

CONFERENZE 142

PIOTR CHMIEL

RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF ANTEMURALE:
VENETIAN DIPLOMACY
IN RESPECT OF THE OTTOMAN WORLD (1573-1645)



CONTENTS

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BIBLIOTECA E CENTRO DI STUDI A ROMA



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vicolo Doria, 2 (Palazzo Doria)
00187 Roma
tel. +39 066792170
e-mail: accademia@rzym.pan.pl
www.rzym.pan.pl

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English text revised by:
JESSICA TAYLOR-KUCIA

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tel. 22 635 03 01,
e-mail: elipsa@elipsa.pl



Agencja Wydawniczo-Poligraficzna GIMPO
ul. Transportowców 11, 02-858 Warszawa
tel. +48 501 076 031,
e-mail: gimpo@poligrafia.waw.pl

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INTRODUCTION

This book is built around a dual core of two main, parallel subjects. The first is an idea (the bulwark of Christendom, Latin: *'antemurale Christianitatis'*), and the second a structure (the Venetian diplomatic service). At first glance there might seem to be no obvious reason, either thematic or methodological, to link them in one book. Further complexity is added by the third element of this composition, the context within which the two main subjects are analysed. This third element is the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, an objective situation that contributed to the emergence of a certain belief among participants of the political life in the period under study, the early modern age, and specifically 1573-1645. My aim in tackling these issues all together is to demonstrate the influence of the first-mentioned idea on the activity of the second-named structure in the period in question; and to examine how that structure construed the idea and contributed to its evolution. Through the questions and findings formulated in this book I hope to shed new light on issues that have been already discussed in the humanities, such as the history of the idea of Europe and its divisions; ethnic, (proto-) national and religious identity in the early modern period; and the history of relations between the European world and the East / Orient, and more broadly the world of an Other. With all certainty the analysis presented here, which is based on the results of relatively limited research in Venetian archives and libraries, is too modest an achievement to make any significant impact on the

course of the abovementioned discussions. I hope, however, that it may at least help to shed light on some aspects of these issues not yet explored. A further aim of the book is to contribute to the development of knowledge on certain aspects of early modern Venetian diplomacy, especially by stressing the role of hitherto less appreciated actors in the foreign service of the Republic of Venice: consuls, and lower-ranking officials and other personnel of the Venetian mission in Constantinople.

While neither Venetian diplomacy nor Ottoman expansion require further comment at this stage of the book, the idea of the bulwark of Christendom should probably be explained in more detail. The notion itself is taken from the language of political writings of the age. It surfaced in a range of different contexts, usually to indicate the role of a given state or its part in the defence of the whole Christian world of Europe against the progressing Ottoman expansion. It took the form of a concept, rhetorical figure, or metaphor in the diplomatic language characteristic for the correspondence which passed between early modern European rulers, in particular with the participation of the pope, and was developed further in later periods. In the nineteenth century, with the decline in importance of that part of Europe which had previously bordered the Ottoman Empire, the *antemurale* idea became a salient element of the identity discourse of many nations in the region, recalling the vital role once played by certain other countries in this area which no longer featured on the political map of the continent. The cases of Poland, Hungary, or Croatia may serve here as good examples of this phenomenon, i.e. of the reformulation of an earlier idea in the nineteenth-century context. In this book my interest is focused on the *antemurale* idea in the form visible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, i.e. before the later revival of national ideas.

The original concept of this project was to compare the functioning of the ‘bulwark of Christendom’ idea in the treatises, political writings and—as far as possible—the collective memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Most Serene Republic of Venice. I assumed that the many similarities between these two states—their institutional orders, their locations on the fringes of Christendom, the relatively large numbers of Eastern Christians in their populations, and the certain ‘institutional lightness’¹ of both states (which led to their collapse in an

1] The expression ‘institutional lightness [of ancient empires]’ (‘leggerezza istituzionale [degli imperi antichi]’) is drawn from L. Di Fiore, M. Meriggi, *World History. Le nuove rotte della*

age of domination of absolutist states)–might be also reflected in the political idea that inspired their relations with the Ottoman Empire, which was treated by both states as a menacing neighbour interested in furthering its expansion into Europe. For obvious reasons, such expansion would have affected in the first instance precisely these two states (as well as the Habsburg Empire and, after 1526, when the independent Crown of Hungary ceased to exist, Transylvania). However, there was also a fundamental difference between the Polish and Venetian realities. In the Polish case, the bulwark idea recurred frequently in the political discourse of the period, and was also revived many times in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Venice, by contrast, the concept seems to have been formulated more weakly, and it did not develop into a mythologem of the modern Italian national discourse. Furthermore, unlike Polish historiography, in which the notion of *antemurale* has been analysed on many occasions,² Venetian studies has not demonstrated particular interest in this concept.

However, I soon realized that a comparative analysis of the idea of *antemurale* was far more complex than I had initially thought. There was no coherent presentation of the idea in any sources from

storia, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011, p. 123. It was used there to refer to a new concept of empires, introduced by S. Gruzinski and S. Subrahmanyam, which argued that early modern empires (bigger states) were platforms for social, cultural, and civilizational exchange rather than oppressive, centralized state organisms. This renders them different than modern absolutist states or nation states. Some elements of this concept can be retraced in S. Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde. Histoire d'une mondialisation*, Paris: La Martinière, 2004, pp. 82-83 and 445.

- 2] Above all in the monographic works by J. Tazbir: *Polskie przedmurze chrześcijańskiej Europy: mity a rzeczywistość historyczna* [Poland as a bulwark of Christian Europe: myths and historical reality], Warszawa: Interpress, 1987; and his more revealing *Polska przedmurzem Europy* [Poland as the bulwark of Europe], Warszawa: Twój Styl, 2004; as well as his article 'Od antemurale do przedmurza, dzieje terminu' [From antemurale to bulwark, the history of a concept], *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* XXIX (1984), 167-184. Also: J. Urwanowicz, 'Wokół ideologii przedmurza chrześcijaństwa w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII w.' [The bulwark of Christendom ideology and its context in the [Polish-Lithuanian] Commonwealth in the second half of the seventeenth century], *ibidem*, 185-200; J. Krzyżaniakowa, 'Polska – *Antemurale Christianitatis*. Polityczne i ideologiczne podstawy kształtowania się idei' [Poland – *Antemurale Christianitatis*. The political and ideological basis for the formation of the idea], [in:] K. Kaczmarek and J. Nikodem (red.), *Docendo discimus: studia historyczne ofiarowane profesorowi Zbigniewowi Wielgoszowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2000, pp. 295-313. Cf. also the interesting study by the Italian scholar S. Graciotti, 'Polskie przedmurze we Włoszech w XVI i XVII wieku. O barokowej ewolucji pewnego mitu' [The Polish bulwark in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the Baroque evolution of a myth], [in:] idem, *Od Renesansu do Oświecenia*, vol. 1, Warszawa: PIW, 1991, pp. 61-78.

the period that could serve as a basis for my further research or reflection. The histories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Venice, including their relations with the Ottoman Empire, were too different to allow me to select a common chronological framework for the book. It was also difficult to specify a particular source typology, since evidence of the idea is to be found in diplomatic writings, including official documents; but also in treatises, letters, diaries, etc. Furthermore, there were fundamental differences in the methods employed both to produce and to disseminate such texts: while in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth they were mainly handwritten,³ in Venice, the sixteenth-century capital of printing, they were usually distributed as printed works.⁴

In order to resolve these problems I modified my original plans in several ways. First I decided to divide up the idea of bulwark into several smaller units linked by the name of *antemurale* in the early modern period and in later historiography. Secondly, selection of sources played an important role in formulating my approach to the problem. I chose to focus on diplomatic sources (including those produced in the diplomatic milieu, which in fact constituted a considerable quantity of the early modern geographic and ethnographic literature).⁵ In my reading of these sources I identified several recurring elements. The first was the widespread belief that an ‘Incomer’⁶—an expansive

3] J. Partyka, *Rękopisy dworu szlacheckiego doby staropolskiej* [Old-Polish manuscripts from noble courts], Warszawa: Semper, 1995.

4] On printing in Venice cf. e.g. J.R. Hale, ‘Industria del libro e cultura militare a Venezia nel Rinascimento’, [in:] G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi (a cura di), *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 3/II, Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1980, pp. 245-288; M. Infelise, ‘Book Publishing and the Circulation of Information’, [in:] E.R. Dursteler, *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013, pp. 651-674. According to I. Fenlon (*The Ceremonial City. History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 236), around 1550 there were 30-50 publishers in Venice who together published an average of around 10,000 titles a year. The same scholar estimates that approximately one-third of the Venetian male population was literate in this period (p. 247). Other research attributes greater importance to manuscripts in the literary culture of the Venetian elites in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cf. D. Raines, ‘Office Seeking, Broglio and the Pocket Political Guidebooks in ‘500 and ‘600 Venice’ (p. 143), *Studi Veneziani* 22 (1991), 137-194.

5] A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben. ‘Türkengefahr’ und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600*, Frankfurt-New York: Campus, 2003, pp. 119-122.

6] The use of this term here is a reference to a concept used by the author to describe the image of the South Slavs from Istria in texts by Triestine authors written in the early twentieth century. Cf. P. Chmiel, ‘Un Nuovo Arrivato? L’immagine dello “slavo” negli scritti di autori triestini dell’inizio del Novecento’, *Razprave in gradivo / Treatises and Documents. Journal of Ethnic Studies* 63 (2010), 104-123.

actor characterized by significant cultural differences—had appeared on the immediate horizons of the Christian world. Secondly, this recent ‘Incomer’, the Ottoman state, fascinated the Venetian political elites, who admired it for certain features of its internal order. At the same time, the civilizational model of the Ottomans and the general internal organization of their state were considered less attractive than those in Europe and believed destined to collapse due to the tyranny, corruption, and violence ubiquitous within them. The third element that recurred in the diplomatic writings was a belief that the Ottoman Empire could not be defeated because of continuous wars among the rulers of the Christian world that made it difficult to form the united front necessary to face this aggressive neighbour. That belief contributed to the formation of the political and cultural geographical consciousness of the Venetian elites: it integrated the dissipating Christendom at the conceptual level.

These three elements, taken together, seem to me to constitute the essence of the content of the *antemurale* idea. Having said that, I must make it clear that the current definition of *antemurale* is but a historiographic proposal. Nonetheless, I believe it is a valuable concept for a comprehensive description of certain aspects of Venetian-Ottoman relations.

This initial organization of notions and matters led me to conclusions from which both the topic of this book and its structure took form. It became clear that the notion of *antemurale* could only be fully explained in relation to another concept already defined in the humanities: the ‘Turkish threat’ / ‘fear of the Turks’ (Latin: *‘furor turcicus’*, German: *‘Türkengefahr’* / *‘Türkenfurcht’*),⁷ and to the political and cultural geography of the early modern world. Moreover, in view of the political profile of the diplomatic documents, I ultimately decided to leave out all sources not directly related to policy-making in the early modern period. This meant that I did not include in my research the whole range of texts—treatises, pamphlets, diaries, anti-Turkish writings (*turcica*), etc.—that informed popular contemporary knowledge of the world, and contained prophecies and plans to attack Constantinople and to partition up the Ottoman Empire, insofar as these were created outside the political (diplomatic) network. These

7] Cf. above all: A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben...*, op. cit., pp. 51-88; G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo oltre le crociate. La guerra turca nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento tra leggende e realtà*, Torino: UTET, 2011, pp. 15-20.

sources had little to contribute to the political (or political and cultural) understanding of *antemurale* that was of particular interest to me. Moreover, there is already an extensive bibliography on them.⁸

Therefore, I decided to focus exclusively on diplomatic sources (reports, dispatches, and instructions) and other texts (treatises, dialogues, etc.) devoted to the Ottoman world produced by diplomats or others active in the diplomatic milieu. These sources seem to give a more realistic⁹ assessment of the issue of the Turkish menace, and convey a knowledge of Ottoman political and cultural realities that was more extensive and nuanced than that demonstrated by the authors of anti-Turkish or anti-Islamic literature, created outside the diplomatic milieu. The diplomatic sources also offer insight into the way the *antemurale* idea functioned in the political and diplomatic practice:

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- 8] Cf. above all a work related to Italian culture: M. Formica, *Lo specchio turco. Immagini dell'Altro e riflessi del Sé nella cultura italiana d'età moderna*, Roma: Donzelli, 2012; a book mostly focused on Italian and French sources: G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit. (including, on prophecies, Chapter II, pp. 75-132, and on plans to seize Constantinople, pp. 133-174); another based in the Italian context: M. Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk' in Italy: a History of the 'Other' in Early Modern Europe*, Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2001; as well as a more general work: N. Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. The best-known selection of anti-Turkish writings (*turcica*) is C. Göllner, *Turcica. Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols., București: Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1961-1978. On *turcica* in the more recent literature cf. K. Mroziejewicz, "'When the Turk roamed around Belgrade": the Ottomans' advent to the Hungarian borderlands in the pre-Mohács Flugschriften', [in:] A. Izdebski and D. Jasiński (eds.), *Cultures in Motion. Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014, pp. 289-309. Cf. also: A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben...*, op. cit., pp. 179-228; and—in reference to Venice—especially: P. Preto, 'I turchi e la cultura veneziana del Seicento', [in:] G. Arnaldi and M.P. Stocchi (a cura di), *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 4/II, Vincenza: N. Pozza, 1984, pp. 313-341; and P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Firenze, G.C. Sansoni Editore, 1975, above all pp. 67-91 (prophecies) and more generally pp. 93-282 (image of the Turks). On anti-Turkish writings cf. also A. Pertusi, 'I primi studi in Occidente sull'origine e la potenza dei Turchi' (488 ff.), *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 465-552. The abovementioned titles are only examples. There are, in fact, many works dedicated to the image of the Turks in various linguistic / national cultures (outside the diplomatic context). Cf. also the bibliography to: M. Beller, J. Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*, Amsterdam-New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2007—on the image of the Turk pp. 254-258.
- 9] I am aware that describing a belief as 'realistic' might be risky from the methodological point of view, particularly when it refers to the beliefs of certain people, or groups of people, who lived in the past. What I mean here (and elsewhere in the book) as a (more) 'realistic assessment', is a way of perceiving and analysing a situation based on access to rationally structured information that was transmitted to Venice by individuals who were tasked with observing and analysing the political reality of a foreign state, without being swayed by radical elements of the public discourse, not usually disseminated by those actually involved in policymaking.

why Venetian diplomats considered the Most Serene Republic to be one of the bulwarks of the Christian world, what effects they hoped to achieve with this designation, and how they attempted to further those aims. Indeed, the vitality of the idea in the long term is curious: at first glance it seems totally irrational, bound to affect Venetian interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet it is such a recurrent theme that there must have been exceptionally constant grounds for it. In this perspective any historiographic explanation based only on religious, propaganda-related, or even economic or political factors will inevitably be completely misleading. Defining the work of the Venetian diplomatic service in connection with the Ottoman state solely in the categories of a 'holy war', a 'delayed crusade', fear of the Turks, Orientalism, or – conversely – as a kind of 'business as usual', is only addressing one aspect of the issue. Such an approach fails to take account of the particular complexity of Venetian-Ottoman relations, which was a function of political (or political and cultural) factors.

Once the decision had been made to use diplomatic sources, it became clear that the Venetian diplomatic service itself should be one of the subjects of the book. I realized that the sources I was analysing contained too much interesting material directly related to the idea of *antemurale* for only a brief outline of the functioning of the Republic's foreign service to be sufficient. This decision became firmer when in the Museo Correr Library I came across a dialogue never previously analysed, written in the 1560s by a secretary to the Venetian mission in Constantinople, Marcantonio Donini. This dialogue complements the other sources used in the book.¹⁰

The consequence of this choice, however, was that I had to abandon my plan to make a comparative study of the functioning of the *antemurale* idea in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Venice, because I failed to identify appropriate materials in the Polish sources. This incompatibility of the sources is due above all to the lack of a permanent representation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the sultans' court, which naturally translates into the relatively small number of reports written by the diplomatic personnel who visited it; moreover, these tended to be relatively brief, and focused above all on ethnographic aspects of life in a country considered by their

10] *Tre dialoghi di Marc'Antonio Donini, già segretario veneto, alle cose de' Turchi* (BMC WL 31.10).

authors (and readers) exotic. There were also far fewer original (not translated) Polish treatises than comparable Venetian sources.

In chronological terms, the book covers the years 1573-1645, with a particular emphasis on the later part of that period. My intention was to choose the time span that best reflected the phenomena I had decided to study. The period designated above was the longest time of peace in the history of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Venice. Thus it cannot be considered a period with residual bias, i.e. deliberately selected with the purpose of proving my thesis of the existence of a sense of threat and menace on the part of the Turks. For this reason, I excluded from my field of interest periods of major Venetian-Ottoman conflicts (i.e. above all the second half of the seventeenth century, which was dominated by the Candian war), periods dominated by formation of anti-Ottoman alliances (the period preceding the Battle of Vienna in 1683, and the final years of the seventeenth century, before the conclusion of the peace treaty in Karlowitz / Sremski Karlovci in 1699), and times marked by a sense of threat common to all or most of Europe / the Christian world, above all the second half of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.¹¹ Likewise, I was not interested in the eighteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire was no longer treated as a real threat to Europe / Christendom. Conversely, my intention was to concentrate on a longer period of peace, when bilateral Venetian-Ottoman relations were satisfactory, and there were no real plans in Christendom to form military alliances against the Ottoman Empire. I decided that the time between the end of the war of Cyprus (1570-1573) and the beginning of the Candian war (1645-1669) would be the best period for such an analysis. The ultimate choice of a slightly earlier date for the start of this period was motivated by my wish to include in my analysis the abovementioned dialogue, whose protagonist is Marcantonio Donini. We do not know exactly when it was written, but it was most probably shortly after Donini's return from his mission in the 1560s. All the other sources analysed were produced after 1573. The period under analysis thus spans around eighty years. This is a sufficient length of time to reveal some overall trends in opinions on the Ottoman Empire and its

11] On this phenomenon cf. above all: R. Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent. The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)*, Nieuwkoop: B. van Graff, 1967; C.M. Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation. Europe and the Caucasus*, New York-London: New York University Press, 1972.

inhabitants, and the *modi operandi* used by Venetian diplomats in their contacts with the Ottoman world. Due to the restrictions by which I was bound in reading unpublished sources, I was forced to narrow down further the chronological timeframe from which I selected the archival materials for analysis. Thus, while I used reports of ambassadors and consuls from the whole period 1573-1645, my analysis of dispatches and instructions has been restricted to examination of a few examples from the years 1625-1640. The unpublished sources from this period have hitherto attracted less interest from historians than others dating from the last decades of the sixteenth century. The dialogues, treatises and similar narrative sources quoted in this book date from the whole period of interest here.

The main group of sources cited in the book comprises documents concerning the activity of ambassadors or consuls (reports, dispatches, instructions) produced in the Venetian diplomatic milieu. Most of these are preserved in the State Archives of Venice (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, ASVe),¹² which were established in the buildings of a former monastery, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, in 1815, to preserve the archives of the Republic of St Mark, previously stored in the Doge's Palace. Care of the archives of the Republic—which were divided between three chancelleries (the greater, the smaller, and the secret, respectively '*superiore*', '*inferiore*', and '*secreta*')—was the responsibility of the grand chancellor of the Republic (*cancelliere grande*). This archive never became scattered to any significant extent;¹³ while some of its parts were transferred after the collapse of the Republic to the capitals of the states on which Venice became dependent (above all Vienna, to a lesser extent Paris), they were returned after the accession of Venice to the united Italy in 1867. Some of the archival documents—above all consular acts from the Levant, and the archives of the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople (*Bailo a Costantinopoli*)—

12] More information on the collections of ASVe is provided by *Guida generale degli Archivi di Stato italiani*, vol. IV, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994, pp. 869-1133 (incl. pp. 882-1013 on collections from the period of the Most Serene Republic, ed. M.F. Tiepolo et al.); and A. Da Mosto, *L'indice generale, storico, descrittivo ed analitico dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, vol. I, Roma: Biblioteca d'Arte Editrice, 1937, esp. pp. 1-8, and vol. II, Roma: Biblioteca d'Arte Editrice, 1940. The present archival resources of ASVe run to c. 70 linear kilometers of files. On the history of the resources of ASVe cf. the exhaustive introduction to: *Guida...*, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 869-879 (including the extensive bibliography on pp. 879-881). Cf. also detailed information present on the Archives' website: <http://www.archiviostatovenezia.it/web/index.php?id=96> (accessed 16.09.2019).

13] On the Venetian chancelleries: *Guida...*, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 906.

were incorporated into the resources of the State Archives in Venice in the 1880s.¹⁴

Other source manuscripts come from the National Library of St Mark (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, BNM) and the Museo Correr Library (Biblioteca del Museo Correr, BMC¹⁵). The former is the biggest and oldest Venetian library, dating back to the bequest of Cardinal Bessarion in 1468. An important element of these collections is the body of Greek manuscripts that was brought to Venice by Greek scholars escaping to the Latin West after the fall of the Byzantine Empire. St Mark's Library holds some 13,000 manuscripts and a large number of early printed works (including all books published in the territory of the Most Serene Republic in the period 1603-1797, one copy of each of which printers were legally obliged to deposit in the library). The BNM manuscripts are classified according to the language in which they were written (Italian, Greek, Latin, French, or Oriental languages), and then into thematic classes. In my research I used treatises, descriptions, and letters in Italian from classes VI (geography), VII (the history of Venice), and XI (miscellaneous).¹⁶ The Museo Correr Library mainly

14] The Levantine archival documents are the part of the documentation preserved in ASVe that was in the past at greatest risk of dispersion. The history of these fonds is turbulent. For instance, the documents of the Venetian mission in Constantinople, gathered into 588 volumes and covering the years 1540-1797, were handed over to the papal internuncio after the fall of the Republic. He kept them until 1840, except for the years 1806-1816, when they were held by the French ambassador at the Ottoman Porte. The documents were taken back to Venice in 1840. Two years later they were transported to Vienna, and only returned to Venice in 1868, after the uniting of Italy, in line with the bilateral agreement on restitution of part of the archival documentation. Cf. *Guida...*, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 1011-1012. On the fonds *Bailo a Costantinopoli* cf. also T. Bertelé, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie: ricerche storiche con documenti inediti e 185 illustrazioni*, Bologna: Apollo, 1932, pp. 356-359 and 381-385; (more briefly) A. Schiavon, 'Venezia e la Porta ottomana: documenti e memorie nell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia', [in:] E. Concina (a cura di), *Venezia e Istanbul: incontri, confronti e scambi*, Udine: Forum, 2006, pp. 63-65; G. Migliardi O'Riordan, 'L'Archivio del bailo a Costantinopoli conservato presso l'Archivio di Stato di Venezia', [in:] *Venezia e Istanbul...*, op. cit., pp. 67-68; and eadem, 'Présentation des archives du baile à Constantinople', *Turcica* 33 (2001), 339-367.

15] Sometimes referred to by the abbreviation 'BMCVe'.

16] Three printed inventories of the Italian manuscripts are available: C. Frati, A. Segarizzi, *Catalogo dei codici marciani italiani*, Modena: Ferraguti, 1909-1911, vols. 1-2 (classes I-V); P. Zorzanello, *Catalogo dei manoscritti italiani della Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia. Classe VI*, Firenze: Olschki, 1950; and P. Zorzanello, G. Zorzanello, *Catalogo dei manoscritti italiani della Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia. Classe VII*, Firenze: Olschki, 1956-1979, vols. 1-5. The inventories of classes VIII-XI are available in the library as a manuscript catalogue, as well as on the library's website. Similarly, on the website there is an index of catalogues of collections in other languages, cf. <http://marciana.venezia.sbn.it/cataloghi> (accessed: 16.09.2019).

preserves collections donated by certain Venetian families, starting from the first half of the nineteenth century, above all concerning the history of Venice and its families. The founder of the library was Teodoro Correr (1750-1830), whose collections were posthumously donated to the city of Venice, pursuant to his will. Nowadays the library holds 12,000 manuscripts, which are divided into collections named after the families to whom they belonged in the past. The largest bodies of manuscripts are in the collections (*'fondi'*) Cicogna (c. 4,000), Correr (over 1,500), and a collection encompassing manuscripts of varying provenance (*Provenienze Diverse*, c. 3,400 items). I used treatises, dialogues, and reports from the collections Donà delle Rose and Wcovich-Lazzari above all.¹⁷ Only sporadically did I turn to other archival sources—e.g. reports sent to the pontifical Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, preserved in the Propaganda Fide Historical Archives (APF) in Rome.¹⁸

The structure of the book reflects the main issues addressed therein. The first chapter is devoted to the Venetian diplomatic service and its functioning in the Ottoman Empire. It covers the organization of the Venetian mission in Constantinople, the Venetian consuls, the types of documents produced by diplomats of the Most Serene Republic, and the circulation of news between Venice and Constantinople. The aim of this chapter is to establish the extent to which the functions of the Venetian diplomatic service and Venetian-Ottoman relations were influenced by the myth of Venice created in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and by a belief in the superior reputation of the state, a reputation whose promotion was one of the main areas of the work of its representatives in foreign states.

The aim of the second chapter is to clarify important terms used in the book connected with political and cultural geography as perceived by the Venetian diplomats, and the political ideas of the Venetian elite

17] The catalogue of the BMC collections has not been edited in a printed volume, except for the fragmentary descriptions in the monumental oeuvre by P.O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum. A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other libraries*, vol. II (London-Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), pp. 280-290 and 577, and vol. VI (London-Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 266-284. The inventories of individual collections are available in the form of handwritten catalogues in the library and are successively being catalogued on the website of a project dedicated to the manuscripts of the Veneto: <http://www.nuovabibliotecamanoscritta.it/BMCVe.html> (accessed: 16.09.2019).

18] Generally on the APF: N. Kowalsky and J. Metzler (eds.), *Inventory of the Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or 'de Propaganda Fide'*, Rome: Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, 1988.

as relevant in their contacts with the Ottoman world. These include concepts such as Christendom, Europe, *antemurale*, and the ‘Turkish threat’ (*Türkengefahr*). In this chapter I trace the meaning and usage of those notions, which are not always the same as those commonly accepted in the present-day literature. I also examine the perception and evaluation of the Ottoman threat by Venetian diplomats.

The third chapter is dedicated to the image of the Ottoman Empire and its Muslim inhabitants as shown in the analysed sources. It looks at the functioning of the Ottoman state apparatus and profiles the Turks and their rulers. This chapter also mentions the categories of political discourse used by diplomats to describe differences between Venice and the sultans’ state. This issue, which I had originally disregarded, I ultimately came to see as important for an analysis of the Ottoman otherness, which was one component of the idea of *antemurale*. Finally, the chapter compares the Venetians’ descriptions of the Ottoman state with their reports from other (Christian) states to which they were posted.

The last two chapters examine the actors who featured in the analysed documents in the context of Venetian-Ottoman relations. The first of them is devoted to states, ethnic groups, and nations (protonational communities), the second to various categories of individuals. Thus Chapter IV profiles Venice’s potential allies in its struggle with the Ottoman state: Persia (in the first part of the chapter), and the various Eastern Christian nations (in the second part). The purpose of my analysis was to identify the factors that motivated or justified Venetian cooperation with these groups of actors, which did not belong to Christendom as traditionally understood (Persia), or were somewhat unreliable due to their political or religious sympathies (the Eastern Christians). Moreover, I decided to focus above all on Eastern Christians from the Caucasus: the Georgians and (to a far lesser extent) the Armenians, because there is already abundant literature on traditional Venetian-Greek relations. Chapter V looks at the various groups of individuals mentioned in the Venetian diplomatic documents: the clergymen and missionaries active in the Ottoman world, converts, and slaves. It emerges that the accomplishment of Venetian diplomatic personnel was in fact judged largely according to their discharge of work in the cause of these three groups of people, such as liberating slaves, monitoring the fates of converts to Islam, who were or were considered potentially dangerous for the Republic, and protection

of certain religious orders while countering the activities of others, thought to be inspired by third states. In this context, the support extended to Venetian missionaries operating in the Levant was directly motivated by the determination to maintain the prestige and position of the Venetian Republic in the Ottoman world.

The analysis contained in this book is situated at the intersection between the traditional disciplines of history and cultural studies. My principal aim was not to reconstruct political events but to examine their social and cultural context and reconstruct the convention of describing and perceiving the Other that served the Venetian elites in their construction of ideas used in the political discourse. My intention was to focus on geographical relations in the period selected for study, especially by examining the imagined political and cultural entities as perceived by the Venetian ruling class. In this way the map of relations and interests analysed reveals the broad interests of the diplomats of the Republic, including the territories of the Southern Caucasus and Persia. Moreover, it conforms to the tenets of connected history¹⁹ and even, to some extent, of world history,²⁰ which stress the need to broaden historical descriptions by adding non-Western perspectives and focusing on extra-European areas. In my analysis of this aspect of Venetian diplomacy, I tried to draw inspiration from works of new diplomatic history, whose aim is to move accents from traditional actors of diplomacy to other players and, more broadly, to bring the achievements of the new humanities and historiography to bear on the history of diplomacy.²¹ In respect of the period under analysis here it is not possible to fulfill all the postulates of this trend, which is mainly concerned with contemporary politics, characterized by globalization of processes and significant participation of non-governmental actors in formation of international relations. Nevertheless, it was my intention

19] S. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997), 735-762.

20] Among the most synthetic works in this fastly growing discipline are: L. Di Fiore and M. Meriggi, *World History...*, op. cit.; P. Stearns, *World History: the Basics*, London-New York: Routledge, 2011; P. Manning (ed.), *Navigating World History. Historians Create a Global Past*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; and P. Pomper, R.H. Elphick, and R.T. Vann (eds.), *World History. Ideologies, Structures and Identities*, Malden-Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

21] More on this approach can be found on the website of an international research group interested in the field (<http://newdiplomatichistory.org/about/>, accessed: 17.09.2019), which also offers a bibliography. Cf. also H. von Thiessen and C. Windler (Hgb.), *Akteure der Aussenbeziehungen: Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, Köln: Böhlau, 2010.

to shift the focus of studies on Venetian diplomacy, wherever possible, from the figure of the *bailo* (the ambassador in Constantinople) to the lower-ranking diplomatic personnel, above all secretaries and *dragomans*, but also consuls and other individuals active in shaping international relations in that period.

I would like to say a few words about the inspirations that came to me from my reading of works by other authors. Three books above all reassured me of the legitimacy of my assumptions and my modes of understanding. The first is the interesting synthesis by Almut Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben. 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600* (2003). This book analyses selected texts—among them many diplomatic reports—in the context of the image of the Turk and the ethnographic knowledge that they conveyed. Höfert's work links these issues to the notion of the Turkish menace (*Türkengefahr*). However, her conclusions are not fully satisfying, as she places the perception of the Turks and their empire within the Orientalist discourse, even as she observes that the model of this discourse cannot fully explain the European image of the Ottomans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Furthermore, her analysis stops at 1600, thus ignoring Venetian diplomatic reports written in the seventeenth century. By contrast, *Pour en finir avec la croisade. Mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les turcs aux XVI et XVII siècles* (2004) by Géraud Poumarède showcases various interpretations of the early modern 'holy war' and the *furor Turcicus* (e.g. in the literary culture, as prophecies of or plans for the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire; and in the political plans of the papacy, individual actions by *condottieri*, activities of privateers, etc.), placing them in the contexts of the operating policy of certain rulers in Christendom and of European-Ottoman trade relations. Poumarède identifies the concept of a 'Turkish war', which he juxtaposes with the notion of 'crusade'. In his view, the former is a product of the early modern age; the latter of the Middle Ages.²² Evincing what I interpret to be an understanding similar to my own of notions that define early modern European-Ottoman relations, Poumarède does not share the view that considers various manifestations of the idea of *antemurale* (which he calls 'holy war') to be a 'delayed crusade'.²³ He also perceives a banalization of the 'holy war' idea, stressing the inconsistency of the politics (including

22] The book is here referred to in its Italian translation (*Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit.).

23] Expression by G. Ricci, *I turchi alle porte*, Bologna: Mulino, 2008, pp. 65-104.

trade relations) pursued by the main political actors in Christendom with their anti-Ottoman rhetoric. This thesis is obviously true, which does not automatically mean that the idea of *antemurale* was dead or 'banalized' in Venetian diplomatic practice. And thirdly, my reading of E. Nathalie Rothman's *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (2012) was an invigorating experience. This book reassured me of the necessity of including individuals—cultural mediators—in my research mandate. In addition to converts, which she described, I also looked at missionaries and slaves. One major asset of her study is that she included Eastern Christians other than the Greeks (i.e. above all the Armenians) in her work.²⁴ This is not a very common approach in Venetian studies. In this context my expansion of the research field covered in this book to include the Venetian image of the Georgians is a humble continuation of the spatial turn within the research on the history of the Republic.

My book does not focus on the *histoire événementielle*, and for the most part eschews description of major political events in Venetian history. It would thus seem expedient to mention here some books with wider reach that offer a general overview of the history of the Venetian Republic. An overarching perspective on the history of this city-state can be found in works written by outstanding experts such as Frederic Lane (*Venice. A Maritime Republic*);²⁵ Alvise Zorzi (*La Repubblica del leone. Storia di Venezia*); Gaetano Cozzi, Michael Knapton, and Giovanni Scarabello (*Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*); and Giuseppe Gullino (*Storia della Repubblica Veneta*). An important recent contribution to Venetian studies is the compendium of the early modern history of Venice edited by E.R. Dursteler, *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*.²⁶ The classic concise history of the Venetian constitutional order *La costituzione di Venezia dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio* is now more than eighty years old, but it can still be recommended.²⁷ The Venetian diplomatic apparatus has been the subject of many

24] E.N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2012, pp. 189-210.

25] Here referred to in its Italian translation: F. Lane, *Storia di Venezia. Ascesa e declino di una repubblica marinara*, Torino: Einaudi, 2006.

26] E.R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013.

27] G. Maranini, *La costituzione di Venezia dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio*, Venezia-Perugia-Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1931. A valuable synthesis of Venetian constitutional history is also provided by I. Cacciavillani, *La Repubblica Serenissima: profilo della costituzione veneziana*, Limena: Signum, 1985.

studies, most of them focused on bilateral relations with a given state, or devoted to a certain period. The most general are works by Andreas Willy, including *Staatskunst und Diplomatie der Venezianer im Spiegel ihrer Gesandtenberichte*, nowadays somewhat dated.²⁸ Thankfully, the activity of Venetian diplomats in the Ottoman Empire has been analysed in many more recent studies, which will be referenced in greater detail in the relevant chapter of this book. The literature on Venetian-Ottoman relations is also very extensive. The monumental book by Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, remains the classic synthesis for this area of Venetian studies.²⁹ The most important newer publications in this field are those by Maria Pia Pedani (above all *Venezia porta d'Oriente*), Eric R. Dursteler (e.g. *Venetians in Constantinople. Nations, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*), and the abovementioned E. Nathalie Rothman.

Some remarks on the names and notions I use are vital. I realized that in some cases I needed to employ specialist terms absent from standard language, both proper names and common nouns. In such cases I decided to use words taken directly from the sources, even if they might seem somewhat anachronistic. I believe that this method, i.e. use of terms present in the sources, can reduce the distance between the intentions of the Venetian authors and the comprehension of the contemporary reader. For instance, I found it necessary to seek a general term to designate all the inhabitants of Venice understood as a state, i.e. all those whose interests were protected by the Venetian diplomatic service. The use of the word 'citizen' in this sense would have been misleading, because the politically and economically active society of Venice was composed of patricians / nobles ('*nobili*') and citizens ('*cittadini*'). It would also not have been fully accurate, since the granting of citizenship was connected with the introduction of an individual into the group of *cittadini*, while admission to the patriciate by this kind of naturalization was not possible. Searching for a more general term to encompass nobles, citizens, and members of other social strata who came from the Venetian state, I found in the sources the expression 'subjects of the doge' (literally: 'subjects of

28] A. Willy, *Staatskunst und Diplomatie der Venezianer im Spiegel ihrer Gesandtenberichte*, Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1943; and, for one specific period, idem, 'Spätzeit der venezianischen Diplomatie', *Die Welt als Geschichte* 5 (1939), 1-24.

29] Cf. also the bibliography for the second edition of that book, including works published between 1975 and 2012 (P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Roma: Viella, 2012, pp. 347-357).

[Your/His Serenity]', originally 'soggetti' or 'sudditi di Vostra Serenità'). I followed a similar rule, where necessary, on usage of proper names, especially the names of states, their inhabitants, or regions. Nonetheless, names of towns are usually given according to the standard English usage; in case of names that have no standard English version, I provided their original names (e.g. taken from the sources) and, on their first appearance, their contemporary names. I hope that my adoption of this rule will not be considered a lack of respect for the inheritance of all the nations that have inhabited these cities, or—worse still—a lack of sensibility to the later history of the states of which these places formed part. I consistently use the name 'Constantinople' because this was the name of Istanbul, also in Turkish, up until the establishment of the twentieth-century Republic of Turkey. For ease of reading I always use present-day names for geographical names other than towns, states or regions. Despite some doubts related to possible anachronism, I also decided to use terms from modern diplomatic relations, such as 'receiving state', 'foreign service', etc. I concluded that a book on diplomacy should use terminology developed specifically for this purpose as far as applicable. After all, this problem applies to many fundamental terms of historical description, such as 'state', 'nation', etc., when referring to pre-modern times.

Dates are given according to the Julian calendar up to 4 October 1584 and according to the Gregorian calendar from 15 October 1584. It is important to remember that the calendar year in the Most Serene Republic began on 1 March; therefore, e.g. 27 February 1603 was, according to Venetian chronology (*'more veneto'*, m.v.), 27 February 1604 according to our dating system. I decided to render years according to our present-day convention, unlike some historians who prefer to use the Venetian custom.

Finally, a few words should be said on the quotations that feature in the book. I decided wherever possible to include in the references relevant short passages *in extenso* from unpublished sources. I explain abbreviations in square brackets, and fill in omitted letters or groups of letters in the same way. As a rule, I preserve the original spelling and punctuation. However, I decided to write out in full the most commonly used abbreviations or ligatures, such as 'che', 'per', 'non', or 'et'. If there is no continuous numbering of pages or sheets within individual volumes of dispatches, I refer only to the number of the dispatch.

CHAPTER I

VENETIAN DIPLOMACY AND ITS *MODUS OPERANDI* IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

When a Venetian ambassador returning from a mission presented himself before the Senate of the Republic of St Mark to deliver his report on the receiving state and on his activity there, he was usually assured of the attentive interest of his audience of Venetian foreign policy decision-makers. The regular delivery of these ambassadorial reports to the supreme collegial body of the Republic was a unique phenomenon in early modern diplomacy, just as Venetian diplomacy itself was unique. It was an impressive structure in terms of both organization and communication; a structure that exercised—and to a certain extent also created—Venetian foreign policy. This is why the first chapter of this book is given over in its entirety to a presentation of how the Venetian diplomatic service functioned in the Ottoman Empire: its structure, its way of working, and the rules by which it was governed.

Traditionally, Venice was represented in Constantinople by an official called a bailo. The etymology of this word is unclear. It may have been derived from the word '*basileus*', the Latin title of the Byzantine emperor, and come to denote the Venetian envoys who represented their doge at his court. According to another hypothesis, the word

stems from an Arabic term.¹ Whatever its etymological origins, the institution itself was already in existence in the Byzantine period. Pursuant to a treaty concluded in 1277 between the Community of Venetians² and Byzantium, the emperor made available twenty-seven houses for the Venetian diaspora in Constantinople. The role of the bailo in this period was to provide leadership to the community, to represent it before the emperor, and to adjudicate disputes that arose within it.³ At the same time, he also represented Venetian interests at the emperor's court. The baili were still aware of this dual capacity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: according to a frequently quoted passage from the report by Bailo Simone Contarini (1612), the position of bailo embraced the functions of two offices: that of ambassador and that of consul.⁴ Moreover, the complex character of this position generated certain problems regarding its categorization within the most appropriate class of Venetian officials. This ambiguity was seen, for instance, in the question of which body had the authority to appoint Venetian representatives at the sultans' court: until 1575 this lay within the remit of the Great Council (*'Maggior Consiglio'*) and not the Senate.⁵ In the former period, then, the bailo tended to be seen through the prism of his consular functions as the head of the Venetian colony in Constantinople, since it was the Great Council that elected officials operating in the provinces, while the election of

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- 1] The first hypothesis is supported by B. Simon, 'I rappresentanti diplomatici veneziani a Costantinopoli', p. 56, [in:] C. Provano (a cura di), *Venezia e i Turchi. Scontri e confronti di due civiltà*, Milano: Electa, 1985, pp. 56-69, while M.P. Pedani ('Consoli veneziani nei porti del Mediterraneo in età moderna', p. 175, [in:] R. Cancila (a cura di), *Mediterraneo in armi (secoli 15-18)*, vol. 1, Palermo: Associazione Mediterranea, 2007, pp. 175-206) argues for the Arabic derivation. It is worth noting that the most senior representative of Venice was known as an ambassador even in the Middle Ages, while the envoys of other states were initially known as *'nuntii'*, cf. D.E. Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 67.
 - 2] Until 1588 the official name of the Venetian state was *'Commune Veneciarum'*, or the Community of Venetians. Only after that date does the name *'Serenissima Repubblica di San Marco'* (the Most Serene Republic of St Mark) start to appear in documents. I would like to thank to Prof. Maria Pia Pedani (Università Ca' Foscari) for this valuable piece of information on terminology.
 - 3] S. Carbone, *Note introduttive ai dispacci al Senato dei rappresentanti diplomatici veneti. Serie: Costantinopoli, Firenze, Inghilterra, Pietroburgo*, Roma: Fratelli Palombi, 1974, p. 12.
 - 4] Report by Bailo Simone Contarini (1612), p. 582, [in:] RAV *Firpo XIII*, pp. 473-602: *'Il carico di Bailo [...] mi pare in sè restringere due uffici: l'uno di ambasciatore, l'altro di console'*.
 - 5] G. Maranini, *La costituzione di Venezia dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio*, Venezia-Perugia-Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1931, p. 196; I. Cacciavillani, *La Repubblica Serenissima. Profilo della costituzione veneziana*, Limena: Signum, 1985, p. 56.

ambassadors was one of the traditional entitlements of the Senate.⁶ Only after 1575 did the role of bailo come to be understood mostly as a diplomatic function. The bailo was supervised by the Senate, although a modicum of control over some of his confidential activities was reserved for the Great Council.

The bailate (a term which denoted both the official dignity and the building housing the Venetian mission in Constantinople) was considered not only one of the most important Venetian diplomatic postings, but also a particularly prestigious office within the Most Serene Republic,⁷ comparable in this context only to the mission at the papal court. The bailate could serve as a gateway to some of the supreme offices of state, although sometimes it was the last office held in a career. In the period of interest to us here, only one bailo, Francesco Contarini (1602-1605), crowned his *cursus honorum* with the highest Venetian office, being elected doge in 1623. Most baili were recruited from among diplomats previously sent on missions to other courts, or officials who had gained experience serving in the administration of the *Stato da Mar* (Venice overseas territories). Baili were generally appointed around the middle of their careers. The average age of a Venetian resident in Constantinople was forty-nine; the youngest bailo was Simone Contarini (1608-1612), who received the office when he was thirty-nine, while the oldest was Girolamo Trevisan (1639-1642), nominated bailo at the age of sixty-seven.⁸

The bailo represented the Republic not only at the sultan's court but also in contacts with ambassadors of other states. The sources provide us with many examples of baili establishing and maintaining contacts

6] S. Carbone, *Note introduttive...*, op. cit., p. 29; G. Maranini, *La costituzione...*, op. cit., p. 83; A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben. 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600*, Frankfurt-New York: Campus, 2003, p. 126 (although she does not mention the fact that the body which appointed the baili changed in 1575).

7] There is a divergence of views among historians regarding the possible significance of previously having served as bailo for later access to higher offices within the Venetian administration. The most recent voices in this discussion come from A. Zannini ('Economic and Social Aspects of the Crisis of Venetian Diplomacy in the 17th and 18th Centuries', p. 115, [in:] D. Frigo [ed.], *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy. The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 109-146), who argued that such an influence did exist; and from E.R. Dursteler ('The Bailo in Constantinople. Crisis and Career in Venice's Early Modern Diplomatic Corps', 13-14, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16 [2001], 1-30), who espoused the opposing view. It seems that appointment to the office of bailo did not always predicate a further career in higher Venetian administration, but it certainly contributed to the personal esteem of the new bailo and the prestige of his whole family.

