Bogodani, Moldavi, Persiani, et Bossinesi...” Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 147, fasc. 1, unpaginated (May 31, 1636). See also Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 27 (June 20, 1636); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 151, cc. 37–38 (Dec. 30, 1636).
varying relationship to the Ottoman state: The Moldavians and Vlachs were (Christian) subjects of principalities which were tribute payers of the Sultan. Conversely, the Bosnians were primarily Muslim inhabitants of one of the Empire’s most solidly Ottomanized provinces. Persians, on the other hand, were subjects of the Safavid Empire, at war with the Ottomans, and not Ottoman subjects at all, while the Armenians could be either Ottoman, Safavid, or indeed Venetian subjects. Thus, this list encompasses and renders equal a great diversity of religious and juridical positions over a great expanse of land, extending from the Western Balkans to Central Asia. Although later in the same document the Board also mentions the merchandise of Greeks as similarly subject to taxation, it omits other Ottoman and Safavid ethnic groups well represented among merchants in Venice, including Albanians. A document of 1642 confirmed that the nations subject to the terzo tax were “Tiurchi [sic], Valachi, Bossinesi, Persiani, Armeni, Bogodani, Moldavi, et Hebrei…”28 In another case in 1658, a group of merchants who were “Greeks, Ponentine and Levantine Jews, and Turkish subjects” petitioned the Senate to reaffirm the Board of Trade’s singular jurisdiction over their cases.29 Another petition submitted two years later was signed by “the nation of Greek, Turkish, and Armenian merchants.”30

28 Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 147, fasc. 2, unpaginated (Feb. 1, 1641 m.v.).
30 “La natione de mercanti Greci, Turchi, et Armeni”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 55, unpaginated (Sept. 1660). While the use of “nation” in the singular in the petition implies unity, the text does not invoke any category to capture the petitioners’ presumably shared status as Ottoman subjects in Venice. Distinctions between Muslim and non-Muslim “people of the book,” as well as between Orthodox and Catholic Christians, were carefully observed by the early modern Ottoman state. Whether in this case the specific wording was due to an effort to downplay the petitioners’ uneasy status as the subjects of an enemy state, or because of their fundamentally different status within Ottoman contexts is hard to gauge. On Ottoman ethno-religious distinctions, see Goffman 1994.
How did these categories become salient in the Venetian commercial sphere? Who were the main agents of their introduction, elaboration, and transformation? And to what extent can we link their shifting ranges to broader transformations in the geopolitics of the early modern Mediterranean?

In a pathbreaking article in 1980, Giorgio Vercellin outlined the arc of development of Orientalist categories in the Venetian commercial sphere. According to Vercellin, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries a distinction had developed between “Turks” (“turchi”) and “merchants of nations subject to the Turks” (“di nationi suddite turchesche”). This distinction would give way to an all-encompassing category of “orientals” (“orientali”) by the later eighteenth century.31

To explain this shift, we need to look at the trans-imperial context of trans-imperial subjects’ petitioning practices. Indeed, this context involved both Ottoman and Venetian practices of governmentality. In the Ottoman domain, as Daniel Goffman shows, the most common term used in seventeenth-century official documents to describe socio-religious communities was taife, referring to “any group that was in a position dependent upon the state.”32 In this sense, the ambiguity and multivalence of collective categories invoked by trans-imperial supplicants in Venice was likely shaped by their Ottoman experiences, where the government “was marvelously versatile in its governance of its diverse population” and where, “in the commercial sphere… the theoretical walls dividing Ottoman religious and political communities were particularly porous.”33

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31 Vercellin 1980: 70.
32 Goffman 1994: 139.
At the same time, the term “nation,” had its own genealogy, which was intimately bound to the history of foreign travel, and the formation of diasporic consciousness among medieval merchants and scholars. For Cicero, nation was a community of foreigners, whose very groupness was defined by their foreign residency. Similarly, in the late Middle Ages “nation” was first used to define a shared place of provenance for foreign students’ associations at the universities of Paris, Bologna, and Padua.\textsuperscript{34} By the late thirteenth century, the term was extended from student unions to groups of church council delegates, and, increasingly, came to denote a loose bond of territorial organization among individual members, with elite connotations, always in foreign contexts.\textsuperscript{35} The eastern Mediterranean was a prime location for the articulation of these meanings, for many of the institutions of medieval commerce (including commercial brokerage and fondacos) first developed there before becoming ubiquitous on the Italian peninsula.\textsuperscript{36}

To understand the gradual transformation of ethnic and geopolitical categories it is thus important to examine the interplay between the terms invoked by the patrician members of the Board of Trade and their trans-imperial interlocutors, whether commercial brokers, Public Dragomans, or various groups of Ottoman and Safavid merchants who petitioned the board either individually or collectively. In 1582, two Bosnian merchants, Hassan and Risuan, heads of “la Nation Turcha Bossinese,” petitioned the Venetian Board of Trade to appoint additional commercial brokers who

\textsuperscript{34} For example, the “Natio Germanica” in Bologna in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries included students not only from a variety of German-speaking regions, but also from the Netherlands, Scandinavia, the Baltic, Besançon and Toul. See Schmutz 2000. On the University of Padua, and its “ultramontane” and “cismontane” nations, see Woolfson 1998: 10–38.

\textsuperscript{35} Zernatto 1944; Post 1974; Petti Balbi 2001; Stergio 2006: 21.

\textsuperscript{36} Ashtor and Kedar 1992; Jacoby 1997; Constable 2003.
spoke “our language.” According to their petition, only three licensed brokers spoke their language and, since the three acted in concert, they practically counted as one.

Public Dragoman Michiel Membré also failed to help them, although his task, according to the petitioners, was precisely to protect foreign merchants’ interests and prevent them from being defrauded by brokers “of bad quality.”37 By claiming to speak a distinct language and to constitute a separate nation, a collective entity entitled to its own institutionalized protections, the petitioners distinguished themselves from other kinds of Balkan Ottoman subjects trading in Venice.

Curiously, the Board of Trade interpreted the request as seeking brokers who spoke “the Slavic language.” Whereas the petitioners used neither “Slavic” nor “Bosnian” as linguistic descriptors, and, indeed, left identification of their language vague, the Board collapsed any dialectal distinctions, to suggest that the petitioners’ language was simply Slavic, spoken by many other merchants in Venice. It countered the petitioners’ claims by presenting its own figures: According to its survey, conducted by interviewing the heads of the brokers’ guild as well as select Turkish merchants (i.e. representing both parties, and based on concrete evidence), Venice boasted no less than 20 Turkish-speaking brokers, including 4 Slavic speakers. Those, the Board concluded, are sufficient and good to serve that nation, for although it is said that those Bosnian Turks use the Slavic language, and that they need brokers who know it, we view this as of no consideration, since all those Turks, who know the Slavic language, use, and similarly speak the Turkish language…38

37 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 7, c. 127 (June 21, 1582).
38 “Siano sufficienti et buoni per servitio di detta nattonne, che se bene vien detto, che loro Turchi bossinesi si servono della lingua schiava, et ch’habbino bisogno di sanseri che sapino q[ue]lla, questo noi reputamo de niuna co[n]sideratione, perciocche tutti essi Turchi, che sano la lingua schiava, usano, et parlano medesim[amen]te in lingua Turca”: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 137, cc. 68r–v (July 31, 1582).
Against the merchants’ attempt to claim linguistic distinctiveness, the Board thus responded with not only a view of all Slavic languages as essentially the same, but with specific observations about the inherent bilingualism of Balkan Muslims, whose competence in Turkish, it suggested, obviated the need to accommodate their linguistic particularities.

The Board’s response on this occasion was unequivocal in its refusal to make language-based concessions to foreign merchants. Yet similar linguistic arguments were to figure time and again in merchants’ petitions for collective privileges. In a petition by commercial broker Marcantonio degli Eletti and other members of the brokers’ guild, put forward in 1584, the supplicants claimed that Turkish merchants’ ignorance of the Italian language occasioned many opportunities for unscrupulous brokers to defraud and overcharge them and force them into illegal transactions involving installment payments. Furthermore, the supplicants repeated the claims that Public Dragoman Membré had failed to protect merchants’ interest by neglecting to be present during the conclusion of deals, and, furthermore, that he accepted bribes from unlicensed brokers to turn a blind eye on their operations.39 Here it was not Ottoman merchants who voiced concerns about their linguistic proficiency, but rather brokers, whose own interests clearly prompted their emphasis of Ottoman merchants’ foreignness and special needs.

The Board of Trade also used foreign merchants’ alleged linguistic incompetence as an occasional argument for special concessions. In 1586, it endorsed a request by Manusso Cresci, a merchant from Malvasia, to be appointed consul of the “Athenian nation” in Venice, on the grounds that the few Athenian merchants in the city were

39 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 7, c. 255 (April 26, 1584).
“ignorant both of the Italian language and of the orders and laws of this city,” and thus needed a person to protect their interests.\(^{40}\) Conversely, in 1588 it rejected a request by the Papacy to establish a consul in Venice who would represent merchants from the Pontifical state trading in the city. In its response, the Board conceded that such consulates were established for Spain and France, but that, at least in the latter case, “subjects of that Crown arrived from the farthest parts and were most inexperienced in the business and customs of this city, and of a different language.”\(^{41}\) These arguments seem to have been meant to keep the Papacy from stationing in Venice another official representative, who would send sensitive news from the Serenissima. Nevertheless, language served as a reasonable excuse to justify the Board’s uneven hand in the two cases.\(^{42}\)

In 1650, the “Armenian nation” supplicated the Venetian Senate for exemption from the terzo tax, which was used to finance the activities of dragoman Pietro Fortis. The petitioners suggested they would have been more than happy to pay the tax had they had any use for the interpreter’s services. Since all Armenian merchants, they claimed, spoke Italian and used their own Armenian commercial brokers, they had no need for the dragoman.\(^{43}\) In 1658, the “ambassadors of the people of Niscichì” (Nikšić, Montenegro) expressed their concern about the difficulties their merchants encountered in Venice due

\(^{40}\) “Li qual pochi come ignazi, et della lingua Italiana, et delle ordeni et leggi di questa citta hanno p[er] il vero bisogno di persona, che difenda, et aiuti loro in q[ue]lle cose, che li occorressero à beneficio di detta nattione”: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b.137, cc. 161v (March 26, 1586).


\(^{42}\) A later concession of a consulate to the merchants of Hamburg made no reference to language as a reason to grant their request: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 74v–75r (April 30, 1616).

\(^{43}\) Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 41, unpaginated (March 9, 1650). As noted above, however, there is much evidence suggests that Fortis actually provided frequent services to various Armenian merchants, as his name figures in several civil trials, notarial deeds, and other documents produced by Armenian merchants in commercial matters.
to their ignorance of the Italian language, and petitioned to have a specific broker, Nicolò Scura, appointed to assist them.44

Linguistic arguments served foreign merchants in Venice to request other concessions, besides the appointment of brokers and interpreters. In 1654, “the Greek nation” requested that the Venetian government allow the lawyer Anzolo Cozzi to represent their cases in front of the magistracy of the Syndic, even though he was Athenian-born, rather than Venetian. The petitioners explained that many of them did not command any language but their native Greek and thus needed the services of someone who “understands their language.”45 Even more unusual is a petition from 1596 by the “nation of Levantine Jews” to allow them to purchase bread and redistribute it within the ghetto, so that “the poor Jewish foreigner, who knows neither the Italian language, nor anything about the customs of the city, is not forced, with notable, and evident danger, to leave the ghetto to have bread.”46 Here, the same group that on many other occasions was quick to note its localness by virtue of de facto long residence, proclaimed its juridical status as “viandanti,” i.e. transient residents.47

While “Bosnians,” “Athenians,” or “Spaniards” were not recognized by the Venetian Board of Trade as separate categories for tax purposes, their very recognition as linguistic groups might have served as a first step towards greater economic privileges. Certainly, Levantine Jews, who repeatedly harped on their foreignness in Venice, enjoyed

44 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 50, unpaginated (April 1, 1658).
45 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 45, unpaginated (March 23, 1654). A decade later, Cozzi was involved in a major civil litigations that ripped apart the Armenian community in Venice: AdC, Misc. Civil, b. 210, fasc. 2, unpaginated (Jan. 29, 1664 m.v.).
46 “Accio che il povero heb.o forast.o che non ha la lingua Italiana, nè sà alcun uso della Città non sij con suo notabile, et evidente pericolo astretto ad’uscir di Ghetto, per haver pane”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 10, c. 91 (March 31,1596).
extensive protections, both commercial and otherwise, which no other Jews in Venice, perceived as more localized, much less any other foreign merchants, could ever achieve.\(^{48}\) Similarly, “Bosnian” became a familiar category in Venetian governmental discourses about Ottoman merchants in Venice, as evidenced, among other things, by their special mention in the 1621 regulations for the *Fondaco dei Turchi*, where, as we saw, Bosnians and Albanians were to live separately from “Asiatics.”

If language served as an effective index of foreignness, religion proved more ambiguous, signaling at times difference, but at others helping rather to underscore the putative loyalty of Christian Ottoman subjects to Venice. In 1636 Luca Miculich sought recognition as a Venetian subject despite his Bosnian provenance. According to his petition, he had been born a Catholic, and had spent many years living as a Franciscan Tertiary among friars in Dalmatia and Istria.\(^{49}\) The following year, a group of merchants who described themselves as “Patinioti” petitioned the Senate for commercial privileges. Although they were Ottoman subjects, they professed their collective loyalty to Venice, “it being famous, that our island, and also the neighboring ones, are only inhabited by Christians, servants of Your Serenity.”\(^{50}\)

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\(^{48}\) On differences among Venice’s various Jewish communities, see Davis and Ravid 2001; Favero and Trivellato 2004. See also my discussion below of the emergence of the category of “Levantine Jews” in the 1540s.

\(^{49}\) Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 27, unpaginated (May 20, 1636). On Bosnian Catholics, see Fine 1996.

\(^{50}\) “Essendo notorio, che nell’Isola n[ost]ra, & anco le convicine non son habitate, se non da soli [Christi]ani, servi di V[ost]ra Ser[eni]tà”. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 28, unpaginated (Aug. 26, 1637). See also Giorgio da Carcusi’s petition where he repeated the assertion that “the Patignoti merchants are humble servants of Your Serenity, even though they are Turkish subjects” (“Li mercanti Patignoti servi humil[issimi] della Ser[eni]tà V[ostra] seben sudditi Turcheschi.”) Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 39, unpaginated (July 29, 1648). I have not been able to locate an island or a town by the name of Patinios. Today, it is a common surname in the region of Kyrenia, in northern Cyprus. Alex Patinios, personal communication, May 15, 2006.
Whether the Venetian-Ottoman War of Crete, which broke out in 1645 made religion a particularly necessary (and effective) rhetorical tool in Christian Ottoman merchants’ dealings with the Venetian government is hard to gauge. But the proliferation of religious-based arguments from the mid 1640s is certainly striking. Indeed, religious descriptors proved particularly useful in the case of Ottoman subjects who soon after the beginning of the war wished to foreground an unambiguous position on the Venetian-Ottoman grid of affect. In early 1646, shortly after the outbreak of the war, a group of Ottoman silk and wool merchants who found themselves stranded in Venice petitioned the Senate for permission to head back home after an eight-month sojourn in the Lagoon. They described themselves not simply as “Bosnians,” but as “Bosnian Christians.”

A couple of weeks later, Zorzi and Diodato, Armenian merchants from Transylvania, similarly sought permission to leave the city after concluding their business there, reminding the Senate that similar concessions had recently been made by the Board of Trade “to two other Christian merchants from Transylvania, as are we.”

A few months later, three Bosnian merchants protested the mistaken taxation on their merchandise as if it belonged to Turks (i.e. Muslims), and reminded the Senate that “we are Christians, even though subjects [of the Ottomans] and so devoted [to the hope] that God pleases to grant the vows of our hearts for the exaltation of Christianity.”

Two aspects of this petition stand out: that the supplicants avoid explicitly naming the Ottoman Sultan as their sovereign, and that they invoke religion to insert themselves in a unified Christian

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51 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 37, unpaginated (March 5, 1646).
52 Ibid. (March 28, 1646).
53 Ibid. (Aug. 20, 1646).
moral community, thus transforming a territorial conflict over the colony of Crete into a religious war, in which they can unquestionably ally themselves with Venice.

Similarly, in early 1663, the “Armenian Nation” petitioned the Senate to be exempted from the *terzo* tax (and not for the first time). After linguistic arguments for exemption had failed them in 1650, this time they claimed that the fact they were Christian should distinguish them from other foreign merchants whose transactions were subject to the tax. They provided the following historical narrative about the circumstances of the tax’s introduction and how Jewish merchants came to be subjected to it. The *terzo*, they suggested,

owed its origins to the entrance to this city of Turkish [Muslim?] traders, due to whom, whether in order that they would not be disappointed as foreigners, or would feel extra burden as infidels, was established the law, in which later the Jews were also included.54

According to this narrative, the subjection of Jews to the *terzo* was meant not as an economic measure, but as a means to avoid offending another foreign group, the Muslim Turks.

On other occasions, Armenian merchants sought to involve the Venetian government in their litigations with other Ottoman subjects, presumably under the assumption that their Christian faith would make the authorities more favorable to their plight.55 It should be noted, however, that Armenians’ use of religious rhetoric to

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54 “Il terzo delle Sensarie, trasse l'origine dall'ingresso, che in questa Città facevano li Turchi negotianti, à debito de' quali, ò perche non fossero delusi come Forrastieri, ò sentissero maggior aggravio come infideli, fu stabilito l'ordine, in cui posteriormente furono inclusi anco gl'hebrei”. Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 59, unpaginated (Jan. 10, 1662).

55 See, especially, the case of the Armenian merchant Amurat from Skopje, who in 1605 sought the Venetian government’s assistance in prosecuting two other (Muslim) merchants from Skopje, who were in Venice, and who, Amurat claimed, had been responsible for his brother Simon’s death, and had run away. The Board’s investigation revealed that in fact the two had been tried by Ottoman magistracies and found not guilty. In any case, the Board concluded, as the crimes had been committed on Ottoman soil, there was
distinguish themselves from Muslim Ottoman and Safavid subjects ultimately had only limited success in penetrating Venetian official discourse.\textsuperscript{56} This may have been a result, at least in part, of Venetian confusion as to Armenians’ relationship to Catholic Orthodoxy. This confusion stemmed from the complex situation of the Armenian Church in the Ottoman and Safavid empires, as well as from missionary attempts to effect the mass conversion of Armenians to Catholicism by converting community leaders in Istanbul and Isfahan in the mid seventeenth century, efforts in which Venice was implicitly and explicitly involved.\textsuperscript{57}

The above examples underscore the great diversity of ethnonyms invoked in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venetian commercial discourse. While new ethnolinguistic and geographical collective categories certainly continued to crop up in Venetian commercial documents throughout the period, one also notices the gradual consolidation of a recently-introduced overarching category, “Levantines,” or those “of

\textsuperscript{56} In fact, Armenians were often suspected by Venetians as potentially less attached to the Christian creed than others precisely because of their purported familiarity with Muslim languages and customs. Stories about Armenians’ allegedly ambiguous religious affiliation were frequently mediated by other trans-imperial subjects. For example, in 1571 Marcantonio degli Eletti, a commercial broker of Jewish origins (he converted to Christianity in 1569), denounced to the Holy Office an Armenian named Giacomo as purportedly having vilified the Holy Virgin and having claimed that the Muslim God was better than the Christian one. Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 30, fasc. 32, (Jan. 2, 1571 m.v.). One of the first allegations leveled by the Armenian prelate (and Catholic convert) Thomas of Aleppo against the membership of the Venetian Armenian congregation in 1649 was their practice of kidnapping local boys to be gifted to Muslims in the Ottoman and Safavid empires. Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 105, cc. 15r–v (April 3, 1653, testimony of Meliton Armeno).

\textsuperscript{57} See, for example, the 1609 petition by several dozen Catholic Armenians in New Julfa (near Isfahan), asking the Pope to send them an Italian patriarch and ambassador to educate them in matters of religion and represent them in the Shah’s court, copied to the Venetian State Inquisitors: Inquisitori di Stato, b. 516, unpaginated (1609). Another case in point is the struggle among Venice’s Armenian community to rid themselves of Tomasо Vartabed, an Aleppo-born Armenian prelate and the former Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, who converted to Catholicism by a Roman missionaries in 1634, was smuggled to Poland, was chased away from Leghorn, and ended up in Venice: Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 105, unpaginated (Feb. 25, 1649 m.v. –Nov. 17, 1655); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 155, cc. 62r–64v (Sept. 24, 1655–Nov. 17, 1655); Cinque Savii, Seconda series, b. 4, fasc. 47, cc. 12r–15r (Sept. 24, 1655); Inquisitori di Stato, b. 527, fasc. 1, c. 10v (April 20, 1656). See also Galanus 1664.
the Levant.” It appears, for example, in a Board of Trade report to the Senate concerning
the belongings of a certain Hajji Mehmed, an Ottoman merchant who had died in Venice
in 1656. In concluding its report, the Board asserts that it alone has oversight “in matters
pertaining to trade, especially that of Turks, Jews, and others of the Levant.”

The term “Levant” itself was, in early modern Venetian usage, rather ambiguous.
In some contexts, it referred to Venice’s Mediterranean maritime colonies, particularly
Greek-speaking ones, sometimes also known by other terms, such as “Oltremare” (i.e.
“overseas”) and “Romania.” This usage of the term “Levant” to refer to the Venetian
maritime colonies was quite prevalent in petitions by colonial subjects themselves. For
example, in 1629 the Corfiot Stamo Redastama petitioned the Senate concerning the
recent confiscation by the island’s Patriarch of a monastery Redastama built. His petition
described his actions as “an ordinary and most common thing, not only in Corfù, but in
all the Churches of the Levant subjected to Your Serenity.” This understanding of the
Levant was common in other language communities too. The English writer and diarist
John Evelyn’s 1658 translation of Nicolas de Bonnefons’s The French Gardiner [sic]
asserts that the Italians import cauliflower seeds “from Candia [i.e. Crete] and other

58 “Nelli affari spettanti alla mercantia, massime de Turchi, ebrei, et altri del Levante”: Cinque Savii,
Seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 3, unpaginated (March 14, 1656).
59 This definition of the Levant may have had its roots in the treaty between Charlemagne and the
Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I in 803-810, which set the boundaries between the western and eastern
empires, and defined the Levant as those territories east of the Adriatic Sea. By the sixteenth century, the
jurisdiction of the Venetian Syndics of the Levant came to include the Adriatic coastline (including Istria)
as well. On the magistracies of “Sindici inquisitori in Levante,” and “Provveditore generale del Levante,”
see Da Mosto 1937: 32, 47, 50, 58, 139, 213; Tiepolo 1994: 919–21; Dudan 1933; Dudan 1938; Eufe 2003:
60 “Cosa ordinaria, et osservatissima non pure in Corfù, ma in tutte le chiese di Levante sogette à Vostra
Serenità”: Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 20, unpaginated (March 20, 1629).
Levantine parts.”

Evelyn’s *Navigation and Commerce, their Original and Progress* (1674) lists “The Levantine parts, Creete [sic], Rhodes, and Cyprus, &c.”

In other contexts, “Levant” could denote rather the Ottoman-controlled coastline of the eastern Mediterranean. For example, in 1658 a Neapolitan merchant, Gianlorenzo Santa Chiara, petitioned the Venetian government for a patent for the importation of coffee, a potion popular, he informed the readers, in the main cities “of the Levant, particularly in Istanbul, Cairo, Izmir, and Alexandria.”

In yet other cases, the “Levant” encompassed both Venetian and Ottoman territories, as in Venetian ambassador Pietro Contarini’s *relazione* from England in 1618. Contarini mentions that in addition to the India Company, another English company trades in places “of the Levant, such as Scythia, Alexandria, Istanbul, Zante, and Venice.”

Here, Contarini clearly adopted an English perspective, according to which Venice itself was part of the “Levant.” Similarly, John Evelyn’s introduction to the reader in *The history of the three late, famous impostors, viz. Padre Ottomano, Mahomed Bei and Sabatai Sevi* (1669) mentions “Malta, and other Levantine parts.”