8] E.R. Dursteler, 'The Bailo...', op. cit., 14.

with other diplomats residing in Constantinople, whether permanently (like the French or English ambassadors) or temporarily (e.g. envoys of the Polish or Muscovite monarchs). These encounters were not merely courtesy visits; they served above all to gather information from distant lands often not easily accessible for Venetian diplomats, to convey the Venetian stance on certain issues to envoys of other states, and to collect letters addressed to the doge. For these reasons Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople had to be highly skilled and experienced. Obviously, the bailo also maintained close relations with the Venetian maritime authorities and governors of overseas territories,⁹ whom he usually visited en route to Constantinople and on his return journey to Venice. Before departing from Constantinople at the end of his posting, the bailo traditionally met with the most important Ottoman officials and with ambassadors of other rulers.¹⁰ An important function reserved exclusively for the bailo was the issue of *salvacondotti*, ie. permits allowing exiles to return to Venetian territory.¹¹ The fact that baili were entrusted with this task confirms that they were considered both diplomatic and consular representatives; as Dursteler observes, the purpose of this institution was to counter potential damage to the interests of the Republic by exiles living in the Ottoman Empire. As such, it was not a merely consular procedure designed to resolve the legal status of an exile.

An important role—and one previously underestimated by historians—was played by the secretaries of the mission in Constantinople. These

9] A. Zannini, 'Economic...', op. cit., pp. 116-118.

10] ASVe *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 11r (disp. 8.03.1633): 'Visiterò al solito li principali Ministri del Governo, et vedutomi co[n] questi S[igno]ri Amb[asciato]ri, volendo Dio, alla fine del presente mese partirò'.

11] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nations, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. 63. Exile extended throughout the territory of the Republic, cf. an example formula: 'bandito [...] da quella Città [...], da tutte le altre Città, terre e luoghi del Ser[enissi]mo D[omi]n[i]o terrestri, Marittimi, Navilji, armati e disarmati' – ASVe, BAC 298, booklet 17, fol. 3r, n. 8. Baili often issued *salvacondotti*, which was a concern for the Council of Ten (*Consiglio dei Dieci*), the body with authority for state security issues (cf. G. Maranini, *La costituzione...*, op. cit., p. 214 ff.). As Dursteler observes (*Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 64), most exiles were inhabitants of the Greek islands. His observations are confirmed by analysis of the consular documents preserved in the fonds *Bailo a Costantinopoli* (BAC), which contains a large number of *salvacondotti* from the years 1640-1641. For example, in booklet 17 of volume BAC 298 there are seventeen entries attesting the issue of *salvacondotti* to inhabitants of Greek islands, mainly Crete, Cephalonia, Corfu, and Zante; the same booklet attests nine *salvacondotti* for inhabitants of Italy (Venice, Padua, Brescia, and Friuli). Cf. also P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Firenze: Sansoni, 1975, pp. 199-202.

were most often Venetian citizens (*'cittadini'*). They were usually posted abroad for longer than ambassadors, so they were often more familiar with the local milieu and administrative custom. For instance, Angelo Alessandri left for Constantinople together with Bailo Valier (1611-1615), returned to Venice during the bailate of Giorgio Giustinian (1620-1627); went back to the Ottoman Empire during the mission of Giovanni Cappello (1629-1633); returned to Venice again with Pietro Foscarini (1632-1637);¹² and stayed on at the bailate after the death of Bailo Girolamo Trevisan (1642). Another secretary, Marcantonio Donini, who had previously worked as a notary in the doge's chancery, started his diplomatic career by accompanying Ambassador Francesco Venier to Rome (in 1542). In 1545 he was posted to the Habsburg court when the mission there was headed by Lorenzo Contarini. After that, Donini was sent to Constantinople as secretary to Bailo Erizzo (until 1557); thereafter he was secretary of the Republic's ambassador to Pope Paul IV and Pius IV, before moving back to the Ottoman capital, where the bailate was headed by Girolamo Ferro. After that, Donini was sent to Rome once more (1569-1571), and then again to Constantinople (during the bailates of Giovanni Correr and Nicolò Barbarigo, i.e. 1575-1579).¹³ Thus he was three times secretary of the Venetian mission in the Ottoman capital. The everyday duties of secretaries included performance of consular work (if this did not necessitate the political support of the bailo) and production of dispatches. We may assume that their role in writing dispatches went beyond ciphering them. During periods of the bailo's absence, the secretary acted in his stead, and signed dispatches sent to Venice. Sometimes the secretaries also delivered final reports to the Senate, as in the cases of Alessandri and Donini. Their role increased as citizens came to have a greater say in Venetian political and economic life. They certainly served as important support for the bailo, who was one of the busiest Venetian diplomats. This may be confirmed by Bailo Foscarini's (1632-1637) praise for Angelo Alessandri.¹⁴ However, sometimes secretaries could pose a threat to the heads of their missions; as Andrea Zannini notes,

12] Cf. introduction to the report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), p. 636, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 635-683.

13] Cf. introduction to the report by secretary Marcantonio Donini (1562), p. 174, [in:] *RAV Alberi III/2*, pp. 173-208; M.P. Pedani, 'Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani', p. 29, *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* V, 4 (2012), 1-54; *Tre dialoghi di Marc'Antonio Donini, già segretario veneto, alle cose de' Turchi*, BMC WL 31.10, pp. 30-32.

14] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 100v (disp. 10 [3a], 13.05.1634): '*Diligenza [...] buon zelo*'.

secretaries often served as informers, obliged to pass on information on the ambassador's behaviour to the relevant Venetian authorities.¹⁵

The Venetian foreign service in the Ottoman Empire relied extensively on dragomans. This word, which was of Arabic or Persian origin, meant 'interpreter', and it was most often used to denote persons who translated or interpreted from or into Oriental languages.¹⁶ For obvious reasons they were much sought after in every Venetian mission in the Ottoman Empire. Any consuls who did not have access to their services felt this lack keenly, and were sometimes forced to send documents to the mission in Constantinople to be translated.¹⁷ Sometimes such consuls would even request the assistance of dragomans from other nations in the Christian world present in the area. The dragomans' role was not limited to translation and interpretation. They should in fact be described as lower-grade diplomats,¹⁸ because they arranged meetings, and handled easier cases with Ottoman officials independently. Sometimes they even conducted negotiations. In emergencies, such as conflicts within the Venetian community, or between incomers from Christendom and the local population, they were sent out as first response, in order to mitigate the conflict and to collect the necessary information for the bailo, especially if a resolution would require the personal intervention of the representative of the Most Serene Republic.¹⁹ The dragomans interviewed candidates for other dragoman posts, and did auxiliary work in the bailo's chancery. They

15] A. Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati a Venezia in età moderna: i cittadini originari (sec. 16-18)*, Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1993, p. 262.

16] The bibliography on Venetian dragomans is extensive, though no monographs have to date been devoted to them. Cf. above all the article by F. Lucchetta, 'Sui dragomanni di Venezia', *Quaderni di studi arabi* 11 (1993), 215-222; E.N. Rothman, 'Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 4 (2009), 771-800; as well as a chapter in a book by the same author (eadem, *Brokering Empire, Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2012, pp. 165-188). Cf. also P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., p. 100 n. 18, and p. 102 n. 23.

17] Furthermore, Consul Gritti asked the bailo to delegate one dragoman to the Venetian mission in Aleppo on a permanent basis (ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 3, fol. 77r, disp. 22, 30.11.1629).

18] Although we do not find this definition in the sources, it must be stressed that according to some baili the dragomans were treated as diplomats, and sometimes they were valued more highly than the secretaries, cf. report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), p. 161, [in:] RAV *Firpo XIII*, pp. 59-166.

19] Cf. the intermediation of the dragomans in the liberation of the archbishop of Smyrna (ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 104, fols. 202r-203r: disp. 15, 15.05.1627). Due to the dragomans' role in day-to-day diplomatic practice they were called by Elisa Gagliardi Mangili a 'key figure' (*figura chiave*) in relations between Venice and the Muslim world (E. Gagliardi Mangili, 'Il "piccolo gioco": diplomazia veneziana e persiana al lavoro', p. 19, [in:] eadem (a cura di), *I doni di*

were engaged as intermediaries between the Venetian mission and the sultans in case of war (if diplomatic relations were not broken off) or other serious disruptions to bilateral relations. The missions that they undertook in such circumstances were not safe, as is shown by the case of the strangulation of the dragoman Giovanni Antonio Grillo in the course of the Candian war, during his visit to Seraglio (1649).²⁰ In the period which interests us here, Grillo was a great support to the Venetian mission in Constantinople, and its institutional memory, because he had been in the service of the Republic for more than forty years. Successive ambassadors praised his mission highly and petitioned the central Venetian authorities for an increase in his salary.²¹

Experienced dragomans acted as mentors for young adepts in the arts of translation and diplomacy; Girolamo Trevisan recalled that he asked the dragoman Grillo to train younger colleagues in ‘important issues of the bailate’.²² In addition to dragomans, in the bailate there were also *giovani di lingua*, i.e. young Venetians learning Oriental languages. The school for *giovani di lingua* existed from 1551. The course lasted five years, extended to seven years in 1623. Once they received a positive opinion from the dragomans, its alumni could support them in their work. The number of students varied: in 1633 there were nine *giovani*, which is thought to have been quite a high number for the period which concerns us.²³ However, the organization of the school was frequently criticized, mainly for the poor didactic

Shah Abbas il Grande alla Serenissima: relazioni diplomatiche tra la Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia safavide, Venezia: Marsilio, 2013, pp. 11-27.

20] Cf. T. Bertelé, *Il Palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie: ricerche storiche con documenti inediti e 185 illustrazioni*, Bologna: Apollo, 1932, p. 186; and M.P. Pedani, *Venezia, porta d'Oriente*, Bologna: Mulino, 2010, p. 163.

21] Petitions on this issue were sent to Venice many times. Bailo Cappello stressed Grillo's accuracy and allegiance (*'Grillo che in tutti questi negotij s'è al solito adoperato con la sua ordinaria sufficienza e fedeltà, et nelle sue humili supplicat[i]oni poste già a piedi di V[ostra] Ser[eni]tà implora la pubblica munificenza'*—ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 111, fol. 79r, disp. 68, 13.10.1630). Bailo Venier praised his diligence and intelligence, and requested his prompt delegation to Constantinople (Grillo had earlier accompanied Bailo Giustinian on his return to Venice—ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 104, fol. 265r, disp. 20a, 29.05.1627). The dragoman himself ensured the doge that he ‘was on watch day and night in this important service, occupying his person and thoughts with serious and important issues to be negotiated with the Porte’, and requested that his son Ambrogio be admitted to the school for dragomans (*'invigilo giorno e notte nell'important[issi]mo servitio di lei [Your Serenity—P.C.], affaticando colla Persona, e colla mente nei suoi gravi e rilevanti negotij colla Porta'* — ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 73r, annex to disp. 7, 23.03.1633).

22] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D24, fol. 67r (disp. 77, 12.04.1642): *'affari importanti del bailaggio'*.

23] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 273r. (disp. 29, 13.07.1633).

skills of local teachers—Turks, Greeks, or people of Slavic origin who did not know Italian (Venetian). The students were Venetian patricians and citizens, in many cases relatives of previous alumni.²⁴

The bailate also employed auxiliary personnel, including local residents who were subjects of the sultan. This group included couriers, kitchen staff, and janissaries, who protected the bailo, his house, and—for an additional fee—Venetian ships in the harbour during loading or unloading.²⁵ Some dragomans and janissaries accompanied baili on their journey to Constantinople or on their return to Venice.²⁶ There were also clergymen serving in the mission: initially a chaplain, later also a theologian.²⁷ The number of people serving in the mission at any one time varied; in the time of Bailo Simone Contarini (1608-1612), the ambassador had a staff of thirty-four: five dragomans, six *giovani di lingua*, the head of the household and service, a chaplain, a bookkeeper, his assistant, a secretary, a physician, and seventeen servants.²⁸ Sometimes baili employed local physicians, usually of Jewish origin, who would also supply the ambassador with information on the situation at the Ottoman court.²⁹ It was not rare for there to be young patricians preparing for their own future diplomatic missions staying at the bailate.³⁰

Venetian diplomats produced two main types of documents for the central authorities in Venice. The first were dispatches, sent back several times a month, which described the current political situation, the bailo's everyday activities, his contacts with Ottoman officials, incidents involving subjects of the doge, interventions undertaken on their behalf, and meetings with envoys of other rulers. In all there are

24] On the school, cf. works by F. Lucchetta, above all: F. Lucchetta, 'La scuola dei "giovani di lingua" veneti nei secoli XVI e XVII', *Quaderni di studi arabi* 7 (1989), 19-40. On dragoman dynasties: F. Lucchetta, 'Sui dragomanni...', op. cit., p. 215.

25] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

26] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 71r (*Al Bailo*, 18.07.1629): '*Opportuntam[en]te sono capitati in questa Città il Dragomanno Naune [?], con il Capigà, et Gianizzero espedito da Voi [Venier-PC.] conforme alli ordini n[ost]ri, per servire, et accompagnare nel viaggio il v[ost]ro successore, il quale allestito delle cose necessarie in brevi giorni dovrà partire, per sollevarvi da quella Carica molto importante.*'

27] T. Bertelé, *Il Palazzo...*, op. cit., p. 124.

28] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 32.

29] F. Lucchetta, 'Il medico del bailaggio di Costantinopoli: fra terapie e politica (sec. XV-XVI)', p. 37, [in:] eadem (a cura di), *Veneziani in Levante, musulmani a Venezia*, Roma: Herder, 1997 [*Quaderni di studi arabi* 15 (1997)], pp. 5-50.

30] P. Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam. A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites*, London: Temple Smith, 1974, p. 96.

some 13,000 extant dispatches from Constantinople. Most of them, collected in more than two hundred and forty volumes, are today accessible in the State Archives of Venice.³¹ Some dispatches were ciphered.³² The geographical coverage of the information transmitted in the dispatches is truly impressive. The records from Constantinople often contain intelligence on events occurring in other states, above all Persia, but also the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy, Sweden, and the Caucasus. The most frequent reasons why other countries might be mentioned were visits by envoys from those states, or war having broken out between the Ottomans and another state.

On their return to Venice each envoy of the Republic was obliged to present a more extensive report (*relazione*) during a session of the Senate. These reports described the countries where the ambassadors had been posted and contained general information on their activities. The reports were usually structured in a certain order, as described, for instance, by Ottaviano Maggi in his treatise *De legato* (1566).³³ According to this, each report had to contain a general profile of the receiving state: its location, its present and any former names, internal divisions, main towns and ports, rivers, mountains, forests, and its climate and natural resources; thereafter information on the residents of the state; and finally a description of its internal order, laws, offices, trade, sources of revenue, etc. The next subject was the ruler: his parentage, personality, interests, biography, and his popularity among his subjects. The last part of the report was given over to relations between the monarch of the receiving state and sovereigns of other countries. Quite often, however, the ambassador did not follow the standard order, focusing instead on one or more elements of the description. Those who did this above all were extraordinary envoys, who paid more attention to the events they had attended

31] S. Carbone, *Note introduttive...*, op. cit., p. 21. Cf. also: *Guida generale degli Archivi di Stato italiani*, vol. IV, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994, pp. 896-897; and A. Da Mosto, *L'Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Indice generale, storico, descrittivo ed analitico*, vol. 1, Roma: Biblioteca d'Arte, 1937, p. 39.

32] On ciphers cf. P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994, pp. 268-278; and G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, New York: Cosimo Books, 2008, pp. 248-250.

33] F. Antonibon, *Le relazioni a stampa di ambasciatori veneti*, Padova: Tipografia del Seminario, 1939, p. 16. The author is probably referring to the order indicated in the anonymous treatise 'Ricordi per Amba[sciato]ri con un epilogo breve di quelle cose, che si ricercano per fare una Relazione', [in:] *Miscellanea*, fols. 245r-249r-BNM, It VI 187 (6039). Cf. also D.E. Queller, 'The Development of Ambassadorial Relazioni', p. 180, [in:] J.R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice*, London: Faber and Faber, 1973, pp. 174-196; A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

(coronations, marriages, peace negotiations, etc.) than to the relations of the receiving state with other countries. Thanks to a rule, probably introduced in 1559, forcing the returning ambassador to prepare a detailed report within eight days of his re-entry into Venice,³⁴ we are now in possession of many well-preserved reports from early modern times; particularly from the period following the great fire in the Doge's Palace in 1577.³⁵ From the sixteenth century alone we have more than a hundred reports, mainly from Constantinople, Rome, France, and Spain.³⁶ The reports from the late sixteenth century are usually more mature and supply more information regarding the functioning of the Ottoman state—at the expense of ethnographic details—than those from the beginning of the century,³⁷ while the reports from the next century are usually shorter than the preceding ones.³⁸

Systematic research on these reports began in the first half of the nineteenth century with the activity of a Swiss historian, Johannes von Müller, who was the first person to examine them as sources. Their great discoverer for modern historiography was Leopold von Ranke, who used to call them his main favourite source, and often quoted them in his studies.³⁹ The fascination with these reports and dispatches has not abated. Nowadays, however, scholars hold diverging views on their utility. Moreover, while at first the reports were more popular than other types of diplomatic sources, later historians started to consider the dispatches more valuable than the reports.⁴⁰ The dispatches are formulated more directly than the *relazioni* and are not structured according to a fixed order. They were written for a smaller group of recipients so that the confidentiality of their content was less likely to be compromised. Nonetheless, the outstanding historian of diplomacy Donald Queller calls these alleged advantages of the dispatches into

34] S. Carbone, *Note introduttive...*, op. cit., p. 32.

35] D.E. Queller, 'The Development...', op. cit., p. 174.

36] E.R. Dursteler, 'Describing or Distorting the "Turk"? The *Relazioni* of the Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople as historical source', 240, *Acta Historiae* 19 (2011), 231-248.

37] *Ibidem*, 241.

38] P. Del Negro, 'Forme e istituzioni del discorso politico veneziano', p. 434, [in:] G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi (a cura di), *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. IV/2, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1984, pp. 407-436.

39] F. de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice. Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 57; A. Baschet, *La diplomatie vénitienne: le princes d'Europe au XVII^e siècle, François Ier-Philippe II-Catherine de Médicis-les Papes-les Sultans etc., etc., d'après les rapports des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, Paris: Henri Plon, 1862, p. 69.

40] D.E. Queller, 'The Development...', op. cit., p. 176.

question. As he notes, the dispatches usually provided their readers with a basic description of events, sometimes enriched with the author's interpretation, while the reports offer a comprehensive picture of the state and its society and officials. Thus, the *relazioni* offered a real panorama, and required much greater narrative skills from their authors than the dispatches. Queller defines the *relazioni* as unique documents, unlike the dispatches.⁴¹ The Venetian diplomats' reports are also acclaimed by Gino Benzoni, who draws attention to their refined structure and style. He also notes that the diplomats compiling the *relazioni* in fact put Venice at the centre of their analyses (a tendency which he calls '*specola lagunare*'), while as a rule the dispatches focused on the receiving state and its situation.⁴²

The usefulness of the Venetian *relazioni* has been broadly discussed by historians, this being perhaps the best confirmation of their importance as sources. Their role in studies undertaken by historians of early modern age is highlighted by Donald Queller.⁴³ Angelo Ventura observes that the reports remain a source of knowledge on the broad humanist culture of the Venetian patriciate and their interests.⁴⁴ Stefano Andretta stresses the usefulness of research into these documents for the social history of Venice, since they illustrate the slow decline of the Republic and the growing conservatism of the patriciate.⁴⁵

41] Ibidem: '*Dispatches provide a simple, full and almost spontaneous account of what was happening and the impressions of the moment*'; '*Of the dispatches, one can ask the gradual and daily course of events, description of facts, momentary interpretations, immediate impressions, conversations with ministers, audiences with princes, current rumours. In his relazione, on the other hand, the ambassador was not a mere chronicler of events, but the painter of a political tableau in broad terms; he depicted the character of princes and ministers, the attitudes and sentiments of people, the strengths and weaknesses of the states. Valuable though they are, there is not much extraordinary about Venetian dispatches. The relazioni, on the other hand [...] are unique.*' Similarly A. Baschet (*Les archives de Venise: Histoire de la chancellerie secrète*, Paris: Henri Plon, 1870, p. 361): '*Dans ses dépêches, l'ambassadeur est un narrateur, esclave des circonstances; dans sa relation, il est l'historien des hommes et des choses politiques, et selon la mesure du talent que lui a départi la nature ou qu'il a acquis par l'étude, il est aussi un artiste et un philosophe.*'

42] G. Benzoni, 'A proposito della fonte prediletta di Ranke, ossia le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneziani', 255, *Studi Veneziani* 16 (1988), 245-257.

43] D.E. Queller, 'The Development...', op. cit., p. 178.

44] A. Ventura, Introduction to: *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1976, pp. IX-X.

45] S. Andretta, *La repubblica inquieta. Venezia nel Seicento tra Italia ed Europa*, Roma: Carocci, 2000, p. 72.

The discussion on the ambassadorial *relazioni* has been recently revisited by Eric R. Dursteler,⁴⁶ who recalled an opinion by Ranke stressing that these texts could offer the reader insight into the world of those directly involved in making early modern politics. As Dursteler observed, these documents were subject to criticism in the later twentieth century, when a number of scholars (Charles Carter, Paolo Preto, and to an extent also Gino Benzoni) cast their usefulness into doubt. They stressed that the ambassadors were simple observers who sourced their information from second hand. They also pointed out the ‘intellectual laziness’ of the diplomats, as well as their anti-Ottoman attitudes and closed-mindedness towards the Other. Dursteler disagrees with these objections, and observes that in analysing such documents it is vital to take into consideration the institutional context in which they were created, as well as the opinions regarding the Turks that were widespread in the Venice of the time.⁴⁷ He also notes that the *relazioni* are more appreciated by Ottomanists of the new generation (such as Cemal Kafadar or Maria Pia Pedani), as a unique source for some aspects of the culture, politics, and functioning of the Ottoman administration.⁴⁸ As Dursteler notes, this new attitude is also indicative of a broader phenomenon, i.e. a more critical view on the applicability of the Orientalist model in the humanities, especially with regard to analysis of early modern reality.⁴⁹

A category of diplomatic sources that receives less attention is the instructions (commissions) prepared for the baili by the Senate or the College.⁵⁰ The College—which was composed of a group of twenty one councillors together with the members of the most senior body in the Venetian administrative apparatus: the Signoria, comprising the doge, his six advisors, and the three presidents of the tribunals (the *Quarantie*)—met on a daily basis to discuss current state issues and to establish the agenda for the Senate’s sessions. It was also the authority with jurisdiction to issue guidelines for representatives of the Venetian state posted outside the capital, such as provincial governors, civil or military personnel in dependent territories, or ambassadors or consuls.

46] E.R. Dursteler, ‘Describing or Distorting...’, op. cit., passim.

47] Ibidem, p. 236.

48] Similar conclusions were also drawn by nineteenth-century historiography, cf. A. Baschet, *La diplomatie...*, op. cit., p. 228 (‘*On peut du reste dire que les archives de l’Orient sont à Venise*’).

49] E.R. Dursteler, ‘Describing or Distorting...’, op. cit., p. 243.

50] I. Cacciavillani, *La Repubblica...*, op. cit., p. 65.

The instructions sent to Constantinople are gathered in the archives of the Republic, in the fonds *Deliberazioni Costantinopoli* (1558-1797). Like the fonds containing the dispatches, it is divided into two sub-units: one comprising sixty registers (*'registri'*), in which the most important directives for the baili and for officials serving in Dalmatia are transcribed, and the other numbering ninety-five volumes (*'filze'*) containing the actual instructions sent to the baili, as well as some additional materials.⁵¹ Interestingly, the instructions for representatives of Venice in Constantinople and in Rome were kept apart from those for other ambassadors, and preserved as two separate fonds, which might attest to the superior status that these two missions held among the foreign representations of the Most Serene Republic.

In addition to ambassadors, the Venetian foreign service also comprised consuls. Their role was different, mostly focused on protection of the subjects of the doge in conflicts with the local authorities. Consuls kept the Venetian government informed of the local economic situation, of prospects for intensification of trade,⁵² and of general political developments in the town and the province where they were posted. They usually came from merchant or dragoman families.⁵³ The presence of a Venetian consul in Constantinople is attested as early as in the eleventh century.⁵⁴ His role at that time was to protect Venetian merchants in the Byzantine Empire, to represent the Venetian colony before the authorities, and to adjudicate conflicts emerging within it. He guarded the privileges of the Venetians and monitored the execution of bilateral Venetian-Byzantine agreements. The consul resided permanently in Constantinople, but ambassadors were sent out (*ad hoc*) from Venice to cover extraordinary events. This dual representation of Venice and its colony became less visible

51] *Guida generale...*, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 895.

52] The fact that protection of Venetian trade and merchants was a priority of the Venetian consuls is confirmed by Consul Alessandro Malipiero: *'l'uffizio del console è di aver principal cura e protezione del negozio della mercanzia, che viene trattato dai mercanti veneziani in quelle parti'* (report by Consul Malipiero [1596], p. 79, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria*, Torino: Paravia, 1866, pp. 79-100). Cf. also B. Arbel, 'Operating Trading Networks in Times of War. A Sixteenth Century Venetian Patrician between Public Service and Private Affairs', p. 28, [in:] S. Faroqhi, G. Veinstein (eds.), *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, Paris: Peeters, 2008, pp. 23-34.

53] G. Migliardi O'Riordan (a cura di), *Archivio del consolato veneto a Cipro: fine secolo XVII-inizio secolo XIX. Inventario e registi con uno studio introduttivo*, Venezia [no publisher given], 1993, p. 14.

54] S. Carbone, *Note introduttive...*, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

after 1277, when consular functions were handed over to the bailo, who was also resident in Constantinople on a permanent basis. The number of Venetian consuls increased rapidly, in line with the needs of Venetian merchants travelling to the Levant. In the late Middle Ages and the early modern age there were Venetian consuls in several port cities in the Ottoman Empire, such as Tyre, Acre, Laodicea, Alexandria, Aleppo, Patras, Tenedos / Bozcaada, Cyprus, Negroponte / Euboea, and Aiazzo (Laiazzo) / Yumurtalık.⁵⁵ A particularly important role was played by the consul in Aleppo, who was defined in the Ottoman sources as ‘*bayulus*’,⁵⁶ possibly suggesting treatment on a par with that of the bailo in Constantinople. Nevertheless, each consul was autonomously treated by the Ottoman authorities, and their approval for his appointment had to be obtained, just as in the case of the bailo.⁵⁷

The complex role of the consul, which encompassed protecting merchants, transmitting political and economic information, and representing Venice before local authorities, was challenging also in terms of the consul’s hierarchical subordination within the Venetian administration. As a rule, consuls were subordinate to the bailo, among whose competencies their election also lay; their appointment was confirmed by the Senate. However, consuls residing in Aleppo and Cairo or Alexandria were elected by the Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*).⁵⁸ From 1517 supervision of consuls’ work was the responsibility of a group of five commercial advisors (*V Savi alla Mercanzia*), who

55] M.P. Pedani, ‘Consoli veneziani...’, op. cit., p. 175.

56] S. Faroqhi, ‘The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire (1600-1630)’, 368, *The Journal of European Economic History* 15 (1986), 345-384.

57] *Ibidem*, 355.

58] It is not clear which consuls (other than those residing in Aleppo) were elected and appointed by the central Venetian authorities. According to B. Simon (‘I rappresentanti...’, op. cit., p. 58) and E.R. Dursteler (‘The Bailo...’, op. cit., 5) this was the method of appointment used in the case of the consuls in Cairo, while M.P. Pedani (‘Consoli veneziani...’, op. cit., p. 178) was of the opinion that the Great Council reserved the right to appoint consuls in Alexandria. It should be observed that the consuls in Aleppo and Cairo were called great / major consuls (‘*consoli maggiori*’), unlike their colleagues residing in other cities (minor consuls); the differentiation between the two groups may have been based on the manner of their election, cf. the explanations in the documents of ASVe, *V Savi alla Mercanzia*, envelope 27, fol. 29 r (22.04.1709). Moreover, some consuls were directly elected by collegial bodies, whose decisions were approved by the Great Council. This was the case of the consuls in Algiers, who mainly dealt with ransoming slaves abducted by privateers; they were elected by the authority with jurisdiction for slave issues, the *Provveditori sopra Ospedali e Luoghi Pii*. It was likewise the method used for consuls in Cyprus and Bosnia, who were appointed by the *V Savi alla Mercanzia*. Interestingly, the consul in Malta was traditionally nominated by the Grand Master of the Military Order of Malta (cf. M.P. Pedani, ‘Consoli veneziani...’, op. cit., p. 178).

were also tasked with acquiring information on the candidates for appointment as consuls.⁵⁹

A major facet of consular activity was trade and maritime issues.⁶⁰ Consuls collected fees called '*cottimo*', which constituted the main income of the mission.⁶¹ They also acted as notaries, and attested births and deaths of the doge's subjects.⁶² They issued many documents recognized not only by the Venetian administration, but throughout the Mediterranean Basin. Among these were *passaporti*, i.e. permits for ships to leave a port, and *fedi*, or certificates attesting certain factual situations (such as kinship). One such document was the *patente di sanità*, which certified that a city was free of plague; another was the *carte della libertà*, i.e. confirmation that a person had previously been a slave. Another group of documents comprised letters of recommendation to the Venetian authorities (*patenti*), which confirmed that the bearer was known to the consul and had permission to sojourn on the territory of the Republic of Venice.

Like ambassadors, once back in the capital, consuls presented reports on their activity, describing the Venetian community in their receiving country, the political and economic situation there, and information 'from the world' (*dal mondo*), i.e. from neighbouring regions and countries, mainly received from travellers, missionaries, and merchants. In the case of Aleppo the 'world' was usually limited to Persia, but sometimes the scope of the information was much broader (Consul Malipiero mentioned the course of the Ottoman-Persian war in the Caucasus in his report from Aleppo in the period 1578-1590).⁶³ The consuls also wrote dispatches, although these were more rarely sent to Venice than the equivalent documents produced by ambassadors. Such documents preserved from Aleppo—from the beginning of the seventeenth century—do not enable us to establish the frequency with

59] M.P. Pedani, 'Consoli veneziani...', op. cit., p. 177.

60] Cf. E. Ianiro, *Levante. Venezia e Ottomani nel 18. secolo*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2014, pp. 74-78.

61] B. Simon, 'I rappresentanti...', op. cit., p. 59.

62] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, Torino: Paravia, 1865, p. 85. The consular chancery also issued certificates attesting the decease of the bailo himself, cf. ASVe, BAC 297, fol. [11r]: 'Si fà nota come hieri sera à bore una e mezza di notte, è mancato da q[ue]sta à miglior Vita Ill[ustrissi]mo et Ecc[ellentissi]mo S[igno]r Ger[ola]mo Trevisan dig[nitissi]mo Bailo della Ser[enissi]ma Rep[ubbli]ca di Ven[ez]ia.'

63] Report by Consul Malipiero (1596), pp. 95-97, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 79-100.

which such dispatches were sent in the long term.⁶⁴ Consuls also exchanged letters with baili.⁶⁵

The functioning of the complex Venetian diplomatic apparatus and its efficiency is assessed differently by different historians. However, it is important to distinguish between the efficiency of the diplomatic service and the efficiency of Venetian foreign policy. The purpose of the latter appears to have been to keep the peace, broaden Venice's trade network, and protect merchants active abroad. Various efforts were undertaken in pursuit of these aims throughout the early modern history of Venice, with the outcomes dependent on the current situation. By contrast, the efficiency of the diplomatic service can be observed in the standard of its organization and the ability of its representatives to conduct successful negotiations with receiving states. In light of the abovementioned observations, Venetian diplomacy seems to have been well organized. Nonetheless, sometimes it failed. There are examples of baili complaining of lack of instructions or information vital to their work. One such case was that of Bailo Alvise Contarini, who waited four months for a letter of congratulation for the new sultan, Ibrahim I, who ascended the throne in 1640. During that time the bailo did not appear in public, refused all invitations, and did not even send Dragoman Grillo to handle current issues with Ottoman officials in his stead. To justify his behaviour Contarini spread a rumour that the ship carrying the letter had been delayed. Even so, according to the news that reached the bailo, his passive attitude in the initial period of Ibrahim's sultanate was rather badly received by the Ottoman court and other diplomats.⁶⁶

On the whole, however, the sources show that the circulation of information was fairly efficient. The Venetian central authorities were kept informed by the baili of their activities on an ongoing basis,

64] The fonds containing dispatches from Aleppo (ASVe, *Dispacci consoli*, subset *Aleppo*) comprises only five volumes and covers the period 1626-1678, with the majority of the documents concerning the years 1626-1640. The consular documentation in ASVe has not yet been catalogued, which makes answering this question more difficult.

65] Cf. the fonds *Lettere dei consoli veneti al bailo*-BNM, It VII 1193 (8883).

66] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 121, fol. 231r (disp. 187, 25.05.1640): '*Nessuno crede, che doppo la morte del Rè seguita gia quattro mesi sono, io no[n] sappi il secreto delle publiche intentioni, e tutto il misterio di questo fatto. Di negotij io no[n] parlo, per imaginatione, perché ogni rimembranza porta seco, e doglianze, e disgusti, e rimproveri, anzi, per il medesimo rispetto no[n] ho voluto trovarmi con l'Ambas[ciato]r di Polonia, che mi ha invitato à parlar con esso [...]. Né manco il dragoman Grillo si lascia vedere alla Porta del Bassà secondo il solito.*'

and the baili regularly received detailed instructions. The news was relayed to all the interested parties, as shown by adnotations made by the consuls in Aleppo, who often informed the Senate that they had reported particular cases to the bailo.⁶⁷ The exchange of information between bailo and consuls also worked in the opposite direction. Furthermore, important news was also promptly transferred to Venice, and double-checked against different sources or channels.⁶⁸

There are also examples of the system taking steps to counter abuses, though these are sometimes founded only on circumstantial evidence. The most drastic example of a reaction to an alleged proliferation of secret information is the case of Bailo Girolamo Lippomano, who was recalled from his mission to the Ottoman Empire and died in mysterious circumstances on his return journey to Venice. His demise provoked the rumour that he had been killed by the Venetian security apparatus.⁶⁹

Some historians have a categorically negative opinion of the work of the Venetian foreign service, however. Alberto Tenenti, for instance, highlights its shortcomings in its choice of personnel, at least in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁷⁰ The most radical opinion was expressed by Charles H. Carter, who called into doubt the very sense of the existence of the Venetian foreign service, given that the main news conveyed with any regularity by its representatives returning from England was the fact that their host state was an island.⁷¹ Nonetheless, Carter's opinion, though eloquently formulated, is not a fair reflection

67] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 3, fol. 31r (disp. 7, 26.01.1630): 'Di tutte le occorrenze hò portato pieni Raguagli all'Ecc[ellentissimo]mo Sig[no]r Bailo Veniero, dell'Infinita Sapienza del quale ricevo in ogni occasione di questa Charica, Raccordi, e consiglio di singolare Profitto'.

68] Ibidem, fol. 32r (disp. 8, 2.03.1630) 'Ho fatto volare gli Avvisi all'Ecc[ellentissimo]mo Sig[no]r Bailo in Constantinopoli della Morte del Rè di Persia'; 'con queste Mie reverentis[sime] lo g'aporto la Confermatione, che viene tenuta per infallibile'.

69] On the case of Girolamo Lippomano, formerly envoy to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, cf. P. Preto, *I servizi segreti...*, op. cit., pp. 76-78; A. Tormene, 'Il bailaggio a Costantinopoli di Girolamo Lippomano e la sua tragica fine', 394-395, *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 3, VI (1903), 375-431.

70] A. Tenenti, 'Il senso dello stato', p. 412, [in:] idem, *Venezia e il senso del mare. Storia di un prisma culturale dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Milano: Guerini e associati, 1999, pp. 373-414.

71] C.H. Carter, 'The Ambassadors of Early Modern Europe: Patterns of Diplomatic Representations in the Early Seventeenth Century', p. 280 [in:] idem (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. Essays in Honor of Garret Mattingly*, New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 269-295: 'The most significant question to ask, it seems to me, is what sort of diplomacy do we have when its policy makers gather together every two or three years to listen to a returning ambassador tell them once more that Great Britan is an island?'

of the facts: naturally, ambassadors returning from England did not limit their reports to this information, though they probably started with it.

Most negative opinions of the Venetian foreign service concern practical aspects of its work. Another harsh critic of this structure is Donald Queller, who lists failings such as bad governance, poor information flow, conflicts of interest, surprising negligence surrounding security of information, and difficulties finding good negotiators.⁷² His criticisms, however, are formulated in too general a manner to be material for discussion. The only aspect of the system that Queller judged efficient was the diplomats' reports on their activities.⁷³ Paradoxically, it is precisely the abundance and detail of these reports that gives us such great insight into the functioning of the Venetian system and its weaknesses; this is something that is often lacking for other European states in the same period.

A major obstacle to the functioning of the Republic's foreign service was the lack of a good system for teaching languages that would have eased the burden on the dragomans and enabled the diplomats to gain better insight into the local reality. There were, however, considerations of political security that argued against an intensification of Oriental language teaching: sometimes *giovani di lingua* succumbed to the lure of life in Constantinople, converted to Islam, and became Ottoman officials. A particularly negative opinion of these temptations—'the luxury of Turkish life'—was formulated by Bailo Bernardo.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the representatives of the Most Serene Republic did not differ from diplomats of other states in terms of their poor knowledge of Oriental languages.

Venetian diplomats were, perhaps more so than their counterparts from other states, obedient to the ethos of service under the flag of St Mark—though naturally only to the extent to which an idea really can influence an individual's choices, particularly those of a civil servant.

72] Cf. D.E. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors*, Genève: Droz, 1966, p. 58.

73] The reporting of Venetian diplomats is impressive even by present-day standards. There are nonetheless some weak points to that overflow of information, above all when sent by an ambassador before the start of his mission. As Bailo Trevisan overtly admits during his journey to Constantinople: '[I] write these few lines without knowing what to write, my only purpose being to keep His Serenity informed of my journey, which I know is dear to his heart' (*scrivo queste poche righe senza quasi saper che scriver; con solo fine che la Ser[eni]tà V[ost]ra resti frequentemente avisata dal mio viaggio, che sò esserle grandem[en]te à cuore*)—ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 121, fol. 55r, disp. 10, 29.03.1640).

74] F. Lucchetta, 'La scuola...', op. cit., 25. Cf. report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), p. 158, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 59-166.

This may have stemmed from a belief in the exceptionality of their state, and was probably related to the ethos of service in a republic, a form of service that was of a different character than offices bestowed by a king in a monarchy. Mindful of this fact, Donald Queller, despite his criticism of Venetian diplomacy, is positive in his assessment of the influence of the Venetian myth (ethos) on the functioning of the republic's administration *sensu largo*, observing that the qualities in its officials promoted by that myth were indicative of the nobility's moral horizons, and the ethos itself was a 'star orienting their life'.⁷⁵ Robert Finlay is likewise convinced of the existence of an 'ethos of the Venetian official' among the city's patriciate. He observes that the Venetian political system fostered the development in its officials of certain qualities such as patience, conformity, and the ability to compromise.⁷⁶ These were in turn traits that supported the internal coherence of the Republic's administrative apparatus. The existence of an 'ethos of the Venetian diplomat' is confirmed by the considerable emphasis placed on the prestige of the state. This prestige was especially visible in the context of Venetian missions abroad.⁷⁷ Ambassador Bon recalls that foreign sailors would often pose as Venetians in order to obtain better treatment from the states in which the ports at which they docked lay.⁷⁸ Upholding the reputation of *La Serenissima* was one of the most basic instructions received by the baili.⁷⁹ One interesting anecdote from 1633 illustrates the importance of this prestige. Apparently, the French ambassador wanted to make the dragomans Grillo and Olivieri gifts of overcoats, probably as payment for services rendered, or to persuade them to perform further services for the French mission. Although it was not rare at that time for consuls to serve more than one state,⁸⁰ or for dragomans to provide translations or interpretation services for

75] 'Stella che orientava la loro vita' (D.E. Queller, *Il patriziato veneziano. La realtà contro il mito*, Roma: Il Veltro, 1987, p. 429). It is worth noting that this historian is inclined to diverging interpretations. Elsewhere he states (*ibidem*, p. 426) that the myth of Venice may have had a bad influence on poorer patricians because it presented an ideal that they could not fulfil, and could thus lead them to resort to actions that were in violation of the law.

76] R. Finlay, *La vita politica nella Venezia del Rinascimento*, Milano: Jaca Books, 1982, p. 182.

77] Cf. the report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1576), p. 222, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 201-223. Cf. also the observation by A. Tenenti ('Il senso dello stato...', *op. cit.*, p. 380) that honour and reputation played an important role in the functioning of every early modern state.

78] Report by Ambassador Ottaviano Bon (Spain, 1602), p. 233, [in:] *RAV Berozzi-Berchet* I/1, pp. 215-276.

79] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 263v (*Al Bailo à C[onstantinopoli]*, 6.02.1631): '*Stima et riputazione della Rep[ubbli]ca*'-'*termine prescrittovi* [to the bailo]'

80] M.P. Pedani, 'Consoli veneziani...', *op. cit.*, p. 193; E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

diplomats of other states, the French ambassador's move provoked a decisive reaction from the Republic. The dragomans prudently refused the gifts, and were praised for doing so by the College, which even pledged to provide the interpreters with silk vestments as a sign of the honour vested in them by the Republic.⁸¹

As the above observations demonstrate clearly, it is difficult to analyse the functioning of the Venetian diplomacy separately from the problem of the myth of Venice. There is an extensive bibliography on this issue, and the myth of Venice itself is another concept that raises methodological challenges similar to those related to *antemurale Christianitatis*. This myth was in currency both in the early modern age and in later times, though its role in the two periods was different, since it answered to different needs. Unlike the *antemurale* idea (in the Venetian context), the myth of Venice has been thoroughly analysed and its main characteristics identified. The classic deconstruction of this myth in historiography was made by Franco Gaeta in 1961. In his view, the mythologem is composed of three elements. Two of them are connected with the image of the political reality (Venice as a state with an ideal constitution, blending elements of a monarchy and a republic; and Venice as a state of freedom), while the third is related to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century perceptions of Venetian culture (Venice as an 'elegant city').⁸² Gaeta argued that the Venetian defeat at Agnadello in 1509, when the Republic fought the League of Cambrai, an alliance of the pope, the king of France, the Habsburg emperor, and the king of Spain, catalysed the birth and development of the myth.⁸³ The risk of losing Venetian domains in Italy, which encompassed territories up to Brescia and Bergamo to the west, as well as the existential threat to the Republic of St Mark itself, precipitated

81] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fols. 102r-v (*Al Bailo di Costantinopoli*, 26.08.1633): 'A noi è piaciuto che il Grillo, et l'Olivieri babbino ricusato il donativo di vesti mandatigli dall'Amb[asciato]r di Francia, et che babbino passati gl'uffici convenienti per tal dimostratione d'honore, rissolvemo però col Senato, et vi com[m]ettemo col med[esi]mo di donar loro una veste di seta per cad[aiun]o in segno d'honore, e della pub[blic]a soddisfazione.'

82] F. Gaeta, 'Alcune considerazioni sul mito di Venezia', 60, *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* XXIII (1961), 58-75. In this context it is also useful to recall the interesting article by J.S. Grubb, 'When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography', *Journal of Modern Historiography* 58, 1 (1986), 43-94, on the functioning of the myth of Venice among postwar historians with an interest in the early modern Republic (including Bouwsma, Cozzi, Finlay, Lane, Queller, and Pullan).

83] F.C. Lane, *Storia di Venezia. Ascesa e declino di una repubblica marinara*, Torino: Einaudi, 2006, pp. 284-288; A. Zorzi, *La repubblica del leone. Storia di Venezia*, Milano: Bompiani, 2001, pp. 287-307; G. Gullino, *Storia della Repubblica Veneta*, Brescia: La Scuola, 2010, pp. 169-178.

a redefinition of the scope of Venetian foreign policy. In parallel with this, the process began of the autocreation of the Venetian Republic as a state of peace, liberty, and tolerance; a place where exiles from all over Europe could find a safe haven.⁸⁴ At the same time Venice itself gained an ancient heritage, which could be traced back almost to the beginning of the Christian world (only the papacy was supposed to be older), and simultaneously an eternity, the wherewithal to overcome all future crises thanks to its constitutional principles and inaccessible location.⁸⁵ To use a contemporary analogy, one might suggest that after the defeat of Agnadello Venice, which had a history as an expanding, imperialist state, tried to reinvent itself as an entity with a political philosophy similar to that of present-day Switzerland. This shift was reinforced with numerous texts stressing its peaceful intentions. As Lester J. Libby observes,⁸⁶ the authors of these treatises, members of the Venetian patriciate active in the first half of the sixteenth century, such as Andrea Mocenigo, Andrea Navagero, Gasparo Contarini, and Giambattista Egnazio, tried to present Venice—a republic ruled by law, and not by the will of a monarch—as a victim of the aggression of tyrants (during the war of the League of Cambrai). Another popular motif in the Venetian discourse was to contrast images of kingdoms ruled by monarchs who ‘desired wars’ with those of republics, which wished to preserve liberty and peace in the Christian world.⁸⁷ In this context it is useful to recall the observation of Oliver Logan that the background to the Venetian ideology of peace was the opposition of the Republic of St Mark to the despotic Milanese state under the Visconti.⁸⁸

84] On this last aspect cf. W.J. Bouwsma, *Venezia e la difesa della libertà repubblicana. I valori del Rinascimento nell'età della Controriforma*, Bologna: Mulino, 1977, p. 74.