The Levant, then, could extend all the way from the Adriatic to North Africa. Unlike the long-standing but under-defined and shifting “Levant,” its derivative adjective, “Levantine,” appeared later, and, initially, had a more circumscribed semantic

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61 Bonnefons 1658: 167–68. Unfortunately, I was not able to consult de Bonnefons’s original French text, published in Amsterdam in 1651.
62 Evelyn 1674: 34.
63 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 50, unpaginated (Aug. 23, 1658). It is precisely in this period that Jews of Iberian descent “slowly assimilated or exiled to the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire the native Romaniote Jewry.” Goffman 1990: 78.
65 Evelyn 1669: unpaginated.
range. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venice it referred primarily to a subset of Sephardic Jewish merchants, namely those who had sojourned in the Ottoman Empire prior to their arrival in the Lagoon, and who enjoyed the protection of the Porte. The overwhelming majority of references to Levantini in Venetian documents concern this group, rather than either Muslim or Christian Ottoman or Safavid subjects.

The first half century (1540-1590) of the Levantini’s settlement in Venice established many of the features which eventually came to define “Levantine nations” as a whole: internal religious autonomy and representation by a consul, summary juridical procedures under the sole jurisdiction of the Board of Trade, and the fiction of non-residency (and hence non-subjecthood). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Levantine Jews were the only group other than Venetian cittadini originarii allowed to trade between Venice and the Levant. Moreover, Levantine Jews themselves emphasized their distinct groupness vis-à-vis the “Tedeschi” (i.e. “German”) Jews who had long lived in Venice and who, as moneylenders and traders in second-hand clothes, were greatly disadvantaged economically. From early on, the “Levantini” were often lumped together with the “Ponentini,” i.e. those Jews of Iberian descent who had not sojourned in the Ottoman Empire but rather in Holland and other European commercial centers. Many Levantini and Ponentini were members of the same families, and

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66 Arbel 2001. According to Benjamin Ravid, “Levantine Jews” were first singled out from other Jews in Venice in 1541, when the Senate recognized their great contribution to trade and granted them additional rooms for their lodging “so that they shall have greater reason to come to the city to its advantage”: Ravid 1976: 190.

67 The first “consul of the Levantini” in Venice was Hayyim Saruq, a prominent Jewish merchant born in the Ottoman Empire, who spent decades in Venice managing business in Zante, Istanbul, and elsewhere. See Arbel 1995: 160. A detailed history of Jewish consuls in the early modern Mediterranean, and their relationship to other forms of consulateship, as well as to notions of community and ethnic distinctness is yet to be written. On Jewish consuls in the Ottoman Empire, see Shmuelevitz 1984: 147–49. On British, French, Dutch and Venetian consuls there, see Steensgaard 1967.
conducted business together. In a proposed charter in 1589 drafted by Daniel Rodriga, the consul of the Ponentini, he specifically asked the Venetian authorities for the exemption of his fellow Ponentines and Levantines from any communal taxation shouldered by the Tedeschi. As Levantines were to engage exclusively in trade, they were to pay only customs duties.68 Three years previously, the Board of Trade became the unappealable court for all litigation between Jewish and Ottoman merchants and assumed jurisdiction over all matters of Levantine Jewish ritual and residency in the city.69 In endorsing the 1589 charter for the Levantines, the Board reserved for itself the right to determine membership in the Levantine nation. By basing its decisions on individuals’ commercial usefulness the Board thus further institutionalized the link between the category of “Levantines” and Venetian-focused mercantile activity in the eastern Mediterranean.

Only gradually, in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did the category “Levantini” extend from Ottoman Jews to the collectivity of Ottoman (and Safavid) subjects irrespective of religion, particularly when operating in Venice and other Italian commercial hubs. In some of its early uses, it is impossible to determine which of the definitions of “Levantines” was intended, as in Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo’s statement that “there is great trafficking in merchandise in this city… with Levantines who bring other wares, like wax and camlets.”70 Significantly, some of the clearest early references to “Levantini” as the collectivity of merchants from the Levant came not from officialdom, but rather from petitions by trans-imperial subjects themselves, particularly

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70 Sanuto 1969: LVIII-II, cited in Battaglia 1973: 1007. I was not able to locate this quote myself. It is vague enough to raise the possibility that Sanuto was actually referring to Levantine Jews.
Cypriot émigrés who aspired to become commercial brokers. For example, on numerous occasions throughout the 1570s the Cypriot Filippo Emanuel, Michiel Membré’s nephew, boasted of his knowledge of the “Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and Persian,” and sought appointment as a broker of Levantine merchants, so he could support himself. Filippo had been briefly enslaved in Istanbul prior to his arrival in Venice.  

Another petition for a license to exercise commercial brokerage “with the Levantine nation” was submitted in 1573 by Giulio Torquato, possibly a Cypriot too, shortly after his release from captivity by Maltese pirates. A third such petition was submitted in 1580 by an Armenian named Gioane de Santo, who cited his command of Turkish, Armenian, Slavic, and Italian. A fourth trans-imperial subject, Francesco q. Sinan Bey, a merchant born to an enslaved Cypriot woman and her Muslim Ottoman master, and now converted to Christianity, petitioned in 1602 to become a broker “of Jews, Turks, and other Levantine nations.”

Although it is hard to establish whether this use of “Levantini” to refer to all Ottoman merchants was introduced into Venetian commercial discourse by trans-imperial commercial brokers, the earliest such use of the term in Venetian official documents I have come across postdates these petitions by over a decade. A 1586 Senate decree refers to “the Levantine merchants who feel themselves discriminated against.”

Another decade passed before the Board of Trade mentioned that the terzo had been...
applied in 1587 “not only to the business of the Turkish nation, but of any other
Levantine subject.”76 In 1599, when it assessed Giacomo de Nores’s performance as
Public Dragoman, the Board mentioned that his predecessor Michiel Membré had
interpreted for “‘Turks, Greeks, and other Levantine nations.’”77

While the range of possible meanings of the category “Levantini” remained fairly
stable throughout the period, its prototypical use shifted somewhat with its gradual
transformation from an adjective to a noun.78 If all Ottoman and Safavid merchants in
Venice could be—and were—on occasion included under the definition of Levantini,
which subsets of it came to be seen as the prototypical ones shifted over time and context.
A report in 1621 by Public Dragoman Giacomo de Nores spoke of “‘Asiatic Turks,
Armenians, and other Levantines, who live scattered around the city.’”79 For Nores, at
least in this case, both Muslims and Christians fell under this category, and it was
implicitly their sojourn in Venice, away from their home, which made them
“Levantines.” The Bukhara-born convert Teodoro Dandolo, whom we met in the
opening of the previous chapter, asked in 1615 to become broker of “‘Turks and
Levantines,’” implying that the two categories were mutually exclusive.80 The Board of
Trade’s review in 1620 of de Nores’s request for a salary increase recalled that he had
been given permission to “collect a third of the brokerage fees of Greeks, Armenians, and

76 “Non solament[e] de essa natio Turchesca, ma de qualsivoglia altro suddito levantino”: Senato Mar,
filza 128, unpaginated (Feb. 22, 1594 m.v.).
77 “Turchi, Greci, et altre nazioni Levantine”: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 140, c. 48 (March 31, 1599).
78 The concepts of “extension” and “intension” refer, very briefly, to “the timeless class of all things which
properly ‘fall under’ or are described by” a term and to its “defining characteristics,” respectively. Swartz
1997.
79 “‘Turchi Assiatici, Armeni, et altri Levantini, che habitano sparsi p[er] la Città’”: Cinque Savii, Seconda
serie, b. 187, fasc. 1, unpaginated (March 29, 1621).
80 Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 31r–v (Feb. 14, 1614 m.v.); Ufficio della Bolla Ducale, Grazie del
Maggior Consiglio, reg. 8, c. 76v (Sept. 23, 1615).
other Levantines, as one collects that of Turks, and Jews….”

Levantines, in this formulation, were Christian Ottoman (and possibly Safavid) subjects, a possible legacy of the early formulation of the Levant as the domain of the Eastern Churches. This definition of Levantines as non-Muslim Ottoman subjects also presaged the nineteenth-century definition of Levantines as Catholic Ottoman subjects of European descent, marked by distinctly “European” clothes and language. Giuseppe Struppiolo, a Venetian physician who had sojourned in the Ottoman Empire for many years and, upon returning to Venice, was rumored by some of his neighbors to have “turned Muslim,” was reported in the testimony of Pietro Marpegano, a 25-year old commercial broker, to have walked around for a while “dressed as a Turk with a cravat, with shoes in the Levantine style…” He was now “dressed with a cravat in the Greek style, and a cloak above, and an ordinary black hat on his head.” For this young broker, the “Levantine” sartorial style was neither Turkish, nor Greek, but clearly related to both. A year later, in 1633, the Senate decreed that all legal controversies among “Levantine Turks, and other Turkish subjects” should be referred to the Board of Trade. Here, a distinction

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82 On the meanings of “Levantines” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Schmitt 2005: 57–58 and passim.
83 “Già un’anno fà lui vene à Venetia, vestito da turco, et andò un pezzo vestito da turco con una cravata, con scarpe alla levantina... et hora và vestito con una crovata alla greca, et un ferrariol sopra, et in testa capel negro ordinario”: Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 89, c. 2r (May 6, 1632).
84 Clothes “alla levantina” “di damasco turchino fodrata di canzante con maniche e bavari” (“of deep blue damask lined with iridescent silk with sleeves and collars”) were already listed in the inventory of Alfonso II d’Este in 1598. See Battaglia 1973: 1007. Dressing “alla greca” could mean very different things: Sanudo describes a young Venetian nobleman dressed in expensive gilded cloth as “vestito d’oro à la grecha.” Sanudo I: 402. On the other hand, Chris Pastore notes that in late sixteenth-century Florence, “artists working for the Grand Dukes repeatedly conflated contemporary Turks with ancient Greeks and Romans” so that even balloon pants and turbans could be cast as dressed “alla greca.” Pastore 2006; Pastore forthcoming. On “exotic” and “oriental” clothes as the marks of foreigners in cinquecento Venice, see also Preto 1975: 119; Newton 1988: 132–44; Wilson 2005.
85 “Controversie vertenti trà Turchi Levantini, et altri sudditi Turcheschi dovessero esser divolute al
was made between Turkish and non-Turkish (or non Muslim?) Ottoman subjects, but the descriptor “Levantine” was attached to the former, rather than to the latter. The semantic range of “Levantine” shifted again in the 1640s, when Armenian merchants in Venice began identifying themselves in notarial deeds and in petitions to Venetian authorities as either “Levantine Armenians” or “Persian Armenians.” The contexts for this specific use are multiple, and cannot be properly addressed here. Briefly, they seem to relate to struggles within the Armenian community over ritual practice and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, to increasing Venetian-Ottoman hostilities with the ongoing War of Crete, and to special commercial privileges guaranteed to Persian merchants in Venice in an effort to resuscitate trade in spite of the war. It was thus in Safavid subjects’ best interest to distinguish themselves from Ottoman subjects when trading in Venice, and, indeed, the term “Persian Armenian” appears in Venetian documents earlier, and more frequently, than “Levantine Armenian.” That Ottoman Armenians were identified as “Levantine” rather than as “Ottoman” might indicate the greater ambiguity of the former term, rendering it safer, especially at times of all-out war.

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86 See, for example, Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 31, unpaginated (March 29, 1640), b. 37, unpaginated (April 11, 1646), b. 44, unpaginated (March 11, 1653); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 154, cc. 19v–20r (April 24, 1646) & cc. 129v–131r (late December 1649); Notarile, Atti, b. 8457, c. 105v (Oct. 13, 1648), b. 8458, c. 155v (Dec. 3, 1649), b. 8459, c. 166v (Feb. 3, 1650 m.v.), b. 8460, cc. 151v–152r (Feb. 20, 1651 m.v.), b. 8461, c. 101r (Sept. 7, 1652), b. 8462, cc. 17r–v (March 23, 1653), b. 8464, part II, cc. 1v–2r (March 4, 1656), b. 8846, cc. 52r–v (July 30, 1670).

87 It should be noted that even after the new terminological distinction between “Levantine Armenian” and “Persian Armenian” was introduced, the majority of Venetian documents, including notarial deeds, still identified subjects simply as “Armenians,” especially when the case involved other, non-Armenian subjects. See, for example, Notarile, Atti, b. 8458, c. 43v (May 14, 1649), b. 8461, c. 129v (Nov. 23, 1652), b. 13563, cc. 317v–318r (Feb. 6, 1656 m.v.), b. 8466, cc. 36v–37r (April 8, 1658), b. 8467, c. 73r (July 1, 1659), b. 8846, c. 20r (June 3, 1670).
In order to appreciate the novelty of the emerging usage of “Levantine” as an adjective, and especially as a noun in Venetian commercial discourse, a comparison with English and French is instructive. In the absence of a full-fledged etymological survey, I can only suggest, conjecturally, that in both languages, throughout much of the seventeenth century, “Levantine” was used primarily to refer to geography, rather than to ethnicity. For example, in his *Epistolae Ho-elianae* (1650), James Howell mentions his intention to bequeath his Italian books “to the worthy company of Turky and Levantine Merchants, from divers of whom I have received many noble favours.”88 Howell refers here, of course, not to merchants from the Levant, but to members of the English Levant Company, who are “Levantine” by virtue of their sojourn in the Levant.

It was only in the 1670s that the new use of the term Levantine/Levantin as a noun rather than an adjective, and in reference not to objects or regions but to a collective of persons marked (culturally) by their distinct birthplace began to appear in printed works in either English or French. The headword “Levantin” does not appear at all in Jean Nicot’s 1606 *Thresor de la langue francoyse*.89 The first dictionary definition of “Levantin” as “Natif des pays du Levant. Les peuples Levantins. les nations Levantines” appears in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*.90 The posthumous, revised sixth edition of Edward Phillips’s *The New World of Words* (1706) similarly glosses “Levantines” as “Natives or Inhabitants of the Levant, the Eastern People.”91

88 Howell 1650: 43.
Although predating its appearance in dictionary glosses, the noun “Levantines” seems to have appeared in print in either English or French only in the 1670s, but in a wide variety of contexts from the beginning. Estienne Cleirac’s _Les us, et coutumes de la mer_ (Rouen, 1671), refers numerous times to naval terminology used by “les Levantins.”92 However, Cleirac never defines those Levantines, and since all the terms he ascribes to them are in the Italianate Mediterranean Lingua Franca, he may have meant mariners operating in the Levant, irrespective of their provenance (not unlike Howell’s “Levantine merchants” discussed above). Around 1675, Jean de la Fontaine already opens one of his fables with the framing statement “les Levantins en leur légende disent…”93 The French diamond merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier’s widely read _Recueil de plusieurs relations et traitez singuliers & curieux_ (1679) reports “la conversion de ces Levantins,” and proceeds to provide examples of Maronites converting to Catholicism in Aleppo and of a Franciscan friar in Diyarbakir.94 Later in the same work Tavernier discusses the gardens of the Seraglio, referring to a “Maniere d’appaiser la soif en mangeant toute particuliere aux Levantins,” and “Concombres grand ragoût des Levantins.”95 The English translation of Tavernier’s slightly earlier work, _The six voyages into Persia and the East-Indies_ (1677) similarly makes repeated use of the new meaning of “Levantines.” It refers to Levantines at least seven times, discussing their cleanliness and culinary preferences, and often contrasting their habits with those of Europeans. For example: “Certain it is, that the _Europaeans_, more addicted to subtily

92 Cleirac 1671: 83, 133, 437, 508, 509, 513, 538, 539.
94 Tavernier 1679: 90.
95 _Ibid._, 502, 554.
and circumvention, than the Leavtines, and for the most part not endeavouring to be sincere in Commerce, have taught the Turks several Cheats, which they were either ignorant of, or did not practice…”; “Those Basins are of a fashion more commodious than that of ours, and it is an evident Mark of the cleanliness of the Leavtines”; “A way to quench thirst at meals, wholly particular to the Levantines”; and, as in the French edition, the ubiquitous reference to cucumbers, “a fruit of much delicacy amongst the Levantines.”

That this new meaning of “Levantines” as people originating in the Levant was still somewhat new for English readers at the end of the seventeenth century is further suggested by Sir Paul Rycaut’s 1688 translation of Garcilaso de la Vega’s (1539-1616) The royal commentaries of Peru, originally published in 1609 in Lisbon as Comentarios Reales de los Incas. According to the English text, “Levantines” are “the Greeks so called in the Indies.” Later, it mentions two soldiers who were “Levantines, (or people of the Eastern Countries, called the Levant).” These two explicit glosses suggest that, at least for Rycaut, the noun “Levantine” was still a neologism, requiring explication for the reader.

Without further research it would be premature to suggest that the noun “Levantine” first emerged in the Venetian trans-imperial commercial sphere and only then introduced into other European milieus and language communities. Unfortunately, inquiry into the term’s use in non-Venetian Italian milieus is hampered by the heavy literary and humanist bias of Italian lexicographers’ early modern corpuses. For

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96 Tavernier 1677: 18, 47, 65, 92.
97 Vega 1688: Book 3, chapter 13, 629.
98 Ibid., Book 5, chapter 28, 814.
example, Salvatore Battaglia’s magisterial *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (1961-2002), considered by many to match the OED in its comprehensiveness, provides only six quotations for “levantino” in the sense of “Oriundo, abitante di un paese orientale” (“native, inhabitant of an eastern land”). Of those, four refer to the term as an adjective, applied once each to Levantine Jews, Levantine Christians, a Levantine female slave, and a Levantine poet. Only two quotes are provided for “levantino” as a noun. The first is the ambiguous statement concerning Levantine merchants by the Venetian diarist Sanudo, quoted above. The second, by the late seventeenth-century Roman antiquarian Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1613-1696), is taken from his work of 1672, *Le Vite de’ pittori, scultori, et architetti moderni*, and is thus clearly too late to serve as evidence for the noun’s recent introduction into the Italian language.99

However, instances of the use of the noun “Levantini” in diverse Italian contexts can be traced at least from the late 1530s. These instances confirm the term’s initial ambiguity. The Dalmatian-born Luigi Bassano, in his *Costumi et i modi particolari della vita de’ Turchi* (1545) refers to the Turks as lascivious (*lussuriose*) and bestial (*salvatiche*) with their own parents-in-law and brothers- and sisters-in-law, as is, he says, “la natione Levantina” in its entirety.100 It is interesting that in stereotyping his objects as sexually lascivious Bassano generalizes from “Turks” to the “Levantine nation,” of which, in this context at least, Turks form a constitutive part. It is also significant that Bassano is using here “the Levantine nation” as a collective term referring to all people living in the Levant, not to merchants trading elsewhere.

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100 Bassano 1963: 22.
More prevalent are sixteenth-century examples for the use of the noun “Levantini” to refer collectively to diasporic merchants, especially Jewish ones, trading in Italy. This use is ubiquitous in a series of parallel laws passed by various Italian rulers throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, whose explicit purpose was to divert the Levant trade from Venice, Ancona, and Ragusa, which dominated it at the time. In 1538 Duke Ercole II of Ferrara promised “all Spaniards and Portuguese, Levantines, Slavs, Dalmatians, Greeks, Turks and [people] of every nation, whether Christians or infidels, who will come to live or trade in our lands, cities and any place of our state and dominion,” that they could live there according to their customs. In 1572 Duke Emanuel Philibert of Savoy issued a long charter “for the entire Hebrew nation, of whatever rank, condition, and language and for those of that descent, both Italians and Germans, Spanish, Portuguese, Levantine, and from Barbary and Syria.” In 1593 the Tuscan Archduke Ferdinand I de’ Medici issues his “Constitution of Livorno: To all of you merchants of any nation, Levantines, Ponentines, Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, and Italians, Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians, and others…” In all three cases, the Ferrarese, Savoyard and Tuscan rulers included “Levantini” in a long and rather convoluted list of ethnicities, all of them referring specifically to diasporic merchants. Moreover, in all three instances the term “Levantini” could be read as either a noun or an adjective, and is immediately preceded or followed by its supposed opposition, Ponentini/Spanish/Portuguese. Given the strong association of all these terms

101 Ravid 1991: 141–42.
102 The charter was initiated by a Jewish merchant, Vitale di Sacerdote and his son Simone, who explicitly cited Florentine, Ferrarese, and Papal precedents, dating from 1551, 1553, and 1559 respectively. Ravid 1991: 144–45.
with Sephardic Jews (and New Christians), “Levantini” here could be seen as denoting primarily Jewish merchants. At the same time, the inclusion of other ethnonemes long associated with the Levant, yet unambiguously Christian, such as Greeks, Slavs, and Armenians, indicates the gradual blurring of religious-based distinctions in the Levantine commercial politics of early modern Italian rulers.

The ubiquity of “Levantini” as a gloss for Ottoman merchants—whether Jewish or other—in Christendom was by no means the purview of legislators. In 1577 the Florentine merchant Filippo Sassetti (1540-1588) composed his “Argument… concerning the trade ordered by Grand Duke Cosimo I between his subjects and the nations of the Levant.” Sassetti’s text is implicitly organized around a series of recursive binary contrasts. At the most obvious level, “Levantini” (them) are contrasted with Tuscans/Florentines (us). But whereas “Levantini” remains relatively undifferentiated throughout the text, the “us” is soon pluralized and nuanced. At the epicenter of Sassetti’s world are Florence and its satellite cities of Pisa, Livorno (the newly established port city of the Tuscan Grand Duchy), and the textile hubs of Lucca and Genoa. On another level, the Tuscan enterprise is contrasted with three rival cities which set its model and point of comparison: Ancona, Venice, and Ragusa. On a broader level still, these Italian commercial centers are contrasted with other parts of Europe for

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104 This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that similar privileges for Levantine merchants to settle in Ancona were published in Rome in 1593, in which “Levantini” were named twice, first as “Levantine Jews” and then as “Jews, Turks, Greeks, and other Levantine merchants.” (“Priuilegii d'hebrei leuantini d'ordine dell'il.mo, & reu.mo monsig. cardinal camerlengo per special commissione di N.S. PP. Clemente 8. Che si osserui quanto da Sisto papa 5. de fel. mem. per sue lettere fu concesso a detti Hebrei, Turchi, Greci & altri mercanti leuantini nella citta d'Ancona.”) On Portuguese/Ponentine merchants in Venice, see Da Silva 1987; Kellenbenz 1987; Ruspio 2002.

105 “Ragionamento… sopra il commercio ordinato dal Granduca Cosimo I tra i sudditi suoi e le nazioni del Levante”: Sassetti 1853 [1577]: 171.

106 For a comparative view of the silk industries of Lucca, Genoa, Florence, and Venice, see the numerous contributions in Molà et al. 2000.
which Italy serves as an intermediary zone in their trade relations with the Levant—
Flanders/Antwerp, France/Marseille. Ultimately, all these regions, which are marked by
pronounced commercial activity, are contrasted with Spain, which provides only raw
materials for the Italian textile industry. Other, more remote places are represented by
proxy, in the form of merchants sojourning in Venice (“Germans” and “Flemish”)\textsuperscript{107} and
in Antwerp (“English” and “Baltic”). Sassetti both underscores the diversity and
complexity of internal economic relations within Christendom and the latter’s unity vis-à-
vis the Levant, by occasionally glossing it under the collective term of “Christian
merchants.” The Levantini, on the other hand, are never distinguished by geography,
political subjecthood, relations of center and periphery, or economic function. The only
“Levantine” place that Sassetti explicitly names is “Gostantinopoli” [sic], mentioned
once, and as a destination for Tuscan merchants rather than as a place of provenance.
The religion of the Levantini can be inferred from their interchangeability with “Turchi”
and “Turchi e Giudei” throughout the text. “Levantini,” in other words, are non-
Christians. Indeed, Sassetti makes no mention of Christian merchants from the Levant,
even though in this period Greek and Armenian merchants far outnumbered Muslim ones
in the great commercial centers of the Italian peninsula and were, as we have seen, very
much on legislators’ minds as they sought to attract the Levant trade to their ports.\textsuperscript{108}

The above examples have pointed to the polyvalence of the term “Levantini” in
sixteenth-century Italian texts circulating outside Venice. This brief survey is obviously
far from exhaustive. It suggests the novelty of the Venetian usage of “Levantini” to refer

\textsuperscript{107} In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the “Flemish” merchant community of Venice did not
distinguish between the northern and the southern Low Countries; the category of “Fiamenghi” thus
included both “Dutch” and “Flemish.” See van Gelder 2004.
\textsuperscript{108} Stoianovich 1960; but see an important critique in Kafadar 1985.
to Christian as well as Muslim and Jewish Ottoman and Safavid subjects, but also its continuity with another prevalent usage referring primarily to diasporic merchants trading on the Italian peninsula, rather than in their home countries.