85] F. Gaeta, ‘Alcune considerazioni...’, op. cit., 69. Cf. the words of G.B. Egnazio (1554): ‘*Illa [Venetia-PC.] igitur cum ab alijs omnibus in eo distat, quod a Christianis viris condita, pietam orthodoxe fidel semper est integre complexa, tum quod prima eius fundamenta a sacrae aedis consecratione caeperint*’ (quoted after: L.J. Libby Jr., ‘Venetian History and Political Thought after 1509’, 34, *Studies in the Renaissance* 20 (1973), 7-45). As E. Sgambati observes (‘Mito e antimito di Venezia nella cronachistica del Quattrocento’, p. 240, [in:] S. Graciotti (a cura di), *Mito e antimito di Venezia nel bacino adriatico (secoli XV-XIX)*, Roma: Il Calamo, 2001, pp. 223-244), Venice’s topographical location was a factor allegedly supporting the claims as to its divine origins—it was situated in a place where no city could have been founded under natural circumstances.

86] Lester J. Libby Jr., ‘Venetian History...’, op. cit., 17-33.

87] *Ibidem*, 32-33.

88] O. Logan, *Venezia, cultura e società 1470-1790*, Roma: Il Veltrò, 1980, p. 12. The image of Venice as the only free state in Italy can be found in many Venetian treatises, cf. e.g. ‘Difesa

However, this ‘Helvetization’ of Venice soon proved problematic. As Franco Gaeta observed, the entrenchment of the myth of Venice contributed to the development of a belief in the perfection of the Venetian institutional order, thus petrifying the government of the aristocracy (the patriciate, the ‘*nobili*’).⁸⁹ Most scholars now believe that the Venetian myth in fact veiled a reality that was closer to a crisis than to an upturn in the fortunes of the state. While its political crisis is commonly dated to the early sixteenth century and the events involving the League of Cambrai, the consensus among historians surrounding the economic and demographic crisis of the ruling class concerns the existence of the problem, not its chronology. The issue of the economic crisis of the Most Serene Republic has been a subject of discussion in modern historiography for at least six decades, and more precisely since the publication of the volume *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII*, which contained contributions by historians of the calibre of Fernand Braudel and Ruggiero Romano (1961).⁹⁰ These studies suggested that the crisis began in the 1620s and 1630s. However, various points have been identified as the onset of the economic collapse. James Davis believes that it began in the sixteenth century, though he stresses its gradual character.⁹¹ Donald Queller even places the starting point of the crisis in the fifteenth century.⁹² Robert Finlay cites 1630—the year of a devastating outbreak of pestilence in Venice—as the beginning of the Venetian decline.⁹³ My own research leaves no doubt that the commercial crisis in the Levant was already affecting Venice in the 1600s and 1610s.⁹⁴ As Venetian trade began to decline, most nobles invested their funds in landed estates ruled by Venice (*terraferma*), and their interest in Eastern Mediterranean issues waned still further.⁹⁵

de Signori Veneziani, per la pace da essi fatta co’ l Turco, L’Anno 1573’, fol. 25v, [in:] *Pace tra Venezia e la Turchia (1573)*—BNM, It VII 2167 (9648): ‘questa Ser[enissi]ma Repub[b]lica, sola reliquia, com’io dissi dapprima, della grandezza, del splendore, e della libertà d’Italia.’

89] F. Gaeta, ‘Alcune considerazioni...’, op. cit., 69.

90] G. Luzzati (a cura di), *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII. Atti del convegno 27 giugno-2 luglio 1957, Venezia, Isola del San Giorgio Maggiore*, Venezia-Roma: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1961.

91] J. Davis, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962, p. 9.

92] D.E. Queller, *Il patriziato...*, op. cit., p. 426.

93] R. Finlay, *La vita politica...*, op. cit., p. 355.

94] E.g. ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1 (disp. 10, 28.06.1619): ‘Il traffico della Nazione Venetiana [...] già mai egli si trovò in stato di tanta debolezza, come in questi tempi.’

95] A. Zannini, *Burocrazia...*, op. cit., p. 252.

The data on the demographic crisis gathered by researchers make depressing reading. Giovanni Cozzi, Michael Knapton, and Giovanni Scarabello note that shortly after the outbreak of the war of Cyprus (1570-1573) Venice was inhabited by approximately 2,500 nobles; by the year 1631 that number had decreased to 1,660, and by 1645 it had fallen further to 1,620. Thereafter, it continued to fall, despite the augmentation of the patriciate by a hundred and twenty-eight new families in the period between the start of the Candian War (1645) and the definitive end to Veneto-Ottoman armed conflicts marked by the treaty of Passarowitz / Požarevac in 1718.⁹⁶ In the period of interest to us here, the biggest population losses were caused by the pestilences that swept Venice in 1576 and 1630-1631, and by the Republic's participation in the wars with the Ottoman Empire: the War of Cyprus (the Fourth Ottoman-Venetian War) and the Candian War. It is estimated that the latter conflict claimed the lives of up to one in four Venetian nobles.⁹⁷ The gradual decrease in the city's population potential was also partly a result of a gradual change in the aristocracy's lifestyle, their penchant for luxury, the attractiveness of ecclesiastical careers (the number of nobles who chose a religious career path doubled between 1620 and 1760, despite the abovementioned demographic trend), and their reluctance to divide up their estates; this latter factor resulted in a smaller number of marriages—often only one in any given generation of a family.⁹⁸

As the demographic crisis deepened, the shortage of those available to hold offices in the Republic became more acute. In order to counter this process, new families began to be included in the traditionally

96] G. Cozzi, M. Knapton, G. Scarabello, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, vol. 2—*Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica*, Torino: UTET, 1995, p. 168. However, the new families, among whom were representatives of the citizens (Rezzonico, Ottobon), did not attain the highest offices of the Republic. Not one of the 'new' people ('*nuovi*') became an ambassador in Rome, Vienna, Paris, or Madrid; the last doge, Ludovico Manin (1789–1797), was the first of them to hold this office. At the same time, two popes were elected from among the new Venetian patricians (Clement XIII and Alexander VIII), which might explain why an ecclesiastical career, more easily accessible to the new noble families, may have been more attractive to some patricians than civil service for the Republic.

97] S. Andretta, *L'arte della prudenza. Teorie e prassi della diplomazia nell'Italia del XVI e XVII secolo*, Roma: Bibrink, 2006, p. 127.

98] J. Davis, *The Decline...*, op. cit., pp. 60-76. According to Davis, in the period of interest to us here, 40-43% of patrician families had just one child or none. The number of only children who did not marry grew steadily: in the sixteenth century they accounted for 18% of children from such families, and in the seventeenth century 52%; this percentage only decreased in the final century of the Republic's existence.

(since 1297) hermetic circle of the nobility. This process was particularly visible during the Candian war.⁹⁹ Simultaneously, still more offices of lower rank were entrusted to citizens (*cittadini*), i.e. townsmen who were not members of the patriciate but had been born in Venice or had other connections to the city-state, e.g. a long period of tax residence or marriage to a Venetian.¹⁰⁰ By around 1550 it was already the norm to employ citizens as secretaries to patricians in Venice and in diplomatic representations.¹⁰¹ Similarly, still more citizens became consuls after 1586, when this office ceased to be connected to judicial functions reserved for the nobles.¹⁰² As Brian Pullan observes, it was difficult to find a reliable criterion by which to distinguish a patrician from a citizen in this period.¹⁰³

From the mid-sixteenth century most secretaries, notaries, and accountants were citizens.¹⁰⁴ It is hard to assess their influence on Venetian foreign policy and on the quality of the functioning of the Venetian state apparatus. The most eminent expert in matters of Venetian chancery, Giuseppe Trebbi, observes¹⁰⁵ that while, unlike the nobles, few secretaries attended law courses at the Republic's university in Padua, they certainly had a direct influence on the efficiency of the Venetian administration, within which they worked. They also performed consular acts in foreign missions, which required a certain knowledge of the law and of local administrative practices. It seems, then, that the role of citizens in the administration of Venice should not be underestimated.¹⁰⁶ The extent of their influence on Venetian

99] On the closure of the Great Council: G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 34-39; F. Lane, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 131-134; A. Zorzi, *La repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 141-146. The first expansion of the patriciate took place after the War of Chioggia (1381), cf. J. Davis, *The Decline...*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

100] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 49.

101] *Ibidem*, p. 48.

102] M.P. Pedani, 'Consoli veneziani...', op. cit., p. 178.

103] B. Pullan, 'Service to the Venetian State: Aspects of Myth and Reality in the Early 17th Century', 110, *Studi Secenteschi* 5 (1964), 95-148.

104] G. Trebbi ('Il segretario veneziano', 40, *Archivio Storico Italiano* 144 (1986), 35-73) states that citizens constituted 5.3% of the Venetian population in 1581 and nobles 4.5% thereof. E.R. Dursteler (*Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 48) gives estimates for these proportions over a longer period (1563-1642) of 5-10% for citizens and 3.5-5% for patricians respectively. These differences increased in later periods with the demographic crisis of the Venetian patriciate, cf. J. Davis, *The Decline...*, op. cit., p. 24.

105] G. Trebbi, 'Il segretario...', op. cit., 60-61.

106] It is worth noting the expression used by Haitsma Mulier to refer to citizens: 'the second-class patriciate', H. Mulier, *The Venetian Myth and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1980, p. 11. A functional rapprochement of citizens to patricians

foreign policy remains an open question. According to Andrea Zannini, the secretaries made no less contribution to foreign policy than the patricians.¹⁰⁷ It cannot now be clarified what proportion of the vast body of diplomatic documentation was produced by secretaries. We cannot rule out the possibility that they supported the baili in preparing their final reports, though neither can we verify this suggestion. They may indeed have been more familiar with the local milieu because they usually stayed abroad longer than the ambassadors. They had contacts not only among the highest Ottoman officials, but also with people whom the baili could not receive for protocolar reasons. Like the patricians (and the dragomans), the citizens often formed dynasties holding certain offices,¹⁰⁸ thus passing down traditions and good practices from one generation to the next. It can thus be concluded that they formed a group parallel to the nobility, which likewise had an important influence on Venetian foreign policy. The extent to which the two groups competed and the degree to which they supported each other is unclear. In all likelihood this question is not even properly formulated, because the two groups did not enter into competition: the citizens recognized their subaltern position, in terms of both hierarchy and protocol, while the nobles did not excessively interfere in local administrative or consular issues if the latter did not require their political intervention. Cases of conflicts between baili and secretaries are, in fact, exceptionally rare.¹⁰⁹ Given the social and demographic changes that affected the patriciate, their decreasing interest in Levantine trade, and the continuous growth in the citizen population, one is led to wonder whether in time the citizens did not become the dominant group of policy-makers in regard to Venetian relations with the Ottoman Empire, at least in the foreign missions of the Most Serene Republic. This hypothesis requires verification, however.

The Venetian diplomatic service was the main force in forming and realizing the foreign policy of the Most Serene Republic. It was quite

is confirmed by the recognition of the first group (en bloc) by the Austrian authorities as representatives of the nobility after the annexation of Venetian territories to Austria (1817), cf. A. Zannini, *Burocrazia...*, op. cit., p. 292.

107] A. Zannini, 'Economic and Social Aspects...', op. cit., p. 141. This historian defines the seventeenth-century diplomacy as 'cittadine diplomacy' (p. 141); this expression does seem somewhat too audacious, however.

108] G. Trebbi, 'Il segretario...', op. cit., 44.

109] Cf. report by secretary Marcantonio Donini (1561/2), p. 129, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 127-131.

efficient, operated in obedience to the main rules of the administrative apparatus of Venice, and built its prestige among other nations of the Christian world in part on the myth of Venice as an elegant, unanimously led, egalitarian, peace-loving republic that attempted to compensate for its growing demographic and economic crisis with the ethos of a perfectly functioning complex administration. The following chapters will show how the work of the Venetian foreign service was influenced by the idea of its role as *antemurale Christianitatis* in the context of the discourse on the republic as ideal and peace-loving; how far that idea served as a ‘start that oriented the lives’ of its diplomats; and to what extent Venetian diplomacy itself contributed to the formation of the image of the Most Serene Republic as the bulwark of the Christian world.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITAS–EUROPE. THE IDEA OF THE BULWARK OF CHRISTENDOM IN THE LIGHT OF VENETIAN DIPLOMATIC WRITINGS

This chapter will supply the reader with information on all the elements necessary to reconstruct the idea of *antemurale Christianitatis*. I start by reviewing the body of geographical and identity-related concepts (such as Christendom and Europe) used by the Venetian political elite, and I explain the political and cultural background to these notions. Thereafter, I define the bulwark of Christendom idea as understood in the Venetian context, and identify the main conceptual elements of the idea. The analysis presented in this chapter is limited to names and notions used by the ruling class of Venice, and to the basic interpretation of these notions in the historiography. Any further consideration of this problem going beyond the Venetian context or attempting a more in-depth historical commentary would reach far beyond its scope.

The diplomats of the Venetian state used a vast number of geographical, political, and cultural categories to describe different types of territories.¹ The main unit of description used in diplomatic

1] For a broader discussion of the problem cf. P. Chmiel, 'How Did Venetian Diplomatic Envoys Define Europe, Its Divisions, Centres and Peripheries (ca. 1570-1645)?', [in:] I. Walser-Bürgler,

documents was the state.² Typical terms for political entities of this type were *‘provincia’*, *‘paese’*, and *‘regno’*. The distribution of these concepts—aside from the last one, which denotes a royal realm—is unclear. For instance, in their reports Venetian diplomats traditionally took the ‘kingdom of Hungary’ (*‘regno d’Ungheria’*)³, part of the Habsburg monarchy, separately from *‘Germania’* (this latter word denoting all the German-speaking lands in Europe). This was probably motivated by the approach adopted by the Serenissima’s political elites: to use categories based on linguistic and sometimes also religious criteria, and hence not always reflected in the political map of the continent in a given period. The contemporary term ‘state’ (*‘stato’*) tended to be used more in complex expressions, such as ‘the state of our republic’, ‘the [state] of the French crown’, ‘the [state] of the Spanish crown’, etc.;⁴ and in some contexts it also referred to dependent territories.⁵ This word was also employed in reference to the Ottoman Empire, though this was more frequently known as the ‘Empire’. The word *‘provincia’* could denote a cultural area, such as Italy, comprising numerous smaller states (*‘dominio’*).⁶

N. Detering, and C. Marsico (eds.), *Contesting Europe. Comparative Perspectives on Early Modern Discourses on Europe (15th-18th centuries)*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2019 (forthcoming).

- 2] While being fully aware of the conceptual problems related to the word ‘state’ in the pre-modern context, I decided to use this term (as sufficiently clear and concise) to denote a political entity treated by the Venetian ruling class as a counterpart for Venice in diplomatic relations, i.e. a political organism such as a kingdom, republic, empire, etc., to which a Venetian ambassador or other type of envoy might be sent.
- 3] Report by Ambassador Giovanni Correr (*Germania*, 1574), p. 164, [in:] RAV Alberi I/6, pp. 164-183.
- 4] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), p. 227, [in:] RAV Alberi I/6, pp. 193-248.
- 5] E.g. to ‘realms and states of the Emperor’: report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 179). Giovanni Correr (1574) divided the Habsburg empire into three states (*‘stati’*): Hungary, Bohemia, and Austria. These states (e.g. Bohemia) were in turn divided into provinces (*‘province’*: Moravia and Silesia), cf. his report, op. cit., p. 164. Similarly, the Venetian territories situated on the islands in the Aegean Sea were described as ‘the states that we have in Greece’ (*‘li stati, che noi tenemo nella Grecia’*: ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 81v, *All’Ambasciator à Roma*, 7.08.1627). A. Tenenti (‘Il senso dello stato’, p. 378, [in:] idem, *Venezia e il senso del mare. Storia di un prisma culturale dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Milano: Guerini e associati, 1999, pp. 372-414) translates the word *‘stato’* as ‘territory’.
- 6] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 243: *‘L’Italia è piena di similij dominj [of mediocre rulers–P.C.] più che alcun’altra provincia’*. According to P. Preto (*Venezia e i Turchi*, Firenze: Sansoni, 1975, p. 159), the meaning of the word *‘dominio’* was equivalent—in the light of the *relazioni*—to *‘imperio’* / ‘empire’, i.e. a state whose ruler treated all his subjects as slaves.

These reflections should shed some light upon an important challenge inherent in the reading of these terms: their meaning and usage could vary depending on the perception of the author or on their context. Their usage in official texts such as reports or dispatches—and also in treatises prepared for the Venetian political elites—often differs from the meaning and usage reconstructed on the basis of theoretical or political works, especially those produced in the milieu of fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Florentine writers. Thus conclusions as to the meaning of words such as ‘*nazione*’, ‘*stato*’, and ‘*dominio*’ presented in various classical works⁷ should only be applied to Venetian diplomatic writings with great caution.⁸

One prime example of a term to which this caveat applies is *Christianitas* / Christendom, broadly speaking a descriptor of the political and cultural circle of the Christian world. It encompassed ‘Christian countries / states’ (*paesi cristiani*), i.e. countries inhabited by Christians (*cristiani*), which in some texts manifested as a category in opposition to the ‘Turks’.⁹ In contrast to ‘Christendom’, the word ‘Christianity’ (*Cristianesimo*) was used to denote the Christian religion.¹⁰ However, like many similar terms, these two words were often used interchangeably, or even confused; there are, for instance, isolated instances of the term ‘Christianity’ being used to mean ‘the Christian world’, as is attested by some instructions for baili.¹¹

7] E.g. F. Chabod, ‘Alcune questioni di terminologia: stato, nazione, patria nel linguaggio del Cinquecento’, [in:] idem, *Scritti sul Rinascimento*, Torino: Einaudi, 1967, pp. 625-661.

8] Ibidem, esp. pp. 642-645.

9] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 220: ‘*Quando i Turchi non sono in tanto numero che possano circondare e rinchiuder i Cristiani [...]*’.

10] Cf. the distinction drawn in the treatise ‘Discorso di Gio[vanni] Battista de Preti, nell’eminente pericolo del Christianesimo alli Maggiori, e minori Principi de Christiani’, fol. 99r, [in:] *Varie relazioni*, fols. 93r-98v-BNM, It XI 146 (7413): ‘*liberare dall’imminente pericolo il Christianesimo*’; ‘*effetto a bassezza del Turco, et à grandezza maggiore della Christiana Republica*’. The word ‘*Christianitas*’ in the sense of the Christian world was also used in documents produced by diplomats of other states, cf. e.g. the letter from the nuncio in Venice to Pope Urban VIII (APF, SOCG 33–*Lettere di Venezia 1641*, fol. 142r, 1.09.1641): ‘*se la Repubblica [of Venice-PC.] guarda al suo interesse, la Religione [the Maltese order-PC.] guarda a quello della Christianità*’. It seems that in documents written by papal diplomats this latter word could be used in the religious sense, cf. ‘*quando occorre per missionarj, e per la Christianità*’ (ibidem, fol. 122v, 2.01.1641). Such usage is incidental in the Venetian sources; for instance, the churches in Pera are described as ‘ornaments of Christianity’ (ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 81r, *All’Amb[asciador] à Roma*, 7.08.1627).

11] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* f. 30, fols. [1r] and [2v] (*Al Bailo à Constantinopoli*, 14.12.1638): ‘*Principi del Christianesimo*’; ibidem, fol. [3r]: ‘*causa finalmente comune à tutto il Christianesimo*’.

Analysis of the content of the notion of Christendom is crucial to the subject of this book, and one means of analysis is review of a sample of interpretations that recall its medieval meanings. Giulio Cipollone held that the word was used to describe the society composed of all the Christian states (*'società di cristiani, di tutti regni di cristiani'*).¹² For Giulio Vismara the notion of *Christianitas* in its original usage denoted a mystical body, a community of the faithful—a structure, therefore, similar to the Church, but with a political rather than a religious base. The 'Christian Republic' (*'respublica Christiana'*), by contrast, was understood as a community of states;¹³ nonetheless, the expressions 'Christian Republic' and 'Christendom' were often used interchangeably in the same text.¹⁴ Christendom (the Christian Republic) was also a specific legal and political construct, difficult to define without anachronistic references to contemporary supranational entities. Its specificity stemmed from its very name ('republic'), which evoked an entity different from a monarchy—an entity characterized by a striving for a common determination of political goals, a lack of subjectivity in respect of its ruler, and the involvement of all interested parties in negotiating solutions. The interpretation of this notion presented by Carlo Curcio, who defined Christendom as 'a peaceful international community' whose primary aim was to safeguard that peace and strengthen solidarity among nations, is probably too utopian, however.¹⁵ Nonetheless, it may be assumed that such a vision of the Christian Republic might have been well received in Venice for its advocacy of the mainstreaming of political concepts held in high esteem in Venice into the broader community.

Christianitas encompassed an area ruled by 'Christian princes' (*'Principi / Prencipi Christiani'*) or 'Christian rulers' (*'Principi /*

12] G. Cipollone, *Cristianità-Islam: cattività e liberazione in nome di Dio: il tempo di Innocenzo III dopo il 1187*, Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1992, p. 3.

13] G. Vismara, *Impium foedus. La illiceità delle alleanze con gli infedeli nella Respublica Christiana Medioevale*, Milano: Giuffrè, 1950, p. 126.

14] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), pp. 240 and 242, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 225-257.

15] C. Curcio, *Europa: Storia di un'idea*, Torino: ERI, 1978, pp. 105-106. However, in the early modern age there were several projects of *sui generis* international organizations that were directed against the Ottoman Empire and envisaged creation of joint anti-Ottoman armies, cf. H. Mikkeli, *Europa. Storia di un'idea e di un'identità*, Bologna: Mulino, 2002, pp. 48-53; G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo oltre le crociate. La guerra turca nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento tra leggende e realtà*, Torino: Libreria UTET, 2011, pp. 153-158.

Prencipi della Christianità'),¹⁶ while the expression 'rulers of the world' (*Principi/Prencipi del Mondo*') was broader in scope.¹⁷ Christian rulers were listed in treatises and reports in a prescribed order, reflecting their seniority within the family of monarchs, and depending on how long a given state had been Christian. The pope was usually first in rank, and the king of France second.¹⁸ If the list included Venice, the republic was mentioned in third place in recognition of the ancient and Christian character of the city, exposed in motifs such as the legend of the transfer of St Mark's earthly remains to Venice, which served as the founding myth of the Republic. Also highly ranked was the Habsburg emperor, who was also termed the 'Christian emperor' (*imperatore Cristiano*').¹⁹

The fact that Christendom could also be understood as an area is confirmed by evidence including documents issued by Venetian diplomats or consular representatives as letters of recommendation for people travelling from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, who often applied for a certificate (*patente*) for '*condursi / ritornare / trasferirsi in Cristianità*' ('going / returning / moving to Christendom').²⁰ The same concept of Christendom as a geographical region was used by the historian Fedele Fedeli in his description of the situation of the defenders of Nicosia after the capitulation of the city and its conquest by Ottoman forces in 1570. Fedeli reports that the defenders were allowed to leave the town with all their belongings and move to Christendom.²¹ The text indicates that after its conquest by the Ottomans, Nicosia ceased to be considered a part of Christendom, i.e. Christian territory, and the defenders directed to areas still under Christian (Venetian) rule were considered to be on their way to Christendom. Sporadically,

16] E.g. *Tre dialoghi di Marc'Antonio Donini, già segretario veneto, alle cose de' Turchi*, BMC WL 31.10, p. 67: '*li Principi christiani*'; ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 34r (*Alli Baili à Const[antinopo]li*, 21.04.1627): '*amicitia, che tiene la Rep[ubbl]ica con tutti li Principi di Christianità*'.

17] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 27v (*Alli Baili Giust[inia]n et Venier in Cons[antinopo]li*, 10.04.1627): '*Amicitia con tutti li Principi del Mondo*'.

18] Cf. G.F. Olmo, *Relationi...*, oldprint no. 2, p. 19: '*Nè vi è Prencipe alcuno nella Chistianità, dopo il Pontefice Romano, così antico, come il Re' di Francia, primogenito di Santa Chiesa, & i Signori Venetiani.*'

19] F. Fedeli, *Storia della guerra contro il Turco (1570-1574)*—BNM, It VII 106 (8033), fol. 104r.

20] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 14, c. 1v (7.07.1639): '*per condursi in Chistianità*'. Similarly in the *fede* dated 11.08.1642: '*per trasferirsi poi in Christ[iani]tà*' – idem, booklet [15], fol. 14r; the *fede* dated to 15.09.1597 (BAC 295, booklet 439, fol. 10v): '*partono da qui per andare in Chistianità*'.

21] F. Fedeli, *Storia...*, op. cit., fol. 49r.

the word also took on other meanings (such as ‘Christian armies’), depending on its stylistic function in a given text.²²

From the documents analysed here it is not clear whether Christendom included territories inhabited by Eastern Christians. However, it was probably limited to the Latin Christian states, because it was understood as a political construct, and most Eastern Christian societies did not form fully independent states in the period of interest to us. Neither had they ever previously recognized any form of formal dependence on either the pope or the Christian (German) emperor. One author living in the late sixteenth century, Lazzaro Soranzo, uses the expression ‘Christians of Europe’ (*‘Christiani d’Europa’*),²³ suggesting that he clearly wanted to refer to Christians living in Europe rather than those from outside Christendom. Thus we may conclude that Soranzo recognized that there were Christians living outside Europe, and that some of the territories where they lived were not part of Christendom. However, he seems not to be entirely consistent in his use of terms, as sometimes he uses the word ‘Christianity’ (*‘Christianesimo’*) to refer to the Christian world rather than to the religion.²⁴

The word ‘Christendom’ was frequently accompanied by the qualifier ‘whole / all of’. This expression is used, for instance, in a dispatch from Consul Gritti from Aleppo: he hoped that all ongoing issues would be concluded with ‘the utmost calm and tranquility in all of Christendom’.²⁵ A similar use of the word ‘Christendom’ with ‘whole / all of’ (*‘tota’*) featured frequently in contemporary Polish diplomatic documents,²⁶ which suggests that this was standard diplomatic parlance. The ‘whole of Christendom’ is also mentioned in treatises and other works.²⁷ According to Giulio Vismara,²⁸ it was used to underline the integrity of Christendom, and could also refer to a community of Christians,

22] Ibidem, fol. 73r: *‘servitio nella Christianità’*.

23] L.Soranzo, *L’Ottomano...*, oldprint no. 3, p. 39.

24] Ibidem, pp. 49 and 73.

25] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 3, fol. 78r (disp. 22, 30.09.1629): *‘Somma quiete, e tranquillità di tutta la christianità’*.

26] E.g. AGAD, LL 35, fol. 41 (*Ad Palatinum Hungariae*): *‘ad comune Christianitatis bonum’*, *‘hoc incendium non ad ruinam solius Regni Nostri sed totius Christianitatis perniciem excitatum’*. The expression *‘tutta la Cristianità’* can be also found in Florentine documents, cf. EFE 27 (No. 273). The variant *‘universa Christianitas’* was also used, cf. EFE 27 (No. 110).

27] E.g. *‘Difesa de Signori Veneziani, per la pace da essi fatta co’ l Turco, L’Anno 1573’*, fol. 35v, [in:] *Pace tra Venezia e la Turchia (1573)*–BNM It VII 2167 (9648): *‘tutta la Cristianità’*; F. Fedeli, *Storia...*, op. cit., fol. 102r.

28] G. Vismara, *Impium foedus...*, op. cit., p. 126.

understood as a social organism. An interesting manoeuvre employed by the authors whose works are analysed here was to juxtapose Italy and (the whole of) Christendom in a single sentence, thus creating a grading or listing effect of geographical and cultural entities with which Venetians could identify.²⁹ In fact, ‘Italy’ was a well defined term, with both geographical and linguistic or cultural meanings. It could denote a political and cultural community—a part of Christendom that could be opposed to the North, i.e. to all transalpine territories.³⁰ In Olmo, the ‘Italians’ were mentioned as one of three nations (*‘nazioni’*) living within the bounds of the Most Serene Republic.³¹ Lazzaro Soranzo defined as ‘ours’ (*‘nostri’*) the inhabitants of Italy and the soldiers of Spain, France, Hungary, Germany, and other nations, whose valour he compared to that of the Ottomans.³² This passage from Soranzo’s work suggests his two-degree cultural identification: he defined himself firstly as an inhabitant of Italy, and secondly as an inhabitant of the community of Christian nations, opposed to the Turks.

In parallel to ‘Christendom’ we also find the word ‘Europe’ in the sources analysed here.³³ This usually had a purely geographical meaning, denoting the continent or part of the world. A disjunctive meaning of the notions of Christendom and Europe may be sensed in the report by Bailo Correr, who mentioned a ‘cavalry from Europe’ (*‘cavalleria d’Europa’*), meaning parts of the Ottoman Empire situated within Europe, but not within Christendom.³⁴ The territories inhabited by the Orthodox Christians of ‘Romania’ (roughly, of Greece), though not defined anywhere as part of Christendom, were nonetheless probably considered to be part of Europe, as suggested by a short treatise

29] BMC, ms. Cicogna 3757, p. 275: *‘per tutta l’Italia, et per tutta la Christianità’*.

30] For a discussion of the meaning of ‘North’ in Venetian diplomatic documents cf. P. Chmiel, ‘How Did Venetian...’, op. cit.

31] The other two nations were the Greeks and the Dalmatians, cf. G. Olmo, *Relationi...*, op. cit., p. 9.

32] L. Soranzo, *L’Ottomano...*, op. cit., p. 35.

33] It will be useful to mention several other works that elaborate on the relations between the notions of ‘Christendom’ and ‘Europe’, usually in the context of the formation of the early modern concept of Europe. Aside from the works quoted above, cf. also: the classic L. Febvre, *Europe. Genèse d’une civilisation*, Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1999; F. Chabod, *Storia dell’idea d’Europa*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1961; and D. Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968; as well as the more recent G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995; and A. Pagden, *The Idea of Europe. From Antiquity to the European Union*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson, 2002.

34] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 238.

by Antonio Bruti from the late sixteenth century.³⁵ The geographical meaning of 'Europe' is attested in a report by Ambassador Tiepolo from Portugal (1572), which lists the territories under the rule of the Portuguese king, by continent. Moreover, the ambassador juxtaposes the three parts of the world that were known to the ancient writers (Europe, Asia, and Africa) with the 'new world recently discovered'.³⁶ Further proof of the existence of a geographical understanding of the word 'Europe' is the observation by Angelo Alessandri that Constantinople was the most densely populated town in Europe (though it was situated outside Christendom).³⁷ A geographical meaning of the word 'Europe' is also attested in numerous descriptions of the lands under the sultans. These usually divide the territories of the Ottoman Empire into its parts lying in Europe and in Asia respectively (sometimes also adding those in Africa). It is worth noting that the respective attribution of the territories to the two continents does not differ from the currently accepted division.³⁸

In some cases the expressions 'Europe' and 'Christendom' were used interchangeably. For instance, Ambassador Michele Soranzo observed in 1562 that France had a larger population, more weapons, and greater wealth than any other 'realm of Europe', but he added that it was located in the 'centre of Christendom'.³⁹ Fedeli's use of the word 'Europe', as an entity opposed to the Ottoman Empire, and denoting the Christian world, is more idiosyncratic. Such metonymy was usually

35] A. Bruti, *Relatione del Bellerbegato della Romania*—BMC, WL 25.9, p. 2: 'Io brevemente tratterò della religione, lingua, et qualità così de christiani, come de Turchi di quella sola parte di questo Regno [Ottoman Empire—PC.] che è in Europa sottoposta al Bellerbey della Romania, che noi chiamiamo la Grecia.'. Sometimes, however, the word 'Romania' had a broader meaning, covering all the European territories of the Ottoman Empire inhabited primarily by Eastern Christians, such as Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Greece, cf. 'Consultatio intorno al modo di far l'impresa contro Infideli secondo le consulte fatte da Papa Leone Decimo [sotto Paolo 3zo]', fol. 2v, [in:] ASVe, *Archivio Pinelli* 1, fols. 1r-9r: 'tutto 'l paese di Romania di qua dallo stretto è habitato da Christiani come si vede in Albania Bossina Servia Bulgaria, e tutta Grecia con la Morea.'

36] Report by Ambassador Antonio Tiepolo (Portugal, 1572), p. 202, [in:] RAV Alberi I/5, pp. 195-228: 'nuovo mondo ancora ritrovato modernamente'.

37] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), p. 672, [in:] RAV Pedani, pp. 635-683.

38] G. Erizzo, *Descrittione del viaggio per terra a Costantinopoli e delle cose principali del Paese*—BNM, It VI 105 (5728), fols. 25r-v.

39] Report by Ambassador Michele Soranzo (France, 1562), p. 108, [in:] RAV Alberi I/4, pp. 103-150: 'Pieno di popoli, armi e ricchezze più d'ogni altro regno di Europa'; 'sta il regno di Francia come centro nella cristianità'.

avoided because part of Europe was ruled by the Ottomans.⁴⁰ The expression ‘Europe’s (European) rulers’ was also used sporadically as a synonym for ‘Christian rulers’.⁴¹ Likewise, there were also ‘nations of Europe’ (*nationi d’Europa*) as a synonym for ‘Christian nations’ (*nationes Christianae*).⁴²

The geography of lands lying outside Europe was less precise. In one of his reports Bailo Cappello listed ‘Egypt, Arabia, Asia, and Barbaria’,⁴³ while Bailo Giustinian mentioned ‘Asia, Europe, Egypt, and Africa’ as lands of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ The notion ‘Barbaria’ recurs frequently in the documents analysed here; it referred to the territories of present-day Maghreb.⁴⁵ Names were used for specific parts of the Empire (such as ‘*Natolia*’ [Anatolia] to denote all the parts of the Empire in Asia).⁴⁶ One interesting geographical category was Arabia: part of the Empire inhabited mostly by a Muslim population, which had been conquered by the Turks. By contrast, the Safavid Empire was always called ‘Persia’ and no subdivision into internal provinces or territories was employed.

According to Curcio, in the fifteenth century the notions of Christendom and Europe were synonymous, and the word ‘Christendom’ continued to be used in successive centuries. While the first observation is dubious, the second may be considered true.⁴⁷ Moreover, as the

40] F. Fedeli, *Storia...*, op. cit., fol. 103r: ‘*si gioiva per tutta Europa il conquisto dell’Armata infedele*’; fol. 10r: ‘*gli ausiliarj privati dell’Italia, et altri, che vennero di tutta Europa*’.

41] G.F. Olmo, *Relationi...*, op. cit., p. 44. Also: ‘*Principi Grandi d’Europa*’ (‘Difesa de Signori...’, op. cit., fol. 23r).

42] ‘Descriptione dell Imperio Turchesco del Sig[no]r Mattio Veniero Ultimamente da lui Revista’, [in:] *Miscellanea*–BMC, DR 9, fol. 111v: ‘*Tutte le altre nationi almeno quelle d’Europa*’; cf. also G.T. Minadoi, *Historia...*, oldprint no. 1, p. 259: ‘*fra le nationi d’Europa*’.

43] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), p. 685, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 669-735.

44] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), p. 540, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 525-633.

45] E.g. ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 69r (*Al Bailo in Costantinopoli*, 3.05.1633); ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 117, fol. 7v (disp. 152, 16.03.1636); *ibidem*, fol. 61r (2.04.1636); A. Sacerdoti (a cura di), ‘*Africa ouvero Barbaria*’. *Relazione al doge di Venezia sulle reggenze di Algeri e di Tunisi del dragomanno Giovanni Battista Salvago (1625)*, Padova: CEDAM, 1937, pluribus locis.

46] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 654: ‘*Tutto quello stato che s’attrova nell’Asia lo chiamano i Turchi col nome de una sola provintia, che è Natolia, come ancor tutto quello che si attrova in Europa con il nome di Gretia, quasi che in doi provintie si riducesse questo gran potentato*.’

47] The difficulty in indicating precisely the moment when the term *Christianitas* ceased to refer to a political and cultural community and was replaced in this meaning by ‘Europe’ is confirmed by G. Galasso, ‘Alle origini delle “storie d’Europa”’. *L’Istoria del Giambullari*, p. 164, [in:] M.A. Visceglia (a cura di), *Le radici storiche dell’Europa. L’età moderna*, Roma: Viella, 2007, pp. 161-186.

present analysis demonstrates, there was no diachronic change in this regard in the period of our interest. It should be assumed, then, that at least until c. 1640 the Venetian political elite understood 'Europe' as a continent, while the word 'Christendom' expressed the political and cultural unity of Europe. This latter expression was still in use in political parlance in the early eighteenth century, and is found in documents produced by V Savi alla Mercanzia.⁴⁸ There can be no doubt, however, that the heterogeneity of meanings of the word 'Christendom', i.e. both political and cultural, and religious or confessional, was due in some degree to the Reformation, which shook the integrity of the Christian Republic, but also to missionary activity, which fostered the spread of Christianity to other continents.⁴⁹

The abovementioned distinction drawn between Christendom and Europe by the Venetian political class had its roots in the unique perspective of the Most Serene Republic. Venice did not participate in geographical discoveries, its interest being focused instead on the Adriatic region and the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁰ It was thus important for the ruling class to be able to distinguish between the geographical concept of Europe—part of which lay within the Ottoman Empire—and

48] ASVe, *V Savi alla Mercanzia*, II serie, envelope 4, part II, pluribus locis. According to H. Mikkeli (*Europa...*, op. cit., p. 45), the expression *respublica christiana* was still in use in the documents of the Peace of Utrecht (1714).

49] C. Curcio, *Europa...*, op. cit., p. 148, O. Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1950, p. 70. The abovementioned conclusions are confirmed by the analysis of W. Fritzenmeyer (*Christenheit und Europa. Zur Geschichte des europäischen Gemeinschaftsgefühls von Dante bis Leibniz*, München-Berlin: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1931) who retraced the meaning and usage of the notions 'Christendom' and 'Europe' in works by a number of writers and intellectuals (Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Luther, Calvin, Suarez, Campanella, Bodin, Grotius, Hobbes, and early seventeenth-century French writers of treatises). He found that 'Europe' started to replace '*Christianitas*' when referring to the system of states within Latin Christendom not only due to the geographical expansion of Christianity, but also as a consequence of early legal reflections on international issues (e.g. Grotius' ideas of the law of nations or of universal peace, which extrapolated terms previously used within the Christian Republic to the whole globe—p. 118). On the influence of reflections on natural law on this phenomenon cf. M. Greengrass (*Christendom Destroyed. Europe 1517-1648*, London: Allen Lane, 2014, pp. 27-29).

50] This is also confirmed by the research by J.A. Drob (*Obieg informacji w Europie w połowie XVII wieku w świetle drukowanych i rękopiśmiennych gazet w zbiorach watykańskich* [Circulation of information in Europe in the mid-seventeenth century in light of printed and handwritten newspapers in Vatican fonds], Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1983, pp. 141 and 195) on newspapers and ephemera from the period 1648-1655 preserved in the Vatican's archives and libraries. According to Drob, Venetian ephemera devoted significantly more attention to the Orient than those printed in other Italian states. They also focused extensively on the Habsburg monarchy and Central Europe.

the non-Ottoman world, i.e. Christendom. At the same time, since Venice was not party to extra-European expansion, Venetian writers did not need to use the word ‘Europe’ in the sense of a political and cultural unity as distinct from the intensively Christianized New World. According to an observation by Geoffroy Atkinson,⁵¹ early modern Europeans perceived the most important territorial division to be the boundary between the Christian world and the Ottoman Empire, not the newly introduced opposition between Europe and the New World. Commenting on Atkinson’s observation, Frank Lestringant points out that Venetian authors, from their vantage point in a city on the frontier between ‘antagonistic cultures’, contributed to the formation of this geographical perception.⁵² A similar opinion is voiced by Almut Höfert, who connects the modern (re)definition of the notion of Europe—as the entity that replaced Christendom—with the contemporary discourse referencing the threat of Turkish expansion.⁵³ It thus seems that it may have been a strategy of Venetian diplomacy and treatise writing to direct the attention of other states on the continent towards its southeastern frontier, and to uphold the Türk as the principal Other for Christians / Europeans. Regardless of whether we concur with Atkinson’s opinion, it is clear that the frontier that loomed largest in Venice—for the members of its cultural circle—was that with the Muslim world. In respect of that world, the Republic was a frontier state—a bulwark—of a steadily shrinking Christendom.

The concept of *antemurale*—bulwark of the Christian world—emerged in the Middle Ages. In Central Europe it was perceived as one form of defence of Christendom against an external enemy. Monarchs who subscribed to this idea strove to draw the attention of the pope and other rulers to their ‘special’ role in defending the Christian community—and hence to obtain exemptions from financial obligations towards Rome.⁵⁴ In Poland it was first used in the fourteenth century, most probably during the reign of Casimir the Great, who, in the face

51] G. Atkinson, *Les nouveaux horizons de la Renaissance française*, Paris: Droz, 1935, after F. Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World: the Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 1.

52] F. Lestringant, *Mapping...*, op. cit., p. 2.

53] A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben. ‘Türkengefahr’ und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600*, Frankfurt-New York: Campus, 2003, pp. 62 and 67.

54] N. Berend, ‘Défense de la Chrétiénté et naissance d’une identité. Hongrie, Pologne et péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge’, 1009-1010, *Annales. Histories, Sciences Sociales* 58 (2003), 1009-1027. Cf. also J. Urwanowicz, ‘Wokół ideologii przedmurza chrześcijaństwa w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII wieku’, 195, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 29 (1984), 185-199.

of conflict with the Teutonic Order, attempted to promote Poland's image as a realm defending Latin Christendom against its enemies.⁵⁵ In this case the *antemurale* idea, initially created as a vehicle for interaction with the papacy, later evolved to contribute to the creation and consolidation of the early modern mythologem of Poland (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) as a bulwark protecting the Christian Republic from an external, mainly Turkish, peril.⁵⁶ The same idea also surfaced in other parts of Europe directly at risk of Turkish invasion in the fifteenth century, including Italy and Venice.⁵⁷ The impact of the idea seems to have been broad, in Venice as elsewhere; Angelo Tenenti even defined *antemurale* as a leitmotif of sixteenth-century Venetian history.⁵⁸

The *antemurale* idea had direct military, rather than geographical overtones. In the period in question here, the word meant 'bulwark' in its literal sense.⁵⁹ The image of Venice as a bastion whose defeat would bring down disaster on the entire Christian world is employed repeatedly in popular treatises and reports. One anonymous author warned that all Italy would be destroyed if it proved impossible to defend from the progressive Ottoman advances the Venetian domains: Cyprus, Candia (Crete), Corfu (more broadly the Ionian Islands), Schiavonia (i.e. the northern Adriatic coast), Friuli, and finally Venice itself.⁶⁰ Similarly, Bailo Cappello observed in 1634 that 'the Kingdom of Candia is a rampart of other domains of Your Serenity, the maritime gate of Italy, the bulwark of Christendom'.⁶¹ The *antemurale* metaphor

55] N. Berend, 'Défense...', op. cit., 1016; J. Krzyżaniakowa, 'Polska – Antemurale Christianitatis. Polityczne i ideologiczne podstawy kształtowania się idei', p. 304, [in:] K. Kaczmarek and J. Nikodem (red.), *Docendo discimus: studia historyczne oferowane profesorowi Zbigniewowi Wielgoszowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2000, pp. 295-313.

56] N. Berend, 'Défense...', op. cit., 1027; J. Krzyżaniakowa, 'Polska...', op. cit., p. 314.

57] J. Tazbir, 'Od antemurale do przedmurza, dzieje terminu', 168, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* XXIX (1984), 167-184.

58] A. Tenenti, 'Il senso dello spazio e del tempo nel mondo veneziano dei secoli XV e XVI', p. 355, [in:] idem, *Venezia e il senso...*, op. cit., pp. 335-371.

59] This expression can also mean a lateral wall support, cf. 'Antemurale', [in:] E. Bianchi, R. Bianchi, and O. Lelli, *Dizionario illustrato latino-italiano*, Firenze: Le Monnier, 1972, p. 91.

60] 'Se il re Filippo deve entrare in lega con Venetiani nella Guerra contra il Turco', fols. 100v-101r, [in:] *Varie relazioni*, fols. 95v-106r-BNM, It XI 146 (7413): '[Venetians-PC.] se saranno abbandonati da gl'altri Prencipi Christiani in breve tempo non pure sij tolto Cipro, ma perderanno Candia, Corfù, la Schiavonia, il Friuli, et ultimame[n]te l'istessa Venetia, doppio la cui rovina il rimanente dell'Italia si ha da tener perduta.'

61] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), op. cit., p. 731.

listing territories and types of military buildings must surely have had great suggestive force (here, the maritime gate is probably understood as a defensive tower situated at the mouth of a port). One political writer, Traiano Boccalini (1556-1613), who was based in Venice in later life, praised the *Serenissima* for its role as a ‘bulwark against barbarians’.⁶² Likewise, in a treatise intended as an apologia of the Venetian position during the controversies surrounding the Interdict (1604-1606), Antonio Querini recalled the mythologem of the Most Serene Republic as *antemurale*: without Venice, he averred, other rulers would be forced to surrender to the sultan.⁶³ These quotations demonstrate that the *antemurale* metaphor as used by the Venetian political elite referred the idea of bulwark (and similar images) to other ontological categories, above all Venice and certain of its domains. It also presented Venice as the main defender of Italy and of the whole Christian world.⁶⁴ These conclusions apply also to other texts even when the word ‘*antemurale*’ is not quoted *expressis verbis*.⁶⁵

The *antemurale* was obviously a convenient diplomatic formula and argument for Venetian diplomats in their negotiations with other Christian monarchs. According to this line of argument, Venice could not face the Turks effectively alone due to the inequality of the Ottoman and Venetian military potentials. This justified its unwillingness to engage in solitary combat with the Ottomans, and hence its neutrality. Thus the *antemurale* motif was used to reinforce the Venetian ‘Helvetization’ mentioned in the first chapter. Stefano Andretta connected the idea of *antemurale* with the sense of siege that reigned in the Most Serene

62] Quoted after G. Benzioni, ‘Un ancoraggio contro la crisi: Venezia’, p. 29, [in:] idem, *Gli affanni della cultura, Intellettuali al potere nell’Italia della Controriforma e barocca*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978, pp. 7-77 (no source supplied): ‘Venezia [...] seggia vera d’una perfetta libertà, stanza sicura a quei che sono forzati abandonar la patria per fuggir l’ira de’ prencipi, asilo de’ virtuosi, antemurale contro i barbari, focina delle biblioteche, sale della sapienza umana, gloria della nazione italiana.’

63] A. Querini (Quirino), ‘Avviso delle regioni della Serenissima Republica di Venezia interno alle difficoltà che le sono promosse dalla Santità di Papa Paolo V di Antonio Quirino senator Veneziano alla sua Patria e a tutto lo stato della medesima republica’, p. 661, [in:] G. Benzioni and T. Zanato (a cura di), *Scrittori e politici veneti del Cinquecento e del Seicento*, Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1982, pp. 657-729: ‘*Gran prencipi della vera religione [...] senza l’antemurale della Republica, potriano facilmente sottoporsi il residuo dell’infelice cristianità.*’

64] ‘Se il Re Filippo...’, op. cit., fol. 101v: ‘*Venetiani, che sono la frontiera e la fortezza d’Italia.*’

65] For more examples cf. P. Chmiel, ‘Venezia: antemurale della cristianità o semiperiferia d’Europa? Un tentativo di rilettura di concetti spaziali relativi alle divisioni d’Europa’, 255-257, *Atti dell’Accademia Polacca* 6 (2017), 245-266.

Republic in the sixteenth century after the battle of Agnadello.⁶⁶ It is doubtful, however, whether the wider Venetian elites shared this pervasive sense of an external threat.

Nonetheless, it seems that despite these declarations and its image *La Serenissima* still intended to exert an influence on other parts of Italy, projecting for itself the role of bulwark defending the rest of the peninsula. This observation is seconded by Marina Formica, who stresses that in the treatise writing of numerous Italian states the struggle for salvation of the Christian world is identified with the battle to save Italy.⁶⁷ In fact, many Venetian texts equate Italy with the wider Europe / Christendom in the context of the Ottoman threat and of *antemurale* as counter to it.

These reflections on *antemurale* lead us to another, related issue: Ottoman expansion⁶⁸ and the perception of this threat in Christendom (*Türkengefabr*). This has been the subject of many works, most of which have focused on its analysis in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁶⁹ The *Türkengefabr* may be described as a state of social consciousness. The best-known researcher of the topic, Winfried Schulze, called it a communication process involving the dissemination of information and visions according to which the Ottoman Empire constituted the main threat to the Christian world. Evidence of this vision can be found in many expressions of early modern culture, such as popular prints (*turcica*).⁷⁰ Almut Höfert takes a critical stance on this opinion, however. She sees the beginnings of its popularity in nineteenth-century German historiography, which was preoccupied with analysis of the Habsburg struggles with the Ottoman Empire. Höfert observes that it was a propaganda weapon of the court of Maximilian I (1486-1519), employed to focus public attention on

66] S. Andretta, *L'arte della prudenza. Teorie e prassi della diplomazia nell'Italia del XVI e XVII secolo*, Roma: Bibrink, 2006, p. 107.

67] M. Formica, *Lo specchio turco. Immagini dell'Altro e riflessi del Sé nella cultura italiana d'età moderna*, Roma: Donzelli, 2012, pp. 48 and 96.

68] On Ottoman expansion cf. H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600*, London: Phoenix Press, 2000, pp. 23-40; C.M. Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1972, passim.

69] E.g. R. Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent. The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)*, Nieuwkoop: B. de Graff, 1967; W. Schulze, *Reich und Türkengefabr im späten 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen einer äußeren Bedrohung*, München: C.H. Beck, 1978; F. Cardini, *Europe and Islam*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, pp. 117-131.

70] W. Schulze, *Reich...*, op. cit., p. 10.

the Ottoman threat. She holds that the Ottoman expansion cannot be treated differently than similar strategies pursued by other early modern states, otherwise we run the risk of distorting the history of the period. She presents the Ottoman-Habsburg wars as a normal form of rivalry between the two empires over the Hungarian territories, and explains the character of the Venetian-Ottoman wars along similar lines, adding that in fact only quite a small area of European territory was truly at risk from Ottoman expansion. In Höfert's view, the notion of the *'Türkengefahr'* as a medieval-style contraposition of Muslims against Christians should be treated with caution in historiography.⁷¹

Notwithstanding the deconstructive criticism of the term itself by later historiography, the Venetian sources do supply many examples of the sense of threat caused by the Turkish advances, or at least of the necessity to prepare a defence against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. The *'Türkengefahr'* did exist in Venice, even if it is difficult to define its real extent in the period of concern to us here. There are no tools that will enable us to determine this, since neither content analysis of writings on the Turks nor information on the number of editions and probable popularity of such works can fully explain the state of the Venetian collective consciousness or the scope of that communication process. We can only presume that this belief was relatively constant throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and tended to gain ground in periods of exacerbated relations with Venice's eastern neighbour. Evidence of this sense of *'Türkengefahr'* is in fact rare; one such example came after the fire in the Arsenale in 1569, when voices were raised accusing the Turks of starting the fire.⁷² A distinction must almost certainly be drawn, however, between the sense of threat present among the Venetian elites, and the more widespread atmosphere of *'Türkengefahr'*. In the former case it stemmed from analysis of information received from Venetian envoys to the Ottoman state, and the sense of threat was linked to perceived potential restrictions on further expansion or full realization of Venetian

71] A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., pp. 51-55. On Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages, and the image of Islam and the Muslim world generated by Latin Christendom cf. above all F. Cardini, *Europe...*, op. cit., passim; N. Daniel, *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1960; and, for the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, N. Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, pp. 13-19.

72] G. Cozzi, M. Knapton, G. Scarabello, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, vol. 2: *La Repubblica di Venezia in età moderna. Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica*, Torino: UTET, 1995, p. 53.

political or trade interests in the Orient. This sense of threat should be considered the first element of *antemurale*, which is understood here not only as a metaphor or a diplomatic formula, but as a political concept. This aspect of the issue is easier to study because it concerns a closed group, whose members were at once the authors and the recipients of the texts they created.

Nonetheless, as has been shown, another important element of the *antemurale* idea was the conviction of the aggressive character of the ‘Turk’ and the need to mount a defence against this ‘enemy’. The threat from the Ottoman Empire was a recurrent motif in texts produced within the diplomatic milieu. According to the baili, the risk of war with the Ottomans was always high, and the sultans would not hesitate to declare war on *La Serenissima*, even despite the potential loss of the huge profits they made on Venetian trade with the Levant.⁷³ Tommaso Contarini observed that the ‘Turk, in time of peace, always pushes towards the kingdom of Hungary, broadens his borders through invasions and raids, and then retires’.⁷⁴ The Venetian diplomats saw certain states, those bordering the Ottoman Empire, as a kind of shield, prone to Turkish attack, and the main foreign policy aim of such states as minimizing the risk of aggression from it (for example, by securing or renewing peace treaties). They were also conscious that the Turks could always change the direction and character of their expansion (e.g. maritime to terrestrial, and vice versa).⁷⁵

The diplomats were apprehensive with regard to the sultans’ intentions in respect of *La Serenissima*. Ottaviano Bon believed that Venice was an easy—and likely—target of Turkish aggression.⁷⁶ Simone Contarini, though he did not observe any particular hostility towards the Republic on the part of the sultan, noted that the Turks were incessantly questioning the Ottoman-Venetian border in Dalmatia, and that they were interested in occupying Candia.⁷⁷ He also warned the Senate of the Turks’ constant intention to start a war against Christendom. Lorenzo Bernardo believed that the Ottomans harboured ‘ill intentions’ towards the Most Serene Republic.⁷⁸ He saw

73] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), p. 44, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 1-58.

74] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 223.

75] Report by Ambassador Giovanni Correr (*Germania*, 1574), p. 164, [in:] *RAV Alberi I/6*, pp. 164-183.

76] Report by Bailo Ottaviano Bon (1609), p. 497, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 475-523.

77] Report by Bailo Simone Contarini (1612), pp. 572, 574 and 576, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 473-608.

78] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), p. 376, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 311-394.

expansion as a fundamental aim and duty of the Muslims, with its basis in their religion and law.⁷⁹ He was concerned at the fact that the Turks were able to conquer lands with such a glorious past, and that discord between Christians had given them a way into Italy, which he described as the ‘garden of the world and centre of Christendom’.⁸⁰ Dragoman Salvago stressed the threat of Ottoman expansion using the example of its African dimension.⁸¹ This warning regarding the Turks’ expansionist tendencies resonated particularly strongly after the Cypriot war: Marcantonio Barbaro, a diplomat actively involved in negotiation of the peace treaty after the war, feared the establishment of a Turkish bridgehead in Italy that might serve to further attacks on the *Christianitas*.⁸²

Some of the authors whose fears are analysed above attempted to explain the long-standing success and expansion of the Ottoman Empire as a function of the sins of the Christian world.⁸³ The awareness that the Empire would always have military supremacy over the Republic led the diplomats to reflect on the conditions necessary for a peaceful coexistence. The Venetian envoys discovered that good relations with the Ottomans could be a way to increase their state’s ‘*reputazione*’—a notion that should be translated as ‘prestige’ or ‘international visibility’. Bailo Bernardo observed that good relations (*amicitia*) between the sultan and the French king were achieved as a result of the Turks’ determination to gain prestige among the Christian monarchs. And, conversely, Bailo Soranzo opined that Venice enjoyed its ‘*reputazione*’ in the Ottoman Empire due to its peaceful relations with other Christian rulers.⁸⁴ Consequently, the instructions of the Collegio to the baili Giustinian and Venier included a clear rule: they were to act in such a way that the Republic would be perceived as a friends’ friend—and at the same time an enemies’ enemy—of the

79] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), p. 138, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 59-166.

80] *Ibidem*, p. 90 (*‘giardin del mondo e centro della Cristianità’*).

81] A. Sacerdoti, *Africa ovvero Barbaria...*, op. cit., p. 55.

82] ‘Scrittura data in S[igno]ria dal cl[arissi]mo Barbaro doppo la Relatione’, fol. 135r, [in:] M. Barbaro, *Scritture attorno alle cose de’ Turchi*, fols. 135r-192r–BNM, It XI 95 (6798): *‘quell’Imperio è già salito à grandezza tale che hà potuto far progressi così notabili nella Christianità per i quali si può hor mai chiaramente conoscere, che per questo trapassando più oltre, potrà metter il piede ò farsi nido in queste nostre parti’*.

83] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 316; report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), p. 289, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 259-310; M. A. Donini, *Tre dialoghi di Marc’Antonio Donini...*, op. cit., p. 44.

84] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1576), p. 222, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 201-223.

Ottoman Empire. They were also reminded that mounting an effective anti-Ottoman alliance was impossible, and as such they would need to maintain good contacts with Ottoman officials in order to communicate Venice's reluctance to cooperate with the enemies of the Empire.⁸⁵

However, the diplomatic documents contain not only calls for a peaceful co-existence with the Ottoman Empire, but also views on the low level of the threat. Sometimes these observations were made by the same diplomats who in other places warned of the Ottoman expansion. Bailo Bernardo pointed out that victory in a conflict with the Ottomans would be impossible.⁸⁶ Tommaso Contarini believed that the reality of the threat depended on the Empire's wherewithal to encircle Christendom.⁸⁷ According to Angelo Alessandri, Christians should not be afraid of 'the Turks', since not all of the Ottoman army was combat-ready, and there was little evidence available on its size and capabilities.⁸⁸ The diplomat's doubts were also motivated by his suspicion that the Ottomans had less gunpowder at their disposal than was commonly thought, because the residents of the Seraglio used to come to the bailate to ask for gunpowder to mark celebrations.⁸⁹

The sources referenced above evince a moderate sense of threat, which distinguishes such diplomatic texts from popular anti-Turkish literature, and illustrates the specifically Venetian context of that threat. In this matter it is useful to recall Angelo Baiocchi's comparison of the perception of the Ottoman threat in Venice and Florence in the sixteenth century. He noted that in Venice it was perceived as real, requiring a complex defence policy and a moratorium on eastward expansion, while in Florence the Ottoman Empire was usually considered a mythical and distant menace.⁹⁰

85] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fols. 27r-v (*Alli Baili Giust[inia]n et Venier in Const[antinopoli]*, 10.04.1627): 'convenga alla Rep[ubbl]ica esser amica de gli amici, et nemica de gli inimici della Casa Ottomana conoscendo la Rep[ubbl]ica buona intelligenza, et amicitia con tutti li Prencipi del Mondo, giamai s'interessa nelli affari loro, se non in quanto l'occasione per il proprio servitio, et sicurezza di unirsi con altri. Onde nelle p[rese]nti occorrenze tanto è lontano, che ve ne habbiamo alcuna col Persiano, quanto è verissimo, et lo comprobano li veri effetti della strettissima corrispondenza n[ost]ra con gli Imperatori Ottomani; et però doveva per se stesso cadere il concetto, che noi vogliamo somministrare ai Principi inimici di quell'Imperio.'

86] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 378.

87] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 220.

88] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 665.

89] *Ibidem*, pp. 655-656.

90] A. Baiocchi, 'Venezia nella storiografia fiorentina del Cinquecento', 264 and 266, *Studi veneziani* 3 (1979), 203-281.

However, analysis of the *antemurale* in the context of the Ottoman expansion alone, without a parallel examination of the manifestations of Venetian counterexpansion, while understandable in light of the historiographical tradition and some cursory readings of the sources, would seem to invite accusations of inaccuracy. Venice's attempts to defend its territories and to preserve the peace were elements of its strategy of response to the Ottoman expansion. Obviously, the Most Serene Republic was powerless to expand in any real dimension in the direction of the Ottoman Empire, at least until the end of the seventeenth century. However, the sources show that, given the clarity of the Ottoman threat as evidenced in the otherness of its model of statehood, its structures, its communication processes, rules of functioning, etc., the Venetian diplomats were not interested in the transformation of the Empire according to the models they knew from Venice or other states of Christendom. Their desire was to see the Ottoman Empire ruined or disintegrated. However, they tried to describe its otherness in order better to prepare their compatriots for the eventuality of its expansion. Venice also conducted small-scale expansion, mostly on a commercial basis, into territories of interest to it. It remains to be clarified whether those localized, rather inefficient actions designed to destabilize the empire, such as attempts to attract Eastern Christians, and support for missionaries in the Orient, can be defined as elements of early modern Venetian expansion towards the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant.

In reflecting on the expansion of the Venetian Republic it is important to remember that Venetian political thought divided the world into seas and lands. That division was present at the administrative level: the Venetian domains were divided into two parts, the continental *Stato da Terra*, and the *Stato da Mar*, comprising the islands, the northern and eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, and periodically also Morea (the Peloponnese). The sixteenth-century theoreticians of the Venetian order pointed to Venice's triumphs in maritime battles and its drive to expand its overseas empire, which contrasted with its lack of tradition of land wars and of Venetian expansion within Italy.⁹¹ That explanation was certainly effective as propaganda: it served to promote the idea of a pacifist Venice, at the same time fostering the vision of *La Serenissima* as an *antemurale* that had once augmented the

91] L.J. Libby Jr., 'Venetian History and Political Thought after 1509', 29, *Studies in the Renaissance* 20 (1973), 7-45.

lands of Christendom through maritime conquests—and had then had to face the Ottoman expansion that reduced the Christian territories. Interestingly, the two big battles in Venetian history—its defeat in the land battle at Agnadello and its victory in the naval engagement at Lepanto—fit well into this logic.⁹²

The third element of the *antemurale* idea—alongside the threat of Ottoman expansion and the perception of the Empire's otherness—was the conviction that the 'Turk' could only be defeated by unity among Christian rulers. The motif of Christian unity, which had been functioning in Christendom since the crusades, revived in the period of Turkish expansion in the fifteenth century.⁹³ One anonymous author projected a broad anti-Ottoman coalition composed of the Habsburg Empire, the Grand Duchy of Moscow, Portugal and its Asian domains, the Arabs, and the Persian monarchy.⁹⁴ A similar alliance was projected by another author in the wake of the War of Cyprus,⁹⁵ while Fedele Fedeli and Lazzaro Soranzo cultivated the hope of creation of other alliances by Christian rulers.⁹⁶ More realistic was the observation made by Tommaso Contarini, who pointed to the defensive and temporary

92] D. Raines, *L'invention du mythe aristocratique. L'image de soi du patriciat vénitien au temps de la Sérénissime*, Venezia: Istituto Veneto delle Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2006, p. 145. Cf. also M.E. Mallett and J.R. Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State. Venice c. 1400 to 1617*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 215 ('By sea Venice had no political choice: it was either to coexist or perish.').

93] A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., p. 64.

94] 'Discorso delle più commode, et utili imprese che far potrebbe la lega Christiana contro il Turco', fol. 2v-ASv, *Archivio Pinelli* 1, A2-30, fols. 1r-3r: 'Imperatore, Re di Polonia, Moscovito, Portoghesi, Arabi, Soffi'.

95] 'Se il Re Filippo...', op. cit., fol. 100v: 'Perché dal Ponente Venetiani, il Rè Filippo, con il Papa si troveranno contro di lui [the Turk-PC.], dal Levante il Soffi, et dal Mezzogiorno gl'Arabi, et Portoghesi non perderanno l'occasione di muovere à tanto loro Nemico. Dal Settentrione il Moscovita già è in arme, et è in Lega con il Soffi contro Turchi, et si tiene per certo, che il Rè di Polonia entrerà ancor egli in Lega con Venetiani. Né per ragione di Stato l'Imperator hà dà dormire in tanto romore da tutto il mondo.'

96] F. Fedeli, *Storia...*, op. cit., fol. 4v: 'L'interesse pubblico di tutta la Christianità del qual si trattava sotto in particolare della Repubblica Veneziana per la massa del Turco, dovesse impetrare da Sua Santità aiuti spirituali, et temporali, a fine che li Principi christiani dalli esempi di lui si dovessero per honore, et servizio di Christo unire'; L. Soranzo, *L'Ottomano...*, op. cit., fol. [4r]: 'E per ciò piaccia a Dio che ben tolto (come pur ci promette l'indifessa solecitudine di V[ost]ra Santità) segua pace tra'l Christianissimo Rè di Francia, & il Cattolico e potentissimo Rè di Spagna [...]. Tanto più havendo pur finalmente V[ost]ra S[antità] smorzate (come si crede) affatto le discordie, che già tempo fra gli Austriaci e Polacchi è più notevolmente tra Polacchi, e Trasilvani, serpendo, pur troppo impediano i disegni e buoni progressi della Christianità.'

character of anti-Ottoman alliances (leagues, ‘*leghe*’).⁹⁷ The diplomats were largely agreed that an anti-Turkish league could increase Venetian prestige (‘*reputazione*’) and deter the sultan from attacking the Republic.⁹⁸

Despite referencing such utopian plans for unity, however, they were nonetheless aware that it would not be possible either to create or to maintain them. They usually limited their reflections on Christian unity to projects of possible alliances and to general remarks on the lack of unanimity among the ‘Christian princes’. As a rule, they kept to expressing generalized hopes for unity among Christians (which were belied by the image of actual discord within Christendom); other observations on anti-Ottoman leagues come from polemical literature, and usually reference specific political situations. It must have been hard for Venetian polemicists to defend the position of Venice in concluding a peace treaty after the War of Cyprus without consultation with its partners in the anti-Ottoman coalition. An anonymous author explained that the Venetians had expected not a long-term alliance, but instant military aid, which other Christian rulers were always obliged to supply. He surmised that the Venetian treaty with the Ottoman Empire had to be concluded, and that previous notice to allies would not have brought any advantages for Christendom.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, it was the diverging interests of the states of Christendom that were the main reason for the failure of successive projected anti-Ottoman alliances. The Venetian diplomats were aware of this problem, and they understood that any cooperation between the several larger states of Latin Christendom could only be short-term and *ad casum* in character. Bailo Bernardo stressed that it would be difficult for the Christian side to make a threatening impression on the Turks because they knew that the Christian states could not muster

97] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (Germania, 1596), op. cit., p. 233.

98] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 378.

99] ‘Difesa de Signori...’, op. cit. fols. 8v-9r: ‘*se essi [Christian monarchs–P.C.] dessero aiuto à Veneziani senza lega, pare che tutto quello, che nella guerra si cogliesse al Turco si guadagnasse per i Veneziani soli, la qual cosa dicono non essere ragionevole, poichè facendosi l’impresa ancora con stipendio loro, e colle loro armi, pone onesta cosa che debbino ancor essi partecipare delli guadagni, quasi avendo per errore, e per peccato gravissimo, che un Principe Cristiano aiuti l’altro, gratamente contro un nemico comune, al quale è comodo, e forse facile l’opprimere gli stati del loro Principe Cristiano, ed amico, che riceva aiuto*’; fol. 10r: ‘*Dunque, i Veneziani volevano aiuto, e non lega*’; fol. 46r: ‘*Prima, se era necessario di far questa pace, sarebbe stata superflua cosa l’avvisarne inanzi alcuno de Collegati, perchè così avisandoli, come non avisandoli, era necessario di farla.*’

joint forces of sufficient number to endanger the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁰ The diplomats' political realism, even if sometimes eclipsed by their audacious visions of major alliances, distinguishes works created in the circle of the foreign service of the Most Serene Republic from other, more fantastical projects in anti-Turkish writings.

Christian unity was also understood as an imaginary phenomenon rooted in a sense of community which stemmed from belonging to the same cultural circle. It was most clearly visible outside the Christian world, as exemplified by the fact that Venetian diplomats would provide assistance to Christian slaves regardless of their country of origin. It was frequently underlined in the instructions for baili that this served as a declaration of good relations between the Republic and other Christian rulers, and reflected a duty motivated by religion.¹⁰¹

The motif of Christian unity is sometimes linked to the idea of crusade. Discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this work, as it is mainly related to international manoeuvres by the pope rather than to any strategy attributable to Venice. However, hasty identification of the medieval idea of the crusades with the leagues formed by early modern states is probably not legitimate. The temptation probably stems from an extension of the motif of *unitas Christiana*—highly exposed in the writings of the early modern age—to other phenomena. We should be cautious in our use of the concept of 'delayed crusades' (*crociate tardive*)¹⁰² proposed by Giovanni Ricci in reference to attempts by early modern rulers to integrate selected states of Christendom in projects to combat the Turks. As Géraud Poumarède¹⁰³ observes, early modern states differed from their medieval predecessors not only in their new modes of expansion, but also in the interests, plans, and imagined hierarchies among the rulers in Christendom. The universalism of medieval times was also a thing of the past. And although the overall

100] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 357.

101] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 34r (*Alli Baili à Const[antinopo]li*, 21.04.1627): *'termine di amicitia, che tiene la Rep[ubbl]ica con tutti li Principi di Christianità, à quale sarebbe di grande aggravio fare diversamente [i.e. to stop ransoming slaves-PC.]; 'siamo ancò tenuti à ciò fare, per causa di Religione, essendo à questa principalm[en]te obbligati'.*

102] G. Ricci, *I turchi alle porte*, Bologna: Mulino, 2008, p. 65.

103] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit., p. 147. Cf. a similar conclusion by M. Greengrass (*Christendom Destroyed...*, op. cit., p. 11): *'That antagonism [between Christendom and Islam-PC.] was no longer expressed, however, in terms of a concrete project (the conquest of the Holy Land). "Crusade" had mutated into "Holy War", where the objective was a less defined and more defensive "protection" of the Christian world from an aggressive enemy, "common" to all.'*

scope of projects organized by the pope, e.g. plans for a military expedition to territories occupied by the Ottomans, was to a certain extent similar to that of the crusades (e.g. in terms of the routes of their combat trails), nonetheless there is no consensus regarding the relation of such early modern papal undertakings to medieval crusades. According to Marina Formica, they were a redefinition of a former model in which the liberation of the Holy Tomb was replaced by a war in defence of Europe and Italy.¹⁰⁴ Géraud Poumarède, whom we saw critical of equating the medieval crusades with early modern anti-Ottoman projects, makes an inspiring distillation of the successive phases of Christendom's responses to the expansion of the Muslim world.¹⁰⁵ He starts with the medieval crusades, organized under the auspices of the pope, and related to the myth of a victorious ruler who would destroy the power of the infidels in order to reclaim Jerusalem. He differentiates this from the forays that took as their aim the reconquest of territories once inhabited by Christians; this latter idea dominated in the first period of the Ottoman threat. Finally, he isolates the later 'Turkish war': a series of defensive wars on Europe's borders waged with the aim of preserving common territories and civilization. Although the three phenomena were interrelated, the ephemerical character of anti-Turkish leagues or alliances in the early modern period sets them apart from the crusades. There are thus no reasons to state that early modern diplomacy was dominated by the idea of a crusade or a 'delayed crusade', even though the concept of Christian unity was still very much alive.

It was the struggle to preserve the common civilization, which was in fact a struggle against Ottoman alterity, that Poumarède identified as the differentiating element of the 'Turkish war'. Unlike the crusade and the reconquest, the 'Turkish war' was not characterized by religious confrontation; the two sides of the conflict were rather perceived to be differentiated by cultural factors. This conclusion requires several comments. Firstly, it shows another difference between the idea of crusade and *antemurale*. Secondly, it reveals the influence of humanism on the formation of the early modern idea of state-bulwark. This may be confirmed by some images of the Turks in diplomatic documents,

104] M. Formica, *Lo specchio...*, op. cit., p. 48.

105] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

which are similar to those produced by outstanding humanists.¹⁰⁶ This foundation of the *antemurale* in ideology related to a ‘complex system of values rooted in Humanism’ and shared by the Venetian patriciate is underlined by Vera Costantini.¹⁰⁷ A similar interpretation has been presented by Dorit Raines,¹⁰⁸ who mentioned the idea of Venice as defender of the Christian world, recalling the image of a wall for protection from barbarians; this expression suggests the strong cultural element of that idea, where otherness is equated to a perceived cultural, not religious, difference.

Finally, however, the role of religious aspects as an element of the myth of Venice described above must be acknowledged. Probably its best political expression was the narrative on the transfer of the body of St Mark from Alexandria, which functioned as a kind of founding myth of Venice. It legitimized a kind of *translatio imperii* from the world of Eastern Christianity to the Latin West, creating a political centre competitive to Rome (a ‘second Rome’, to use the words of Haitsma Mulier).¹⁰⁹ Other examples of the importance bestowed on the religious factor in the self-definition of the Venetian political image may be found in diplomatic and treatise writings. For example, when referring to the protection of Christians in the East, one Venetian consul called his motherland ‘*la devotissima Repubblica*’.¹¹⁰ The humanist Giambattista Egnazio defined Venice as the third pillar of Christendom (alongside the Christian empire and the papacy),¹¹¹ while the poet Giulio Strozzi called her the ‘shield of Italy’ and the ‘bedrock of the Christian religion’.¹¹² This narrative served to explain the distinctiveness

106] An extensive review of humanist writings on the Turks – and a bibliography of the works analysed, attesting to the scale of interest in the Ottoman Empire in the circle of Italian intellectuals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – can be found in the work by N. Bisaha, *Creating East and West...*, op. cit., pp. 273-280.

107] V. Costantini, *Il sultano e l'isola contesa. Cipro tra eredità veneziana e potere ottomano*, Torino: UTET, 2009, p. 70.

108] D. Raines, *L'invention du mythe...*, op. cit., p. 144.

109] H. Mulier, *The Venetian Myth and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1980, p. 14. On the other hand, during the period of the Interdict (1606–1607) there were voices defining Venice as ‘the new Geneva’, cf. G. Benzoni, ‘Un ancoraggio...’, op. cit., p. 43. Cf. also: I. Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City. History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 175-192.

110] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 2, fol. 30v (disp. 20, 12.02.1627).

111] Quoted after L.J. Libby Jr., ‘Venetian...’, op. cit., 34.

112] ‘Propugnacolo d'Italia’, ‘sostegno della cristiana religione’, quoted after: M.L. Doglio, ‘La letteratura ufficiale e l'oratoria celebrativa’, p. 177, [in:] G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi (a cura di), *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. IV/1, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1984, pp. 163-187.

of Venice to the rest of the Christian world, to justify its conflicts with the papacy, and to illustrate the importance of eastern issues (including protection of Greek refugees from the Ottoman Empire) in Venetian foreign policy.

We have now seen how notions such as *Christianitas*, Europe, and *antemurale* in the geographical and military sense coexisted on the imaginary political and cultural map of the Venetian political elites. We have also enumerated the main elements of the idea of state-bulwark in the Christian world. The next chapter will be given over to the image of the Other created by the political elites of the Republic; an Other from whom the *antemurale* was to offer protection to Venice, Italy, and all Christendom.

CHAPTER III

NEWCOMERS. THE PERCEIVED OTHERNESS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

According to Niccolò Contarini, ‘a Venetian writer should know first of all that when it comes to the Turks the Republic has always had either an insecure peace or a very intransigent struggle’.¹ Lorenzo Bernardo stressed in his report that the Venetian political elite had to take an interest in Ottoman affairs, and he listed several reasons for his opinion: the Empire was powerful; it was an enemy of Venice due to its religion; the sultan could not be trusted; his state shared a 500-mile border with Venice; and there were other contentious bilateral trade and maritime issues.² Both these sources reveal that Venetian diplomats were strongly encouraged to learn as much as possible about the Ottoman Empire. This chapter will examine the image of the Empire that was disseminated among representatives of the foreign service of the Most Serene Republic

1] N. Contarini, ‘Delle istorie veneziane et altre a loro annesse, cominciando dall’anno 1597 e successivamente’, p. 156, [in:] G. Benzoni and T. Zanato, *Storici e politici veneti del Cinquecento e del Seicento (La letteratura italiana. Storia e testi)*, Part 35, vol. II, Milano-Napoli: Riccardo Riccardi, 1982, pp. 151-442.

2] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), pp. 63, 64, and 66, [in]: *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 60-166.

in the period of interest to us here, and the way that these people perceived the Ottoman otherness.

Stressing the importance of relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire for the history of *La Serenissima* is something of a truism that, while frequently repeated in the historiography, can be exasperating and may encourage challenges in the form of reinterpretations of history in order to demonstrate the existence of parallel, even stronger relations between Venice and other states. Thus it is even more important to stress the scale of the interest in the Ottoman world evinced by the Venetian political elite. In this respect only the papal court can be compared to the Ottoman Empire. The records of matters debated by the Senate in 1622 show that twelve concerned Turkish issues, compared to ten connected with Rome, twenty-three with foreign policy in respect of other states, forty-four with Venice itself, twenty-eight with its Italian domains (*'terra ferma'*), nineteen with those located outside Italy (*'Mar'*), and the remaining eight with the Kingdom of Candia. While it is understandable that a third of all the matters debated were related to foreign policy (which fell within the jurisdiction of the Senate), the number of issues concerning the Ottoman Empire is particularly striking.³ The balance of content in the records for this particular year may not have been representative for the whole period of our interest – for example, the *'materie'* regarding the Ottoman Empire discussed in 1611 were not listed as a separate group at all, though there was a broader category of *'Levant'* (*'Levante'*), which included them.⁴ Nevertheless, this review reflects the importance attached in Venice to relations with the Ottoman Empire.

As well as the intensity of bilateral contacts, also of significance for our subject is the military and strategic context of Venetian-Ottoman relations. As Alberto Tenenti observes, Venice was an easy antagonist for the Ottoman Empire, as–unlike the Habsburg Empire, Spain, or Persia–it was not in a position to attack the sultans' state unilaterally.⁵ Throughout the period of the Venetian presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, *La Serenissima* was the defensive party in these

3] The list of *'materie'* analysed here is quoted after: *Discorso sopra materie trattate nel Senato (1622)*–BNM, It VII 1236 (8693). The Venetian-Ottoman issues are listed on fol. 302r.

4] *Materie particolari della Rep[ubbl]ica di Venezia trattate nel Senato di essa (1611)*, [in:] *Materie trattate in Senato, 1610-1611*–BNM It VII 359 (7658).

5] A. Tenenti, 'Profilo di un conflitto secolare', p. 478, [in:] idem, *Venezia e il senso del mare. Storia di un prisma culturale dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Milano: Guerini, 1999, pp. 453-510.

relations, interested above all in preserving peace with the Ottomans and minimizing its own territorial and commercial losses.

At this point a brief synthesis of the history of Venetian-Ottoman relations is crucial for the sake of clarity before we proceed.⁶ As a result of the intensive expansion of the Ottoman state in the fifteenth century, the Venetian *Stato da Mar* suffered considerable shrinkage. In the 1463-1479 conflict the Venetians lost Negroponte / Euboea, Lemnos, and some of its islands in the Cyclades.⁷ The next Venetian-Ottoman war broke out in 1499 and ended, four years later, with the loss of many of the Venetian domains in Morea / the Peloponnese, including the fortresses Modone / Methoni and Corone / Koroni.⁸ Further parts of the Peloponnese (including Nauplia / Nafplio and Malvasia / Monemvasia) were annexed to the Ottoman Empire after the war of 1537-1540. Also as a result of this war, the Venetians were forced to pay a tribute for Zante / Zakynthos and Cyprus.⁹ After this, a period of peace ensued which lasted for several decades, until 1570, when Sultan Selim II called on Venice to surrender Cyprus, explaining that the island would be well suited as a staging-post for pilgrims travelling to Mecca. During this war all capitulations were suspended, and Venetian merchants in Constantinople were arrested and their goods confiscated. Ottoman merchants in Venice suffered a similar fate.¹⁰ The Community of Venetians attempted to broker an

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- 6] There is an extensive literature on this topic. Aside from the general works on the history of Venice listed in the introduction, the salient works that should be mentioned here are H. İnalçık, 'An Outline of Ottoman-Venetian Relations', [in:] H.-G. Bleck, M. Manoussacas, and A. Pertusi (a cura di), *Venezia centro mediazione di oriente e occidente: secoli 15-16: aspetti e problemi. Atti del 2 convegno internazionale di storia della civiltà veneziana: Venezia, 3-6 ottobre 1973*, vol. 1, Firenze: Olschki, 1977, pp. 84-90; and the synthetic introduction to P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Firenze: G.C. Sansoni Editore, 1975, pp. 25-66.
- 7] A. Tenenti, 'Il senso dello spazio e del tempo nel mondo veneziano dei secoli XVI e XVII', pp. 349-350, [in:] idem, *Venezia e il senso...*, op. cit., pp. 335-371; G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo oltre le crociate. La guerra turca nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento tra leggende e realtà*, Torino: UTET, 2011, p. 24; A. Zorzi, *La repubblica del leone. Storia di Venezia*, Milano: Bompiani, 2001, pp. 250-259; G. Gullino, *Storia della Repubblica Veneta*, Brescia: La Scuola, 2010, pp. 96-103.
- 8] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit., p. 25; G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 119-123.
- 9] G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 183-185; A. Zorzi, *La repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 311-315. In formal terms, the Venetians paid tributes ('*carazzo*') only for Cyprus, and 'were expected to pay ducats' for Zante ('*devono essere versati dei ducati*'). This construct served to weaken the impression of Venetian dependence on the Empire. Cf. M.P. Pedani, *La dimora della pace. Considerazioni sulle capitolazioni tra i paesi islamici e l'Europa*, Venezia: Cafoscarina, 1996, p. 71.
- 10] E. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople, Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. 131.

anti-Ottoman league, and succeeded in attracting partners including Spain and the papal state. In the meantime, however, Nicosia – seized by the Ottomans – fell, while another Cypriot fortress, Famagusta, mounted a desperate defence. It was a long time before a joint allied fleet could be deployed, and on 3 August 1571, after a year-long siege, Famagusta was forced to surrender, before the fleet had even left Messina. The public skinning of the Venetian commander of Famagusta, Marcantonio Bragadin, which followed the fall of the fortress, came to be seen as a symbolic moment in the war, and is a frequent motif in Venetian treatise writing. The Christian and Ottoman fleets ultimately engaged close to Lepanto / Naupaktos on 7 October 1571. The battle inflicted huge losses on the Turkish fleet: more than two-thirds of its galleons were destroyed, and the Battle of Lepanto was thus hailed as a watershed moment that marked an end to Ottoman expansion.¹¹ However, the victory was untapped and no further large-scale action by the league followed. In a bid to minimize potential losses, in 1573 Venice concluded a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire pursuant to which the Community of Venetians lost Cyprus and was forced to pay war reparations and an increased annual tribute for Zante.¹² The end of the Cyprus war ushered in the longest period of peace in Venetian-Ottoman relations, which lasted until 1645. The relationship was not always stable, however, marred by tensions which usually stemmed from the activities of pirates or privateers. Further conflict was unavoidable, and during the war of 1645-1669 the Empire took control of Candia / Crete (thereby giving the name to the conflict).¹³ The *casus belli* was the arrival in a Venetian-controlled port of ships of the Order of Malta after a battle with the Ottomans. The Ottoman fleet was directed to Candia, and the bailo was arrested. The Venetians' fortunes varied over the course of the war: the army of the Most Serene Republic conquered several fortresses in Dalmatia, and its fleet even arrived in the Dardanelles, where it defeated a number of Ottoman vessels, but the protracted conflict ultimately ended in 1669 with the loss of Candia (Venice maintained control of only three fortresses on the island). In the late seventeenth century, the Venetians – by then part

11] A. Stouraiti, 'Costruendo un luogo della memoria: Lepanto', *Storia di Venezia-Rivista* 1 (2003), 65-88.

12] G. Cozzi, M. Knapton, G. Scarabello, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, vol. 2: *Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica*, Torino: UTET, 1995, p. 57; G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 196-205; A. Zorzi, *La repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 342-360.

13] G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 239-247, A. Zorzi, *La repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 409-422.

of an anti-Ottoman league, which had been created in 1683 – started another war, which ended in the return of Morea / the Peloponnese and several Aegean territories to Venice under the terms of the peace treaty of Karlowitz. Morea was once more lost to the Ottomans in 1718 as a result of a four-year war that ended with the Peace of Passarowitz / Požarevac.¹⁴ That treaty marked a definitive end to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which thereafter ceased to be the offensive party in military relations with Christendom / Europe.

It can thus be concluded that the history of Venetian-Ottoman relations is composed of a series of wars which inflicted successive losses of important overseas domains on Venice. The perception of the threat of the Empire's expansion may well, then, have had an impact on the understanding and assessment of Ottoman otherness in texts produced by Venetian diplomats. For this reason, in order to minimize the risk of overrepresentation of this sense of the threat of Ottoman expansion in the documents I analyse here, my analysis of the Venetian image of the Ottoman state and its inhabitants will essentially be based on the period 1573–1645, when neither Venice nor the wider Christendom were affected by events evoking widespread concern related to the expansion of the sultans' domains.

The main sources for analysis of the Venetian image of the Ottoman Empire are the ambassadorial *relazioni*.¹⁵ These provide the reader with an exhaustive description of the Empire and its inhabitants, and are at the same time a unique source conveying an image of the Turks that was certainly read – and not usually questioned – by the Venetian political elite. Their usefulness today is confirmed by the fact that they are still referenced in works on the image of the Turks¹⁶ in early modern Venice and Italy. Two such seminal publications in

14] G. Gullino, *Storia...*, op. cit., pp. 253-256, A. Zorzi, *La repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 424-429.

15] A complete list of Venetian envoys to the Ottoman Empire, also containing information on the reports and dispatches left by them, has been drawn up by M.P. Pedani, 'Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani', *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 4, V (2002), 1-54. The list of reports written by the baili between 1450 and 1600 can be also found in A. Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben. 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450–1600*, Frankfurt-New York: Campus, 2003, pp. 168-169.

16] The expression 'Turks' used in these reports and dispatches is hard to translate in one word. Sometimes it defined the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, but more often it denoted Muslims who lived in the Empire ('tanto Turchi quanto Christiani' – cf. ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 5, fol. 149v [disp. 34, 17.12.1638]), and in some cases it referred to those members of the ruling class of the Empire who were of Turkish origin. However, the latter were more usually termed 'native Turks' ('*Turchi nativi*', '*Turchi naturali*').

particular draw on these sources: one by Paolo Preto and the other by Lucette Valensi. In his book on Venetian-Ottoman relations, Preto stressed the positive image of the organization of the Ottoman state, constituted by the legendary discipline, warriorhood, and power of the Janissary corps. He noted that an important role in descriptions of the Empire was played by tyranny and atrocity, which he termed a 'binomial identifying the Ottoman state'.¹⁷ He also noted that the motif of persecution of Christians recurred frequently in diplomatic dispatches and reports.¹⁸ Preto surmises that the Turks were perceived as modern barbarians, deceitful and cruel, with art and culture of a poor standard.¹⁹ For her part, Lucette Valensi studied manifestations of the theme of the might and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the formation of the image of the Oriental despot.²⁰ She paid more attention to the categories of tyranny and despotism present in these documents.

The *relazioni* are also often used to reconstruct the image of the Ottoman Empire in works by other authors; Géraud Poumarède, Marina Formica, and Maria Pia Pedani are some of those who illustrate their reflections with quotations from these sources. This chapter, however, will not focus on the *relazioni* as sources for research into the state of knowledge on the Turks in Europe, ethnographic issues, or – more broadly – the perception of the Empire and the Ottomans in Venetian culture. Here these documents will serve analysis of the

17] P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi...*, op. cit., pp. 157. Preto's observations are based on reports by baili (e.g. Marcantonio Barbaro, Alvise and Simone Contarini, Giacomo Soranzo, Giovanni Moro, and Bernardo Navagero), mainly from the sixteenth and a minority from the seventeenth century, as well as – incidentally – on works by Giovanni Botero, Giovanni Battista Barpo, Traiano Boccalini, and Emilio Mario Manolesso.

18] *Ibidem*, p. 161.

19] *Ibidem*, pp. 233-243.

20] L. Valensi, *Venezia e la Sublime Porta. La nascita del deposta*, Bologna: Mulino 1987. This author's analysis is based predominantly on sixteenth-century reports, and refers only incidentally to writings from the seventeenth century. Both Preto and Valensi based their works on the body of documents published by E. Alberi, G. Berozzi and G. Berchet, and Valensi was also able to use the volume edited by L. Firpo. As such, several interesting reports, among them those written by Aurelio Santa Croce (1573), Giacomo Soranzo (1576 and 1584), Giovanni Correr (1578), Girolamo Cappello (1600), Ottaviano Bon (1609), Giorgio Giustinian (1627), and Angelo Alessandri (1637), as well as one report by Lorenzo Bernardo (1590) published by M.P. Pedani in 1996, were excluded from their analyses (cf. the observation by L. Valensi [*Venezia...*, op. cit., p. 93] that there are no extant reports from the period 1616-1634, an observation that has since proved not to be true). I have tried as far as possible to use documents published by Pedani in this chapter in order to extend and diversify the list of sources.

Venetian diplomatic discourse on the Ottoman Empire, above all in the context of the *antemurale* idea, and only in the period of interest to us here.

The first factor in the perception of the Ottomans as Others was the fact that the Empire was not directly comparable to any Christian / European state. Therefore, the primary categories used to describe it were its size and diversity. Bailo Foscarini began his description of the Empire with the observation that it lay across three parts of the world (continents) and occupied an important part of each of them.²¹ The territorial reach and contiguousness of the imperial lands – a factor of significance given the unfavourable location of the Venetian domains – was mentioned by Bailo Cappello.²²

Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo, held that the power of the Empire was exemplified by the number and size of its various armed forces, and that the Empire outranked the states of Christendom also in respect of its military assets.²³ Giovanni Correr stated that the sultan was the most powerful ruler in the world.²⁴ The size of the Empire was also commented on by Gasparo Erizzo, author of a treatise written in the 1550s or 1560s, describing his journey from Venice to Constantinople. According to Erizzo, the sultan ruled over the richest and most beautiful countries of the world.²⁵

The Empire's size predicated its self-sufficiency. In 1637 Bailo Foscarini drew attention to its internal cohesiveness and bountiful riches, remarking that all trade in the Levant was concentrated within the Ottoman state.²⁶ Another diplomat, however, Bailo Bernardo, cited the very vastness of the Empire, the underdevelopment of certain of its lands, and the fiscal oppression of the subject population, as a cause

21] Report by Bailo Pietro Foscarini (1637), p. 742, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 737-771.

22] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), p. 681, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 669-735.

23] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), p. 320, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 311-394.

24] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), p. 227, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 225-257.

25] *Descrizione del viaggio per terra a Costantinopoli e delle cose principali del Paese*–BNM, It VI 105 (5728), fol. 25r: '*Grandissimo è veramente il stato di questo Signore; concio sia che egli habbia D[omi]nio in tutte tre le parti del mondo: et s'io voler particolarmente nominar tutte le città e luoghi uscissi del mio proposto. Hora mi basta di dire quello che non si devi passare senza lacrime che egli è padrone delle più belle, e più ricche provincie del mondo.*' This text was partly edited by P. Matković, 'Dva talijanska putopisa po balkanskom poluotoku iz XVI veka', *Starine* 10 (1878), 247-256. On Erizzo and the chronology of his travels to Constantinople with one of the baili, cf. G. Gullino, 'Gasparo Erizzo', [in:] *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 43, Roma: Treccani, 1993: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gasparo-erizzo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gasparo-erizzo_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed: 15.09.2019).

26] Report by Bailo Pietro Foscarini (1637), op. cit., p. 742.

of numerous disasters and famines.²⁷ Bailo Soranzo, in turn, noted the sultan's wealth, and observed that his avarice was one reason for the Empire's gradual decline.²⁸

The Venetian *relazioni* reflect the diplomats' interest in the ruler of the Empire. This interest is particularly understandable given that their own experience was that of a republic, a state model that operated according to different categories of political discourse than a monarchy. Obviously, it is not possible to generalize on the features that individual diplomats attributed to successive emperors. Murad III, according to Bailo Moro, was proud and conceited,²⁹ though Bailo Correr emphasized his clemency.³⁰ Angelo Alessandri, secretary of the mission in Constantinople, characterized Murad IV as proud and cruel, although he noted the sultan's broad historical and literary interests.³¹ Bailo Giustinian also stressed his virtues.³² The descriptors 'pride', 'clemency', and 'cruelty' returned in many texts about the Ottoman rulers, interspersed with other – often equally contradictory – features. Many reports portrayed the sultans as peace-loving, i.e. with no intention of fomenting war.³³ Any predilection for wars was attributed to cruelty (or ferocity, '*ferocità*'), to pressure from military commanders, or to other external factors. However, in the light of Bailo Correr's words it seems that these reflections on the rulers' characters were of little practical importance in any case, because most political decisions were taken by the sultan's court or were conditioned by factors that left the sultan little room for independent action.³⁴

In this context it is worth recalling one interesting observation by Bailo Bernardo. He wondered how it was possible that the Empire was ruled by inexperienced men who often lacked good advisors and

27] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 319.

28] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1576), p. 209, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 201-223.

29] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), p. 8, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 1-58. The author of the treatise *Discorso sopra la natura del Turco, suoi Bassà et altri particolari* (BMC, WL 25.14, p. 3) wrote in a similar fashion about Murad III.

30] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 228.

31] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), p. 645, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 635-683. By the same token, Bailo Correr mentioned the historical and literary interests of Murad III (report from 1578, op. cit., p. 229).

32] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), p. 563, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 525-633.

33] Cf. the opinion by Bailo Soranzo on Sultan Murad III (his report [1584], op. cit., p. 270). On the other hand, the same ruler is described as 'inclined to war' by the anonymous author of the treaty *Discorso sopra la natura...*, op. cit., p. 6: 'È Sua Magnificèntia per natura inclinata alla guerra'.

34] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 229.

were closed up for years in the Seraglio, among women. The bailo had no good explanation for this conundrum, though he believed that the Ottoman state always managed to return to its rightful trajectory.³⁵ Thus the Venetian diplomats saw the sultan— despite his central position in the institutional order of the Empire—as a hostage to the system that functioned at his court and at the same time as one cog in the broader workings of the state, which was equipped with effective self-regulatory mechanisms. The figure of the sultan incorporated the pride generally ascribed to the Turks along with positive character traits, specifically a peace-loving nature, which was apparently not expected among members of the political elite of a state that was supposedly focused on warfare.³⁶

Certain Ottoman officials were portrayed in a positive light. Bailo Cappello praised the nature of Honor Aga, a convert from Zara / Zadar who served as head of the Seraglio. At the same time, he warned of his astuteness.³⁷ Bailo Foscarini noted that the mufti – whom the diplomat referred to as the second pillar of the Empire, after the vizier – conversed extensively with him ‘with clemency and finesse’.³⁸ Such examples of familiarity between Venetian envoys and Ottoman officials are noted by Eric R. Dursteler, who sees in them confirmation of his hypothesis on the fluidity of identities in the early modern world.³⁹ However, these examples seem more like standard relations between diplomats and representatives of the receiving state well within the limits of diplomatic courtesy; it is hard to see how Dursteler interpreted them as evidence of friendship between Venetian envoys and Ottoman officials.

35] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 104.

36] L. Valensi (*La nascita...*, op. cit., pp. 52-54) presents another opinion: that all the sultans who ruled up to the end of the 1570s—with the exception of Selim II, who started the war of Cyprus—were generally presented as righteous and wise. The only diplomat—mentioned by Valensi—who presented another sultan (Suleiman) as cruel was Marcantonio Donini. This observation is based on Donini’s report.

37] Report by Bailo Girolamo Cappello (1600), p. 420, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 395-474.

38] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 40r (disp. 6, March 1633): ‘*Conoscendo che tutta la mole di questo grand’Imperio per la Sua direttione e sostenim[en]to resta appoggiata s[opr]a doi colon[n]e, l’uno del Primo Visir per le ordinat[i]o[n]i et essecut[i]o[n]i, e l’altra del Mufti per il consiglio, e per la maturità, senza il cui parere non si stabilisce decreto alcuno di considerazione, ho per questo stimato bene, doppo haver visitato il Primo Visir [...] di condurmi anco al d[ett]o grande, et accreditato Ministro, col quale mi trattenni con grande soavità e dolcezza per conveniente spatio di tempo.*’

39] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., pp. 174-177.

The diplomatic reports create a fascinating image of the Empire's might, which they attributed to its subjects' absolute obedience to the sultan. Their authors praised the unity and discipline of the Ottoman army.⁴⁰ According to the report by Tommaso Contarini (from '*Germania*'), Ottoman commanders had much greater authority and power ('*autorità*') over their soldiers than their Christian counterparts, and the Turkish forces were further bonded by their profession of one religion.⁴¹ The reports suggest that this obedience, discipline, and religious unity were the main factors in the Empire's cohesion and permanence. Nonetheless, the Venetians held ambivalent, if predominantly positive opinions on this obedience. Even if an obedient subject could easily be moulded into a slave, as Bailo Bernardo observed: 'it is this obedience that generates unity, and – conversely – disobedience that results in discord and divisions within the government'.⁴² In fact, obedience seems to be a value universally appreciated by the Venetian patriciate.

A logical consequence of this pattern of obedience and discipline was the autocracy of the sultan. Notwithstanding the abovementioned reservations, the reports usually stressed that authority in the state accrued to him alone.⁴³ A classic text describing the 'despotic and absolute power / state' ('*dominio*') is a passage from Bailo Foscarini's report, which profiled the Empire's inhabitants as slaves whose life, property, and even children's fate were entirely at the mercy of the sultan's whim. While they had some freedom to take decisions concerning their own lives, they followed no law but his will.⁴⁴ A similar definition of Ottoman absolutism was proffered by Giorgio Giustinian, who averred that the absolute character of the imperial administration stemmed from the concentration of power in the sultan's hands; the sultan was the lord of all property and life, and ruled only according to his own will.⁴⁵ The members of the Collegio went even further, describing the sultan's power as 'terrifying', and defined the Turkish

40] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), pp. 224 and 235, [in:] RAV *Alberi I/6*; pp. 193-248.

41] *Ibidem*, p. 223.

42] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), *op. cit.*, p. 112.

43] *Ibidem*, p. 90.

44] Report by Bailo Pietro Foscarini (1637), *op. cit.*, p. 745; report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), *op. cit.*, pp. 350-351.

45] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), *op. cit.*, p. 544.

mode of governance as ‘bloody, fierce, and absolute’.⁴⁶ According to Venetian diplomats and writers, Ottoman autocracy was a direct function of obedience to the sultan. This obedience was not only ‘the first cornerstone on which the system of power is [was] based’ – as in other countries – but was an institutional principle stemming from the few laws that were designed to regulate relations within the Empire.⁴⁷

Thus, the reports seem to show that the Venetian diplomats’ potential for success in Constantinople or Aleppo was always tempered by the difficulties with which their discharge of their missions was fraught, and which resulted from the weaker position of Venice and the efficient organization of the Ottoman state, so different from the Venetian model. Another factor hindering their work was the lack of an established *modus operandi* for dealings with the Ottoman authorities. Bailo Moro notes that the ‘fair and amicable’ style of negotiation that usually produced positive attitudes in partners at other courts was useless in Constantinople, because the Turks were used to the language of power – owing to their ‘evil nature and base mind’.⁴⁸ This quotation shows that the unique position of the bailo within Venetian diplomatic structures stemmed not only from tradition or the contemporary protocol, but was related to the different, more difficult work of diplomats serving at the Sublime Porte than that of their colleagues accredited at courts of rulers within Christendom. In the following passage the same Bailo Moro summarizes – with great literary flourish – the difficulty of the work of a Christian (European) diplomat in the Ottoman Empire: ‘[...]beauty of mind does not count for too much where the people are raw (*‘rozzi’*), nor eloquence where there is a constant need for an interpreter, nor sincerity of mind where there is no semblance of good; noble customs are useless if one constantly has to deal with barbarians’.⁴⁹ Similarly, Lorenzo Bernardo observed that the notions of kindness and clemency (*‘amorevolezza’*) were totally alien to the Turks.⁵⁰ In this context it is interesting to cite the opinion of Bailo Bon, who noted that the Ottomans had little experience in matters of state policy, and negotiating with them was not

46] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.*, r. 22, fol. 177v. (*Al Bailo in Constant[inopo]li*, 8.03.1634): ‘*Si rendono i maneggi à questa corte per la natura terribile, et per li modi sanguiniscenti, impetuosi, et assoluti, con i quali si regge il Rè.*’

47] N. Contarini, ‘Delle istorie...’, op. cit., p. 180.

48] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 6.

49] *Ibidem*, p. 6.

50] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 142.

difficult if one did not attempt to portray Venice as an equal partner for the Ottoman state, or to refer too often to the category of justice, which was understood differently by the Constantinople officials.⁵¹ The reluctance of Ottoman officials to consider Venice as an equal seems obvious, as does the difference in understanding of the very concept of an international treaty between the Christian / European and Ottoman parties. While the 'Christian princes' considered a treaty to be a mutual and equal exchange of declarations or commitments by both parties, in the Ottoman concept of international law the treaty was rather a set of privileges (capitulations) granted by the sultan to the other party.⁵² Further problems concerning international communication were manifested in the perception of the role of the nobility in society. Paolo Preto⁵³ argues that the Venetian diplomats perceived a lack of respect for the nobility in Ottoman society, which they attributed to the lower social origins of the Ottoman officials and their insufficient intellectual preparation for the offices they held.⁵⁴

Another peculiarity of the diplomatic *modus operandi* in Constantinople was related to features which Venetian diplomats attributed to the Turkish character and the functioning of their state. One of these features was avarice (*'avarizia'*), a direct consequence of which was the ubiquity of corruption.⁵⁵ Bailo Giustinian summarized the problem with the simple comment that 'it is [was] impossible to settle any matter with the Turks without [additional] expenditures'.⁵⁶ According to Giacomo Soranzo, no Turkish alliance with Christendom

51] Report by Bailo Ottaviano Bon (1609), p. 513, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 475-523.

52] M.P. Pedani, *La dimora...*, op. cit., pp. 10 and 13. According to Pedani, the first Ottoman treaty concluded on the basis of the principle of equality of the parties was the peace treaty with the Habsburg emperor in Zsitvatorok (1606), cf. *ibidem*, p. 39.

53] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 156 and 163-166. Cf. also L. Valensi, *La nascita...*, op. cit., pp. 89.

54] As a consequence, the baili were convinced that the Turks aimed to exterminate the nobility (as a class) in their subject lands, cf. report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 66.

55] Cf. the comment by Consul Giovanni Francesco Sagredo from his report of 1612, p. 142, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria*, Torino: Paravia, 1866, pp. 138-156: *'naturale avarizia dei Turchi'*. Furthermore, Marcantonio Donini (*Tre dialoghi di Marc'Antonio Donini, già segretario veneto, alle cose de' Turchi*—BMC, WL 31.10, p. 69) noted that judges in the provinces passed sentences according to the wishes of those from whom they received a sufficiently large sum of money: *'Pertiene anco à questi di provvedere di Cadì alle Città, et altri luoghi, sottoposte alla loro giurisdittione, facendo elettione cadauno di essi di persone da loro giudicate migliori dell'altre, mà chi ha modo di donare ottiene da loro, quel governo che vuole.'*

56] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), op. cit., p. 603. According to Paolo Preto (*Venezia...*, op. cit., p. 240), there was a treatise on the art of delivering gifts to Ottoman officials.

could give Venice such assurances of peace with the Ottomans as could presenting the grand vizier or kapudan pasha (the commander-in-chief of the navy) with well-chosen gifts. He also noted that regularly plying the sultan's mother, Nurbanu (Cecilia Venier-Baffo, a Venetian who had been abducted to Constantinople), with gifts was equally efficient, since she had a strong influence on state affairs.⁵⁷ By analogy, an unfavourable outcome in negotiations was sometimes attributed to lack of sufficient funds with which to buy the favours of a competent official.⁵⁸ The reports and dispatches seem to indicate that the Venetian community in Aleppo and clergymen in Jerusalem were harrassed for money by Ottoman officials. In this context Consul Alvise Pesaro ensured his supervisors that he protected the Venetian merchant community 'like the pupil in my [his] eye, from the avarice and tyranny of the Ottoman officials'.⁵⁹

The diplomats perceived a connection between this greed and the pride and arrogance of their Turkish partners. Bailo Bernardo mentioned a 'natural avarice and ambition' in the senior Ottoman officials,⁶⁰ while Ottaviano Bon stressed their overweening pride, which had its source in the fact that they considered themselves rulers of the world (*'superbia di tenersi monarchi del mondo'*). Bailo Moro connected the Turkish arrogance (*'arroganza turchesca'*) with the constant military preparedness of the Ottoman forces.⁶¹ Agostino Nani had a similar explanation for the Turkish arrogance; he observed that the Ottoman political elites were not used to ending a war without a victory, and they were convinced that they could intimidate any foreign partner with the might of their army.⁶² Another diplomat, Marcantonio Donini, made a connection between the greatness of the Ottoman state and the pride of its elites, observing that the expansion of their state was possible due to the military passivity of Christendom.⁶³

57] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), op. cit., p. 305.

58] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 5 [pages not numbered] (disp. 55, 24.03.1646): '*vedendomi privo di quelli mezzi, con quali in questo paese tutto si supera.*'

59] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1 [pages not numbered] (disp. 18, 15.07.1621): '[...] *in Gerusalemme à quei poveri Padri, non solo fanno ben spesso pagar grosse summe de denari, ma anco alcuna volta le danno delle bastonate*'; report by Consul Alvise Pesaro (1628), p. 165, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

60] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 110.

61] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 42.

62] Report by Bailo Agostino Nani (1603), p. 401, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 371-406.

63] *Tre dialoghi...*, op. cit., p. 67: '*So della tanta loro grandezza, et superbia, poiche li Principi christiani sono stati cagione d'esse col lasciarli venire così potenti, et superbi.*'

Other characteristic traits of the Ottoman elites listed by the Venetian envoys included unpredictability and a tendency to break promises and faiths. This unpredictability was reflected in a popular saying quoted by Giovanni Correr: ‘Do not [try to] support yourself on water, do not trust the Ottoman house’ (*‘Sopra l’acqua non ti appoggiar, et nella casa ottomana non ti fidar’*).⁶⁴ The Turks’ unpredictability and their inclination to pull out of agreements was also stressed by Bailo Moro.⁶⁵

The otherness of the Ottomans was expressed above all in questions of religion. An examination of the early modern Christian / European perception of Islam would go beyond the scope of this work; this issue, as an aspect of European-Islamic intercultural relations, has been studied in many publications⁶⁶ and is too vast to be analysed here, even if only from the perspective of the Venetian diplomats’ reports. However, the envoys of the Most Serene Republic serving in the Ottoman Empire naturally observed not only the state, but also its religion, and for this reason some general comments are in order. There was a widespread belief among the baili that Islam was an important factor in the internal cohesion of the Empire and strengthening its subjects’ allegiance to the sultan.⁶⁷ Conversely, the Venetian envoys considered its confessional divisions to be one of the causes of the decline of its ‘ancient spirit’.⁶⁸ As Stefano Andretta observed, a similar perception of the role of religion – i.e. through the lens of its social impact – is also discernible in the *relazioni* from other countries, e.g. in the report from Spain by Ambassador Soranzo (1602).⁶⁹ The diplomats’ knowledge of Islam was not very extensive. As Giorgio Fedalto interestingly observed, the Islam of the *relazioni* was in fact not a coherent religious system, but rather a patchwork of various doctrinal and liturgical elements and local traditions⁷⁰ – thus, more

64] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 257.

65] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 5.

66] Cf Chapter II, note 71.

67] *Descrittione del viaggio...*, op. cit., fol. 52v: ‘*Non potrebbe un Principe Regger il Stato, se ne popoli non vi fusse alcuna religione, et quanto più sono osservatori delle ceremonie tanto sono più obbedienti al Principe, et ostinati nella difesa della sua fede.*’; N. Contarini, ‘Delle istorie...’, op. cit., p. 172, on religion: ‘*cardine principale delli governi*’; report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., pp. 349 and 351.

68] *Ibidem*, pp. 350-351.

69] S. Andretta, *La repubblica inquieta. Roma nel Seicento tra Venezia e Europa*, Roma: Carocci, 2000, p. 77.

70] G. Fedalto, ‘Diplomatici veneziani a Istanbul nel Cinquecento. Osservazioni su religione e morale’, p. 107, [in:] B. Bertoli (a cura di), *Chiesa, società e stato a Venezia. Miscellanea*

a doctrine that could hardly be considered a faith *pleno titulo*. This is probably most clearly visible in Bailo Bernardo's report: this diplomat believed that the sultan was wont not to honour his commitments because he did not have a true faith.⁷¹ Belying such comments on Islam itself, however, many reports gave an approbatory description of the religiosity and devotion of the Ottomans, including the sultan. Bailo Bernardo observed that the Turks could put the Christians to shame in terms of piety.⁷² A similar opinion was expressed by Angelo Alessandri.⁷³ The protagonist of Marcantonio Donini's dialogue, the alter ego of the diplomat himself, observed that the Turks were generous almsgivers.⁷⁴ Bailo Soranzo underlined the piety of Murad III.⁷⁵ On the other hand, some reports presented Turks as major enemies of Christians.⁷⁶ These observations confirm Paolo Preto's conclusion that the baili were not interested in Islam as a religion, and treated it with contempt, while stressing its importance for the internal cohesion of the Empire.⁷⁷

In the dialogue mentioned above, Marcantonio Donini makes repeated mention of the issue of religious difference between Christians and Turks. Asked to define these differences, Donini explained that the Turks were 'Arians or even Manicheans with the addition of their own rites'. This statement provides clear confirmation of Fedalto's opinion on the Venetian diplomats' knowledge of Islam. According to Donini, the Turks supposedly venerated some Christian saints, including St George, St John the Baptist, and St Mark.⁷⁸ They also

di studi in onore di Silvio Tramontin nel suo 75 anno di età, Venezia: Studium cattolico Veneziano, 1994, pp. 101-120.

- 71] Moreover, Bernardo drew a connection between this lack of faith and the sultan's tyranny: *'il conoscer l'animo di un uomo è cosa certo difficile e più difficile d'un prencipe infedele; poichè come potrà sperare a promettere che debba osserrar fede chi non ne ha? Come potrò sperare buona disposizione di animo e corrispondenza in un tiranno, che non abbia altra ragione che la propria volontà?'* (Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo from 1592, op. cit., p. 121). The same author further observes emphatically (p. 138): *'I Turchi non hanno nè fede, nè parola, ma il proprio loro stato è la tirannia, la violenza e la usurpazione.'*
- 72] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 349.
- 73] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 674.
- 74] Cf. *Tre dialoghi...*, op. cit., p. 143 (*Fanno delle elemosine così alli poveri Turchi, come anco alli poveri christiani*). Similar observations are made by Aurelio Santa Croce in his report from 1573 (p. 181, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 179-192). P. Preto (*Venezia...*, op. cit., p. 153) notes the contradictory character of diplomats' comments on the Turks' proclivity for giving alms on the one hand, and their alleged avarice on the other.
- 75] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), op. cit., p. 270.
- 76] Report by Bailo Agostino Nani (1603), op. cit., p. 401.
- 77] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 151-153.
- 78] *Tre dialoghi...*, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

respected friars and were happy to host them.⁷⁹ If the dialogue is to be believed, the Turks were curious of Christian rites and would go to Catholic churches to observe the liturgy, especially during Holy Week. However, Donini's observations referred only to ethnic / native Turks and not to renegades, which will be discussed more broadly in Chapter 5.

The image of the Empire's power conveyed in the reports was at once undermined by their creation of a vision of its decadence, which purportedly heralded its imminent decline. One of the main theses of Valensi's book is the existence of a diachronic difference in descriptions of the Empire. She argues that the first reports, written in the 1570s, focus on the good organization of the Empire, the obedience of its subjects, and its internal harmony, despite their authors' criticism of some practices such as corruption and dynastic murders.⁸⁰ From the early 1580s the reports began to mention more imperfections in the functioning of the Ottoman state.⁸¹ Agostino Nani observed a deterioration in the skills of the Janissary corps;⁸² similar comments were made by the baili Cappello, Giustinian, and Bernardo.⁸³ The latter diplomat noted a sharp decline in civil obedience and a loosening of the internal cohesion of the Empire, all within the years of his own bailate.⁸⁴ A longer description of the Empire's decline can be found in the report by Giorgio Giustinian.⁸⁵ A vivid picture of this decadence was painted by Bailo Cappello.⁸⁶ His general view was that a lack of internal unity leads a ruler to tyranny, turns the respect of his subjects to disdain, and replaces the rule of law with violence.

The reasons for the Empire's decline were attributed to a range of factors. Bailo Soranzo stressed the lack of experience of Sultan Murad III and his court, recalling the opinion of 'wise old Turks' that the Empire's collapse was not only due to its (self-regulatory) power.⁸⁷ Lorenzo Bernardo concluded that the Empire's decline was due to a weakening of its rules and values, and to the deteriorating organization of the

79] *Ibidem*, p. 136.

80] L. Valensi, *La nascita...*, op. cit., pp. 39.

81] *Ibidem*, pp. 87-91.

82] Report by Bailo Agostino Nani (1603), op. cit., p. 395.

83] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), op. cit., p. 528; report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 73; report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), op. cit., p. 683.

84] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., pp. 109-110.

85] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), op. cit., pp. 556-562.

86] Report by Bailo Girolamo Cappello (1600), op. cit., p. 422.

87] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), op. cit., p. 289.

state. As a result, its might alone was not sufficient for it to maintain its power.⁸⁸ He named three factors that he believed could precipitate the fall of the Ottoman state: existing internal divisions, detrimental personal traits in individual sultans, and the long-term cooperation of certain 'Christian princes' with the Persian king, who planned to reconquer several lands previously lost to the Ottomans.⁸⁹ Angelo Alessandri, in turn, considered the inappropriate methods used to select high-ranking officials and the deterioration of the military skills of various units of the armed forces to be the principal reasons for the Empire's decline.⁹⁰

The alleged erosion of Ottoman military structures was, naturally, a subject of great interest to the representatives of the Republic of St Mark. Bailo Moro believed that the crisis began with a deterioration in standards in the army, whose morale was weakened as a result of its increasing wealth.⁹¹ Many reports focused on the naval fleet. In 1636 Bailo Foscarini noted that construction of military vessels was at an advanced stage.⁹² Five years later, the same diplomat stressed that the sultan was constantly conflict-ready.⁹³ Bailo Cappello paid similar attention to the progress of work in the Ottoman dockyards.⁹⁴ Detailed information on the strength of the Ottoman fleet was also to be found in an anonymous treatise on the Turkish character.⁹⁵ There were, however, more critical voices regarding the navy's might. Bailo Bernardo observed that the galleys were kept in conditions that would

88] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 117.

89] Ibidem. Fedalto takes these conclusions further, observing that the diplomats usually cited the following indicators of the Empire's progressive decline: the decomposition of the social and political system due to wars with Persia and the weakening of the ruling class; and tyranny, the poor education and enslavement of the population, and the decline in morals (G. Fedalto, *Diplomatici veneziani...*, op. cit., pp. 101-102).

90] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., pp. 641-644.

91] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 44.

92] ASVe, *Disp. Cost. f.* 117, fol. 17r (disp. 152, 16.03.1636): '*All'Arsenale si lavora con la scritta [above-PC.] diligenza, senza alcuna intermissione, et con continua assistenza del Cap[uda]n Bassà, il quale quasi sempre per dar valore alle maestranze, dorme in esso, al qual affatto il Rè in propria persona si ha condotto ivi per doi volte, havendo voluto veder la [da?-PC.] prima, tutte le cose minutam[en]te.*'

93] Report by Bailo Pietro Foscarini (1637), op. cit., p. 753.

94] ASVe, *Disp. Cost. f.* 114, fol. 54v (disp. 7, 23.03.1633): '*Nell'Arsenale lavorano con qualche dilig[en]za ma però non eccederan[n]o le galee il n[ume]ro già scritto.*'

95] *Discorso sopra la natura...*, op. cit., p. 22: '*Delle cose da mare si trova havere Sua Maestà in questo Arsenale galere cento, e cinquanta navigabili [...] in Mar Maggiore, et altri luochi ne sono al presente quaranta in cinquanta galere.*'

rapidly cause them to fall into disrepair.⁹⁶ Similarly, Bailo Cappello was critical of the battle readiness of the Ottoman fleet, though at the same time he noted that the Turks had sufficient manpower and timber resources to build a fleet at any time.⁹⁷

Venetian diplomats sometimes quoted popular prophecies regarding the ultimate decline of the Ottoman Empire, sharing a vision typical for treatises and anti-Turkish writings. Consul Malipiero claimed to know of a prediction that before very long the Ottoman state would cease to exist.⁹⁸ Another prophecy – that the Empire would fall due to an invasion by a fair-bearded nation, usually identified with the Muscovites – is quoted by Donini;⁹⁹ Bailo Alvise Contarini associated the same augury with the subjects of the Polish king.¹⁰⁰ Angelo Alessandri recalled what was purported to be the Arab prediction that Ottoman rule over Constantinople would come to an end before very long, and the city would be occupied by the Cossacks.¹⁰¹ A similar prophecy is also mentioned by Consul Morosini from Aleppo.¹⁰² Preto and Poumarède link the existence of such popular predictions regarding the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the specificity of the culture of the city republic, which was always trying to present itself not only as a perfect regime but also as victorious and triumphant (and the fall of the Ottoman Empire would be a triumph par excellence for the Most Serene Republic).¹⁰³ This thesis is not particularly convincing, especially given that prophecies on the collapse of the Ottoman state were also widespread elsewhere in Europe, and that far fewer anti-Turkish writings were printed in Venice – which was, after all, the sixteenth-century printing capital – than in the states of the German Reich.¹⁰⁴

96] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 80.

97] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), op. cit., p. 686.

98] Report by Consul Alessandro Malipiero (1596), p. 89, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 79-100.

99] *Tre dialoghi...*, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

100] Report by Bailo Alvise Contarini (1641), pp. 844-845, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 773-888.

101] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 681.

102] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1 (disp. 18, 15.08.1621).

103] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, op. cit., pp. 76-94 (above all p. 94); P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 67-91.

104] A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., p. 117, table 1. According to this table, roughly one in fifteen of the anti-Turkish publications (7.94%) listed by C. Göllner (*Turcica. Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI Jabrhunderts*, 3 vols., Bucureşti: Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1961-1978) was printed in Venice. The states of the Holy Roman Empire together produced more than 45% of these printed texts.

With regard to the baili, the prophecies seem to confirm their interest in learning different opinions of the Empire's potential future. It is hard to know whether they really believed the predictions. Their primary reason for mentioning them was probably that as members of the diplomatic corps it was their duty to inform their government of all matters of importance, and they knew that further proliferation of such prophecies could also affect the Empire's reputation among other rulers, and thus further Venice's foreign policy aims. The reports therefore identify tyranny, internal unrest, and the dissatisfaction of the peoples of the Empire as among the causes of its crisis. According to Valensi, the category of tyranny appeared as early as in the report by Bailo Navagero from 1553, but from the *relazione* by Giovanni Cappello (1634) it became a dominant motif. She finds this also to be a common feature of the reports produced after that date, which she classifies into a third group, after the reports that describe the order of the empire and those charting its erosion, respectively.¹⁰⁵ This is partly justified by the documents analysed, although in fact tyranny is mentioned throughout almost the whole period of interest to us here. Bailo Moro observed that the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were badly treated, and were subject to severe, mercilessly executed penalties.¹⁰⁶ One consul in Aleppo recalled a conversation between the pasha of the city and his subordinates: the dignitary admitted that there was no justice in the Ottoman Empire, and that the goal of every official was to amass as much money as possible, or at least to reclaim what had been taken from him by force.¹⁰⁷ According to Angelo Alessandri, tyranny—i.e. the situation where the ruler was not bound by any laws—meant that the state apparatus prioritized the monarch's satisfaction, regardless of the impact this had on the Empire and its population.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, in the reports of the consuls from Aleppo, tyranny was associated with different consequences: not so much with arbitrary legislation and the execution of absolute obedience from the subject population as with oppression, corruption, and poor administration of the provinces. The consuls working in Syria expressed considerable concern regarding the 'ruin' (*rovina*) of the local provinces. Consul Morosini attributed the devastation of Syria to the poor governance

105] L. Valensi, *La nascita...*, op. cit., pp. 91-95.

106] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 44.

107] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1 (disp. 18, 15.08.1621).

108] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 644.

of Daut Pasha;¹⁰⁹ Consul Emo to actions by Turkish officials such as Ibrahim Pasha, who—acting on the sultan’s orders—stamped out the tyranny of the governors and tax collector corps, but thereafter himself began to exert fiscal oppression on the population.¹¹⁰

Sometimes, however, the consuls cited unrest and rebellions as reasons for the devastation in the provinces.¹¹¹ The reports confirm that their authors perceived the Empire to be in the throes of a transformation process that was revealing the increasing backwardness of its structures. However, the diplomats seem to go no further than describing the Empire’s social and economic difficulties rather than interpreting them in any particular categories (and if so, they tended to ignore the category of confusion that will be mentioned below). It is also possible that they referred the territories of the Empire as they were to a vision of the development of those territories under Byzantine rule, as Paolo Preto has suggested.¹¹²

Something that made a greater impression on the Venetian diplomats than tyranny was cruelty¹¹³ – not towards the sultan’s subjects, but towards members of the court, representatives of Christendom, local Christians, or subjects of other rulers. By cruelty they usually referred to mistreatment of Christians (including European missionaries) by the Ottoman authorities. Sometimes the cruelty of the Turks was portrayed as a function of the constant expansion of the sultans’ state. One prime example of this, frequently mentioned by authors of reports dating from this period, was the conquest of Famagusta in 1571 and the fate of Marcantonio Bragadin, a Venetian commander who was skinned alive. That experience – which became linked to the loss of Cyprus in the Venetian collective imagination – was interpreted by these authors as a watershed moment in the last war with the Ottomans.

109] Report by Consul Girolamo Morosini (1614) p. 157, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 157-160.

110] Report by Consul Giorgio Emo (1599), op. cit., pp. 101 and 102.

111] Report by Consul Giovanni Francesco Sagredo (1612), op. cit., p. 141.

112] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., p. 238 n.15.

113] Lorenzo Bernardo introduced an interesting differentiation between the concepts of cruelty and tyranny. He used the word ‘tyranny’ to refer to oppression of subjugated peoples, and ‘cruelty’ to refer to events such as murders within the sultan’s family. Cf. report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., pp. 105-106: *‘Li mezzi con li quali sono asceti i Turchi a tanta grandezza senza dubbio sono stati la tirannia e la crudeltà. Tirannia con la oppressione de’ popoli, e distruzione di tutta la nobiltà: crudeltà nel proprio loro sangue reale, strangolando e trucidando il fratello più potente li altri fratelli e nepoti innocenti, solo per dominare senza sospetto di ribellione.’*

Bragadin's execution was recounted again and again in detail, from the deception employed to take the commander captive, through his humiliation by Turkish officials, to his denudation and skinning in one of the town's squares.¹¹⁴

The erosion of the Ottoman state was sometimes described as a function of a category of discord and confusion that was often linked to reflections on ethnic relations in the Empire. Bailo Cappello perceived the state to be in a difficult situation, with 'peoples (...) in many places appear[ing] to be in rebel movements', merely waiting for an opportunity to liberate themselves from Turkish rule.¹¹⁵ Bailo Correr was of the opinion that there was not a single province in the Empire that was satisfied with Ottoman governance. This discontent resulted in pockets of social unrest that flared up all over the Empire; the baili expected this unrest to bring it down, just as a defect in one element of a clock's mechanism can destroy its workings completely.¹¹⁶ Consul Sagredo observed that as a result of a previous civil war the Ottoman state had lost significant numbers of citizens.¹¹⁷ Another source of the fragility of the Empire was the many Christians, who were not unified by religion with the Turks and other Muslims.¹¹⁸

An important category that recurs throughout the reports and relates to contacts between different ethnic groups (nations) was aversion ('odio', lit. 'hatred').¹¹⁹ This was most often used to stress the Arabs'

114] Cf. e.g. the collection of texts on the siege and fall of Famagosta: *Relatione e particolare ragguaglio della presa di Nicosia* [but it actually refers to Famagosta-PC.] in *Cipro l'anno 1570*-BMC, WL 23.14, and also 'Relazione della presa di Famagosta nel 1571 fatta da Turchi', fol. 4v, [in:] *Miscellanea*-BNM, It XI 91 (6809), fols. 2r-6v: 'Al Cl[arissi]mo Bragadino, dopo l'haverli fatto sporgere il collo, come in terra raggionava seco [Lala Mustafa, the Ottoman commander-PC.], dicendoli, dove è il tuo Cristo che non ti aiuta'; 'Alle 17 [...] fu menato il clar[issi]mo Bragadino, co[n] la p[rese]ntia di Mustafa alle baterie della città, et lo fece portar due cavagne di terra, una in sù, condottulo à Marina, et postolo à seder sopra una bariga [?] d'appoggio, fu tirato sopra una Antenna, e mostrato à tutti i soldati che si trovavano schiavi in porto, et poi fattolo condur verso piazza, fu messo alla Berlina, è spogliatolo, fu crudelissimamente scorticato vivo, co[n] tanta sua co[n]stantia, e fede, che mai si perse.'

115] Report by Bailo Girolamo Cappello (1600), op. cit., p. 432.

116] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 237.

117] Report by Consul Giovanni Francesco Sagredo (1611), op. cit., p. 131.

118] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), op. cit., p. 354.

119] The precise meaning of the notion 'odio' is difficult to pinpoint. There are some quotations that suggest a difference between 'aversion' and 'hatred', e.g. in the report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, [1596], op. cit., p. 201): 'Vi è una mala volontà anzi odio grande'. One sometimes also has the impression that 'odio' was a response to a natural

animosity towards the Turks, who had subjugated them.¹²⁰ These observations were accompanied by hope for a future Arab alliance (which dragoman Salvago referred to literally as ‘antemurale’) against the Ottomans. Nonetheless, the diplomats emphasized that the chances of this vision becoming reality were less than moderate, given the problems faced by similar joint initiatives in Christendom.¹²¹ The reports tend to use ‘*odio*’ to describe a response to a serious threat to one part of a population by the ethnic or religious group ruling in a given state. It could also be related to a confessional issue. A longer passage on ‘*odio*’ appears in the report by Bailo Bernardo, who links this hostility to the sultan, or the officials in provinces with a mandate from the Ottoman authorities for a rapacious fiscal policy.¹²²

In some cases ‘*odio*’ was clearly employed to indicate intense hostility. This is the sense conveyed by Bailo Bon in his use of ‘*odio grande*’ to describe the Turks’ attitude towards Christians, which he observed to be a consequence of the increase in the number of Muslim slaves taken to Christendom.¹²³ ‘*Odio*’ was also connected to another notion used in the same report: a natural enemy (*nemico naturale*). According to Fedele, the Spanish king was a natural enemy of the Turks.¹²⁴ Bailo Moro used the term ‘*nemico per natura*’ to refer to the Persians and other peoples of the borderlands, and Ottaviano Bon called the Turks the enemies of Christians, both ‘by nature’ and ‘by choice’—the Turks’ choice (*per propria elezione*).¹²⁵ There was also the concept of ‘constant enemy’ (*perpetuo nemico*), which also referred to relations between nations.¹²⁶

situation or objective impediment which makes sympathy for a given person or social or ethnic group impossible, unlike hatred, which was an emotional and subjective response.

120] Cf. F. Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World: the Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 55; cf. report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo of 1590, op. cit., pp. 316-317.

121] A. Sacerdoti (a cura di), *Africa ovvero Barbaria. Relazione al doge di Venezia sulle reggenze di Algeri e di Tunisi del dragomanno Giovanni Battista Salvago (1625)*, Padova: CEDAM, 1937, p. 67.

122] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., pp. 112-113.

123] Report by Bailo Ottaviano Bon (1609), op. cit., p. 497.

124] F. Fedeli, *Storia della guerra contra il Turco (1570-1574)*, fol. 13r-BNM It VII 106 (8033): ‘*Re di Spagna natural nemico de Turchi.*’

125] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), op. cit., p. 42; report by Bailo Ottaviano Bon (1609), op. cit., p. 478.

126] *Discorso sopra la natura...*, op. cit., p. 31 (*perpetuo nemico*); F. Fedeli, *Storia...*, op. cit., fol. 179v (*perpetui nemici*).

Thus we may conclude that the reports convey certain stereotypical descriptions of the Ottoman world which recur again and again: the absolute obedience of the subjects, the sultan's autocracy, the notion that all the inhabitants of the empire were slaves,¹²⁷ the existence of certain institutional cornerstones on which the state was founded (even if these cornerstones were variously defined),¹²⁸ widespread corruption, tyranny, and oppression, and finally the motif of the erosion of the system and predictions of the Empire's collapse. At the same time, several of the motifs that recurred in multiple reports were at least partly contradictory. Beside the descriptions of the Empire as oppressive – which were balanced by the motif of its disintegration – another good example of such contradictoriness was the characterizations of the state in these reports: on the one hand as cohesive, on the other as disturbed by internal tensions in which further groups of subjects, above all ethnic minorities, were allegedly preparing to rebel against the sultan.¹²⁹ Similarly, the absolute (tyrannical) power of the sultan was sometimes presented not so much as an emanation of the power of one man, but as an effect of the influence of his milieu: other officials or his family.¹³⁰ All these elements were present in many of the reports, in proportions that reflected their own experiences, personal interests, and observations from their time in the Empire.

However, in order properly to conceptualize the Ottoman otherness, all these elements should be compared with the images of states of Christendom to be gleaned from readings of analogous reports by Venetian envoys to those states. Interestingly, in many of them we will find several motifs similar to those that surfaced in descriptions of the Empire. For instance, Portugal under the rule of King Sebastian, visited by Ambassador Antonio Tiepolo, was a vast country which had territories in all the known continents, though despite its size and wealth it could not be considered equal to the Ottoman state because Portuguese authority did not extend to the interiors of the lands their explorers discovered; it was limited to fortresses built on their shores.¹³¹ Tiepolo, like his fellow diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, observed

127] Report by Bailo Ottaviano Bon (1609), op. cit., p. 484.

128] Ibidem, p. 478: '*governo, militia, danari*'.

129] Ibidem, pp. 490 and 504.

130] Ibidem, pp. 508-509.

131] Report by Ambassador Antonio Tiepolo (Portugal, 1572), pp. 202-203, [in:] *RAV Alberi 1/5*, pp. 195-228.

some weaknesses, such as corruption among pepper traders.¹³² In Spain there were internal conflicts among the king's advisory bodies, as Ambassador Lorenzo Priuli reported in 1576. There were also social dissonances (*'discordie civili'*) in the state, stemming from differences between countries within the monarchy, as well as from the disintegrating impacts of new Christians.¹³³ The poor organization of the Spanish state was noted by another ambassador, Pietro Contarini, who visited Spain some decades after Priuli.¹³⁴ Ottaviano Bon – who before his bailate was ambassador in Spain – observed that the officials of the kingdom paid too much attention to their own interests. He also complained of the diplomatic *modus operandi* of the Spanish officials, who did not respect promises and claimed superiority over their foreign counterparts.¹³⁵

More than anywhere else, however, Venetian diplomats perceived a lack of internal cohesion in the Christian Habsburg Empire. They attributed it to the expansion of this state, which imposed Habsburg authority on an ethnically and linguistically diverse population. As a result, the Hungarians, for instance, were – according to Ambassador Correr – enemies (*'nemici'*) of the Germans, 'contrary to them in everything'. The emperor was not respected by his subjects. Internal confessional divisions were bound to cause the dissolution of the empire, he warned, if the emperor did not produce an heir and successor.¹³⁶ He claimed that the residents of Austria also evinced hostility towards certain other nations, such as the Spanish and the Poles.¹³⁷ A yet more critical opinion on the state of the Habsburg empire and its position on the international stage was presented by Tommaso Contarini in 1596. According to him, the empire was constantly under threat due to its lack of fortresses and the presence of powerful neighbours – the Turks and the Poles – who were hostile towards the emperor because of different religion (*'nemici per la religione'*) or due to rivalry with him (*'nemici per l'emulazione'*).

132] Ibidem, p. 204.

133] Report by Ambassador Lorenzo Priuli (*Germania*, 1576), pp. 241 and 255, [in:] RAV Alberi I/5, pp. 229-272.

134] Report by Ambassador Pietro Contarini (*Germania*, 1621), p. 574, [in:] RAV Berozzi-Berchet I/1, pp. 557-592.

135] Report by Ambassador Ottaviano Bon (Spain, 1602), pp. 230 and 264, [in:] RAV Berozzi-Berchet I/1, pp. 215-276.

136] Report by Ambassador Giovanni Correr (*Germania*, 1574), op. cit., pp. 164, 166, 170, and 172.

137] Ibidem, p. 173.

The state was menaced by internal unrest among peoples who had been forced to be obedient and who professed different confessions. There was a lack of money for soldiers' pay; and the emperor did not cultivate good relations with many of the German princes.¹³⁸

Thus it is clear that many of the features that seemed typical for the descriptions of the Ottoman Empire in the *relazioni* are also to be found in reports on other states. If we discount religious dissimilarity, tyranny and slavery constituted the only differences identified by the quoted diplomats between the models of organization of state and public life in the states of Christendom and the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, these two features were perceived to be constitutive principles of the Ottoman political system. Excessive obedience and discipline, unknown to the Christian world, were closely associated with the Empire. Therefore, *antemurale* incorporated a perception of otherness as a threat, stemming from a conviction that if the Empire did make advances into Christendom (and Venice, above all), in the lands it conquered everyone would become slaves powerless to decide on their own fate or to contribute to the legislative process, so petrifying the lawlessness and oppression of the authorities.

Although the *relazioni* do not contain descriptions of the customs of the 'Turks', i.e. the Muslim inhabitants of the Empire, it is quite possible that the diplomats returning from Constantinople did contribute to the dissemination of a certain vision of the Turk, considering themselves as they did experts not only on foreign policy, but also on cultural communication. This is clearly visible in the treatise written by Donini, who describes Ottoman customs (related to matters such as marriages, funerals, fasts, and holidays) and provides his readers with answers to numerous questions, such as whether the Turks go to bed at a reasonable hour. The diplomats' own knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and its image was naturally itself influenced by works on the subject that were available in Venice – above all printed matter, but also manuscripts. It is hard to compose a list of works that may have been read by the Venetian patriciate in the period of interest to us here. It should probably include the very popular works by Francesco Sansovino (*Historia universale dell'origine ed imperio dei Turchi* of 1560, *Annali Turcheschi* from 1571, reprinted several times in the seventeenth century),¹³⁹ and possibly also *L'Ottomano* by

138] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contrarini (*Germania*, 1596), op. cit., p. 197.

139] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 296-298; A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., pp. 138-141.

Lazzaro Soranzo. It is quite probable that some older works on the Ottoman state (by authors including Menavino, Spandugino, Giovio, and Georgijević) were still read.¹⁴⁰ In fact, however, it is not clear how reading these works could really have influenced knowledge about the Turks and the image of their state among official representatives of the Venetian Republic in Constantinople. They probably supplied a basic cultural matrix. For those who shaped Venetian foreign policy, however, the reports written by the baili, which brought together and ordered according to a given political key information that on a general level was already known, and enriched it with their own experience and up-to-date news from Constantinople, were more important. The attractiveness of these diplomatic texts may be confirmed by the many copies of them that were widespread outside the official circulation of documents. In this context it is worth mentioning an intervention by the Council of Ten, who prohibited the publication of *L'Ottomano* by Lazzaro Soranzo for fear of the potential for misuse of the politically sensitive information it contained. The case is not fully clear: Soranzo allegedly defended himself, explaining that the content of the treatise did not go beyond information that was already in circulation. As Paolo Preto suggests, the incident may have stemmed from the author's relations with Pope Clement VIII, which might not have been well received by the authorities of the Republic in the period preceding the apogee of the Venetian-Roman conflict.¹⁴¹

140] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 326-333. A thorough analysis of twelve treatises written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—an analysis composed, above all, of a detailed list of the issues mentioned by their authors—was made by A. Höfert, *Den Feind...*, op. cit., pp. 323-428. Five of these treaties were disseminated in Venice in the sixteenth century: Bartholomaeus Georgejević, *De Turcarum ritu et caeremoniis* (printed six times from 1560); Luigi Bassano, *Costrumi et i modi particolari della vita de' Turchi* (printed six times from 1561); Giovanantonio Menavino, *I cinque libri della legge, religione, et vita de' Turchi* (printed seven times over the second half of the sixteenth century); Benedetto Ramberti, *Libri tre delle cose de' Turchi* (printed five times in the sixteenth century, for the last time in 1560) and Teodoro Spandugino, *Origine e costumi de' Turchi* (printed six times). Two of the treatises were printed in Venice only once: Bartholomaeus Georgejević, *De afflictione tam captivorum quam etiam sub Turcae tributo viventium christianorum*, and Nicolas de Nicolay, *Dans l'empire de Soliman de Magnifique* (we may assume that they did not have a significant impact on Venetian perceptions of the Ottomans). This list includes reprints of given works in subsequent editions of Sansovino's *Historia universale...* Höfert did not extend her analysis past 1600, so her book cannot help to clarify which of these treaties were still being read in the first half of the seventeenth century.

141] P. Preto, *Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 300-301.

Thanks to the detailed image presented by the reports and treatises, we can conclude that beside keeping the peace with Venice's powerful neighbour, the primary role of a Venetian diplomat posted in Constantinople or Aleppo was to understand the internal tensions at play within the Empire, identify the organizational shortcomings of the state apparatus, and interpret the intentions of the conquered peoples who evinced '*odio*' toward the Great Lord. All these insights would, it was hoped, contribute to devising a way of breaking up the Empire. In such a concept, those potential allies who were outside the internally disunited Christendom also had a role to play, and this will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTENDOM: STATES AND NATIONS. IMAGES OF PERSIA AND EASTERN CHRISTIANS CREATED IN VENETIAN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS

Even a cursory reading of Venetian diplomatic documents relating to the Ottoman Empire shows that considerable space was occupied therein by references to members of the states and nations / ethnicities¹ who inhabited or maintained contacts with the Empire. The purpose of these references was not only to keep the Venetian political elites informed on certain aspects of the internal and external functioning of the Empire, but also to mould their opinion on ways in which those relations might be leveraged to weaken the Ottoman power. For clear confessional reasons, Venice had a keen interest in this context in Eastern Christians, of whom there were many residing both in territories subject to the Empire and in lands subordinate to the Republic. Potential allies were also sought within the world of Islam, probably out of a conviction that

1] The world 'nation' is used here as an equivalent of the word '*natione*' mentioned in the sources, regardless of any differences between the notions 'nation', 'nationality', and 'ethnicity' currently recognized by the social sciences.

any confessional differences among Muslims might be conducive to formation of alliances advantageous to Venice.

The interest of Venice in these more distant actors was also motivated by political factors deeply rooted in the idea of Christendom. As Fabio Martelli² has observed, since the Middle Ages the political elites of Christendom had assumed that aside from the Christian and Muslim worlds there was yet another political entity (or even a cultural circle), governed by a mysterious Christian ruler, which had the potential to become an ally in resisting the expansion of Islam. From the fifteenth century the presumed location of that putative entity gradually shifted further westwards, with Persia and the Caucasus thus increasingly coming into the frame.³ Coincidentally, the Caucasian nations also began to take a political interest in the Christian West, and expressed their hope of receiving help in their struggles with their expansive Muslim neighbours. The consequent synergy that emerged between these two ideas—the Latin Christian interest in an (anti-Ottoman) ally on the one hand, and the Caucasian messianism on the other⁴—facilitated a mutual understanding between envoys from the Caucasian countries and the political elites of Latin Christian states. A similar phenomenon, though requiring a partial redefinition of the political mission of Christendom, emerged in the case of the Venetian interest in Persia. Certainly, the lack of practical outcomes of these political interests, which was due to the sporadic nature of the contacts between Venice and all these partners, was not tantamount to the failure of the concept of a broad anti-Ottoman alliance, a concept which was an important element of the bulwark of Christendom idea in the period of interest here.

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- 2] F. Martelli, 'Un esempio di identità utopica: le riflessioni italiane sulla realtà del Caucaso tra XV e XVIII secolo', pp. 42-43, [in:] P. Prodi and V. Marchetti (a cura di), *Problemi e identità tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna. Seminari e bibliografia*, Bologna: CLUEB, 2001, pp. 41-58.
- 3] On the similarity between Uzun Hasan, identified in Europe as a Persian monarch, and the medieval idea of Prester John, cf. M. Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 231.
- 4] For the purposes of this book, the notion of 'Caucasian messianism' is an extension of the term 'Armenian messianism' to all the Christian states of the Caucasus. This term was coined by A. Ferrari and defined as a conviction shared by Armenians that their territories would be liberated from non-Christian governance by the efforts of rulers from Christendom. Cf. A. Ferrari, 'La salvezza viene da Occidente. Il messianismo apocalittico nella cultura armena', [in:] idem, *L'Ararat e la grù. Studi sulla storia e la cultura degli Armeni*, Milano: Mimesis, 2008, pp. 47-64; idem, *In cerca di un regno. Profezia, nobiltà e monarchia in Armenia tra Settecento e Ottocento*, Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2011, pp. 61-70 and (in relation to a specific messianic project in the seventeenth century) pp. 91-114.

Two notes should be made before proceeding with further observations. Firstly, due to the lack of permanent Venetian representations in either Persia or the Eastern Christian states, for the Venetian central authorities the diplomatic documents from Constantinople and Aleppo filled an important information gap with regard to these actors. However, the documents did not in fact contain direct observations, as the diplomats acquired their information from other sources (such as merchants, missionaries, or local informers). Consequently, these sources often provided a different type of description than those obtained from comparable documents referencing the Ottoman reality. Secondly, Venetian policy on Persia and the Eastern Christians was defined by the long-term goal of weakening the power of the Empire; therefore, it was less about closer cooperation in a particular political or military undertaking. That policy also varied depending on the partner it concerned: the powerful but distant Safavid Empire, the weak and internally conflicted Caucasian states, or individual groups within the population of the Ottoman Empire, such as Greeks or Armenians, who were not distinct political entities.

In this chapter I will outline the expectations and ideas of the Venetian diplomats concerning four actors: one Muslim state (Persia), the most powerful adversary of the Ottoman Empire in the period of interest here; and three Christian nations: the Greeks, who were the most numerous inhabitants of those regions of the Empire that constituted the forum of Venetian-Ottoman cooperation or conflict, and two Caucasian nations, the Armenians and the Georgians. Closer attention will be paid to the Georgians in view of the scarcity of works examining references to them in Venetian diplomatic sources, especially given the much larger number of analogous publications regarding the Greeks.⁵

5] Among the most recent works are G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte. Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia*, Roma: Viella, 2014; B. Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period', [in:] E.R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013, pp. 125-254 (both works incorporate extensive bibliographies); and B. Ravid, 'Venice and Its Minorities', [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 449-486.

(a) Persia

Relations between Venice and Persia in the period of interest to us here were based on legations sent ad hoc, with the mandate of creating a common anti-Ottoman alliance.⁶ One such mission was undertaken by a representative of the Venetian Republic in Constantinople, Vincenzo degli Alessandri, who set off for Isfahan in 1570 and arrived there in 1572. He was not granted an audience with Shah Tahmasp, but was received only by a prince, and, despite having referred on the political situation in Christendom and on the preparations for the anti-Ottoman league, he received no response from the shah.⁷ Likewise, the mission of Mohamed, an envoy who carried a letter from King Mohammad Khodabanda to Venice in 1580, ended fruitlessly.⁸ In 1587 an Armenian called Giacomo, an envoy of both the shah and the Georgian king Simon I, reached Venice. Giacomo also visited Rome and Transylvania with the offer of an alliance. In Venice he was received by representatives of the Collegio.⁹ Between 1600 and 1639 the city of the doges also received visits from nine Persian envoys, seven of whom arrived within a relatively short period, between 1600 and 1622.¹⁰

The first of them was Efet beg / Asad bayg (1600).¹¹ His mission was restricted to an exchange of courtesies; its main aim was commercial. The visit of Fethy beg / Fathy bayg in 1603 was similar in scope.¹² Special respects were paid to him on his arrival, however, including the display of an image dedicated to his visit in the Sala delle Quattro Porte in the Doge's Palace. According to a hypothesis by Giorgio Rota, the

6] According to G. Rota ('Safavid Envoys in Venice', p. 215, [in:] R. Krauz, G. Rota, and J.P. Niederkorn (Hgb.), *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der frühen Neuzeit*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009, pp. 213-249), thirteen or fourteen Persian legations visited Venice between 1500 and 1700.

7] The documents connected with that mission (a dispatch sent from Cracow on 24 July 1574) are quoted in G. Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, Torino: Paravia, 1865, pp. 30-37.

8] *Ibidem*, pp. 38-39.

9] L. Tardy, 'Il ruolo di Venezia nei rapporti persiani e giorgiani dell'Ungheria', p. 266, [in:] T. Klaniczay (a cura di), *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi all'epoca di Rinascimento. Atti del secondo convegno di studi italo-ungheresi, Budapest, 20-23 giugno 1973*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975, pp. 257-267.

10] M.P. Pedani, 'Oltre la retorica. Il pragmatismo veneziano di fronte all'islam', p. 174, [in:] B. Heyberger, M. Garcia-Arenal, E. Colombo, and P. Vismara (a cura di), *L'islam visto dall'Occidente. Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all'islam*, Genova-Milano: Marietti, 2009, pp. 171-186; G. Rota, 'Safavid Envoys...', *op. cit.*, p. 221.

11] G. Rota, 'Safavid Envoys...', *op. cit.*, p. 227.

12] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-197 (doc. XXXII).

motivation for this gesture was to underscore the important position of Venice among the states of the Christian world, which was particularly judicious in view of the impending conflict with Rome.¹³ A real revival of Venetian-Persian contacts became discernible in the late 1600s. Boghos Levon Zekiyani¹⁴ lists three Persian envoys who went to Venice around that time: Xoga Šioš in 1607;¹⁵ Yovhanes, a merchant who arrived in 1608 with a commercial mission; and Yakob Makarian Amdeci, who apparently came to Europe many times, and visited Rome, Venice, and the imperial court in Vienna between 1593 and 1606. There is somewhat more information on Xoga Šafar / Seffer, who was received by the doge on 22 January 1610.¹⁶ According to Zekiyani, Šafar's mission had no clearly defined aim, and was undertaken solely for the sake of strengthening bilateral contacts. Nevertheless, in light of the letter from the shah presented by the envoy, it might be deduced that his primary task was in fact to secure goods left in Venice by Fethy beg.¹⁷ Just a few days after Šafar's reception, on 30 January, *La Serenissima* replied to the letter he had presented, but the response contained no overt political proposals.¹⁸ Further information on the envoy's activities is supplied by Pietro della Valle, who recalled in his letters that Šafar delivered letters to a number of rulers: to the pope, the king of Spain, the princes of Lucca, Parma, and Modena, and Cardinal Carlo Borromeo.¹⁹ The exchange of legations continued: in 1613 Alredin and Sassuar arrived in Venice with information on the conclusion of the Ottoman-Persian peace agreement.²⁰ The same Sassuar reappears in the Doge's Palace in 1621 with another letter from the shah.²¹ Reports on Persia were also delivered by Venetian merchants returning from Iran, such as Michiel Angelo Corrai (from Aleppo) in 1599 and Angelo Gradenigo in 1602.²²

13] G. Rota, 'Safavid Envoys...', op. cit., pp. 230-231. The painting depicted the envoy presenting gifts to the doge, representing a monarch favoured by Christians, the Persian shah Abbas, honouring the doge, rather than the pope or other rulers in Christendom.

14] B. L. Zekiyani, 'Xoga Safar ambasciatore di Shah Abbas a Venezia', 361, *Oriente moderno* 58, 7-8 (1978), 357-367.

15] Cf. also G. Berchet (*La Repubblica...*, op. cit., pp. 200-201: doc. XXXVI).

16] Ibidem, pp. 201-206 (docs. XXXVII and XXXVIII).

17] Ibidem, p. 207 (doc. XXXIX).

18] Ibidem, p. 209 (doc. XLI).

19] B. L. Zekiyani, 'Xoga Safar...', op. cit., 362-365.

20] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica...*, op. cit., p. 49.

21] Ibidem, p. 212 (doc. XLIII).

22] G. Rota considers Angelo Gradenigo to have been a Persian envoy, cf. G. Rota, 'Safavid Envoys...', op. cit., p. 234.

The foregoing general description of the history of Persian legations to Venice invites three conclusions. Firstly, any political goals of Venetian-Persian contacts were secondary to the two parties' mutual commercial interests; it should also be noted that in the period which interests us the dynamics of the bilateral contacts between these states was indeed weaker than in preceding periods.²³ Secondly, both the Venetian political elites and the shahs perceived the potential difficulties and risks of deeper cooperation, especially given the geographical distance between the states.²⁴ The Venetians' extreme caution regarding an alliance with the Persians was probably motivated by the traditional *prudenza Venetiana*, which was rooted in a reluctance to violate peace with other states or to do anything that might expose *La Serenissima* to an Ottoman threat.²⁵ These considerations may also help to explain why Venice in fact had no real intention of establishing a permanent diplomatic representation in Persia. Finally, the main role in those legations—as in previous missions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—was played by Armenians.²⁶ Thus, it should not be surprising that the Venetian ruling class perceived the Safavid Empire differently than the Ottoman Porte, both in view of the role of Christians in its structure and given its lack of characteristics ascribed by Venetians to Muslim political entities: religious fanaticism (as understood in those times in the context of atrocities affecting Christians) and expansiveness in respect of Christendom.

Rota observes that the Venetians' ambivalence towards Persia stemmed not so much from their policy in respect of the Safavids, which prioritized protection of Venetian interests in the Levant by only authorizing moves that would not provoke any Ottoman reprisals, but rather from the indirectness of their interest in Persia, though this was due only to their perception of the Ottoman threat.²⁷ He divides early modern Venetian-Persian relations into two periods. In the earlier of these, which broadly corresponds to the sixteenth century, the primary purpose of these contacts was to find an ally

23] G. Rota, *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450-1797)*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie, 2009, p. 40.

24] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica...*, op. cit., p. 195 (doc. XXXI): '*gli uffici, che per la distanza del paese non possono esser tra noi molto frequenti*'. Both conclusions are also confirmed by G. Rota, 'Safavid Envoys...', op. cit., p. 214.

25] This notion is drawn from a work by Paolo Paruta ('Discorso di P[aolo] Paruta', p. 76, [in:] *Miscellanea-BNM*, It XI 28 (6790), pp. 67-86).

26] G. Rota (*Under Two Lions...*, op. cit., p. 21) observes that their role 'should not be underestimated'.

27] Idem, 'Safavid Envoys...', op. cit., pp. 213-214; idem, *Under Two Lions...*, op. cit., p. 38.

with the military capability to stand up to the Ottoman Empire. The second period, the seventeenth century—with the slight exception of the duration of the Candian war, was a time of peaceful commercial relations without political or military goals—or at least these aspects of their relationship were less important than economic ties.²⁸ Regardless of Rota's conclusions, it seems that assessment of the possibility of considering Persia an ally against the sultans was one of the primary aims of Venetian diplomacy with regard to the Safavid state. This observation is confirmed by references in diplomatic documents produced in other states (mainly in the Ottoman Empire). For example, the matter of the creation of a major anti-Ottoman alliance appears even in a letter from the shah to the Polish king. A set of instructions sent to the bailo in Constantinople in 1634 contained a summary of a Persian envoy's report, according to which the shah had dispatched an ambassador to the Polish king in an attempt to convince him not to conclude a peace treaty with the sultan, in order not to weaken Persia's ongoing offensive operations.²⁹

In fact, the interest of Venetian diplomats in information from Persia could be described as lively. They relayed news on the situation in Persia back to Venice in their dispatches, and the baili gave general assessments of Ottoman-Persian relations in the final sections of selected reports. In their instructions to their diplomatic personnel, the Venetian authorities stressed their need to be supplied with regular information on developments in any Ottoman-Persian wars in progress.³⁰ Similar instructions were also given to consuls in Aleppo.³¹

However, the news on Persia sent from the missions back to Venice varied considerably in value. Sometimes it was no more than general information on 'poor understanding' between the sultan and

28] Idem, 'Safavid Envoys...', op. cit., p. 213.

29] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 227r (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopo]li*, 8.07.1634): '*Che il Rè di Persia à q[ue]llo di Polonia haveva inviato Amb[asciato]re per evitarlo à non far la pace con Turchi, promettendo dal suo canto di tener fermo con gran forza la continuatione della guerra, et che ogni dì arrivano nuovi messi Persiani à Costantinopoli per osservar li andamenti, et apparecchi de' Turchi*'.

30] Ibidem, fol. 193v (*Al Bailo in Const[antinopo]li*, 7.04.1634): '*progressi di q[ue]lla [war-PC.] di Persia con tutti li maggiori particolari con la vostra zelante applicatione potrete andar penetrando delle inclinationi e concetti del Rè, e de consigli, che gli venissero suggeriti per la continuatione di queste gran mosse d'Arme [...]*'.

31] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 105v (*Al cons[ole] di Aleppo*, [1629]): '*Carissimi ne saranno gli avisi fondati di coteste Parti [Persia-PC.], et delle occorenze della guerra de Turchi con Persiani, et si accresserà per essi la n[ost]ra soddisfattione*'.

the shah,³² or very limited information on major events, such as the expulsion of English merchants from the Safavid Empire.³³ In other cases the representatives of the Venetian Republic merely informed their superiors of a lack of any news from Persia.³⁴ The Venetian authorities followed any Ottoman-Persian conflict with particular attention, as is confirmed by the report of the consul in Aleppo, Pietro Michele (1584). In that document the consul stressed his interest in the ongoing war, pursuant to the instructions he had received.³⁵ His successor, Tommaso Contarini (1593), explained in his turn that his silence on the conflict was due to its gradual loss of intensity.³⁶ Sometimes we find detailed analyses of the causes of Ottoman-Persian conflicts; in these the blame is usually laid with the Ottoman party.³⁷ Detailed information was relayed back to Venice on the progress of the Ottoman-Persian peace negotiations in 1632.³⁸ Similarly, close attention was paid to the news of Abbas' death; that information was verified using several sources³⁹ and promptly sent to the Republic via parallel channels.⁴⁰

Venetian interest in Persia as a potential ally against the Ottoman Empire was vested in the potential of the shahdom to engage the Ottoman forces on the eastern or south-eastern fronts, or even to precipitate the dissolution of the Empire. Bailo Correr made note of the factors that could contribute to bringing about such a development for Venice: the historical ties of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire with the Persian state, and the religious identity of the inhabitants of these territories (Shia), who were usually described in

32] Report by Consul Vincenzo Dandolo (1603), p. 128, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria*, Torino: Paravia, 1865, pp. 110-130 ('*mala intelligenza*').

33] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1, disp. 11 (29.01.1620): '*Di Persia s'ha, che quel Rè babbia licentiati del suo Regno tutti li Mercanti Inglesi.*'

34] *Ibidem*, disp. 16 (13.12.1620): '*Di Persia non si sente alcuna novità.*'

35] Report by Consul Pietro Michele (1584), p. 65, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 65-73.

36] Report by Consul Tommaso Contarini (1593), p. 78, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 74-78.

37] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), p. 292, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 259-310.

38] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D22, disp. 211-217 (June-August 1632).

39] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fol. 183r (disp. 189, 25.04.1629): '*Pare che la morte del Re di Persia si vadi sempre più verificando*', reflected in *Disp. Cost.* r. D21, fol. 35v; ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 3, fol. 32r (disp. 8, 2.03.1630): '*Ho fatto volare gli Avvisi all'Ec[ellentissimo] Sig[no]r Bailo in Constantinopoli della Morte del Rè di Persia, et ho stimato anco bene il farlo, con espressa Missione, perche alla caduta di questo gran Re non può essere che non sorgan[n]o de rebelianti accidenti.*'

40] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fol. 109r (disp. 185, 14.04.1629): '*È capitato avviso, ch'il Rè di Persia sia morto.*'

the reports as the 'Persian sect'.⁴¹ However, on a more general level the Venetian image of Persia—as underlined by Giorgio Rota⁴²—was in all respects the opposite of the vision of the Ottoman Empire and of the Turks that was most widespread in the Republic. The diplomats of the Most Serene Republic underlined the Persians' respect for the nobility, their military skills, which assured them victory in battles against the Ottoman armies,⁴³ and their outstanding literary and intellectual culture. They also valued the attitude of Shah Abbas, who fostered the European settlements in his country.⁴⁴

Traditionally, the reports drew attention to the person of the shah as the second Muslim ruler in terms of military power after the sultan (see, for instance, the opinions expressed by Bailo Giustinian).⁴⁵ Unlike the sultan, the shah was portrayed as a monarch who enjoyed the respect of his neighbours and other foreigners, whom he received willingly.⁴⁶ He often made public appearances and gave audiences, which the sultan did not. His advisors were modest freemen invested with real power over state provinces, and they obeyed his commands to the letter, especially in wartime.⁴⁷ Descriptions paint Shah Abbas, the preferred protagonist of Venetian diplomats' reports, as a fair-minded person who enjoyed the respect and obedience of his subjects, with whom he cultivated contact.⁴⁸ According to these reports, he treated his subjects without superiority, and was righteous and magnanimous. He attracted Venetian interest because of his plans to restore Persia's ancient borders.⁴⁹ As Margaret Meserve observes, the positive image of the Persian ruler in Venetian diplomatic reports was similar to the wider image of the shah created by thinkers contemporary to them, who portrayed him almost as if he had been a Renaissance Christian ruler.⁵⁰ This opinion is shared by Giuliano Lucchetta, who interprets

41] Report by bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), p. 236, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 225-257.

42] G. Rota, *Under Two Lions...*, op. cit., p. 31-32.

43] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), p. 226, [in:] *RAV Alberi I/6*, pp. 196-238.

44] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica...*, op. cit., p. 202 (doc. XXXVI).

45] Report by Bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), p. 625, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 525-633.

46] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 236.

47] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1576), p. 212, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 201-223.

48] Report by Simone Contarini (1612), [in:] G. Berchet *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia. Nuovi documenti e registi*, Venezia: Antonelli, 1866, p. 19.

49] Report by Consul Alessandro Malipiero (1596), p. 91, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 79-100.

50] M. Meserve, *Empires of Islam...*, op. cit., pp. 223-237.

portraits of Shah Ismael from the period as typical representations of a Renaissance monarch.⁵¹

Individual Persians—the diplomatic partners of *La Serenissima*'s envoys—are also depicted positively. Consul Contarini describes Ali Pasha, an Ottoman official of Persian origin, as his 'public and private defender'.⁵² The Persians as a nation are portrayed in diplomatic reports as closer to the Christian world than to the sphere of Muslim culture. Similarly, descriptions of the economic and social order of Persia depict it as significantly different from that reigning in the Ottoman Empire. As Rota observes, the Persians tended to be described as the cultural heirs of the Achaemenids:⁵³ gallant, well-educated lovers of sciences and the arts (including specifically miniatures, as Bailo Bernardo notes with fascination).⁵⁴ According to Bailo Bernardo, the Persians were courteous (*civili*) and they valued the liberal arts. They respected nobility, which was important to a member of the Venetian elite.⁵⁵ As he notes, in terms of the political order, Persia was similar to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or to the German Reich, where the power of the central monarch was kept in check by the prerogatives of other princes or magnates, unlike in France and the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶ For this reason, Persia was often perceived by Venetian diplomats as a state characterized by internal regulations that precluded tyranny. Bernardo's conclusions are confirmed by Margaret Meserve, who observes that Persia was described in the writings of humanists (not only diplomats) as an exemplary empire, powerful and well organized, intellectually advanced, and with political traditions dating back to antiquity.⁵⁷

The motif of internal problems known from reports written by Venetian diplomats about other states appears only incidentally in their descriptions of the Safavid Empire. The same Bailo Bernardo, who produced his report in 1592—i.e. two years after the end of the war against the Ottoman Empire lost by the Persians—notes that the shah's

51] G. Lucchetta, 'L'Oriente mediterraneo nella cultura di Venezia tra Quattro- e Cinquecento', p. 424, [in:] G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi (a cura di), *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 3/II, Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1980, pp. 375-432.

52] Report by Consul Tomamaso Contarini (1593), p. 75, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni...*, op. cit., pp. 74-78.

53] G. Rota, *Under Two Lions...*, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

54] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 236.

55] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), p. 133, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 59-166; eiusdem (1590), p. 360, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 311-394.

56] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 132.

57] M. Meserve, *Empires of Islam...*, op. cit., p. 221.

state had been weakened by both internal causes (including discord within the royal family and deteriorating standards in the army) and external ones such as the war with the Tatars from the Samarkand region.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, there are instances of Persia being depicted as a state just as distant from the cultural and political world view of the states of Christendom as the Ottoman Empire. In the context of the general trend of the reports described above, the information supplied by Consul Foscarini in 1615 is somewhat unexpected. He refers to extraordinary cruelties on the part of Shah Abbas, who slayed his eldest son, also planned to kill the second prince, and razed the town of Nakhchivan to the ground. The same shah also forced many Christians to convert to Islam.⁵⁹ Another consul reported that at the time he sent his dispatch, the Persian ruler was about to slay sixty women suspected of plotting to poison him.⁶⁰

Reports on Persia had to take a stance on one fundamental issue related to its position on the political and religious map of the contemporary world: its confessional definition. The shahdom was usually defined as a state which differed in this respect from the Ottoman Empire, and those who penned such descriptions often employed an extrapolation of the difference between Catholic and Protestant states in Europe to the divergence between the Ottoman and Safavid realms. This, for instance, was how Ottoman-Persian relations were presented by Bailo Bernardo. In his view, the Turks' resentment of Persia was rooted mainly in confessional issues, which

58] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., pp. 131-132.

59] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1 (disp. 7, 26.06.1615): '*Qui di Persia si sono divulgate certe nove [...] et è, che q[ue]l Re sij divenuto d'animo molto crudele, poi che per sospetti vani, dicono, che habbi fatto privar di vita il proprio fig[li]o]lo maggiore, P[ri]n[ci]pe di molta speranza, di estremo valore nell'Armj, et amato, et riverito da tutti i popoli in universale, il quale amore portatoli, et da sudditi, et dalle militie, hà causato la suspitione, et rresolutione del Re. Quest'attione, dicono, ch'è stata sentita con estremo dolore da tutti li Persiani, ma niuno ardisse mostrare il dolore per il dubbio della propria vita. Dicono anco, che senza sappersi l'occasione, fosse venuto in rresolutione di privar della luce de gli occhi il 2do figlio, mà per la Intercessione de molti suoi più cari non ha eseguita q[ue]sta sì barbara attione. Dicesi anco che'gli habbia fatto destrugger da fondamenti una sua famosa Città del suo Regno chiamata Nacsua[n] [...]. Con Christiani, è fatto inesorabile, perseguitandoli quanto più può, et facendo ogni sforzo per far che rineghino la fede.'*

60] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 3, fol. 31r (disp. 7, 26.01.1630): '*Mi ha dato [Ft. Giovanni Carmelitano Scalzo-P.C.] in Confidenza, che il Rè di Persia si trova in angustie, non già per l'esercito Turchesco, qual attende, con animo Incerto, ma per la poca fede de suoi della corte, et in particolare delle proprie Don[n]e, à Sessanta de quali era per levargli la Testa, insospettato, ch'bauessero tentato di dargli il veleno.'*

were compounded by a rivalry between the sultan and the shah ‘over power and reputation’.⁶¹ Generally speaking, the baili observed that the differences between the two nations stemmed above all from their divergent interpretations of Mohammed’s legacy, and concerned rites more than doctrines; Bailo Soranzo noted that each party called the other ‘heretic’.⁶² Eric R. Dursteler points out that Venetian documents often mention the expression ‘*Persiano si fa Turco*’, suggesting an erroneous conviction among the Venetians that a change of political identification, where a person reneged on their allegiance to the Safavid Empire to become an Ottoman subject, or vice versa, was accompanied by conversion—by analogy with the situation in Europe.⁶³

It is worth noting an interesting motif in some reports: the suggestion that Shah Abbas may have been a crypto-Christian. According to reports by Venetian merchants active in Persia, this alleged confessional identity was proved by a crucifix that the king wore under his vesture. An important role in the shah’s putative conversion to Christianity was attributed to his wife, who was of Georgian origin. Moreover, he was friendly towards Christians, which manifested itself in policies including support for the construction of Catholic churches in Persia, and in his plans to exempt Christian merchants from taxes previously levied on them.⁶⁴

Clearly, these attempts to find another link between Persia and the Christian world—this time in the form of its ruler’s confessional identity—were efforts to define the state of the shahs as an entity that was located between Latin Christendom and the Muslim world, so that it could not unequivocally be classified as part of the latter. While attempts to cast the shah as a Christian monarch were far removed from reality (and their role in reports may have served a similar purpose to quoting prophecies on the decline of the Ottoman Empire, as observed in Chapter 3), the image of the Safavid Empire created by the Venetian diplomatic service in the period of interest here gives an impression of

61] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 130.

62] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), op. cit., p. 290; his report (1576), op. cit., p. 213; report by secretary Aurelio Santa Croce (1573), p. 189, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 177-192.

63] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 116-117.

64] More examples of alleged ‘evidence’ in support of this interpretation of the shah’s confession are quoted in: P. Chmiel, ‘Scoprendo le due fedè del re. Un contributo allo studio della visione dei Georgiani in documenti creati nell’ambiente diplomatico veneziano (1573-1645)’, p. 104, [in:] A. Ferrari, E. Pupulin, M. Ruffilli, and V. Tomelleri (a cura di), *Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale. Ricerche 2017*, Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2018 (*Eurasiatica. Quaderni di Studi su Balcani, Anatolia, Iran, Caucaso e Asia Centrale* 7 [2018]), pp. 97-108.

coherence. Notwithstanding the main difference between Venice and the monarchy of the shahs—confession—Persia was largely portrayed in reports and dispatches as a potential ally of the Christian world in the war with the greatest predatory religious dissenter: the sultan. At the same time, Persia did not present a danger to Venice either in the form of expansion in the latter's direction or in view of its cultural or political otherness, since its internal reality was perceived as relatively similar to that in the Christian sphere, and correspondingly distant from the oppressive Ottoman tyranny.

But is this image of Persia created by Venetian diplomats realistic, or should it be treated only as an illusion formed under the influence of the *antemurale* idea? It cannot have been realistic in the sense in which this word is used in relation to the image they portrayed of the Ottoman Empire, because for the most part it was not formulated as a result of direct observation but was based on received information. On the other hand, it conveyed basic information on potential policies that might be adopted toward the Safavid state, including above all conclusion of an anti-Ottoman alliance with it. Verification of these possibilities lay within the remit of the decision-makers in Venice, who made every effort not to upset the delicate relations with the Ottoman Empire. Since the Venetian ruling class saw no possibility of a close alliance with Persia, they did not put the theoretical *antemurale* discourse into practice.

Relations with Eastern Christians were fraught with similar dilemmas – in the spheres of both ideas and practice.

(b) The Eastern Christian world

Venetian diplomatic documents demonstrate a vivid interest in the minorities that inhabited the Ottoman Empire, especially in those who had the potential to exert opposition to the Turkish might and challenge the unity of that state. These groups were essentially identified by their religious affiliation. It seems that one of the key Venetian foreign policy aims in the Orient was to protect the local Christians and win them over to the anti-Ottoman struggle. The Venetian diplomats focused their attention on the Greeks, and on the Christians from Anatolia and the Caucasus—the Georgians and the Armenians.

The reports, dispatches, and commissions permit the reconstruction of a cohesive image of the Ottoman Empire as a state with

a considerable number of Christian inhabitants who—suitably inspired—might be persuaded to ally with Venice in case of a conflict with her powerful Eastern neighbour. According to a document dated 1595, more than two-thirds of the Empire's population were Christians, who were permanently oppressed by the Ottomans.⁶⁵ Although the Venetian diplomats believed the large number of Christians to be a factor that contributed to the wealth of the Empire (due to the taxes paid by non-Muslims),⁶⁶ they also perceived the confessional structure of the Empire's population to be a circumstance that could bring about its dissolution. Contarini lived in expectation of an uprising among the Christian population, which he believed would be pivotal for the destruction of the Ottoman state.⁶⁷ Bailo Correr reported that all the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire were inhabited by Christians, who prayed unceasingly for liberation from the Turkish yoke.⁶⁸ Bailo Nani expressed a similar opinion, though he noted that the Greeks were reluctant to foment an uprising since they feared it might end in the inclusion of their lands in the sphere of Latin Christendom, which could result in the imposition of restrictions on their observance of the Orthodox rite.⁶⁹ Another report (by Antonio Bruti), from outside the diplomatic context, also noted that the European territories of the Ottoman Empire were inhabited by more Christians than Muslims, despite decreasing numbers of the former (due to factors including a lack of clergymen).⁷⁰ In these circumstances, the author believed

65] 'Diverse materie appartenenti à Costan[tino]p[oli], e nota particolare del viaggio da Dolcigno ad essa città', fol. 158r, [in:] *Costantinopoli*, fols. 157r-170v-BMC, DR 23: '*Questo paese è habitato più di due terzi da Christiani, cioè Greci, Bulgari, Schiavoni, Albanesi in Europa, et da Armeni et Nostrani in Asia, tutti [...] continti di Turchi per li istermini, rapine [...].*'

66] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), p. 656, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 635-683.

67] Report by Ambassador Tommaso Contarini (*Germania*, 1596), p. 227, [in:] *RAV Alberi* I/6, pp. 196-238.

68] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 237.

69] Report by Bailo Agostino Nani (1603), p. 394, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 371-406.

70] A. Bruti, *Relatione del Bellebergato della Romania*, pp. 3-4-BMC, WL 25.9: '*La christiana [fede] di n[ume]ro avanza la Maumettana, et Giudea, mà per esser povera, et soggetta, et divisa tra Greco, et Latino, già per la gara di queste due chiese, et barà per la co[n]cordia che ritrova nella Mabometana, ogni giorno và declinando. Oltre per l'ignoranza, et rarità de Prelati, molti non hanno del christiano altro che 'l nome, e tanto pensano esser grati à Dio col farsi Turchi, quanto col restar christiani, imaginandosi che in qualsi voglia religione l'huomo da bene possa salvarsi. Tutti quei christiani, che parlano la lingua Greca, sono ancora di rito Greco, eccettandone alcune quelle famiglie di Pera, et certe Isole di Arcipelago.*'

that it would be possible, given auspicious conditions, to foment an uprising among the Greeks.⁷¹

On the other hand, diplomatic documents and reports written within the sphere of Venetian diplomacy often pointed to difficulties that would be bound to arise in inspiring an uprising by the Christian population, citing in particular the Christians' inferior fighting skills and changing attitudes towards Latin Christendom in general and the Most Serene Republic in particular. These opinions usually referred specifically to the Greeks, who were the most numerous group of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Lazzaro Soranzo, though he considered the Greeks the nation with the potential to inflict the greatest damage on the Turks,⁷² was very sceptical of the view that the Eastern Christians really commanded sufficient leverage to bring about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. He believed that internal differences between the Christians in the Empire and the distances between the various territories they inhabited precluded any such development.⁷³ Giovanni Tommaso Minadoi reported that in his day the 'Greek spirit' (probably a reference to the ancient history of the Greek-Persian wars) was a thing of the past.⁷⁴ Similarly, Fedele Fedeli considered the Greeks to be of little potential help in combatting the Turks, as they were inexperienced in military action.⁷⁵ Niccolò Contarini admitted overtly that the Greek Christians preferred to remain under Muslim rule since this protected them from the risk of conversion to Catholicism.⁷⁶ The limited contribution of the Eastern Christians to achievement of military aims was a theme that recurred frequently in descriptions of the lands they inhabited. Another repeated motif was the devastation of those lands and the persecution of their population by the Ottoman authorities; cf. the description by Soranzo;⁷⁷ Contarini also observed that Christians were the most persecuted victims of the Ottoman tyranny.⁷⁸ The fate of Eastern

71] Ibidem, p. 23.

72] L. Soranzo, *L'Ottomano...*, oldprint no. 3, p. 112.

73] Ibidem, p. 111.

74] G.T. Minadoi, *Historia...*, oldprint no. 1, p. 3: '*Nella stessa Grecia [...] sia spento il nome Greco*'.

75] F. Fedeli, *Storia della guerra contro il Turco (1570-1574)*, fol. 50v-BNM, It VII 106 (8033): '*Greci mal atti, et inesperti nella guerra*'.

76] N. Contarini, 'Delle istorie veneziane et altre a loro annesse, cominciando dall'anno 1597 e successivamente', p. 179, [in:] G. Benzoni and T. Zanato (a cura di), *Storici e politici veneti del Cinquecento e del Seicento (La letteratura italiana - storia e testi, part 35)*, vol. II, Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1982, pp. 151-442.

77] L. Soranzo, *L'Ottomano...*, oldprint no. 3, p. 23.

78] N. Contarini, 'Delle istorie...', op. cit., p. 179.

Christians in the Ottoman Empire was likewise mentioned by Antonio Tiepolo, who underlined the subaltern status of Christian peasants in the Ottoman lands—a result of their membership of a particular social group and of their confessional identity.⁷⁹

Perception of the Greeks was more ambivalent than that of any other Eastern Christians. In fact, evidence of overt aversion to Greeks can be found in many sources. Bailo Foscarini called them ‘wretched and mendacious’,⁸⁰ and reported on the ‘falsity of the Greeks’.⁸¹ Mentions of the Greeks’ own negative attitude towards Latin Christianity or Latin clergymen in the Holy Land were not rare in the dispatches.⁸² Angelo Alessandri recalled that it was a Greek—a Christian ‘only by name, who acted like a pagan’—who brought about the closure of St. Anthony’s Church in Galata.⁸³ The same diplomat considered Greeks to be the nation most hostile to Christendom and the Latin Christians. He believed that they were more interested in remaining under Ottoman rule than in allying with a broadly Christian bloc.⁸⁴

The attitude of the Venetian diplomats towards the Greeks—and, indeed, towards Eastern Christians more generally—seems to have been a product of all the above-mentioned factors. Even the large numbers of Christians and their presumed discontent under Ottoman rule could not reconcile the divergences of Venetian policy on the one hand and Greek aspirations on the other. The Greeks, who did not have their own state, did not formulate far-reaching political goals in a way expected or understood by Venice. On the other hand, the ambivalent image of the Greeks purveyed by the baili and consuls reflects a broader issue that cannot be fully addressed here: Venetian policy towards the Greeks. Suffice it to say here that this policy varied, and in some periods was characterized by mistrust of Greeks and their religious leaders. Although

79] *Discorso del Clarissimo Si[gnor] Antonio Thiepolo Cav[allier] delle forze del Si[gnor] Turco*, fols. 12r-v—BMC WL 32.3: ‘[the army—P.C.] *distrugge il villano che è sempre in preda al soldato [...] et il villano christiano è anchora peggio trattato, perché non può havere ragione contra quel Turcho che è il patrone perché il Cadì, cioè giudice, è pure Turco si come l’altro patrone.*’

80] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 117, fol. 61r (disp. 155, 2.04.1636): ‘*Quei maledetti, e bugiardi Greci.*’

81] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D23a, fol. 135v (disp. 120, 12.05.1635): ‘*falsità dei Greci.*’

82] *Ibidem*, fol. 11v (disp. 12, 13.04.1633): ‘*Ricorso de greci al Bassa di Damasco con chiaro attacco per la privat[i]one a’ P[ad]ri de S[an]ti luoghi.*’; ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 276 r. (13.07.1633, disp. 30): ‘*Questi Greci, che non lasciano mia intentata per condursi al loro ingiusto fine di privar prima di parte, e spogliar poi di tutto il possesso dei S[an]ti Luoghi di Gerusalem, li Padri di S[an] Francesco Zoccolanti [...].*’

83] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 679.

84] *Ibidem*, pp. 673-674.

Venice officially strove to reinforce good relations between Orthodox and Catholic Christians living in its territories,⁸⁵ there were sometimes tensions arising from Venetian demands for reduced connections between Greeks living in the Most Serene Republic and Orthodox Church structures outside it. For example, on several consecutive occasions *La Serenissima* required the doge's approval of nominees for the post of the Orthodox bishop of Cyprus, while the Catholic bishops requested that all the most significant projects undertaken by the Orthodox clergy (such as siting new churches) be consulted with them. Venetian domination could be also seen in the liturgy, which included a reference to the pope. On the other hand, the Venetians were as a rule more tolerant towards the Greeks living in Venice than to those of *Oltremare*.⁸⁶ However, it is difficult to make any fuller assessment of Greek-Venetian relations within the Republic. According to Anastasia Papadia-Lala, attitudes towards the Ottoman-Venetian conflict among the Greeks varied; basically, landowners were better disposed towards the Venetians, while peasants favoured the Ottomans.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Greeks living in territories subject to the sultan often messianized the Republic, nurturing the hope that her representatives would liberate them from the Ottoman yoke.⁸⁸ We have seen that these hopes were not always correctly interpreted by the Venetian diplomats, which is perhaps unsurprising given both the lack of any real prospects of fulfilling them and the variation in attitudes among the Greeks—and indeed among the baili and consuls themselves—regarding both the Greek issue and individual Greeks with whom they worked.

For Venice the Greeks also constituted a security problem. Eric R. Dursteler estimates that there were some 480,000 Greeks living in the Venetian *Stato da Mar* at the end of the sixteenth century.⁸⁹ Some of them travelled backwards and forwards between the Ottoman Empire and the Venetian state, many having been hired to work in the Turkish shipyards. This perception is confirmed by Pompeo Ferrari from Piacenza,

85] E. Skoufari, *Cipro veneziana (1473-1571). Istituzioni e culture nel Regno della Serenissima*, Roma: Viella, 2011, p. 106, recalls a quotation from a document issued by the Council of Ten: '*intentione nostra ferma et risoluta esser che per confirmar la pace et amore ha 'l clero latino et greco*' (ASVe Consiglio X, parti segrete f. 13, no side given).

86] Ibidem, p. 82.

87] A. Papadia-Lala, 'I Greci fra Venezia e i Turchi nell'arco della lunga durata', pp. 190-191, [in:] G. Motta (a cura di), *I Turchi, il Mediterraneo, l'Europa*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1998, pp. 185-196; G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

88] A. Papadia-Lala, 'I Greci...', op. cit., p. 195.

89] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 78.

a Venetian administrator from the island of Tine / Tinos, who warned the Venetian authorities of Venice about the Greeks' increasing cross-border mobility.⁹⁰ However, these fears do not seem to have been particularly common in the Aegean Archipelago: according to Maria Pedani, at the end of the sixteenth century many inhabitants of Candia considered it pointless to seek employment in the Ottoman shipyards, because the salaries offered in the Venetian dockyards on the island were comparable.⁹¹

The dispatches also contained information on conflicts between certain ethnic groups of Eastern Christians. One such broke out in 1634 over the right of the Greek patriarchate to certain revenues, which had initially been usurped by the Armenians; as a consequence, the Greek patriarch forbade his compatriots to trade with Armenians.⁹² The Venetian diplomats were also alert to financing of the activity of Orthodox clerics in the Ottoman Empire by the Muscovite patriarch.⁹³

References to Armenians were different in character. On the whole, the sources analysed here do not give grounds for assuming that the baili considered them useful as allies in countering the Ottoman expansion. They are mentioned as consummate merchants many times in the archives of V Savi della Mercanzia, though naturally more in the context of tax matters than of political issues.⁹⁴ More general mentions of Armenians occasionally appear in diplomatic documents—for example

90] E. Armao (ed.), *Venezia in Oriente: la 'Relazione dell'Isola et Città di Tine' di Pompeo Ferrari Gentil'buomo piacentino*, Roma: Bardi, 1938, p. 42.