Finally, it is important to note occasions when the category of “Levantini” is absent altogether, even in texts clearly referring to the sum total of Ottoman or Ottoman and Safavid merchants in Venice. A landmark ruling by the Board of Trade in 1645 reaffirmed its exclusive jurisdiction over “all the Greek, Armenian, and Levantine and Ponentine Jewish nations, and other subjects of the Grand Turk…”

Although all these groups could have fit under the category “Levantine,” here the Board of Trade employed only the earlier, narrow definition of “Levantini” as a subset of Jewish merchants operating in Venice under Ottoman protection. In another case, the clergyman Giorgio Stampaneo presented himself in 1664 as “the Chaplain of the Overseas Nation.”

Although he did not explain who the “Oltramarini” were, his past service as emissary in the service of Venetian magistrates in Antivari, Scutari, and Durazzo (all Ottoman territories bordering on the Venetian frontier) suggests that “Oltramarini” hailed from either Venetian or Ottoman Adriatic territories, similarly to the “Oltramarini” soldiers of the Venetian army.

To conclude, early modern Venetian official documents only rarely refer to a unified category of “Levantini.” More often, religious, linguistic, and political divides—between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, Armenians and Greeks, Bosnians, Albanians and

110 “Capellano della Natione Oltramarina.”
Moldavians, Ottoman and Safavid subjects—are recognized, if grudgingly, even in policies that render them all subject to the same legislation. This leads us back to the struggles over the *terzo* tax, first introduced by the Board of Trade in 1534. As I showed in the previous chapter, this tax was initially levied on commercial brokers’ commissions to finance the services of the Public Dragoman, who was required to be present during the conclusion of all transactions involving Turkish merchants, and to carefully note down their details. By turning now to this tax’s evolution in the course of the seventeenth century, I illustrate how genres, institutions, and trans-imperial life trajectories intersected in the emergence of “Levantini” and other geopolitical and ethnolinguistic groupings in the Venetian commercial sphere.

THE STRUGGLE OVER THE *TERZO* (PART II)

In 1609, Pietro Francolin submitted a memorandum to the Board of Trade, in which he claimed that much revenue had been lost due to evasion of the *terzo* tax by scheming merchants. According to Francolin, Jews, who were not subject to the *terzo*, were buying and selling on behalf of Muslim merchants.¹¹² Francolin was a Cypriot émigré to Venice, a former Ottoman captive, and the son-in-law of a long-time commercial broker, Zorzi da Milo. Soon after submitting his memorandum to the Board of Trade, Francolin himself became a guild member broker, in lieu of his aging father-in-law.¹¹³ Francolin’s motion to subject the commercial transactions of Jewish merchants to

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¹¹² Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 142, cc. 169v–170r (Jan. 18, 1609 m.v.).
¹¹³ According to his father-in-law’s petition, Francolin was not only fluent in Turkish and Slavic, which he had acquired during his years in Ottoman captivity, but also well-connected among the Ottoman merchant community in Venice. Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 142, cc. 119r–v (March 17, 1609) & b. 144, c. 63r (Feb.
the terzo was ultimately endorsed by the Senate in 1617. But a year later, the legislation was revoked, and the Senate reaffirmed its earlier ruling that the terzo was imposed on brokers, not on merchants, and should not be shouldered by merchants under any circumstances. Throughout the following decade arguments raged on about whether those Jewish merchants who refused to name a broker upon releasing their merchandise from the customs’ office should or should not be required to shoulder the terzo tax themselves.

The process by which the transactions of Jews became subject to the terzo suggests the role of reason of state and political economy in the articulation of early modern ethnic categories: As I showed in chapter 8, the tax was initially imposed on commercial brokers in 1534 to finance the services of an interpreter, deemed necessary to protect Ottoman merchants’ interests vis-à-vis less-than-scrupulous Venetian merchants and brokers. Gradually, the tax became a sign and a proof of the very foreignness of Levantine merchants. Jewish merchants’ growing prosperity in the early seventeenth century stood in sharp relief against the decline in Venice’s Levantine trade. That Jews came to be included among those Levantine (both Ottoman and Safavid) merchants whose commercial transactions were subjected to the terzo was thus both a result of their presumed foreignness and further evidence of it.

5, 1615 m.v.). See also chapter 2, pp. 73–74.  
114 Jewish merchants complained about the Senate decree of Nov. 25, 1617 in Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, cc. 151v–152v (Jan. 16, 1617 m.v.). See also reference to the recent inclusion of Jewish transactions under the terzo in the Board of Trade’s favorable response to dragoman de Nores’ request for a salary increase in early 1618: Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 144, c. 149r (Jan. 12, 1617 m.v.).  
115 Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 147, fasc. 1, unpaginated (June 16, 1618). The legislation was endorsed by the Board of Trade on Sept. 15, 1618, and reconfirmed in 1633.  
116 Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 15, c. 303 (Oct. 24, 1620); Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 145, cc. 86v–87v (Dec. 16, 1620), cc. 176v–177r (Sept. 28, 1622); Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 24, unpaginated (Dec. 30, 1633, including copies of Senate legislation of 1617, 1620, 1623).
Government attempts to control and tax Jewish merchants soon combined with efforts by the brokers’ guild to curb unlicensed brokerage. In 1637, the Board of Trade decreed that the merchandise of Jews could not be released from the customs office unless a licensed commercial broker signed the documents and paid the terzo.\textsuperscript{117} Shortly thereafter, Jewish merchants petitioned the Board to revoke these regulations. They asked to be exempt from the requirement to name a broker for their merchandise in the customs office, as well as from the terzo itself. In a complete reversal of their usual rhetoric, they claimed that as residents of Venice they were very experienced and had no need for brokers. They further suggested that since their merchandise arrived from the West as well as from the East it should not be automatically subjected to a tax levied on Levantine merchandise. Moreover, while they shouldered the tax, other Jewish merchants used false Christian names due to their precarious situation in Spain, thus evading taxation in Venice. Remarkably, neither the Jewish supplicants, nor the Board of Trade, ever explicitly addressed foreign merchants’ purported need for linguistic assistance as a reason for subjecting their merchandise (or their brokers) to the terzo, even though this had been the declared rationale for imposing a tax on brokers’ commissions in the first place. Linguistic incompetence, as we saw, did figure prominently in other groups’ petitions, as well as in Levantine Jews’ requests for collective privileges at other times. And while the Levantine Jewish merchants did implicitly assert their local residence as grounds for exemption from the requirement to employ brokers, they did not mention it as a reason for tax exemption.

\textsuperscript{117} Cinque Savii, Seconda serie, b. 147, fasc. 1, unpaginated (Feb. 4, 1636 m.v.).
In 1637, an enterprising customs official, Bartolomeo Guarinoni, suggested a reform that would subject to the *terzo* all Levantine merchandise, rather than Levantine merchants.\(^{118}\) It was not until 1669, however, that the Board of Trade actuated a Senate resolution of May 20, 1636 imposing the *terzo* on any and all merchandise arriving from “Turkish [Muslim?] land,” regardless of its importer. The rescript of 1669 emphasized that it applied to the merchandise of all nations “regardless of rite” and specifically referred to the merchandise of “Armenian and other subjects [soggetti] of the King of Persia, Levantine and Ponentine Jews, and other subjects [sudditi].”\(^{119}\) This brought the *terzo* legislation to an almost complete reversal of its original intent: From a tax levied on the brokers of Muslim Ottoman subjects, and rationalized as financing the protection of their interests by the Public Dragoman, it was gradually applied to all trans-imperial Levantine merchants, irrespective of religion, political affiliation, juridical status, or linguistic proficiency.

If arguments surrounding the *Fondaco dei Turchi* gradually blurred previous distinctions between Ottoman and Safavid Muslim subjects and gave rise to essentializing observations about Muslim difference-through-custom, the *terzo* legislation further undermined distinctions between Ottoman and Safavid Muslim, Jewish, and Christian subjects, between fluent Italian-speaking long-time residents of Venice, and newly arrived sojourners. Whether the *terzo* facilitated the introduction of an expansive category of “Levantines” in Venetian commercial discourse, or was facilitated by it, the

\(^{118}\) *Ibid.*, unpaginated (May 23, 1637). Among the goods to be subjected to the *terzo* in Guarinoni’s proposal were quicksilver, lambskin, amber, fleece, Bulgarian leather, castor, Cypriot and Syrian phyllites, grain and powder, wolf cloaks, Cypriot and Izmir cotton, musk, orpiment, beaver skins, and Greek sugar.

collusion of the two forms an important element in Orientalism’s yet-to-be-written pre-Enlightenment genealogy.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I looked at the processes by which certain terms, such as “Turchi” and “Levantini,” gained their prototypical meanings in moments of struggle between competing groups in an attempt to control the link between foreign merchants and the Venetian state. Members of the Venetian patriciate and Ottoman central and provincial elites, trans-imperial converts, dragomans, commercial brokers and merchants were involved during this period in several major struggles over the terzo tax, the forced relocation of Ottoman and Safavid Muslim merchants into the Fondaco dei Turchi, and the meanings of religious conversion and subjecthood. These were all moments in which ethnolinguistic categories were recalibrated, and where linguistic proficiency and religious affiliation were tested and contested as indexical signs of foreignness.

In discussing the genealogy of the terzo tax, I demonstrated how it brought ideas about foreign merchants’ linguistic incompetence and lack of relational resources to the fore. Rather than pre-given, what eventually came to be seen in much of the scholarship as foreigners’ defining “characteristics” were often contested by trans-imperial merchants themselves, as well as by those who claimed to speak on their behalf, including brokers and dragomans.

Overall, the chapter pointed to the proliferation of ethnolinguistic categories in Venetian commercial discourse, and the ambiguity of the terms “Turchi” and “Levantini.” If “Turchi” could mean either ethnic Turks (of any juridical status),
Muslims (either Ottoman, Safavid, or other), or Ottoman subjects (of any religion or ethnicity), “Levantini” could encompass any and all of the Ottoman and Safavid empires’ many ethnolinguistic and religious groupings. The shifting range and prototypical centers of these and other categories were shaped by and in turn contributed to a complex set of power relations, where estate and juridical status mattered no less than religious affiliation and linguistic competence. These aspects of trans-imperial subjects’ life trajectories intersected with gender, age, length of sojourn, command of local practices, and access to diverse local and trans-local social resources.

Early modern trans-imperial subjects forged networks of sociability and affect that belied official categories of difference, and assumptions (shared by many scholars) about foreigners’ lack of relational resources. At the same time, trans-imperial subjects—particularly in their capacities as dragomans, commercial brokers, converts and merchants—played crucial and contrasting roles in articulating notions of Ottoman Otherness, and thus occupy an early but crucial place in the genealogy of pre-Enlightenment Orientalist discourses.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

_Tutti sono forestieri in Venezia che Veneziani non siano._

[All are foreigners in Venice who aren’t Venetians.]

—Cornelio Frangipane (1508–1588)¹

Suggestive as it may be, this embittered comment by the sixteenth-century Friulian nobleman Cornelio Frangipane holds only a partial truth. While the juridical status of “Venetian” and its attendant political and economic privileges were carefully guarded by a small minority, the contested category of “foreigner” was very unevenly applied to the majority of inhabitants and sojourners in the city and its imperial domains. It is hardly by accident that Frangipane’s circular statement ultimately leaves unanswered the question of how to tell Venetians and foreigners apart. Who claimed whom a foreigner, to what ends, and with what degree of success depended not only on the unique circumstances of the “foreigner” in question, but also on the status of both those making the claim and their interlocutors, on the genre in which the claim was made, and on the expected consequences of the claim’s acceptance. More importantly, if Frangipane conveniently proposed a binary set that included only “Venetian” and “foreigner,” a third, ¹ Frangipane 1858: 14.
intermediary category was clearly at work in the articulation of both. Even though the term “trans-imperial subjects” is my own, my research has documented the myriad ways in which this intermediary category was in fact operative in a host of Venetian institutions and genres. Trans-imperial subjects made repeated claims to knowledge and membership of an elsewhere, but also possessed deep knowledge of and exercised membership in Venetian metropolitan institutions. It was in fact this unique position which allowed them to perform significant kinds of cultural mediation between the Venetian and Ottoman empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is in this context that the strong intellectual and biographical links between the subjects studied in this dissertation and their baroque successors, although beyond the scope of the current work, should be acknowledged. Indeed, the practices of mediation and cultural categorization elaborated by early modern trans-imperial subjects form important elements in the genealogy of Enlightenment anthropology and the nascent discipline of Orientalism. In particular, the taxonomies of Mediterranean peoples and races based on language, ritual and customs, powerfully articulated by eighteenth-century Orientalists, were based in many ways on the efforts of their trans-imperial forebears, including dragomans, commercial brokers, and converts, to open up a space for their specialized knowledge of things Ottoman in several European metropoles in the previous two centuries.²

Neither metropolitan elites, nor subaltern groups (whether colonial or socially marginalized) should be privileged in the production of categories of otherness. Rather, as I have shown, claims by trans-imperial subjects to special knowledge premised on

² On the special place of Venetian Dalmatia in Enlightenment anthropology, see Wolff 1998; Wolff 2005.
their supposed location “in between” two imperial domains were constitutive of the very units they purported to mediate. At the same time, these claims and their authors must be situated within specific institutional sites and the attendant genres which emerged in these sites described, as a means to study the interactions between elites and subaltern groups.

This raises important questions about the location—geographical, textual, material—of the knowledge produced by trans-imperial subjects, i.e. about how discourses articulated by trans-imperial subjects within specific (mostly metropolitan) institutions circulated further, and what roles they might have had in the emergence of the public in the course of the seventeenth century. The narrative genres most frequently engaged in by trans-imperial subjects, including petitions, diplomatic and administrative reports, and court depositions, were all contained in manuscripts of limited circulation, addressed to a circumscribed readership among (primarily) metropolitan elites. Yet if we consider the interface between the manuscript production of early modern state officialdom and the thriving printing press, it becomes clear that their significance extended much further. The latter appealed to a broader—but still emerging—public across Europe and the Mediterranean. The popularity of print culture depended to no small extent precisely on the access it offered broad publics to knowledge of “distant” places and peoples. In fact, the linguistic, sartorial, and other modes of stereotyping a wide array of non-elite groups (from peasants and lepers to “Turks” and Jews) in print genres of the nascent public sphere, including pamphlets, broadsheets, travel narratives, and costume albums, help to explain their great popularity.\(^3\) How dragomans and other

\(^3\) On print culture in early modern Venice see Wilson 2005. On the conflation of Old- and New-World taxonomies of difference in early modern print culture see Hall 1995; Schmidt 2001. See also Johns 1998 on the formation of a common public across early modern European centers of literary production, as book
trans-imperial subjects tapped into the broad curiosity about distant places and peoples facilitated by print culture (and its attendant effects of “Othering”), nourished it, and participated in shaping its contours is the next step in understanding the role they played in constituting the categories “East” and “West” for early modern Europeans more broadly.

The designation “trans-imperial subjects” itself hints at these subjects’ potential mobility well beyond the Venetian and Ottoman empires. Such subjects and their discourses traveled beyond Venice and the Italian peninsula to the Atlantic seaboard powers which entered the Mediterranean precisely in this period, and might have interacted there with other social groups and their cultural categories. Of particular interest in this context is the merging of notions of Ottoman and Muslim alterity with conceptions of race, religion, and indeed civilization, developed in the wake of European imperial expansion and missionary efforts in the Americas, Africa, and South and East Asia.4 At the same time, the better documented presence of Venetian-Ottoman trans-imperial cadres (including many of the Latin families of Pera and the colonial nobility of Venetian Istria) in south and southeastern Europe calls for further investigation into their role in the articulation of proto-nationalist anti-Ottoman discourses there.

In order to address these questions, a greater comparative framework is needed that will engage not only Venetian archival and narrative sources, but Ottoman ones as well. Such a framework will allow scholars to develop a more fine-tuned picture of the

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4 On this, and the changing scales of Venetian cartography of “the East” in the wake of European Atlantic expansion, see the suggestive comments in Lestringant 1994: 1–3.
multiple interactions among different trans-imperial cadres, their intellectual genealogies and milieus, and their links to other groups in Ottoman society.

As I have shown, dragomans’ notions of loyalty and competence, commercial brokers’ understandings of foreignness and localness, and converts’ ideas about spiritual transformation, converthood, and indeed Christianity were all shaped by their encounters with Venetian institutions and genres, but also by their prior life trajectories and the cultural categories they had acquired in diverse Ottoman milieus. Recent studies by Ottomanists on early state-formation, on tensions between metropolitan and provincial administrative and legal practices, and on discourses of religious conversion in the Balkans, Istanbul, and the Arab provinces, have already alerted us to some of the rewards of approaching the Ottoman archives from a comparative perspective. Bringing the Ottoman archives to bear on broader early modern historiographical debates would surely yield even more results in challenging and refining our conceptual vocabulary and our understanding of practices of imperial subject-making and the maintenance of social boundaries. Integrating the Ottomans into our early modern historical narratives is a crucial antidote not only to Orientalist visions of European pre-Enlightenment insularity and innocence, but also to equally problematic and Eurocentric postcolonial assumptions about Europe’s linear imperial expansion as the main driving force of early modern history.

Second, it would be useful to explore the applicability of the concept of “trans-imperial subject” to other kinds of intermediaries and intermediary practices, as well as to

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5 Makdisi 1997; Deringil 2000; Peirce 2003; Krstic 2004; Makdisi et al. 2005. See also Goffman 1990: 147–54 for insightful comments on the potential of Ottoman official registers for the study of early modern foreign presence in Istanbul and the provinces.
other periods and regions. As I argued throughout the dissertation, much is to be gained by thinking of the early modern Mediterranean contact zone as a set of interrelated genres and institutions. Other institutions, genres, and social groups clearly played important roles in constituting this contact zone as well. The growing scholarship on pilgrims, travelers, scholars, missionaries, merchants, mariners, soldiers, slaves, servants, and itinerant laborers in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean has already provided ample materials for conceptual synthesis. Such synthesis would not only refine the concept of “trans-imperial subject,” but help give better chronological precision to the semiotic contributions made by the specific groups studied in this dissertation.

Finally, the concept of trans-imperial subjects raises important questions about our notions of early modern coloniality, citizenship, and subjecthood in general. To the extent that trans-imperial subjects operated within a plural political and socio-cultural context, how were their trajectories and categories constitutive of broader discourses about place, subjecthood, and social membership? How do their performances of mediation challenge not only a bifurcated vision of metropole and colony, self and other, but the very mapping of social positionality onto geographical space? Venice and Istanbul, the two important early modern centers of cultural production examined here, can only be understood as placed along mutually-influenced networks of trade, kinship, religious ties, circulating texts, and migration, around which categories of inclusion and exclusion were formed. The centrality of trans-imperial subjects to processes of boundary-making in the early modern Mediterranean underscores the extent to which semiotic systems in the region interpenetrated and overlapped over their long histories. Understanding the trans-imperial dimensions of early modern cultural mediation thus
helps us document the emergence of boundaries now so ingrained that their very historicity is often forgotten. It also calls into question the motivations of those who benefited—and still do—from naturalizing the boundaries which, at the beginning of the period under study, were anything but natural.
APPENDIX 1

PETITION BY ZUAN GIACOMO (1563)


Source: ASV, Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 1, c. 7 (September 27, 1563).

Source: ASV, Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 152, cc. 194r–v (July 12, 1641).
APPENDIX 3
PETITION BY LORENZO CAPESSICH (1621)


Source: ASV, Collegio, Risposte di dentro, b. 16, c. 135 (November 13, 1621).
APPENDIX 4
INVENTORY OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE GUILD OF COMMERCIAL BROKERS (1493–1807)

Note: The following is based on an inventory produced by the staff of the ASV, but updated to reflect actual current content, as necessary.

517 517.1 1493–1664 Capitolare dell’Arte dei Senseri (appellatione, ordine, parte)  
Copies of decrees by various magistracies (Senate, PdC, OaM, Gdl, Cinque Savii) in matters of brokers, guild resolutions, elections, lists of guild members, officials elected

517.2 1670–1740 Capitolare dell’Arte dei Senseri perg.

517.3 1670–1740 Copia dello stesso

copy made in the second half of the eighteenth century)

[518.alt] 1555–1591 Terminazioni de’ Magistrati, Provveditori sopra Camere e Camera d’Impresti, nonchè d’altre Magistrature, relative ai Senseri. Sembra essere il Capitolare (e Notatorio) A delle amere degli Imprestiti, dove essiste analogo Capitolare

Transferred to Ufficiali agli imprestiti 8 Bis

518.2 1763–1806 Terminazioni dell’i Sanseri Rimasti Principia 1762 usque

519 519.1 1661 Raspa  
Lists of guild members convicted by the guild tribunal

519.2 1705 Libro intitolato Mare, ove sono descritti tutti li Sanseri, Ordinarij di Rialto, & Fontico; Restaurato di nuovo dà mè Gio:Battista Paludi, Nodaro dell’Offito medesimo; In tempo dell’i Spettabili Signori Presidenti infrascritti, Gio:Batt[ist]a Asinelli, Giacomo Gavazzi, Paulo Astori, Presidenti attuali

On the frontispiece: a copy of a license issued by the Provveditori di Comun on August 1, 1705 to appoint new guild member brokers in place of deceased ones. The alphabetical register that follows specifies the date of appointment, the appointee’s full name (including his father’s first name), name of the deceased broker in whose place he was appointed, and the new broker that eventually replaced him.

Alphabetical-chronological listings for the following rubrics: Secret denunciations, criminal trials with conviction, non-expedited criminal trials, expedited verdicts, criminal trials without conviction, defenses without trial, sentences without trial, sworn statements of entering brokers, debtors’ certificats, account books, misc. books, index.


Details the confraternity’s decisions on elections to various offices, expenditures (such as new books, paintings), rulings in matters of illicit brokers, charity to poor members.

520.2 1682 Somario Delli cinque Capitololi che s’attrovano al presente nell’OFFITIO de SANSERI ORDENARII DI RIALTO dovendossi per l’avenire secondo si andara registrando le parti nel Capitolari sopradetto novissimo, cossi si dovera ponerle nel presente Somario, e fornito che sarà se li farà nel fine una Rubrica per Alfabeto di tutto quello che contenira lo stesso. / Fatto da me Gio: Domenio dall’Aglio Fedellissimo Quadernier del presente Offitio d’ordine delli S’pri sig[no]ri Gio: Maria Mutti, Gio: Batt’a Carminati, Giacomo Joanis Honorandi Pres[iden]ti / MDCLXXXII


Organized thematically, with very brief entries.

521 1560–1566 (mostly lists of members, some resolutions in cases of members, with index at end)

B) 1570–1570 Libro de parte
[unnumbered] 1621–1672 Libro di Capitololi de Sanseri di Fontico,
H) 1655–1665
L) 1677–1683 Libro de Capitololi
[unnumbered] 1677–1683 Libro de Capitolî—not same as above
[unnumbered] 1700–1712 Libro di Capitoli segnato

522–524 1713–1802 Riduzioni di Congregazioni di Capitoli Generali come sopra

525  525.1 1596–1598

525.2 1608–1609 Libro delle Denontie
Presidents: Mattio Bon, Giovanni Biopanditi, Vallerio Lolletti.
Approximately 400 pages, about half unnumbered.

525.3 1613–1614 Libro delle Denontie
Presidents: Bastian di Martini, Francesco Lenerin, Diomede Vercelli.

525.4 1643 Libro de Denontie e Processi
Presidents: Eugenio Lamanedi, Lorenzo Bianchi, Antonio Cargnion.

526–530 1590s–1670s Processi
Trial transcripts are copied in individual notebooks; now ordered alphabetically, it
seems they were once ordered chronologically. Several are marked as A, B etc.

531  1799–1801 Processi definiti

532–537 1675–1800 Processi

538  1640s–1680s trials, legislation

539–542 1745–1793 Suppliche dell’Arte dei Senseri

543  543.1 1626–1640 [1658] Multorum

543.2 1640–1691 Multorum

543.3 1676–1678 Intimationi p[er] il Giuramento et Consegne delle Carte de
nomi de Senseri

543.4 1722–1744 Multorum

544–548 1724–1807 vari registri [esecuzioni contra debitori, etc.]

549–550 1786–1807 Giornale di cassa

APPENDIX 5
DEPOSITION OF ABDONE Q. GIOVANNI OF ALEPPO (1616, EXCERPTED)

Essendo io nato christiano in Aleppo, et battezzato. dopo 10 anni in circ[a] sono stato fatto turco et per detto tempo visuto alla turchesca. et son circonciso. et hora essendo capitato à Venetia, et volendo lassar detta setta de turchi et esser buon cat[oli]co mi son in questo loco per far quanto mi sarà ordinato

Int. che dica con che occ’one abbandonasse la fede cat[oli]ca et si facesse turco.