91] M.P. Pedani, *Venezia porta d'Oriente*, Bologna: Mulino, 2010, p. 182.

92] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D23a, fol. 94v (disp. 88, 12.07.1634): '*Interdice il Pat[riar]ca Greco il commercio ai Greci con i Armeni. Differenze tra Greci, et Armeni, per causa del luoco [...] Armeni provavano con grosse offerte di denaro di impossessarsi della Sedia Pat[riar]ca[le] dei Greci.*'; fol. 96r (disp. 90, 25.08.1634): '*Controversia tra Armeni e Greci terminata à favore de Greci.*'

93] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D23a, fol. 100r (disp. 92, 21.09.1634): '*Pat[riar]ca Greco di Moscovia morto hà lasciato ai suoi Religiosi in Gerusalemme c[ir]ca 20 mila reali.*'

94] It is worth observing that the sources often distinguish Armenians from Persia as a separate category (ASVe, *V Savi alla Mercanzia serie II*, envelope 4, part I: fol. 2r – '*mercanti Armeni Persiani*'; fol. [14v] – '*Armeni di Persia*'; fol. 10r – '*Armeni della Persia*', also: '*Armeni e Persiani*'). Cf. also an interesting observation by E.N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2012, pp. 229-230 and note 58 thereto: according to Rothman, the description of Armenians as Persian / from Persia (as opposed to nations from the Levant, i.e. from the Ottoman Empire) took on meaning in the period of the Ottoman-Persian conflicts, and thus was used more frequently from c. 1640, leading up to the Candian war. It should be also noted that the sources in *V Savi* often list Armenian and Persian merchants together, e.g. ASVe, *V Savi alla Mercanzia, serie II*, envelope 4, part I, fol. 4r ('*mercanti, che' di Persia, Armenia, et altre parti de' Levante [...]*') and the above quoted 10r.

Bailo Cappello defined them as ‘extraordinarily devoted to the Republic, appreciated and favoured by Your Excellencies’.⁹⁵ Another document (dated 1595) mentions a division of the Armenians into two religious groups, one subject to the religious authority of the patriarch of Anatolia (Sis) and the other to the Armenian Patriarch in Persia (from Etchmiadzin).⁹⁶ Representatives of this ethnic group are often featured in consular records. In 1597 an Armenian, one Morat from the town of Champsin (Samsun?), presented himself at the chancery of Bailo Cappello. He said that he was about to leave for Christendom in order to visit the shrines in Rome, on the orders of the Armenian patriarch in Constantinople.⁹⁷ A ‘Pole of Armenian nationality’ (*sic!*), Lazzaro Vartario, also came to Bailo Cappello with the request for a document that would enable him to return to Christendom.⁹⁸ Bailo Alvise Contarini, in turn, expressly commended two Armenian clergymen travelling to Rome to the care of the Venetian authorities.⁹⁹ The records also include *fedi* confirming family relations between Armenians,¹⁰⁰ or issued to freed slaves or to persons forced to travel to Christendom in order to beg for

95] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 110, fol. 46r (disp. 9, 1.02.1630): ‘*natione Armena in quale divotissima della Rep[ubbl]ica dall’Ecc[elen]ze V[ostr]e accarezzata, e favorita.*’

96] ASVe, *V Savi alla Mercanzia*, serie II, envelope 4, part I, fol. 12v: ‘*Armeni Scismatici.*’

97] ASVe, BAC 295, booklet 439, fol. 13r-v (13.11.1597): ‘*Noi [...] facemo indubitata fede, à ciasc[un]a persona, in mano alla quale pervenirano queste n[ost]re. Come Morat d[e]t[to] g[ià] Examos Armeno della Città di Champsin nell’Asia app[re]sso Trebisonda, è persona da bene, et honorata, et che è, per partire da questa Città per andare à Roma, à visitare li corpi santi, che vi si trovano, per qu[es]to siamo stati informati per depositare d[e]tti infrascritti, et giurano esser stati mandati dal R[everen]do Vic[ario] d[e]t[to] P[ri?]mo Patriarca de gli Armeni di Const[antinop]oli, à rendere vera testimonianza delle cose predette, li quali furono riconosciuti per M. Ambrosio Grillo n[ost]ro Dragomano, chè interpretò anco il detto loro; et sono Prete Gieser detto G. Mirech [Mikech?–P.C.] armeno, di Diarbechir, Rachel Diacono fig[l]io del R[everen]do Matthias vic[ario] sop[raddet]to, Avac d[e]t[to] g[ià] Derbabac armeno da Caffà.*’

98] ASVe, BAC 297, last booklet [no number], fol. 14r (11.08.1642): ‘*Lazzaro Vartario Polacco di nat[io]ne armena di andar in [...] per trasferirsi poi in Christ[iani]tà, et venendoci attestati da persone degne di fede esser egli huomo di buona qualità, così ricercarsi habb[iam]o voluto gratificarlo della p[rese]nte accio dove gli occorrerà di transitare sia ben veduto, e coadiuvato in d[ett]o suo viaggio dalla pietà de fedeli Chbistianiani.*’

99] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 14, fol. 1r (5.06.1639): ‘*Partendo da queste Parti il R[everen]do d[on] Stefano Derogopovic Sacerdote del Rito Armeno per condursi à Roma per sua devotione. Così ricercasi lo accompagnano con le p[rese]nti, pregando cadauno Min[ist]ro di Pr[en]c[i]pe amico della Ser[eniss]ma Rep[ubbl]ica, come parimenti ogni Rapp[resenta]nte della med[esi]ma così da Terra come da Mare, à prestar le ogni aiuto, a favore per il sod[det]to suo viaggio. Simile per apunto al Rev[eren]do d[on] Gio[vanni] Antonio Serepkovic, sacerdote del Rito Armeno.*’

100] ASVe, BAC 295, booklet 439, fol. 10v (13.09.1597).

alms.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the issue of *carte delle sanità* to Armenian travellers is attested.¹⁰² Moreover, individual Greeks and Armenians were often considered as potential candidates for dragomans.¹⁰³ According to the sources, they were sometimes hired as envoys to the Venetian central authorities,¹⁰⁴ or even as spies.¹⁰⁵ On occasion, information supplied by Greeks was used by the Venetian authorities in order better to plan actions countering ‘novelties’,¹⁰⁶ i.e. Catholic religious orders treated by Venice as new, and hence suspect (cf. Chapter 5).

101] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 6, fol. 2r (23.04.1615): *‘Facciamo indubitata fede à ciascuna persona in mano della quale pervenissero le presenti nostre, come Parekan de Diarbechir; et Kanun de Amasia tutte due Donne Armene Christiane, sono di ritorno (come affermano) dalla visita delli santissimi luoghi di Gerusalem[m]e, et desiderano di condursi à Roma per visitare li corpi santi che ivi si trovano, et perche sono povere Donne, pregano, come facciamo ancor Noi tutti li buoni Christiani à souvenirle di qualche opera pia, et carità Christiana, conforme alla loro pietà.’*; ibidem, booklet 12, fol. 10v (12.08.1636): *‘Havendo fatta fede nella Canc[elle]ria n[ost]ra il Rev[eren]do Derachia Papa d’Armeni, che a Agup pur Armeno da Revan siano stati fatti schiavi la M[ad]re, la moglie, e due fig[lio]li per il che sij per incaminarsi bora in Christianità à cercar elemosine per liberar la pred[ett]a sua famiglia di schiavitù, ricercati noi d’accompagnarlo con n[ost]re patenti, habb[ia]mo voluto gratificarlo delle p[rese]nti, acciò dove capiterà, possi esser ben veduto, et aiutato il stato suo calamitoso dalla [...] pietà, e charità de fedeli christiani.’*; ibidem, booklet 8, fol. 20v (31.08.1622); ibidem, booklet 10, fol. 27v (8.08.1629): *‘[an Armenian called Emergiul–P.C.] desiderando trasferirsi nella Christianità, et specialmente nell’In[.]ta Città di Venetia [...] per ritrovar denari da’ suoi parenti, et amici, et per liberar di schiavitù due sue giovani figliuole.’*

102] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 6, fol. 46v, 21.04.1618: *‘Parte da questa Città per gratia di Dio libera da ogni sospetto di male contagioso [...] Martan [Vartan?–P.C.] sacerdote Armeno di com[m]une statura.’*

103] The sources analysed here attest examples including the work of dragoman Molino, an Armenian, cf. ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 229v (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopoli]*, 18.12.1630). On the complex ethnic identities of the public dragomans of Venice, see E.N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire...*, op. cit., pp. 165-186.

104] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 54, fol. 248r (11.05.1594): *‘Il latore delle presenti sarà Fran (...?) Armeno della Villa di Stanos appresso Angori il quale è quello, che dice essere stati tolti per contrabando li cento e dicisette toleri, che io con lettere mie avisai già alla Ser[eni]tà V[ost]ra, però havendole fatto intendere quanto le piacque commettermi con le sue de V di Genaro, se ne viene bora à i suoi piedi, et mi ha ricercato di accompagnarlo con le presenti per raccomandarli alla Ser[eni]tà V[ost]ra, il che non mi è parso di negarle, sapendo che intentione sua è di accarezzare, et favorire tutti li mercanti di questa natione.’*

105] P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994, p. 251.

106] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 37r (*Alli Baili à Const[antinopoli]*, 21.04.1627): *‘Quel tal Prete Calogero, che si fà chiamar Archimandrita della Chiesa Greca, giunto à Roma hà portato al n[ost]ro Amb[asciato]r quello, che vederete dalla copia di sue lettere, egli mostra esser ben informato di tutti li fini del pred[ett]o Amb[asciato]re baverli esplicati al Pontefice, et alla Congregatione, et portato il suo senso, che senza la protezione della Rep[ubbli]ca tutte le cose siano per condursi à fine dan[n]osissimo. Noi havemo fatto passar ufficio seco di amorevole affetione, et scritto al n[ost]ro Amb[asciato]re di tenerlo grato, et ben affetto, ve ne diamo con le p[rese]nti per notitia aviso.’*

By contrast, information on Georgia and Georgians aroused immense curiosity. This is understandable since, unlike other areas inhabited by Eastern Christians, in the period of interest to us the Georgian territories were governed by partly independent rulers. These territories, which for some time in the Middle Ages (1089-1222) had been an independent and unified kingdom under the Bagratid dynasty, did not reconstitute as an autonomous state after the first Mongolian invasion (1221), because they succumbed to the might of successive neighbouring empires. In the early modern period the Georgian territories bowed to Ottoman and Persian supremacy; the zones of influences were divided along the line of the Surami Range. This division was confirmed by the Ottoman-Persian treaty in Amasya (1555) and, after a temporary Ottoman hegemony following the Empire's victory in the 1578-1590 war, and subsequently a Persian episode as a result of the 1603-1612 war, was restored by the Treaty of Zuhab / Qasr-e Shirin in 1639.¹⁰⁷ The difficulties experienced by both Muslim states in exercising real control over the Georgian territories, the frequent changes of alliance among the Caucasian states, as well as the belief in the possibility (or even the need) to cooperate with a Christian ruler from outside Christendom in order to weaken the Ottoman Empire—all these factors invited strong interest among Venetian diplomats in the political situation in Georgia. This interest may also have been stimulated by a range of endeavours to establish closer contacts with the Georgian states. Besides the missionary initiatives¹⁰⁸ (the details of which may not have been known in Venice) there was also an expedition led by Pietro della Valle, whose idea of a major anti-Ottoman alliance to include the Catholic states, Persia, the Caucasian countries, and the Cossacks, attracted significant attention not only at the papal

107] A. Ferrari, *Breve storia del Caucaso*, Milano: Carocci, 2007, pp. 46-47.

108] On early modern Georgian-Latin contacts cf. N. Gabašvili, *La Georgia e Roma. Duemila anni di dialogo fra cristiani*, Vaticano: Libreria Vaticana, 2003, pp. 1-170. One major missionary undertaking entirely designated for the Georgian lands was the mission of the Theatines, cf. B. Majorana, *La gloriosa impresa. Storia e immagini di un viaggio secentesco*, Palermo: Sellerio, 1990; M. Tamarati, *L'église géorgienne des origines jusqu'à nos jours*, Rome: Société Typographico-Editrice Romaine, 1910, pp. 476-511; P. Chmiel, "You Are Christians Without a Light from Heaven". A Pluriconfessional Encounter: an Image of Georgians According to the Seventeenth-Century Theatine Missionaries' Writings', [in:] A. Izdebski and D. Jasiński (eds.), *Cultures in Motion. Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014, pp. 255-272.

court.¹⁰⁹ Georgian rulers also sought possibilities to establish contacts with the states of Christendom. To this end they dispatched missions to Europe; one such, to Spain and the papal state, was led by Niceforo Erbachi (Nikoloz Irubakidze-Cholokashvili) in 1625-1629. It failed to produce any positive results, however.¹¹⁰

For the Venetian diplomats it was crucial to collect as much information on the Georgian lands as possible and to describe and define their inhabitants—both in ethnic and confessional categories—in order to reflect on their usefulness in the context of further shaping Venetian-Ottoman relations. The sources make a clear distinction between the Georgians, i.e. inhabitants of eastern Georgia, which was under Persian rule, and the Mingrelians, who lived in the western part of the country.¹¹¹ A document dated to 1595 lists the Georgians and the Mingrelians among the neighbours of the Ottoman Empire, thus drawing a distinction between the two groups: while the former were thought to sympathize with the ‘Persian sect’, the latter recognized Ottoman authority.¹¹² As such, this division was not merely an ethnographic curiosity, but served to identify both groups by their assumed allegiance to one or other of the rulers of the Muslim empires.

The diplomatic reports clearly characterize the Georgians as Orthodox Christians, i.e. Christians ‘of the Greek rite’.¹¹³ A critical approach to this definition was presented by Bailo Cappello, who diminished the attachment of both the Georgians and the Mingrelians to Christianity as ‘trifling’, describing the faith of the Caucasian nations as ‘some remnant’. Conversely, the author of another, anonymous treaty considered the Georgians ‘persevering in their intention to remain Christians and live in liberty’, despite cases of conversion, also among the highest strata of the population.¹¹⁴

109] On Pietro della Valle and his excursion cf. the introduction to: F. Gaeta and L. Lockhart (a cura di), *I viaggi di Pietro della Valle*, vol. I, *Lettere dalla Persia*, Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, 1972, pp. XXII-XXVI.

110] On Erbachi's mission cf. M. Tamarati, *L'église...*, op. cit., p. 501-507.

111] For examples from the sources and further discussion cf. P. Chmiel, ‘Scoprendo le due fedi...’, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

112] ‘Diverse materie...’, op. cit., fol. 159r: ‘*Giorgiani, che sentono et/ che favoriscono la setta Persiana assai, et il loro Re*’; ‘*Li Mengrelli poi che sono anch'essi cristiani Greci inimicissimi et/che convivono che l'intrinsecarsi con Turchi.*’

113] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 133; report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1584), op. cit., p. 292; report by Consul Alessandro Malipiero (1596), op. cit., pp. 96-97.

114] *Discorso sopra la natura del Turco, suoi Bassà et altri particolari*, fol. 17-18—BMC, WL 25.14: ‘*Delli Georgiani posso dir questo solamente all'Eccellenza vostra, che se bene in uno delli principali [...] Levet bej si fece Turco, et venne all'obbedienza di quello Signore, mà doppo*

The main issue discussed in the diplomatic documents was mutual Georgian-Ottoman and Georgian-Persian relations. On the whole, the Venetian diplomats expressed understanding for the tendency of Georgian rulers to remain neutral in conflicts between their two powerful neighbours.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, they were wont to speculate over potential future alliances of the Georgian kings or princes. In this context they took considerable interest in the position of the Georgian rulers during the successive Ottoman-Persian conflicts. Campaigns mounted by the Georgians against the Ottomans were even recorded in a chronology of Turkish-Christian wars, written after 1647.¹¹⁶ Particular interest was attracted by the Ottoman-Persian war of 1578-1590, one front of which was in the Caucasus. Consul Michele from Aleppo informed Venice of the seizure of Tiflis (*sic!*) / Tbilisi, and observed that the Georgians were unwilling to submit to Turkish domination.¹¹⁷ In 1590 Bailo Giovanni Moro judged that the Georgians might at some point in the future prove an asset to the victorious Ottoman army, though he opined that directly after the 1578-1590 war the inhabitants of Georgia, as new subjects of the sultan, had not yet earned the full trust of the Ottoman commanders.¹¹⁸

There is some information on Ottoman-Georgian and Persian-Georgian military relations in Venetian diplomatic documents, though not as much as that regarding movements of the Ottoman or Persian armies.¹¹⁹ The reports also show that the Republic took an interest in Georgian envoys to Christendom, such as Niceforo Erbachì.¹²⁰

ritornò di nuovo alli suoi, fattosi christiano, sono tutti gli altri ostinatissimi di volere mantenersi christiani, et vivere in libertà, come hanno fatto per il passato.'

115] Report by bailo Alvise Contarini (1641), p. 843, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 773-888.

116] *Breve Compendio dell'Origine della Casa Ottomana, con li progressi c'hà dato sopra il Cristianesimo fin l'anno 1647*, p. 24-BMC, WL 32.6: '1583: Giorgiani dieddero rotta à Turchi. 1584: Feras [Perat?-PC.] Passà eletto p[rim]o Vizir à luogo di Sinan acquistò 2. Fortezze nella Georgia, e 3m. Castelli [?] furono uccisi da Simon Gorgiano'.

117] Report by Consul Pietro Michele (1584), op. cit., pp. 68, 70, 72.

118] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), p. 27, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 1-58.

119] See examples in: P. Chmiel, 'Scoprendo le due fedì...', op. cit., pp. 102-103.

120] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fol. 324r (disp. 201, 23.06.1629): '[a Greek serving under Cardinal Barberini-PC.] *mi disse esser venuto ad accompagnare un tal Religioso Giorgiano chiamato Niceforo Erbasì, che alcuni an[n]i si è trattenuto in Roma, et in Spagna, spendendo nome di Amb[asciato]r del p[ri]n[ci]pe de Georgiani, dove è stato ben veduto, presentato, et accarezzato [...]*'. The dispatch is cited in an entry in the register: ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D21, fol. 62v (disp. 201, 23.06.1629): '*Un religioso Giorgiano chiamato Niceforo Erbuti trattenutosi à Roma alcuni anni, et in Spagna in nome di Amb[asciato]re del Principe di Giorgiani dove è stato ben veduto havendo trattato oltre quello che non sa egli che siano mandati Religiosi in Georgia, ricercandoli Teatini per principali ò di al[cu]na Religione escludendo li Gesuiti.*'

Information on his visit to Spain was included in one set of instructions from the Venetian authorities to the bailo.¹²¹ A similar degree of interest was aroused by the arrival in Constantinople of members of the Georgian royal family as the sultan's prisoners.¹²²

Some reports include more detailed information on Georgia. One such is that written by Bailo Bernardo, which included several extensive passages on the origins of the nation, its religion, its language, and the political situation in the country. He referred to two Georgian rulers as tributaries of the Turks.¹²³ He also observed that the Circassians and the Mingrelians, neighbours of the Georgians, were in constant fear of the Turks, and supplied them with slaves.¹²⁴ Bernardo noted that Georgia was fragmented and ruled by 'various princes and lords', comparing it in this respect to Switzerland.¹²⁵ Consul Malipiero also devoted a lengthy passage to Georgia in his 1596 report. He observed that the Georgians were inclined to ally with the shah against the sultan, but that due to their fear of the Ottoman might they were not likely to instigate any military action against the Turks, even though the natural conditions in the Caucasus might favour it. He profiled the internal order of the Georgian states, stating that they were divided into three states, ruled respectively by Alexander, Daut (David IX), and Simon. The consul mentioned that the Georgians maintained good relations with the Muscovite ruler because of 'their affinity and the compatibility of their religion', and had on several occasions received military support from him.¹²⁶ The work by Giovanni Tommaso Minadoi

121] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 134r (*Al Bailo à Costantinopoli*, 1.12.1627): '*in quella corte [in Spain-PC.] si trovi un Amb[asciato]r o Agente di Georgiani Monaco di San Basilio, il quale haveva Casa, et spese dal Re, et un prete fiorentino maneggiava il suo negozio, nel qual ancora non si penetrava.*'

122] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 51, fols. 31r-v (22.09.1601): '*Gli huomeni che lo anno pass[at]o condussero qui il nipotino di Simeon Georgiano, sperando con ostagio di quello liberare questo, bora riuscitole vano il suo disegno, Partono al p[rese]nte con nove promesse di liberare pur esso Simeone mentre venghi per Ostaggio Alessandro fratello dell d[ett]o Simeone, et portino una nipote de lui figliuola di una sua sorella, et dicono essere bellis[im]a, et non si accedevano li miseri della fraude di questi, che quanti conduranno per ostagio tutti resteranno captivati nella medesima schiavitù con lo infelice Simeone.*'

123] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 68.

124] *Ibidem*, pp. 127-128.

125] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), p. 362, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 311-394.

126] Report by Consul Alessandro Malipiero, op. cit., pp. 96-97. Despite the commonly held opinion that the Muscovite state / Russia only began to take a closer interest in the Caucasian nations in the eighteenth century, after the failure of messianic projects in the Latin Christian states, and that the first visible evidence of this interest was the Caucasian expedition of Peter the Great (cf. A. Ferrari, 'Gli armeni e la spedizione persiana di Pietro il Grande (1722-1723)',

on the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1578-1590, published at least three times—in Venice in 1588 and 1594, and in Rome in 1597—also mentions Georgia many times.¹²⁷ This work may have been popular among the Venetian political elites and especially among diplomats leaving for postings in the Ottoman Empire.

As in the case of the Persian shahs, these writings betray a belief in the concept I call ‘the king’s two faiths’, i.e. the quest for and reporting on facts and situations that purported to reveal a Christian identity of the Georgian kings and princes despite their declarative confession of Islam. For the same reason, rulers’ conversions also attracted great interest. The ‘king’s two faiths’ concept is particularly visible in the work of Minadoi. Almost every Georgian ruler described by this author was confronted with the temptation to convert to Islam.¹²⁸ Indeed, it was not only kings whose religious activities were scrutinized in the diplomats’ dispatches. One report mentions a Georgian called Mauro / Maur who was to have converted to Islam in order to gain the confidence of the Ottoman officials and thus to infiltrate their structures to work to the Empire’s detriment,¹²⁹ while Bailo Simone Contarini described the interesting case of a Georgian dignitary who, conversely, despite persecution did not change his faith to Islam.

[in:] idem, *L'Ararat e la grù...*, op. cit., pp. 65-78), the gradual Russian expansion into the Caucasus before that period cannot be ignored. One element of that expansion was the dispatch of legacies to rulers in the region. On these aspects of Russian-Caucasian relations cf. W.E.D. Allen, *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589-1605)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

127] According to M. Tamarati (*L'église...*, op. cit., p. 477 n. 1), who quotes earlier authors and one of the editions of Minadoi’s work, his extensive knowledge of facts about the Turkish-Persian war was a result of his participation—as a physician—in the Ottoman expedition. A contemporary biogram (G. Gullino, ‘Giovanni Tommaso Minadoi’, [in:] *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 74, Roma: Treccani, 2010 [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-ni-tommaso-minadoi_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/-accessed 14.09.2019]) only mentions that Minadoi visited Aleppo and briefly also Constantinople during the war; there he was to have acquired some knowledge on the ongoing war from his Muslim patients. S. Brentjes thinks similarly: she claims that in 1576-1585 Minadoi worked as physician to the Venetian consul in Aleppo and at the bailate in Constantinople, cf. S. Brentjes, ‘Pride and Prejudice: the Invention of a “Historiography of Science” in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires by European Travellers and Writers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, p. 246, [in:] eadem, *Travellers from Europe in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, 16-17th Centuries. Seeking, Transforming, Discarding Knowledge*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, pp. 229-254.

128] P. Chmiel, ‘Scoprendo le due fedì...’, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

129] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D20, fols. 49r-v (disp. 109, 29.04.1628): ‘*Un Mauro Giorgiano dichiaratosi turco ha seco molti, che continuano nel Rito Greco uno di essi ha detto che il Mauro si era fatto Turco per acquistar co[n]fidenza anc[or]a [...] per poter osservar le forze et li andamenti et li disegni di questi per apportarli danno et pregiudicij.*’

Contarini contrasted his steadfastness with the unresisting conversion to Islam of one of the sons of the viceroy of Sicily (Juan Fernandez Pacheco, Duke of Escalona).¹³⁰

The Venetian interest in Eastern Christians, which was of an intensity unusual among the diplomatic services of Latin Christian states of the epoch, is understandable in light of the large number of Eastern Christians living in the territories of both the Most Serene Republic and the Ottoman Empire. There is also no doubt that the Venetian diplomatic service was interested in these matters in the context of their potential for contributing to a weakening of the sultans' empire. Greek issues may also have been of interest to the Venetian political elite in respect of internal matters, e.g. the effective administration of the Aegean Archipelago. The image of Eastern Christians in the diplomats' reports seems on the whole to be realistic: apart from hopes for an imminent Greek insurrection, which were tempered by more critical voices of other Venetian envoys to Constantinople, they contain no clear expressions of attempts to create a major alliance with Eastern Christians in order to unravel the fabric of the Empire.

All this meticulously gathered information shows that the authorities of the Republic monitored the political sympathies and problems of the Eastern Christians, recognizing the potential for leveraging positive contacts with them and the political entities they created. The representatives of the Most Serene Republic also granted aid to some Eastern Christians in the form of certificates and permits. Paradoxically, such gestures were the clearest evidence of the political and cultural community which the Venetian political elites claimed to share with the Greeks or the Armenians (since such documents were not issued to Muslims).

Commonality of religion also contributed to a perception of the Eastern Christians as potential allies, even if they were outside (Latin) Christendom. On the Venetian political and cultural map they were a *sui generis* category whose uniqueness was visible in their lack of stable political representation and their confessional situation, which aroused sympathy and empathy for the persecution that they experienced from Muslim rulers, but was also a source of political problems or ambivalence. Obviously, from a cultural and religious standpoint Eastern Christians were closer to the Most Serene Republic than Persia was, and they were not suspected of endangering other Christian states through their expansiveness. On the other hand, they ranked lower among Venice's

[130] Report by Bailo Simone Contarini (1612), pp. 567-568, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 473-602.

imagined allies than the socially, politically, and militarily stable Persia, which was valued for its political order and developed culture.

Commenting on the political and confessional situation of Venice in the broader historical perspective, William McNeill observed that between 1573 and c. 1630 *La Serenissima* was in the 'greatest harmony, never achieved earlier' with the world of Eastern Christianity, which was due to their shared aversion to papal policy.¹³¹ McNeill's conclusion, inspired by his focus on connections between the Orthodox Christian world and Venice—understandable in a period when those motifs were less exposed in historiography than they are now—mainly references divergences between the policies of the ecumenical and multicultural Venice and the integrist Rome. It also focuses on the period when the political aims of the Republic and of Eastern Christians were at their most confluent. In a later epoch, due to the shrinkage of the Venetian dominion, the changing image of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, and the increasing importance of new players (including Russia, which attracted the attention of the Caucasian states above all), the synergy described above between the political aims of Venice and the Eastern Christians was reduced significantly. Something similar happened in the case of Persia. The idea of a wide-reaching anti-Ottoman alliance, which inspired the imagination of certain authors and—probably to a lesser extent—diplomats, was never implemented in practice. However, it was an important element of their reflections and the reports in which they recorded information on the political and religious identification of their presumptive allies and on the political and military relations of those countries and nations with the Ottoman Empire. As we will see in the next chapter, the interest in converts and hidden religious identities mentioned by McNeill, which also shaped policy on relations with the Catholic clergy, did not extend only to Persian or Georgian monarchs, but was also visible in the practical aspects of relations between Venetian diplomatic personnel and individuals who crossed the boundary between Christendom and the world of Islam: missionaries, converts, and slaves.

131] W. McNeill, *Venezia. Il cardine d'Europa 1081-1797*, Roma: Il Veltro, 1984, p. 271.

CHAPTER V

BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTENDOM: INDIVIDUALS. THE WORK OF THE VENETIAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

(a) Missionaries

The Venetian diplomatic service did not focus solely on the macro-issues described in previous chapters, but also extended support to cultural intermediaries from Christendom in the Orient, such as missionaries. The diplomats of the Most Serene Republic were keen to maintain contact with such individuals in the Ottoman Empire and on its fringes, above all in order to leverage their presence as a means of strengthening the prestige of the Republic and the structures of Latin Christianity, and of protecting other Christians living in the Empire. However, the reach and practices of Venetian diplomatic personnel in this area were not uniform, and depended largely on the order to which a given missionary belonged.

Naturally, the baili presented themselves as defenders of Christians, and strove to protect this confessional group within the Ottoman

Empire. To this end they tasked themselves with the protection of sacred sites in Jerusalem, and of Christians in Constantinople, the Ottoman territories, and, indirectly, in the *Stato da Mar*.¹ These roles were a discernible part of their everyday work, even though they were undertaken for the benefit of a relatively small group of people. It is not clear exactly how many Latin Christians lived in the Ottoman Empire. According to estimates by Charles Frazee,² there were some six hundred Catholics, mainly merchants, living in Constantinople in the later sixteenth century, and there may have been around three thousand altogether in the Ottoman state, including two thousand slaves.³ At that time there were twelve Catholic churches in the Empire's capital, nine of them in Galata.

The place of the various orders, missions, and individual Latin Christians in the work of the Venetian diplomats is reflected in the surprisingly large volume of matters relating to the service and day-to-day needs of friars referenced in the diplomatic documents, with some dispatches even being dedicated in their entirety to such issues. Specific instructions on these issues were conveyed to the envoys of the Republic by representatives of the Venetian ruling class. The beneficiaries of this aid can generally be categorized into two main groups: the 'old orders' (*vecchie religioni*)—the Dominicans and the Franciscan family, excluding the Capuchins—and the 'new' ones (literally: 'novelties', *novità*), which were supported by other states, above all by

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- 1] Cf. report by bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), p. 723, [in:] RAV *Firpo XIII*, pp. 669-735: '*Ho sostenuto con la mano di Dio, e difeso il culto della nostra santa Religione in Gerusalemme, ove quelli santi luoghi furono costituiti a tempo mio in evidente procinto di perdersi. [...] Così m'è successo, in altri luoghi dell'Imperio ed in Costantinopoli, delle Chiese che in quel tempo stettero per cadere. Ho sottratti dalla pena della morte più d'una volta Religiosi ed altri sudditi di Vostra Serenità, alcuni innocenti, altri non senza colpa.*' Cf. also E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nations, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. 31.
 - 2] C. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 72.
 - 3] Slightly different data are provided by E.R. Dursteler (*Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 153): according to him, there were around 500 Catholics in Constantinople in 1550. The 1550 census identified 40,000 Christian houses (compared to 60,000 Muslim and 4,000 Jewish houses). Angelo Alessandri makes mention of seven churches in Constantinople during his mission: St Francis and St Mary, run by the Franciscan friars, St Peter (Dominican friars), St George (Capuchins), St Benedict (Jesuits), St John the Baptist, St Sebastian, and three churches that had been taken over by the Ottoman authorities shortly before he wrote his report: St Nicholas, another St Mary, and St Anthony in Galata (report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), pp. 679-680, [in:] RAV *Pedani*, pp. 635-683).

the king of France and the pope. The Venetian authorities considered above all the Capuchins and the Jesuits to be representatives of these 'new orders', but they also treated members of other religious orders operating in the Ottoman Empire with similar mistrust. Generally, the baili were asked to provide support to the orders which had traditionally sought the protection of the Most Serene Republic, and to counteract the spread of 'new' ones, whose expansion—perceived as aggressive by the Venetian officials—might provoke a reaction from the Ottoman authorities.⁴ The role assumed by the Republic was not only to foster and promote 'old orders' in the Ottoman Empire and the *Stato da Mar*, but also to ensure that priests who were not subjects of the doge would not be posted to newly established monasteries.⁵ The Venetian authorities were keen to monitor the selection of friars leaving for missions. This was probably due to their concern to avoid damage to the prestige of Venice and to the efficiency of its diplomatic activities if the missionaries offended the local population with their behaviour, even if this were due to a provocation.

4] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fols. 38v-39r (*Al Bailo à Costantinopoli*, 24.03.1629): *'Intorno alli gravissimi pregiudicij, che si van[n]o ricevendo dalle Religioni estranee, che van[n]o capitando nel paese Ottomano, molte sono le com[m]issioni, che vi havemo dato per divertirli in quanto vi sia possibile, et così le andate esercitando in piena maniera; ma dove chiaramente si comprende esservi pensiero di andarsi giornalmente inasprendo di disegni, contener fermar le rissolutioni di missione de' Cap[p]ucini, Giesuiti, et altre Religioni, con diverse sug[g]estioni à populi, con procurar alienatione loro dalle vecchie Religioni, con seminar Zizanie, et altre vie indebite vogliono levar alla n[ost]ra Rep[ubbli]ca la soprintendenza, che sempre ne hà tenuta: Doverete Voi per quanto sarà in poter v[ost]ro opponervi destramente, et sostentar con la via placida, et quieta, senza mostrarvene molto interessato; Le predette Religioni vecchie, considerando le dipendenze dalle nuove, li loro fini, et quanto finalmente saran[n]o dan[n]ose alli stessi interessi de Turchi, perche dovremo pur sperare, che maturando meglio il negotio, siano per pigliar qualche temperamento, et possa terminar il tutto con reciproca sodisfattione.'*

5] This is echoed in the instructions sent to one bailo concerning the foundation of a monastery on the island of Tinos / Tine—ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 45r (6.04.1629): *'Padre Raimondo, al quale farete saper dovuta n[ost]ra risoluta esser; che li Padri, che si doveran[n]o condurre in quell'Isola siano sempre sudditi n[ost]ri, in tutte le parti dipendenti dalla Rep[ubbli]ca, et che di altre nationi vi saran[n]o certam[en]te giammai admessi, et come concorrero volentieri à dar questa sodisfattione alla sua Religione, de noi grandemente amata, così è ben di dovere, che in fortezza tanto principale, et gelosa, non vi entrino altri soggetti, et siano de vita esemplare, de costumi venerandi, diano con l'esempio buona edificazione à popoli, et nell'educatione de figlioli habbiano mira principale all'honor del S[igno]r Dio, et alle n[ost]re sodisfattioni; assicurandolo che con questi mezi può esser certo esso Padre Raimondo della buona dispositione nostra verso gli interessi della sua Religione [...].'*

The most important function of the bailo in the field of religious affairs seems to have been to protect existing sites of Catholic cult.⁶ Aside from the primary purpose of this duty, which was to meet the needs of the Latin population, it also had a clear political dimension: it offset the impression made by the reports of persecutions of Christians—a recurrent motif in descriptions of Ottoman tyranny. For this reason the churches in Pera / Galata, described as ‘ornaments of the Christian world’ were frequently discussed in diplomatic documents.⁷ The secretary of the Venetian mission, Angelo Alessandri, reported that over the course of his mission the Ottomans seized three churches in Constantinople, among them one attended by members of several faiths or denominations.⁸ Bailo Cappello was instructed to block attempts to close down the Church of the Virgin Mary in Galata.⁹ The baili were also asked to intervene when churches were desecrated (as in the case of the tabernacle in Smyrna / Izmir in 1629).¹⁰ Alessandri observed that the threat to Catholic churches in Constantinople was twofold: from the ill will of the sultans, and from the unwillingness of their subjects to tolerate the Catholic cult.¹¹

6] Cf. the observation by Bailo Alvise Contarini (report dated 1641, p. 785, [in:] RAV *Firpo XIII*, pp. 773-888).

7] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 81r (*All'Amb[asciato]r à Roma*, 7.08.1627): ‘*ornamento della Christianità*’.

8] Report by secretary Angelo Alesandri (1637), op. cit., p. 678.

9] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fols. 96r-v (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopo]li, et al suo pross[imo] successor*, 16.10.1629): ‘*Il pericolo, che ci rapp[rese]ntate di quella Chbiesa della Madon[n]a in Cost[antinopo]li molesto quanto più dir si possa ci riesce, considerando l'ornamento che perderebbe il Christianesimo, et il ius, che perderebbe la Rep[ubbl]ica di quella Chiesa; in quella Città preservatasi sola si lungamente con tanti nostri ufficij, et interessi, doverete però voi [...] impiegare tutto lo spirito, et l'opera per divertire si pernicioso concetto, et con le considerazioni, con le istanze, et con q[ual]che spesa volemo che in ogni modo procuriate di sostenere quella Chbiesa, ma quando in fine vedeste prevalere la malignità di quei particolari Turchi alla soddisfat[io]ne della Rep[ubbl]ica al desiderio degli babitanti Christiani, et al servizio della Porta medesima nel riceverli, et allettarli alla dimora, volgerete le v[ost]re premure in questo compiacimento almeno, che sia da Turchi assignato posto, et permessa licenza di fabbricarne in Const[antinopo]li altra Chbiesa in cambio di quella che smantlar si volesse, et di ogni avidente, speranza, et frutto in questa maniera, che tanto ci preme, et per tanti capi, aspetteremo gli avisi v[ost]ri.*’

10] *Ibidem*, c. 96r: ‘*Quel rubamento fatto nella Chbiesa di Smirne del Tabernacolo, col Sanc[tiss]mo Sacramento, ne ha recata una ben grave com[m]otione, per la quale, si come desideressimo, che ne havesse quel Vice Console ottenuta la ricuperatione, cosi molto ne piacerebbe, che quei Garzoni de Gianizzeri ò chi ne fossero stati gli autori, non andassero impuniti, e se a questo n[ost]ro desiderio potessero gli ufficij v[ost]ri o giovevoli, et opportuni, ben volentieri li sentiremmo in ciò impiegati, per divertir anco il pregiuditto dell'esempio in altri casi, et in altre Chbiese.*’

11] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., pp. 678-679.

A second important task of the bailo was to provide support to 'old orders' active in the Orient. This support could take various forms, but in most cases it was financial assistance. The Franciscans and Dominicans could certainly rely on pecuniary support from Venetian envoys, and the authorities of the Republic expressed their approbation of the baili's decisions in this regard.¹² In 1631 Bailo Cappello wrote a report on friars who benefited from Venetian state support during their time in Constantinople. The report mentioned thirteen friars: nine Franciscans (among them six observants) and four Dominicans. Twelve of them received a salary, of thirty reals, from the Republic. Among them was one Raimondo da Brescia, chaplain to Bailo Giustinian during Giustinian's mission to the imperial court in Vienna and his subsequent bailate. Raimondo da Brescia had been superior general of the Dominicans 'in these parts', as the receiving state was often called in the dispatches, since 1623. Cappello described the friar as a zealous servant of God who acted in obedience to the will of the doge and his representatives, and was thus deserving also of remuneration from the state. The bailo also lauded a number of other Dominican monks: Ottavio Riva, and two friars called Faustino and Andrea, as well as five Franciscan friars. The purpose of the bailo's plaudits was to justify which friars were entitled to a salary from the Most Serene Republic. This must have been quite a difficult task, because the bailo had only three salaries at his disposal to be divided up among the six Franciscan observants.¹³

The baili's involvement in the cause of missionaries in the Orient also took other forms. They regularly mediated in conflicts arising within monasteries that threatened to influence the friars' service and thus lead to scandal. This may be attested by an attempt by Bailo Foscarini to resolve a dispute in the Franciscan monastery in Galata.¹⁴

12] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 177v (*Al Bailo in Constant[inopo]li*, 8.03.1634): '*Al Padre Presidente Vecchio di S[an]ta Maria di Galatà riconosciamo per giusto, et conveniente l'assegnamento concessogli dà voi di una delle due pensioni, che erano godute dalli due P[ad]ri del med[esim]o monastero andati in Gerusalem, onde si potrà continuarglielo fermo, e senza dubbio alcuno del modo, et fin quando vi parerà bene.*'

13] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 112, fol. 81r (disp. 110, 19.04.1631). Cf. e.g. the opinion on Raimondo da Brescia: '*molto zelante del culto del S[igno]r Dio, et affatto dipendente da V[ost]ra Ser[eni]tà e suoi Rappresentanti, degno certo della pub[bli]ca protett[io]ne perciò gode il privilegio della pensione.*'

14] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 187r (disp. 20, 20.05.1633): '*Nel monastero di questi Padri Zoccolanti di S[an]ta Maria di Galatà continuano sempre maggiori le discordie tra di loro [...] non senza pericolo di qualche grave scandalo, et sebbene io faccio ogn'opera*

In this context the Venetian authorities' insistence on the need for properly qualified candidates (*soggetti qualificati*) for religious missions becomes clear. Instructions to this effect were repeatedly conveyed to the baili,¹⁵ who were sometimes asked to try to influence the behaviour of certain friars that was considered improper by senior Venetian foreign policy makers.¹⁶ Exhortations regarding a considered choice of missionaries to the Levant were directed by the Venetian authorities to representatives of the respective orders, sometimes on an informal basis.¹⁷ The need for suitable candidates—as a remedy for the decline in the number of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire—was also stressed by Angelo Alessandri. He observed that the clergymen who served during his mission in Constantinople led 'unusually exemplary lives'.¹⁸ It is worth noting that this concern for the recruitment of the right candidates sometimes constituted a veiled intent to exclude foreigners from their number. Bailo Venier, for instance, was worried about the arrival of a large number of 'foreign fathers', who might cause numerous scandals.¹⁹

per sedarle, conosco nondimeno, che elle non possono terminarsi, che ò coll'arrivo del Guardiano, che con desiderio sto' aspettando, ò con la partenza di questi doi Reformati, che vado con desterità procurando, e spero possi seguire con l'Internuntio di Polonia; per il qual buon effetto, mi conte[n]terò agevolarli la strada con qualche picciola cortesia.'

- 15] Cf. e.g.: ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 23lv (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopo]li*, 19.12.1630): '*Del vantaggio, et necessità di buoni Religiosi in coteste parti, havemo noi senso conforme, et sempre havemo scritto, come anco ultimamente à Roma, perche sia conosciuto questo bisogno, et vi si provega, quando occorra farsi missione [...] di noui frati, la quale scrivete non esser ne bisognevole, ne deisderata per hora, ce ne scriverete, et cosi se stimaste bene, che alcuno dei frati p[rese]nti si cambiasse, p[er]che procureremo, che ne vengano de' migliori, et de nostri sudditi.'*
- 16] *Ibidem*, fol. 53v (*Al Bailo*, 26.05.1629): '*D'intorno à quel Vicario Patriarcale fratte francescano, che paporta tanti scandali, et inobedienze agli ordini del suo Superiore, non vedemo, che poter operar d'avantaggio à Roma, essendo stati pienissimi gli ufficij, che havemo per l'addietro passato; Tutta via se ne sarà da Voi raccordato a q[ua]lch[e] altro espediente, che possa farlo avvertito del Suo mal procedere.'*
- 17] APF, SOCG 33 (*Lettere di Venezia 1641*), fol. 14r: '*Mi è stato avvertito di qualcheduno di questi S[igno]ri, che sia necessario haver buona considerazione nell'elettione de' Missionarij per Levante, credo mossi dall'infelice resolut[i]one delli doi frati Minor'Osservanti, et particolar[m]en[te] mi è stato messo in considerat[i]one, che si habbia riguardo di Siciliani, Calabresi, et Regnicoli, che se bene mostreno nelle maniere boni costumi riescono alla fine pessimi, come cervelli Vertiginosi.'*
- 18] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), *op. cit.*, p. 680.
- 19] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D19, fol. 61r (disp. 16, 15.05.1627): '*[Bailo-PC.] ha inteso [...] la venuta à Const[antinopo]li di molti padri forastieri, spera, che anco à questi dissordini sia per esser applicato il conveniente rimedio, et divertire li Scandali che possono succedere.'*

The close attention paid to the careful choice of candidates for missions in the Orient may be more understandable if we analyse the fate of Ottavio Riva as described by Bailo Cappello only shortly after his positive assessment of the friar.²⁰ The facts are difficult to reconstruct: from Cappello's dispatches we only know that Fr Ottavio was seen in women's clothing at the palace of the governor of Galata, after which he was led through a hostile crowd to a court. On receiving this information, the bailo sent Dragoman Grillo to the place and himself contacted a high-ranking Ottoman official (*caimacan*). The dignitary was initially unwilling to have the friar released, but the promise of personal financial compensation elicited his consent. Father Ottavio, who admitted having worn a garment which he described as a '*ferezie*' under his habit, but denied that this constituted women's clothing, was provided by the bailo with the necessary financial assistance to leave for Candia. Commenting on the case in a dispatch, Bailo Cappello expressed his satisfaction at the fact that the case had not attracted too much publicity, and added that he had paid both sums in order to resolve the matter, since he stood in great awe of the friar's religious zeal. This case shows that even highly respected clergymen under the protection of the Venetian authorities could cause unexpected situations with the potential to damage the prestige of Venice.