R.t Io caminai da giovine, et in un certo tempo che seida territorio di Tripoli alcuni turchi si erano ribellati, io andai tra di loro, et mi posi un turbante in testa, et loro mi accettarono ricercandomi chi ero, et io li risposi che ero turco. et li dissi che da picolo era uscito fuori di casa mia, et che per questo non era tagliato, et all’hora poi mi fecero circoncider. ma io li disi così perche se li havesse detto che era christiano, mi haverebbero fatto rinegar per forza o che mi haverebbero ammazzato, et per questo io li dissi che ero turco. Et mi lassai poi anco tagliar per l’istesso timor, perche loro se ne accorsero che non ero tagliato.

Int. per qual c’a andò così à seida fra turchi, et non andò fra christiani.

R.t Io era stato in Gierusalem à visitar il san[t]o sepolcro come Pelegrino, et nel ritorno passai da seida non sapendo dove andar, et così mi compagnai fra loro, perche era anco un gran bisogno.

Int R.t avanti che io andasse in Gerusalem q’n stava à casa io tessevo delli ormesini

Int R.t q’n mi tagliorono et mi fecero turco mi chiamorono Ebraim. Et sevì come soldato per un anno un capitano che si chiamava Magiar Mustaffa che era capo delli ribelli. Et passato poi l’anno andai nel gran Cairo, et per che niuno sapeva che io era stato turcho, mi vesti da christiano et steti fra christiani per sette anni. dopo andando verso Constantinopoli à Borsa, vi fi à un turco che mi conobbe ch ero stato turco, et accio non mi scoprissi, mene fuggi nelli confini dell’ongaria per venir in queste arti della X’pianità, ma da un barbier mi fi detto che li passi non erano sicuri, che saria stato preso come spione, et così per timore tornai indietro et per altre strade poi son venuto al seraglio della Bossina. Et da seraglio con alcuni mercanti turchi son venuto à Venetia, et mentre son stato con loro hò fatto alla turca, perché loro mi tenevano per turco, et credevano ch’io fosse uno di quei loro santoni che vano à cercando.

Int R.t Io non son tornato à star in Aleppo perché là si era saputo che mi era fatto turco, et non saria stato sicuro longamen[te] se bene vi son stato una volta così per passaggio doi mesi, et andava in chiesa come Christiano.

APPENDIX 6
DEPOSITION OF MADDALENA Q. MELIN TURCA (1647)


Source: ASV, Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 103, fasc. Madalena q. Melin Turca (June 4, 1647).
APPENDIX 7
DEPOSITION OF PIERRE BLANCHE (1631)


Source: ASV, Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88 (Oct. 16, 1631).
APPENDIX 8
DEPOSITION OF ANNA FRAIS (1630)


Source: ASV, Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88, (June 4, 1630).
APPENDIX 9

DEPOSITION OF MARCO LOMBARDO (1632)


Source: ASV, Santo Uffizio, Processi, b. 88 (Nov. 8, 1632).
APPENDIX 10

SAMPLE PAGE FROM THE PIA CASAS DEPARTURE REGISTER (1616)

Source: ACPV, BDCh 2, cc. 2r-3r, 1616
APPENDIX II

SAMPLE PAGE FROM THE PIA CASA'S BAPTISMAL REGISTER (1657)

Source: ACPV, BDC, 2, cc. 47v–48r (1657).
APPENDIX 12
ALMS-COLLECTING PATENT OF ANTONIO GIUSTINIANO (1619)

By order of the Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop.

It is entrusted to you, Reverend heads of Monasteries, both of men and of women, and to all the Vicars, Foranes, Archpriests, Curates, of the Cities, Castles, and Villages of our jurisdiction, that the Pia Casa of Venice has suspended and annulled all the Patents, or mandates previously conceded to several infidels who have come to the Holy Fountain, which allowed them to search for alms everywhere, That from now on in no way shall it be allowed, that in the Villages, and locales subject to the said Territory may they search any longer by virtue of the aforesaid Patents, but the only one who may do so or have it done is Antonio Giustiniano, formerly a Jew turned Christian, bearer of our present mandate, as elected by the lords Governors of the aforesaid Pia Casa, to be permitted once a year starting August 15, day of the Blessed Virgin, to hold (conforming to his order) one general alms-collecting in all the Cities, Lands, and places of the Most Serene Dominion, for the sustenance of all those who every day come to the Holy Baptism, to whom we beseech you to give with charity all favors and accompany him to all the Houses, and Farms, so that he receives from all the devotees of Christ our Lord, grains, wine, money, and other [goods] to be able to provide for the necessities of that Pia Casa, and since it could be that those who have until now collected alms in virtue of the aforesaid patents, may be upset by that prohibition, you should persuade them to come to the aforesaid Pia Casa their mother, assuring them that they will be provided for by the aforesaid lords Governors, as is their intention and thought. You are required to publicize this mandate in your Churches eight days before the above-said feast of the Blessed Virgin, so that all the faithful prepare to make this holy alms-giving.

Source: ACPV, BdC, 20, c. 95 (July 1, 1619).
# APPENDIX 13

## DRAGOMANS IN VENETIAN SERVICE (C. 1550–C. 1670)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Last, First)</th>
<th>Place of Provenance</th>
<th>Father’s Name, and Profession</th>
<th>Other Dragoman Relatives</th>
<th>Dates in Venetian Employment</th>
<th>Place(s) of Service</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agapito, Gabriel</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>physician</td>
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<td>1641–?</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
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<td>Aggiondrite, Andrea</td>
<td>Modon</td>
<td>Zuane (son)</td>
<td>?–1553</td>
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<td>Modon</td>
<td>Andrea (dragoman)</td>
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<td>Gasparo (secretary)</td>
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<td>Ambrosio Ceroyco</td>
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<td>Giacomo (consul)</td>
<td>Domenico (brother)</td>
<td>1637–1643</td>
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<td>Balsarini, Giacomo</td>
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<td>Domenico &amp; Carlo (sons)</td>
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<td>Bon, Andrea</td>
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<td>Gio: Maria (dragoman)</td>
<td>Gio: Battista Salvago (cousin)</td>
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<td>Gio: Maria (son)</td>
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<td>Andrea (son)</td>
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<td>Cristoforo (uncle)</td>
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<td>Matteo (brother)</td>
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<td>Cyprus, Istanbul, Venice</td>
<td>Turkish, Greek, Persian?</td>
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<td>Navon, Alessandro</td>
<td>Pera</td>
<td>Gio: Battista (dragoman)</td>
<td>Pasqual (grandfather); Tommaso (uncle)</td>
<td>1641–1652</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navon, Gio: Battista</td>
<td>Pera</td>
<td>Pasqual (dragoman)</td>
<td>1641–1652</td>
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<td>Navon, Pasqual (I)</td>
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<td>Navon, Pasqual (II)</td>
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<td>Gio: Battista (dragoman)</td>
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<td>Pasqual &amp; Gio: Battista (brothers)</td>
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<td>Olivier (French dragoman)</td>
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<td>Pace, Girolamo</td>
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<td>Pace, Marco</td>
<td>Split</td>
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<td>1539–1553</td>
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<td>Salvago, Gianesin (II)</td>
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<td>Mateca (son)</td>
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<td>Salvago, Gio: Battista</td>
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<td>Mateca (dragoman)</td>
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<td>Tarsia, Cristoforo</td>
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<td>Tarsia, Giacomo</td>
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<td>Tarsia, Marco</td>
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<td>Rugier &amp; Cristoforo (brothers)</td>
<td>Istanbul, Venice, Candia</td>
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<td>Tarsia, Ruggiero</td>
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<td>Tarsia, Tommaso</td>
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<td>Torre, Antonio</td>
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<td>&lt;1627–1629</td>
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<td>Tosi, Faustino</td>
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<td>1612–?</td>
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<td>Vecchia, Paolo</td>
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<td>Velutello, Alvise</td>
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<td>Velutello, Marcantonio</td>
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<td>Split, Venice, Istanbul</td>
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<td>Venier, Anzolo</td>
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<td>Venice</td>
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<td>Venier, Pietro</td>
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<td>1627–?</td>
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APPENDIX 15
LETTER BY SULTAN MURAD III TO DOGE PASQUALE CICOGNA AND TWO TRANSLATIONS BY GIROLAMO ALBERTI AND GIACOMO DE NORES (1594)

15.1 Excerpt from letter by Sultan Murad III to Doge Pasquale Cicogna

[Image: Photo by Vera Costantini]

Source: ASV, Documenti Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1057
15.2 Translation by Girolamo Alberti


Tradotta da Gier[ola]mo Alberti

Lettera del Gransig[n]or venuta co[n] lettere di Cattaro di 4 Zugno 1594

Source: ASV, Documenti Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1058.
15.3 Translation by Giacomo de Nores


Tradotta p[e]r mè Giacmo de Nores.
R[icevuta] p[e]r via di Cattaro a 3 luglio 1594.

Source: ASV, Document Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1059.
APPENDIX 16
TRANSLATIONS BY MARCANTONIO BORISI AND GIACOMO DE NORES OF A LETTER BY SULTAN MEHMET III TO DOGE PASQUALE CICOGNA (1595)

16.1 Translation by Marcantonio Borisi

Al più glorioso tra i Signori magni nella Nation di Gesù eletto fra i grandi, et Ecc[el]si nella religion del Messia, correttore dei negotij dell universal Nation Nazarena, dominator della lunga falda del manto di gravità potentia, et riputatione padron, et Signore dei segni della gloria. Il Doce di Venetia, il cui fine sia buono


Tradotta da Merc’Ant[oni]o Borissi


Source: ASV, Document Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1080.
16.2 Translation by Giacomo de Nores


Et perche è sempre stato suolito di questa corona di comunicar in simili occasioni la nova della creatione del nuovo Rè alli Prencipi, e S[igno]ri grandi, che vivono amici con la sublime nostra Corte, n’è parso però convenevole fargliela con la presente sapere, la quale portata, che sarà dall’honorato fra i grandi, e celeberimi servi della nostra Corte Useinn, uno delli Cesnighiri dell’ inclita Porta; che il suo valor sia in augumento; si desidera, che per la pura, e sincera amicitia che dà antico tempo in quà havete sempre osservato co[n] questa sublime Corte, et per l’abondante amore, che portrate all’alta e felice nostra Prosapia, vogliate far anco palese questo felice avvenimento della nostra creatione, et assuntione à questo sublime grado di felicità, e grandezze, à tutti gl’huomini del Dominio vostro; et poi disponendovi anco per l’avenire di star fermi, e costanti nella sincera amicitia et amor, che portate verso questo Imperio, attendrete à continuar nelle pratiche, e nei contratti in quel medesimo modo appunto che fatto havete nel tempo di essi Gloriosi Avi, et Bisavi nostri, che la misericordia di Dio sia sopra di loro; et anco mandando (come è l’antico vostro costume) di Ambasciatori valorosi, farete rinovare i patti, e le conventioni; affinché vivendo li sudditi in pace, et in reposo, habbino occasione di pregar per la conservatione, et felicità maggiore di questo Imperio.

Dat[to] in Costantinopoli à gl’ultimi giorni della luna di Gemasiel’ Achir dell’anno 1003 di Maumeto, ciò è nel mese di febraro dell’anno di [christo] 1594.

Tradotta per mè Giacomo Nores il primo di Giugno 1595.

Source: ASV, Document Turchi, b. 9, fasc. 1081.
APPENDIX 17

EXCERPT FROM GIOVANNI BATTISTA SALVAGO'S RELAZIONE FROM BARBARY

Source: MCC, MSS Morosini-Grimani 547, f. 12r, c. 27r.
APPENDIX 18
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56 The two Castles on the Black Sea
57 The Castle of the Seven Towers
58 The Rumeli Castle
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Translation

Seeing that it has pleased God to call to a better life Mr. Michele Membré, after the long service as interpreter he has granted to the Serenity, it is my role, Giacomo de Nores, knowing myself not to be inferior to your other servants, and subjects, in matter of loyalty, or devotion, to present myself at your feet, and as a not unqualified servant for said task, that being encountered by your utmost clemency, and piety, I couldn’t exercise it I would petition reverently Your Serenity that it deign accept in this occasion my servitude, and devotion by granting me the favor, that as its special servant and subject I could in the future demonstrate even more my readiness, and fidelity, serving you in the greater, and more important task which mine isn’t. Knowing, however, that enjoying not having been born of vile blood I am the firstborn son and successor in the feudum of late Mr. Pietro de Nores Cavalier, and feudatory of Her Serenity in the Reign of Cyprus, a subject of those conditions that the Serenity could better recognize than I can recount, and that having dedicated and given his life fighting in the service of this Most Serene Republic with the blood spilt in the latest war, I give some testimony of his devotion toward this Most Happy State, to the [?] of the maternal family Podocattara, afflicted and desolated no less than the paternal one in your service. If the inconveniencies of the life passed can give place and merit, I have experienced many of those that cannot be proven any greater, when in the swaddles I was left miserable and taken by Turkish people deprived not only of any sustenance, and of my own and my relatives’ blood, but of memory as well, and of the recognition of the Fatherland where I was born: I have traveled for many, many years in various and diverse fortunes, and countries, in Turkey, in Persia, and in Babylonia with all those misfortunes and encountered that most result in servitude. And if it is necessary, as indeed is very much the case, a certain accomplished intelligence in the Turkish language I had to make a profession of it, I say to Your Serenity how I feel so much the Master of that [language], that it is not only most easy for me to read, and write, compose and translate in that idiom, but also teaching it when the occasion would be given me would be as easy adding to it altrotanta knowledge of the Arab language, and the Persian, which I and perhaps no one else in this city understands, of which I can avail myself so easily as of Turkish, and recognizing the
benefits of these languages for the office of interpreter in your service, is easier for you than for me, and since it is not less useful for that task being accustomed to the customs of the Turkish and their inclinations and their manner of negotiation which are very different from ours Your Serenity can easily be convinced, that being, I can say, born among these people, and to my bad luck exercised, having practiced for many years their affairs, and traveled in many and diverse provinces, and lands here and there in a manner of being able to make use of the opportunities that the day presented me, and given me by you, that would be as I hope fully serviced, and satisfied. It is the eighth year that I serve this most happy state as speaker of these people to the office of the illustrious masters Cinque Savij sopra la mercantia with satisfaction, I believe, of that most important magistrate, and that, which is more important, I have had the task of translating many and most important public letters both of those going out, as of those which were sent from elsewhere and this I believe to have done with great enjoyment of those who entrusted me with that office quanto I would like that being informed your serenity understands I enjoy having this as testimony for my efforts, whom I have immediately served, [?] thus accompanying most Serene Prince the not-mediocre merits of my house for the faculty smarite, loss of the Fatherland, and blood spilt in service of this Most Serene Republic, my stenti, efforts, misadventures, and torments of many years of insufferable servitude with complete knowledge of not only the Turkish language, but also Arabic and Persian, I dare say, to appear most humbly at the feet of Your Serenity and petition you reverently that it deigns place me in the position already vacant for the death of said Mr. Michel Membré, which favor beyond being granted to a most loyal person and not inept for this task is dedicated already for a long time solely to your service, forsaking any other [exercise] to which he could apply himself to be able to serve Your Serenity with most espedito spiriti would also be most agreeable to His Divine Majesty being able by that way to support my poor mother two most unhappy cousins and keep a most impoverished house which is in colmo of any disaggio which along with me appeals most humbly to the clemency and goodness of Your Serenity.

Source: ASV, Senato Mar, filza 128, unpaginated (Dec. 13, 1594).
I, Andrea Negroni, Your most humble servant, and public dragoman, petition that you be content to grant me the position vacated due to the death of Mr. Michiel Membré, not as a favor, nor for kind promise, nor for the useful and loyal service I have rendered for about 15 years, but rather for your simple benevolence, and thanks to talent really because it so happens that I am suitable for it, and for that reason alone I should be permitted to make note of certain things, first of all [my] unusual service on the occasion of the capturing of the ship of the Bosnian merchants by the Uskoks, which caused Your Serenity great inconvenience, which is why I wrote Arze [decrees] to Sinan Bassà and went on your instructions to Lesina [Hvar, an island off the shores of Dalmatia], and handled the surrendering of those goods writing down what was received and noting the receipts with marks, stamps, and seals of each one of these Turks [so that] with great advantage, and public reputation I put an end and perpetual silence [to their complaints], and stopped any difficulty, and beyond that, that in the important and scandalous affair prompted by the Turks’ wish to build a new Fortress near the Fortress of Zara carrying in addition to all the other preparations seven large canons of 50 and one culverin bringing them safely to the city of Clina [Koljane, Croatia] twenty miles from the border, these Turks pretending that some places including the fortress of Verpoglia [Vrpolje, Croatia] were under the jurisdiction and within the borders of the Grand Turk, for which occasion I was sent by Your Serenity onboard a frigate to Cataro [Kötör], and then through Scardona along with Mr. Alessandri we went to the Pasha, where I did what befitted my loyalty, and stated clearly against the Turkish adversaries, who lay claims to either houses, or fields, or mills and structures within the borders of Your Serenity and once the two Arze [decrees] I ordered were ready and signed by the Pasha and sealed to the Glory of God this scandalous affair too was silenced, and any order of that innovation was revoked. I omit having been burdened by the troubling scandal of the entanglement of the Sultan’s agent and of this matter, as of others, in which Your Serenity has proven highly satisfied, another thing I should say regards the current purpose which is Turkish language and writing, and twelve other types of Oriental alphabets that I am well versed in, and it would be legitimate to say that I don’t know anyone better than me to keep to a certain customary modesty because it is not enough to speak it, and write it, but to prudently do this and that with which – with singular discretion – the most perceptive and skilled could maintain the dignity of their Prince and avoid offending [his] pride to the advantage of another great Master with whom they happen to negotiate, and in explaining the writing it may end up being useful to demonstrate vigor, and boldness, and conjointly good mind, and respect, in the ambit of which alone consists the perfection of negotiating. This great discretion is acquired with the greatest pain, but I turn to remind Your Serenity that I am poor with father, mother, wife and three children, that with a salary of only 9 ducats a month I have always served loyally, and have never bothered your ears to give me a raise of any sort, but always patiently with the hope of succeeding the above mentioned office, for which I again petition that I be recommended, to the glory of God and public felicity, etc.

Source: ASV, Senato Mar, filza 128, unpaginated (Dec. 9, 1594).
APPENDIX 21
REPORT TO THE SENATE BY FRANCESCO SCARAMELLI (1626)


[40r] Dapoi non si mancò di considerarle con la visione de molti letti in dette Camere, la custodia, che si haveva delle dogelle, et poi veduto il Dormitorio anco ad esso s’acquietò per l’ordine de detti letti; Oltre molte Dongelle attendevano al lavoriero d’ago, tutte coperte de velli, hebbe un novo concerto di musica, et le fù detto dall’Ill[ustrissi]m[i] S[ignori] interpretando io Scaramelli, che la figliola s’haverebbe trovata nell’ultimo, et più riservato luoco, mentre egli osservava fra tante di vederla, se gli mostrarono alcuni lavorieri d’aere [acre?] bellissimi, per farle veder l’impiego virtuoso di quelle creature laudate à buon proposito di ottima educazione, et impiego secondo le loro inclinazioni, à la Religione, à al matrimonio. Finalmente conferitici in un altra salla ampia, et spacios, dove dalle S[ignori]re Governatrici fussimo incontrati, era appresso l’Ill[ustrissi]m[a] S[ignori] ra Suriana sedente la figliola vestita i habito rovano, ma ben ornata; dimostrata da lontano da me scaramelli, fù incontrata con abbracciamento dal Padre, che in quell’atto bacciandola non si pote ritenere dalle lagrime, se bene la figliola dimostrò una ciera allegra, e talmente significante la costanza, et la irrefragabilita del suo animo, che mai si mosse da quella gravità, la quale dimostrò da principio; fù in turco interrogata dal Padre, et dal Genero, se stava in quel luoco di sua voglia, et se era sforciata à starvi, et se voleva, che haveva portato un Imperial comandamento dal Gran S[ignori] re per liberarla, et condurla al suo Paese, al che ridendo, rispose prima in Italiano, ó questo nò, crolando la testo; Io scaramelli vedendo, che non rispondeva in lingua, che
Franc[o] Scaramelli
Pietro Mattheacci

Ser[enissimo] Principe
di scotto, come fecevano tante altre Gentildonne, le quali tutte di sange nobilissimo ad altro non pensavano, che a tralasciare a parte le pompe mondane, per il che anco la figliola, che ad altro non pensav, che a ben, et virtuosamente vivere, s’haveva eletta quella forma di habito, et se ella ne desiderava d’algun altro sorte, perche al Padre faceva instanza, che gliene mandasse, lo faceva, come disse essa figliola per vestirsi alcuna volta in occasione di feste spirituali, di giochi, et di dimostrazioni. All’hora il turco rimase sodisfattissimo, et sempre intenerito con proromper in lagrime lodando l’ottima forma di quella vita: Et perche essa figliola haveva prima conferito all’Illustri S[ignore]ri Gov[ernato]ri di voler essortar il Padre a farsi Christiano, et intorno à che ella fù avvertita a parlar in questo proposito con accedimento senza rendersele molesta; et Noi Scaramelli, et Mattheacci erimo vigilanti a questo punto, non ven[n]e altra occasione di faticarsi i questo particolare; poiche solamente la figliola essortò il Padre a venir a star a Venetia, dove da questi Illustri sarebbe come ella era ben veduto, et se la Madre fusse anco ella venuta sarebbe stata abbracciata; Onde il buen turco sempre stilando lagrime per gli occhi lodava la Cità, la carità, et il governo. Desiderava egli, che le rispondesse in turco, o in schiavo; al che anco io Mattheacci la persuadevo, ma in schiavo le dimandò solamente, S[ignore] Padre, mi volete Voi bene? mi amate; ma egli inarcate le ciglia si rese quasi stupido; et poi pim volte pregò la figliola a contentarsi che Cassan suo Genero potesse venir a quel [43r] ragionamento; et che diverse fiate le recuso, ma finalmente fece, che io Mattheacci lo chiamassi, et volendo, che io le sedesci appresso, fece seder il Cognato nel luoco, che io tenevo all’incontro di essa; all’hora parendolo al Cognato in dubio, che non sapesse ella scriver, si fece portar l’inchiostro, et la carta, et scrisse, il che aquietò il Cognato, et consolò il Padre, volendo haver un segno di tirro di pena, per ricognizione delle sue lettere, le quali promisero di mandarle vicendevolmente spesso, massime che giornalmente s’intendevano li avisi della com’un salute, havendo dimandato il Padre alla figliola, se per le Galee di mercantia haveva ricevute alcune robe, le quali disse esserle state rese sicure. Parve al Padre di narar in turco certa occasione di disgusto, che temeva d’haver dato alla figliola mentre era fanciulla; onde senza spettar l’interpretatione, per haver il tutto inteso, si pose a rider, volendo significare, che per tal occasione non era partita. Ella disse, che sarebbe andata in un altro luoco Monaca, ma il Padre le rispose, che stava in un Paradiso, et che non si movesse, si che le era spiaciuto solamente, che le veniva detto, che era in prigione, ma che conosceva d’esser stato ingannato; poi che non poteva star meglio al mondo; anzi rendeva gratie a Dio, che quel matrimonio ineguale, che haveva contratto, non habbia havuto luoco, poiche rimaneva per la sua sproportione afflito, sicome all’incontro hora vive conosolato, et procurerà di consolare la Madre; all’hora guardando le mani, le dita, et le ungie della giovane, disse, che erano molto gentili, et più benne di quelle della Madre, et che il buen trattamento la rendeva benna, sana, et ben governata; ne occorrendo in quelli ragionamenti osservare altri concetti familiari, et domestici di sodisfazione, di lode si tralascino, perché sarebbero tediosi, finalmente levati dal sedere si approspìgì la figliola ad un tolino, dove erano apparecchiati alcuni cristali coll’impressione del suo nome coperti de fiori in una cestella, et altre gentilezze in un’ altra, d’una ben ornata don[n]etta vestita alla venetiana, de fiori di seta naturali ,certe scatole di seta, un scepteto di fillo d’argent, alcuni frutti naturali, glieli presentò tutti, come opere delle sue mano, li quali mostrò aggradire, nominandola virtuosa, e tanto più delle sue condizioni si sodisfece, quanto che poco di poi la sentì a cantare un salmo con buona voce, et con


Franc[esco] Scaramelli
Pietro Mattheazzi

Source: ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 8, cc. 39v–44r (June 5, 1627–July 6, 1627).
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