Another of the bailo's duties related to confessional issues was to inform the Venetian authorities of the arrival of new friars in Constantinople.²¹ They might also be expected to host missionaries; in 1629 Bailo Venier received in his residence two Dominican friars who were en route to Crimea to support a local mission.²² Diplomats of the Republic were also expected to intervene in cases involving clergymen; Bailo Cappello, for instance, was instructed to provide assistance to the Venetian bishop of Paphos, who had reported concerns for his own safety.²³ Where necessary the baili negotiated the redemption of clergymen from slavery, as testified by Bailo

20] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 112, fols. 134r-136r (disp. 116, 6.05.1631).

21] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D22, fol. 22r (disp. 25, 30.04.1630): '*avvisa l'arrivo di tre Padri dominicani*'.

22] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fol. 162 r, (disp. 188, 28.04.1629).

23] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 96v (*Al Bailo à Const[antinop]li, et al suo pross[imo] successor, 16.10.1629*): '*Il Vescovo nuovo di Paffo, che è n[ost]ro Venetiano ci ha p[rese]ntata l'aggionta supplica per il comandamento del Gran S[igno]re del possesso; et sicurezza di lui, et voi lo procurerete conforme al solito.*'

Foscarini.²⁴ Furthermore, the Venetian legation rendered standard consular services to missionaries, including the issue of certificates documenting their work in the Orient.²⁵ It is, however, difficult to clarify whether membership of an ‘old order’ was or might have been useful in obtaining favourable treatment in administrative or penal proceedings performed by diplomatic or consular staff on behalf of the Republic. I found only one mention of such a case directly involving a member of this group in the consular archives of the bailate that I analysed. It concerned a Franciscan friar called Milino, previously exiled from the territories of the Most Serene Republic, whose sentence was commuted by the bailo—in a *salvacondotto*—but this was due to the monk’s poor health and poverty, rather than to his religious affiliation or suitability for missionary work.²⁶

Venetian diplomats sometimes also lent their support to Eastern Christian (especially Greek) clergymen. This tended to be on an incidental basis, and not as a rule mandated by the capital,²⁷ though it was commended in instructions sent to the baili. The Venetian authorities welcomed with satisfaction, for instance, the aid extended by the bailo to the Greek patriarch of Constantinople with the aim of winning his support for the Republic.²⁸ Representatives of

24] ASVe, *Disp. Cost. r.* D23a, fol. 88r (disp. 82, 23.06.1634): ‘*Libera S[ua] E[ccelenza] un frate dominicano che venuto alle mani con un Turco era in pericolo.*’

25] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 6, fol. 18v (4.07.1615): ‘*[frate Giovanni Nicicoli Piccinini–P.C.] hà fatto opere di carità, et essercitij spirituali con molto zelo di religione predicando con gran concorso di popolo d’ogni statione con frutto et salute delle anime nelle Chiese ne bagni à poveri schiavi et nelle prigioni.*’ Baili also issued certificates confirming that such clergymen were travelling to Jerusalem for worship (‘*per sua divotione*’), cf. a certificate dated 6.05.1637 issued free of charge (‘*gratis*’) to Domenico Vedulato, [in:] *ibidem*, booklet 13, c. 3v.

26] ASVe, BAC 298, booklet 17, fol. [6r], no. 12 (4.03.1641): ‘*Mossi noj da diversi importanti rispetti habbiamo voluto concedere come in virtù delle p[rese]nti concedono a d[ett]o gra[n]de n[ost]rano Milino franciscano Libero, e Sicuro Salvo condotto d’anni cinque da principiargli dalla pub[blicazio]ne delle p[rese]nti di poter andar star e francam[en]te praticar in ogni Luoco proibitogli nella Sentenza, senza poter esser offeso ne molestato d’alcuno. Non potento però sotto qual si sia pretesto andar star ne praticar nella Città di Candia, nè cinque miglia d’intorno, et il p[rese]nte n[ost]ro suffragio resti sottoposto al beneplacito dell’Ecc[ellentissimo] S[igno]r P[rocurato]r G[e]n[er]al [...].*’

27] However cf.: ASVe, *Delib. Cost. f.* 19, fol. 35r (*Al Bailo à Costantinopoli*, 24.03.1629): ‘*Con cotesto R[everendissimo] Patriarca Greco [...] Volemo gli siano da Voi per nome del Senato predetto dati in dono reali trecento in contanti, meritandolo le sue virtù.*’

28] ASVe, *Delib. Cost. r.* 19, fol. 210v (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopo]li*, 10.08.1630): ‘*L’offerte v[ost]re al Patriarca Greco, et ogni favore impiegato per sollevarlo dalle indebite molestie, s’incontrano co[n] la n[ost]ra soddisfattione, et gratitudine, mentre egli s’è dimostrato sempre molto divoto, et inchinato agli interessi della Rep[ubbl]ica, et anderete accertandolo sempre del n[ost]ro sincero affetto verso il bene, et prosperità sua.*’

La Serenissima would also meet Orthodox bishops to discuss current affairs with them.²⁹ The baili also received requests for intervention in cases involving Eastern Christians, such as the community of Cypriot Maronites whose churches had been occupied by a Greek bishop.³⁰ Moreover, the consular archives of the bailate show evidence of individual cases of cooperation with Orthodox clergymen. The bailo's chancery issued travel certificates (*patenti*) to Greeks leaving for Christendom, for example to beg for alms,³¹ or to raise money, such as the Greek monks who travelled to the Latin West to collect funds for the renovation of their destroyed monastery.³²

Another of the baili's standard responsibilities was protection of sacred sites and of the Franciscans who took care of the shrines in Jerusalem.³³ The importance of this mission is reflected in the many documents of instruction dispatched to Constantinople,³⁴ and in the frequency with which it was referenced in the baili's dispatches. Information from the Holy Land described the difficulties faced by the friars working there and the antipathy of the local authorities, who tried to extort large sums of money from the clergymen. In such

29] Cf. e. g. ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 110, fol. 303r (disp. 33, 4.05.1630): the bailo is referring to his encounter with the Greek bishop with jurisdiction for regions including the island of Andros, who was moving to that island to take office in the diocese.

30] *Ibidem*, fol. 397 (disp. 45, December 1630): '[...] lettera nella quale son ricercato procurar per P[ad]ri Maronitti nel Regno di Cipro la chiesa usurpata dall'Arcivescovo di Greci, io senza passar più oltre hò scritto al Console sod[ett]o per l'informazione di questo negotio, che nel resto vadi cancellato, et io di fatto per quei degni rispetti, per li qual V[ost]ra Ser[en]ità mi commette la necessaria circospettione in casi simili.'

31] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 10, fol. 10v (1.12.1628): 'Havendo noi nelle mani di Mana Apostoli altre patenti e particolarment[e] a questo R[everendiss]imo Pat[riar]ca Greco, che attesta la sua calamità e miseria con conseguenze pericolose di perder in queste parti la sua povera famiglia, Noi promossi da carità e comis[.]jando il suo stato babb[iam]o voluto, rissolvendo ella partir per X[ristiani]tà conceder le p[rese]nti n[ost]re raccomandarla, come facciamo alla pietà di X[ristia]ni, accioche soccorsa col mezzo delle loro elemosine possa consolata presentarsi con la sua povera famiglia fuori di questi Paesi.'

32] For example cf. ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 10, fol. 13r (9.06.1629).

33] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fols. 118v-119r (*Al Bailo in Const[antinopo]li*, 28.10.1633): 'Il proteggere li santi luoghi in q[ue]lle parti vivame[n]te resta fisso, come fù sempre in noi, et ogni buon effetto, che ne segua ci riuscirà pur sempre carissimo, ben vorremmo che nelle differenze del Sant[iss]imo Presepio tra li padri franciscani, et gli Ecclesiastici Greci, salvi li rispetti d[e]lla n[ost]ra continuata, nè mai interrotta antica pietà, s'incontrasse il terminarli in quiete.'

34] *Ibidem*, fol. 69r (*Al Bailo in Const[antinopo]li*, 7.05.1633): 'Riuscirano d'intiera sodisfattione al Senato tutti li uffitij, et più efficaci, et più proprij, che anderete facendo à q[ue]lla Porta per la conservatione de santi luoghi di Gerusalem alla custodia de Padri Zoccolanti per confirmar sempre più l'antichità del loro possesso nei medesimi santi luoghi.'

situations the baili intervened with the central Ottoman authorities. Sometimes they also acted on behalf of Eastern Christians. Bailo Cappello reported one such case, in which he promised to approach the mufti of Constantinople on behalf of the Greeks and Armenians.³⁵ Moreover, the Venetian envoys were tasked with settling internal disputes among the Franciscans serving in the Holy Land.³⁶ As well as the baili, the consuls residing in Aleppo also cooperated on the protection of the shrines in Jerusalem; it was evidently easier for them to contact local Ottoman officials and thus resolve problems. As is clear from an observation made by Consul Michele, it might have been easier to prevent litigious situations if the authorities of the various orders selected candidates for their missions in the Orient more carefully, and urged the friars only to take the most vital items with them, so as not to provoke residents of the Ottoman Empire to robbery.³⁷

The consuls in Aleppo had more frequent contacts with friars serving in the Holy Land than did the baili, and they tried to keep the Venetian authorities informed of the missionaries' activities. In 1621, for instance, a local consul mentioned the visit of the custodian of a monastery in Jerusalem, Tommaso da Navarra, who engaged in some (unsuccessful) projects with the aim of encouraging Eastern Christians to convert

35] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 112, fol. 27r (disp. 102, 22.03.1631): *'Ricevo dalli Padri di Gierusalem avisi dell'insopportabile avaritia di quel Cadì, che ha fatto una dimanda di 10 mila ceccbini con protesta in caso contrario di gettarli à terra in convento; per lo che s'era risoluto il Guardiano con il Drag[oman]no e Proc[urato]re, sotto pretesto di negotij alluntanarsi per qualche giorno in Nazaret. L'istessi tiranniche pretensioni essercita il d[ett]o Cadì con li Greci, et Armeni, li quali han[n]o tutti unitam[en]te scritto di quà a suoi corrispondenti, et al Patriarcha di Gierusalem, che qui ancora si ritrova, perché siano passate le indoglianze necessarie presso i Grandi, et il Muftù in particolare. Io che farò i proprij uff[i]ci con ogn'uno, procurerò insieme, che questi altri interessati operino in conformità per gli ordini necessarj, et risoluti in simil proposito, seben spero che gli comandam[en]ti inviati, e non ancora à loro pervenuti possino mortificar i sensi di quel Ministro.'*

36] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 121, fol. 374r (disp. 193, 9.07.1640): *'Nel negotio dei Santi Luochi, devo rap[prese]ntare à V[ost]ra Ser[en]ità, come è capitato qui il Patriarca di Gierusalem, il quale ha fatto chiamar da lui il Guardiano della Madonna Com[m]issario di Terra Santa già dichiarato il suo buon desiderio, acciò si trovi in avvenire qualche aggiustamento, che levi li litigij frà le due nationi, et il profitto à Turchi di questo religioso incanto.'* The activities of the Franciscans in the Holy Land were closely observed by the Turks, c.f. G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo oltre le crociate. La guerra turca nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento tra leggende e realtà*, Torino: UTET, 2011, p. 418; Poumarède describes the interesting case of the restoration of the monastery of San Salvatore in the mid-seventeenth century. The friars' activities were interpreted by the local authorities as attempts to build a citadel.

37] Report by Consul Pietro Michele (1584), pp. 72-73, [in:] G. Berchet, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria*, Torino: Paravia, 1866, pp. 65-73.

to the Latin rite.³⁸ Similarly, Consul Alvise Pesaro reported on issues related to sacred sites in Jerusalem, because he understood that they were of interest to those who read his dispatches in Venice.³⁹

Another task of the Venetian diplomats was to keep their headquarters informed of the establishment of 'new orders' in the Orient. They were also empowered to counteract such attempts.⁴⁰ Bailo Correr reported on the popularity of such 'new' orders in Asia Minor and Syria.⁴¹ One of his successors, Giovanni Cappello, was concerned about the arrival in Jerusalem of subjects of the French king, who was perceived as a facilitator of the settlement of 'new' orders in the Holy Land. Cappello averred that many of the clergymen in such orders tended to pay more attention to state than religious issues.⁴² His comments also reveal his antipathy towards the Jesuits' role in corrupting the Ottoman administration in order to have the Greek patriarch Lucaris removed from his office.⁴³ Similarly, consul Alvise Pesaro observed with concern the installation of a group of Discalced

38] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 1, disp. 18 (15.08.1621): '*[Fra Tomaso da Navarra] s'attrova in queste Parti, dove hà più volte trattato con questi Christiani, Armeni, Maroniti, Et Caldei, per ridurlri al rito latino, havendo anco in questo negotio fatto qualche proffitto, mà non già quale si prometteva.*'

39] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 2, fol. 30r (disp. 20, 12.02.1627): '*quelli Santis[s]imi Luochi de quali sò molto bene quanto V[ost]ra Ser[eni]tà si fosse interessata.*'

40] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 120r (*Al Bailo in Const[antinopoli]*, 5.11.1633): '*[...] comettemo col Senato di avertir in ciò con la vostra solita virtù, et prudenza, che non ci resti pregiudicato, mà vi si mantenghi inalterabile il luoco, et intiera la parte, et la dignità godutane sempre dalla Rep[ubbli]ca col merito longhissimo de suoi giusti titoli, che da' simili tentativi non può, non deve esser mai punto oscurato, scrivendone ancora, voi alli consuli nostri in Aleppo, et in Cairo, per scoprire, se parimenti in quei suoi consulati francesi tentassero novità, pur avvertendoli di non admettere, mà anzi di divertirle con piacevolezza, et desterità quando fossero tentate, principalmente perché non resti anco fatto pregiudito al nostro fine mag[gio]re di esercitare, et cavar; ivi frutti sempre più abbondanti della protezione à Cattolici dagl'ordinarij antichi istituti d[e]lla n[ost]ra pietà.*'

41] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), p. 237, [in:] RAV *Pedani*, pp. 225-257.

42] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 110, fol. 435r (disp. 47, January 1630): '*quelli, che sotto il manto di Religione trattano materie di Stato.*'

43] Ibidem: '*Questi Gesuiti sono huomini cattivi: hanno fatto venir da Roma XX mila Cecchini, et offertili al Re per deponer il Patriarca Greco.*' In this dispatch Bailo Cappello recalls events that occurred in 1622-1623, when the patriarch Cyril Lucaris was removed from his office on the inspiration of the Jesuits. The friars were supported in their role in this case by the Habsburg and French diplomats. Lucaris was the author of *Confession* (1629), and planned to reform the Orthodox Church by introducing certain Calvinistic solutions. Diplomats from Catholic states perceived the patriarch and his Protestant inclinations as a threat to the stable confessional situation in the Ottoman Empire, and they had him removed from the office of patriarch four times. On the life and activity of Cyril Lucaris cf. V. Nosilia and M. Prandoni (eds.), *Trame controluce: Il patriarca 'protestante' Cirillo Lukaris*, Firenze: Firenze University

Carmelites in Aleppo,⁴⁴ and monitored the movements of two Jesuits living in the town.⁴⁵

Representatives of the Republic were particularly ill-disposed towards two orders: the Capuchins and the Jesuits. Tensions between the Jesuits and *La Serenissima* had a long history, which came to a head in the period of the Interdict imposed on Venice in 1606 by Pope Paul V. As a consequence of this conflict, the Jesuits left the Republic, and they were not allowed to return there even after the end of the conflict.⁴⁶ The Venetian diplomats kept their superiors informed in detail of the advances of the Jesuits,⁴⁷ while the authorities of the Most Serene Republic gave the baili unequivocal orders to take any and all action that could curtail or exclude the activity of the Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire⁴⁸ in order to preserve the confessional *status quo* in the Orient.

Press, 2015; on the events of 1622-1623 cf. G. Hadjiantoniou, *Protestant Patriarch: The Life of Cyril Lucaris (1572-1638)*, *Patriarch of Constantinople*, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961.

44] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 2, fol. 73r (disp. 32, 30.06.1627): 'De gl'andamenti di questi Religiosi io procurerò di essere diligente osservante, et conforme à gli ordini della Ser[en]ità V[ost]ra (...) darò riverente conto.'

45] *Ibidem*, fol. 108r (disp. 5, 5.03.1626): 'Porto finalmente à Vostra Serenità l'ultima partenza delli due Gesuiti, de' i quali gl'ho già tante volte scritto nelle passate mie [lette]re. Mà veramente l'havere abbattuto quegl'inganni, ch'hanno usato per fermare in Alessandretta, à segno, ch'erano fuggiti dà una Nave francese, sulla quale erano imbarcati, et si erano nascosti nei boschi, è stata impresa assai dura, e difficile]. Tuttavia mi vi sono adoperato in modo che un [...] uguale hò defuso i loro artificij, e gli hò finalmente con alcuna spesa fatti non imbarcare mà caricare à viva forza su un Vassello Inglese, per Marsilia, che questi passati giorni hà fatto meta à questa volta. Però come godo d'havere con la mia debolezza posta l'ultima mano a questo negotio, così resto pure col concetto d'haver operato conforme alla mente pubblica, e non infruttuosamente gettata l'opera, e la fatica.'

46] There is a rich literature on the 1606 Interdict and on relations between *La Serenissima* and the Jesuits, cf. e.g. P. Pirri, *L'interdetto di Venezia del 1606 e i Gesuiti: silloge di documenti con introduzione*, Roma: Institutum Historicum, 1959; M. Zanardi (a cura di), *I Gesuiti e Venezia. Momenti e problemi di storia veneziana della Compagnia di Gesù. Atti del convegno di studi, Venezia, 2-5 ottobre 1990*, Padova: Gregoriana, 1994. In 1606 the Theatines and the Jesuits left Venice, cf. G. Cozzi, 'Fortuna e sfortuna della Compagnia di Gesù a Venezia', p. 77, [in:] M. Zanardi, *I Gesuiti e Venezia...*, op. cit., pp. 59-88.

47] ASVe, *Disp. Cost. r. D23a*, fol. 7v (disp. 8, 23.03.1633): 'Progressi de Gesuiti in Aleppo et altre parti'; *Disp. Cost. r. D22*, fol. 12v (disp. 15, 26.03.1630): 'Gesuiti ivi et Cappuccini introdottisi'.

48] ASVe, *Delib. Cost. r. 18*, fols. 36v-37r (*Alli Baili à Const[antinopo]li*, 21.04.1627): 'Havemo in varij tempi cosi pienam[en]te espressa à Voi Giustiniano la n[ost]ra ferma rissoluzione all'usare ogni mezzo per la esclusione dai Stati Ottomani dei Gesuiti, et datovi libertà di spendere quanto convenisse honestam[en]te per questo effetto [...] dipendendo da questi [the Jesuits-P.C.] tutte la alterationi nelle Chiese Latine in q[ue]l Imperio, la mutatione de Religiosi già soliti essere del Stato n[ost]ro in forastieri, per far cadere tutte le cose alla confusione, nella quale si nutriscono, per poter poi nel torbido delli affari appoggiati à cotesto Amb[asciato]r Francese, pensare à cose maggiori, dovete usar il solito della virtù vostra,

This attitude was motivated by the over-zealous operations of the 'new' orders, which, it was feared, could provoke retortion from the Ottoman authorities⁴⁹—concerns which, it seems, in light of a case reported by Bailo Giustinian, may have been justified. According to one dispatch written by him, the Jesuits' activity in Constantinople came to the attention of a high-ranking Ottoman official, who went as far as to make inquiries of the Greek patriarch on the matter.⁵⁰ The representatives of *La Serenissima* in Rome were also actively involved in countering 'new' movements: the Venetian ambassador at the papal court was tasked with discouraging the Pope from entrusting missions in the Orient to 'new' orders. In the autumn of 1627 the instructions sent to Palazzo Venezia in Rome expressed approbation of the activity of the Dominicans, 'an order so numerous and rich in friars capable of satisfying the needs of missions in the Ottoman Empire, unlike the Jesuits, the Theatines, or the Capuchins'.⁵¹

The activity of these latter, supported above all by the French king, was also considered suspicious by representatives of the Venetian administration. In 1631 Bailo Cappello, displeased at the tardiness of a courtesy visit by some Capuchins to the bailate in Constantinople,

perche cadano questi disegni tanto contrarij, et perniciosi ai n[ost]ri interessi, come Voi Giustiniano andate con molta prudenza considerando.'

49] Ibidem, fol. 41r (*All'Amb[asciato]r di Roma*, 24.04.1627): '*la creatione di nuove Chiese nell'Imperio Ottomano, particolar[men]te del Rito Latino, è materia che porta seco conseguenze gravissime non solo per le difficoltà, che incontrerà nell'effettuare questi pensieri nel Mufti Capo di quella Legge et negli professori di essa, ma non vi assentirano giamai li Greci, li Armeni, et quelli delli altri Riti christiani, che vi han[n]o antico Domicilio onde nella confusione di tante novità, sempre dan[n]ose con Turchi, potriano ricever gran nocimento le Religioni antiche.'*

50] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 104, fol. 31r (dep. 693, 13.03.1627): '*Questo Rev[erendiss]mo Patriarca de Greci l'altro giorno in gran Confidenza mi fece sapere esser stato chiamato dal Caimecan, et fattoli un gran rimprovero, che succedendo al p[rese]nte molte novità in proposito de Vescovi, et frati mandati di Franchia nel Paese del Gran S[igno]re egli non l'habbia avisato, et particol[armen]te gli fece mentione del sufragano de frati sudditi de P[rinci]pi nemici, che si trovano nelli conventi di Pera, et de Gesuiti che vanno mettendo il piede dap[er]tutto. Et che egli si trovò con esso Caimecan dicendo, che questi non dipendono da lui: ma dal Pont[efi]ce Romano, et mi soggiunse haver veduto il Caimecan per questo molto commosso; et egli haver fatto buon ufficio seco, che ci preveda à tali disordini, ma senza offesa, ò violenza.'*

51] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 100v (*All'Amb[asciato]r di Roma*, 18.09.1627): '*[the Dominicans-PC.] religione tanto ampia et piena di Sacerdoti che ben potevano supplire al bisogno'; 'tralasciato questo lodevole, et necessario uso, si è atteso dalla Corte Romana à mandar Gesuiti, Theatini, et Capucini, da che ne sono sortiti molte discordie, et ne possono pullulare infinite.'*

declared that this order did not deserve the Republic's trust.⁵² He also reported on the advances of the Capuchins and the Jesuits, whose homilies and willingness to hear confessions produced numerous conversions in the Ottoman capital and on the islands of the Aegean Archipelago.⁵³ One instruction issued to the bailo documents his Venetian supervisors' approval of his action in respect of the Capuchin provincial; he had allegedly persuaded the abbot not to found a house for the order in Cyprus.⁵⁴

Bailo Cappello also reported on an interesting conflict that occurred in 1630. In the February of that year two Capuchins—with the help of a local *kadi*—reportedly evicted the Franciscans from their monastery on the island of Nexia / Naxos. The bailo intervened in the case without delay, and he received a *firman* from the sultan allowing the Franciscans from the Candian province—who recognized the authority of the doge—to continue to use the monastery. Throughout his dealings with the Ottoman authorities in this case, the bailo purposely did not contact the French ambassador, because he expected the latter, known as a protector of the Capuchins, to attempt to frustrate his efforts.⁵⁵

The increasing presence of 'new' orders in the Orient in the first half of the seventeenth century reflected a trend that could not be halted

52] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 111, fol. 221r (disp. 87, 6.01.1631): '[the Capuchins-PC.] *questi diffidenti, per l'assoluta dipendenza, che tengono da Francia in maniera tale, che al mio arrivo a questa carica se non doppo molto tempo venero à vedermi.*'

53] *Ibidem*, fols. 221r-v (disp. 87, 6.01.1631): '*Capucini si vogliarno nelle prediche con profito di gran converso, e Gesuiti nelle confessioni in questa Città, come nell'Isole dell'Arcipelago, dove [donde?-PC.] procedono le adherenze, à favore de Popoli Christiani.*'

54] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 45v (*Al Bailo à Costantinopoli*, 6.04.1629): '*Voì vi sete pienamente incontrato con la n[ost]ra volontà nella risposta vostra al Provinciale de Capuccini, con le quali senza scoprire la nostra intenzione, l'havete per se stesso fatto cadere in risoluzione di non approvare li pensieri de suoi fratelli condursi ad habitare in Cipro.*'

55] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 110, fol. 86v (disp. 14, 3.03.1630): '*Da Nexia, per lettere, che saran[n]o qui occluse, perche V[ostra] Ser[eni]tà con la sua som[m]a prudenza rifletti à quel di più che occorresse in questo proposito intendemo che i Padri di S[an] Fran[ces]co osservanti dell'Annuntziata di Nexia con violenza fatta li dai Padri Capuccini che si ritrovano in quell'Isola e con l'Intervento di un Turco per nome del Cadi sono stati scacciati dal convento con quanto in esso havevano et introdotti i detti Capuccini. [...], instantam[en]te ricercano la publica protezione, per esser restituiti in un possesso, che già 60 anni conservano di quel luogo [...]. Ho subito io Cappello procurato, et ottenuto un comm[endam]to efficace, copia del quale sarà qui aggiunta, mentre in virtù di esso vien commesso il regresso del convento ai Padri sodetti, et in caso che i Capuccini vi si fossero intrusi, ne siano, immediate espulsi, come sperò succederà. Con questo s[igno]r Amb[asciato]r di Francia, col quale viene nelle lett[e]re sodette persuasa la conferenza di questo negotio, io hò osservato il silenzio, per il dubio ragionevole, che con la solita protett[io]ne ai Padri Capuccini, habbi di questo fatta la notitia.*'

by isolated action on the part of the Venetian envoys: a change in the structure of the presence of Catholic orders in the Orient. According to Consul Gritti's profile of the confessional situation in Aleppo, the Capuchins, invited to the city by the French consul, launched their activity there in 1628. There were five brothers altogether, and they provided pastoral services in French. They also planned to persuade the Venetian consul to allow them to celebrate the liturgy for subjects of the doge, but they did not obtain his approval. Members of other orders active in Aleppo besides the Capuchins were three Carmelite monks (from France, Florence, and Genoa), and the Jesuits. The only congregation in Aleppo that enjoyed the doge's trust was the Conventual Franciscans, which was composed of Venetians and subjects of other Italian rulers.⁵⁶

The change in the structure of the presence of missionary orders in the Orient was connected with the appearance of new actors attempting to fill the space hitherto occupied by Venice. The French king hoped that his ambassadors in Constantinople would become the principal defenders of Latin Christians in the Ottoman Empire. During the pontificates of Gregory XV (1621-1623) and Urban VIII (1623-1644) the papacy also launched expansive missionary activity which, though not actually directed at the Ottoman Empire, absorbed the attention of Venetian diplomats for geographical reasons (missionaries going to Persia and Georgia passed through territories governed by the sultan; moreover, significant participation by the Jesuits was evident in the new wave of missionary activity). Nonetheless, it was France that was the main rival of *La Serenissima* and after 1600 came to be considered by Christians living in the Ottoman Empire as the main advocate of their interests.⁵⁷ To a certain degree the Ottoman authorities also began to see France in this role: in 1606 the sultan issued a *firman* permitting the French ambassador to exercise protection over the Dominicans, whom the Venetian representatives considered an 'old' religion under the auspices of the Republic.⁵⁸

56] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 4, fol. 180r (disp. 6, 4.03.1630), cf. i.a.: '[the Capuchins-PC.] furono à chiedermi licentia di far cerca di tutti questi Mercanti, et Sudditi di V[ost]ra Ser[eni]tà, per meglio provedere alla maggior perfezione della loro Chiesa, et Abitacione; ma non le seguì di ottenerla, havendole detto che li Sudditi della Ser[eni]tà V[ost]ra tengono l'obbligo della loro Chiesa.'

57] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 31.

58] C. Frazee, *Catholics...*, op. cit., p. 80.

Suraya Faroqhi observes that the French-Turkish capitulations gave grounds for the recognition of the king of France as the protector of Christians in the Holy Land.⁵⁹ It should thus be unsurprising that envoys of the Most Serene Republic often voiced fears regarding the activities of the ‘most Christian king’ (*christianissimo*) in religious matters. An example is provided by Bailo Cappello in the margins of his observations on the increasing presence of the Capuchins and the Jesuits in the Ottoman territories.⁶⁰ The endeavours of the French ambassador in Constantinople to become recognized as the exclusive protector of missionaries in the Ottoman Empire were confirmed by other sources: one clergyman reported having been asked by the French diplomat to approach him on every problematic issue. The diplomat advised the cleric against turning to the bailo, who, he claimed, was involved in negotiating numerous territorial disputes with the Ottoman authorities.⁶¹ Moreover, in a conversation with Bailo Foscarini the French ambassador stressed that he could not tolerate a representative of any other ruler being asked for protection on confessional issues; Foscarini replied that the Republic was extensively involved in protection of both shrines and clergymen, and its role in this regard could not be called into question.⁶²

59] S. Faroqhi, ‘The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire (1600-1630)’, 364, *The Journal of European Economic History* 15 (1986), 345-384.

60] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 111, fols. 221r and 222r (disp. 87, 6.01.1631): ‘questo S[igno]r Amb[asciato]r di Francia professa col’ecetione di R. S. sopra tutte le altre nationi il privilegio di protezione singolare et particolar[m]e[n]te sempre li sudditi della Chiesa, come dubito riuscirà di quello, che intendo esser di già stato eletto in Vicario Patriarcale suddito Ecclesiastico, anzi che nelle Chiese di Valachia, et Moldavia, et del Caffà, come anco in quella dell’isole dell’Arcipelago, la Sacra Congregazione, fà solo il Capo co[n] che il solo S[igno]r Amb[asciato]r di Francia, et per la loro conservatione, et auguramento, le corrisponde il denaro, [...]; et circa à Vescovati, i suoi [...] favoriti dalle relationi de Gesuiti, et Cappucini sono preferiti.’

61] APF, SOCG 33 (*Lettere di Venezia 1641*), fol. 122v: ‘L’istesso [the French ambassador-PC.] mi ha detto, che quando occorre per missionarij, e per la Chirstianità, e ben sempre principalme[n]te di far capo al Amb[asciato]r di Francia, che la chiamano Amb[asciato]re del Rè, perche lui è colà il più stimato, massime per l’interesse de franchi, che come più disinteressato tratta più con la libertà, che è anche buonissimo il Bailo di Ven[ezi]a, mà, che questo hà tanti, e cosi continui li proprij interessi particolar[m]e[n]te de confini, che non si riscalda per essi facilme[n]te.’

62] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fols. 143r-v (disp. 17, 30.04.1633): ‘si preghi altro Prencipe col nome di Protettore, che per il suo [the French ambassador-PC.] Rè, che solo pretende protettore delli Christiani; ‘la Rep[ubbli]ca affaticam[e]nte et ponderosam[e]nte protegge li Santi Luochi, et li Religiosi, et le Chiese di queste parti, et che se non gli vengono impediti li affari non si doveva contestandone il nome.’

Bailo Giustinian also complained of difficulties maintaining good relations with his French counterpart. The problems stemmed from the different interests of the two states, which were illustrated by French attempts to exclude the Venetian envoy from work to provide protection to sacred sites in Jerusalem, and by the French diplomat's support for the 'new' orders.⁶³ Clashes between representatives of Venice and France were by no means rare. In 1634 the bailo informed the Venetian authorities of efforts by the French ambassador to remove the Republic of Venice (traditionally listed together with the French king) from the intentions of prayers for prosperity in the Catholic churches in Constantinople.⁶⁴ These attempts, however, failed. According to Giovanni Pizzorusso the activities of the French ambassador in Constantinople reflected the vigorous policy of his state to seek primacy among the Christian states with representations in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The scholar observes that the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in the 1620s and 1630s could be even considered a representative of the congregation 'Propaganda Fide' given the synergy of French and papal policies on confessional issues in the Orient.⁶⁵ Moreover, the French ambassador had played a role in bringing the Jesuits to Constantinople in 1609 and in the expulsion of the Venetian Capuchins from that city in 1629.⁶⁶

In practice, what the Venetians interpreted as the aggressive policy of the French ambassador was designed not only to bring 'new' orders and subjects of the French king to the Ottoman capital: his ultimate brief was to win the Latin Christians living in Constantinople and Galata / Pera for the French mission. According to Eric R. Dursteler, in the early seventeenth century many inhabitants of Pera—who were traditionally bound to the bailate, where many of them were employed (and thus exempt from paying *kharadj* and *jizyah*)—did indeed start

63] Report by bailo Giorgio Giustinian (1627), p. 615, [in:] RAV *Pedani*, pp. 525-633.

64] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D23a, fol. 5r (disp. 4, 8.02.1633): '*Pensiero dell'Amb[asciato]r di Francia s[opr]a una lett[e]ra del Rè d'escluder l'oratione nella Chiesa per la Rep[ubbli]ca et continuar quella per S[ua] M[ae]stà. Dice l'Amb[asciato]r per le cag[io]ni, solo il Re di Francia protettor delle Religioni e Chiese. Che in ogni tempo dai P[ad]ri di Gerusalem e altri Religiosi si è fatto ricorso unitam[en]te all'Amb[asciato]r di Francia e Bailo di Ven[eti]a e da quello canto principalm[en]te derivar il sollievo de Santi luoghi. Vano tentativo dell'Amb[asciato]r per il Vic[ari]o Pat[ri]arcal[e] permetter il dire l'oratione sola per il Re.'*

65] G. Pizzorusso, 'Reti informative e le strategie politiche tra la Francia, Roma e le missioni cattoliche nell'impero ottomano agli inizi del XVII secolo', p. 222, [in:] G. Motta (a cura di), *I Turchi, il Mediterraneo, l'Europa*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2000, pp. 212-231.

66] *Ibidem*, pp. 215 and 220.

to seek the protection of the French ambassador.⁶⁷ What is more, the Capuchins, inspired by the French ambassador, had plans to start offering the inhabitants of Pera an education, which gave the bailo further cause for concern.⁶⁸

Clashes with the French representative also occurred at the regional level: among the consuls in Aleppo. The consul Alvise Pesaro reported dissatisfaction with his French counterpart, alerted by the fact that two clergymen had specifically requested the protection of the Venetian consul rather than the French one.⁶⁹ The consul of the Most Serene Republic deemed that the actions of his French counterpart were designed to diminish the role of other consulates in Aleppo (and consequently to eliminate them from the city) rather than to strengthen the prestige of the French king on religious matters.

A new phenomenon that disquieted the envoys of the Republic was the activity of the recently founded (in 1622) Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide). Baili Capello and Foscarini reported in 1633 that in case of problems the congregation advised its missionaries to seek protection above all from the diplomats of the French king, and only in second place, in case of specific needs, from representatives of the Christian emperor or of Venice.⁷⁰ This was in fact a highly pragmatic recommendation, because it was often the diplomats of the Most Serene Republic who could afford monks or friars the most effective protection.

67] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

68] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 80r (*Al Bailo di Constantinopoli*, 2.08.1629): *'Nelli disegni de Capucini fomentati dall'Amb[asciato]r del Christ[ianiss]mo di educar li figlioli de Perotti, per acquistarsi il concetto, et le volontà de quei Popoli col publico pregiudicio, nel divertirli con le desterità, che havete usata, et nel proibire à nostri Dragomanni di non vi assentire, ne concorrere alla spesa; è stato effetto solito della v[ost]ra prudenza, per le male conseguenze, et per il pericolo di perdere presso à Turchi il concetto, che non vi possa esser occasione nelli n[ost]ri in quelle parti di turbare la loro quiete [...]. Prudentissima è stata la v[ost]ra risposta à quel Capucino, che di questo negocio vi ha voluto parlare, non essendo egli capitato prima, forse perche stimava bastarli la sola aut[ori]tà di Francia, ma scoperta da voi la trama, vi sete liberati con prudente maniera delle insidiose proposte.'*

69] ASVe, *Disp. Alep.* 2, fols. 104r-105v (disp. 4, 21.02.1626): *'Questo Sig[no]r Consolo di Francia, che professa qui il Protettore di tutte le Nationi franche, che non hanno Consolo proprio, non per mira di riputatione, mà per la sola avidità di estingere i Consolati, è rimasto molto disgustato di questi P[ad]ri, che babbino voluto ricorrere non alla Sua, ma alla mia protezione, e ne hà fatto pubbliche lamentationi.'*

70] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 103r (disp. 12, 13.04.1633): *'non permetteranno questa unica protezione all'Amb[asciato]r di Franza, ma vorrano, che per l'onorenze della Religione in queste parti si ricorri, hora alli Ministri dell'Imperator, hora à quelli di Franza, hora à quelli di Venetia, et hora à tutti secondo il bisogno.'*

In fact, patterns of cooperation and rivalry among missionaries and their protectors in the Orient were not always predictable. Among the dispatches, for instance, there is one letter addressed to a bailo by the secretary of the Congregation Francesco Ingoli requesting support for the Catholic bishop of Milo / Melos, whose income had been confiscated by a local Ottoman official, allegedly on the inspiration of the Greek Orthodox bishop.⁷¹ Normally, however, the activities of the Congregation and of the Republic in the Orient were characterized by significant mutual distrust. According to Pizzorusso, Francesco Ingoli suspected the authorities of the Republic of tacitly fostering Protestants and adopting a policy towards Eastern Christians in the Ottoman Empire that was unfavourable for Rome.⁷² For their part, the Venetian authorities advised the baili to be cautious when replying to letters sent by the Congregation, and to formulate any answers in a very general way. Characteristically for documents created within the diplomatic apparatus, the authors of one such brief to Bailo Capello expressed this recommendation obliquely, without supplying him with a specific line of argumentation.⁷³

The examples mentioned above invite several conclusions. Firstly, they show that protection of the Christian (and especially Catholic) population in the Orient was an important task of successive baili and consuls which—contrary to what the propaganda of the French ambassadors suggested—constituted a significant proportion of their everyday work. It was also an area through which the baili and the consuls strove to maintain the prestige of the Republic, as is confirmed by their constant concern surrounding the selection of candidates for the missions, by the rapid repatriation of missionaries who caused scandals in the local population, and by their efforts to ensure the visibility of the Most Serene Republic via efficient interventions on behalf of missionaries, especially when the French ambassador was passive. Moreover, the activity of the Venetian diplomats testifies to

71] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 110, fol. 409r (Rome, 29.12.1629, annex to disp. 45).

72] G. Pizzorusso, 'Reti informative...', op. cit., p. 223.

73] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 219v (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopoli]*, 2.09.1630): '*Procureremo di farvi pervenire li n[ost]ri concetti di volta in volta sopra le lettere, che à Voi scritte fossero dalla Congregatione di Roma, ma le v[ost]re risposte, che ci manderete aperte dovevano esser in termini generali, et con dimostrazione di buona volontà, di sodisfar all'istanza, infatti però haver di principal mira al n[ost]ro vantaggio, il quale con la v[ost]ra virtù, per la cognitione de n[ost]ri interessi ben conoscete ove consiste, ma quando potesse in alcun caso sodisfarsi la domanda, senza pregiudicio de n[ost]ri interessi, non lasciereste anco di coaiuarle, così potendo conferire ai riguardi del n[ost]ro servitio.*'

the major importance of issues related to missionaries and Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Although—as we are led to believe—the baili did not consider the conversion of Eastern Christians to Catholicism possible, they observed that work undertaken in the confessional field was of great value, especially for Venetian prestige and visibility. This value was clearly manifested not only in the engagement of the diplomatic and consular corps in Constantinople and Aleppo, but also in Christendom, where there had always been concern for the fate of Christians living in the Orient, a historically motivated fear of lack of access to the Holy Land, and the perception of Turkish oppression targeted at Christians. The policy adopted towards the small group of missionaries and other clergymen active in the Ottoman Empire also served to enrich the knowledge of the Venetian ruling class about situations in states or regions of the Empire where Venice did not have representations. This network, which supplied useful information on both important political issues and certain more minor matters, such as local conflicts or the interests of ethnic and religious minorities, was a valuable support to the political apparatus of *La Serenissima*.

At the same time, the competition between individual missionary congregations—and, more broadly, the states that supported this rivalry—affected Christian unity in the Orient. At the very end, Venice was the loser in that rivalry, mainly due to the increasing activity of the French diplomatic and papal missions. Nonetheless, despite these negative trends, the Venetian diplomats in the Ottoman Empire were successful at defending the interests of local Catholics and missionaries, and taking a stance—one that was tolerated by the Ottoman authorities—on the spread of ‘novelties’.

(b) Slaves and converts

Venetian diplomats in the Orient also assisted slaves and converts. Members of these social strata challenged the Venetian perception of relations between Christendom and the Ottoman world: both slaves and converts were representatives of the large group of people that migrated between the two cultural circles and even between political and confessional affiliations. While missionaries active in the Muslim world contributed (or at least, were supposed to contribute) to the spread of Catholicism among local Eastern Christians and to the consolidation of the actual or alleged

identification of Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire with the wider *Christianitas*, converts and slaves were outside the Christian world, and their conversion could negatively influence the confessional or political choices of people who lived in the Republic but had contact with the Muslim world. Even more importantly, converts were a threat to Venice because if they entered the Ottoman army or administration they might use their pre-conversion knowledge to the detriment of the Republic, especially in the case of a Venetian-Ottoman war. In this light, it is not surprising that the Republic aimed to formalize a policy concerning these two groups of society, or that representatives of Venice in Constantinople had a major role in that policy.

Unlike missionaries, converts and slaves were a heterogenous group in terms of both their social status and the circumstances that led to their change of religious and cultural identification (if this fully occurred). Our interest in this section will focus on several types of people who attracted the attention of the baili. The first were converts holding important posts in the Ottoman administration. Obviously, the Venetian diplomats did not have a particular policy regarding them, but conducted political business with them, because they were natural partners for negotiations on bilateral issues. The second—and diametrically different—group comprised slaves from the lower social strata. The baili's interest in them was largely as an issue—the redemption of slaves—to be discussed with officials at the sultan's court; or sometimes as the subjects of a ransom transaction. Between these categories there is the relatively fluid group of those who converted as slaves. Moreover, all these groups are internally differentiated. Among the converts were people brought to Constantinople as *devşirme* (the Ottoman child levy), but also people from higher social strata, such as nobles or merchants, who had been taken into slavery. These people are defined in the sources either as renegades (*'rinnegati'*, *'renegati'*), i.e. converts, or as 'slaves', making thus the above typology even more complex.

Both converts and slaves (including those who accepted Islam) remain an important subject of studies by researchers examining slavery in the Mediterranean Basin and conversions in the early modern era. Studies have been conducted from a range of angles, including the social (e.g. Robert C. Davis),⁷⁴ the political (Geraud

74] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters. White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Poumarède),⁷⁵ and the anthropological (Giovanni Ricci),⁷⁶ as well as others with a focus on identity (Eric R. Dursteler⁷⁷ and Stephen Ortega).⁷⁸ Worthy of note among recent works is an approach that stresses the role of states in supporting individual conversions (E. Nathalie Rothman⁷⁹ and Anna Vanzan).⁸⁰ Furthermore, there are many complex and multidimensional interpretations of the phenomena of slavery and conversions, some focusing on Venice (Giuseppina Minchella)⁸¹ and others on the broader Mediterranean perspective (Bartolomé and Lucile Benassar,⁸² Salvatore Bono,⁸³ Luccetta Scaraffia).⁸⁴ A recent review of the *status quaestionis* on the history of slavery in the Mediterranean should also be recalled: a collection of articles and a book on the issue.⁸⁵ Unlike them, this chapter will offer only a partial analysis of the phenomenon, its scope defined by the perspective of the Venetian diplomatic service.

It is clear from the sources that the baili often negotiated with Ottoman officials from Christian states or from the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire. There were relatively few Venetians in either of these categories, at least until the final years of the sixteenth century,

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- 75] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo oltre le crociate. La guerra turca nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento tra leggende e realtà*, Torino: Libreria UTET, 2011.
- 76] G. Ricci, *I turchi alle porte*, Bologna: Mulino, 2008.
- 77] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006; idem, *Renegade Women. Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
- 78] S. Ortega, *Negotiating Transcultural Relations in the Early Modern Mediterranean. Ottoman-Venetian Encounters*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.
- 79] E.N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2012.
- 80] A. Vanzan, 'La Pia Casa dei Catecumeni in Venezia. Un tentativo di devshirme cristiana?', [in:] A. Destro (a cura di), *Donne e microcosmi culturali*, Bologna: Patron, 1997, pp. 221-255.
- 81] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte. Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia*, Roma: Viella, 2014.
- 82] B. and L. Benassar, *Los cristianos de Alá. La fascinante aventura de los renegados*, Madrid: Nerea, 1989.
- 83] S. Bono, *I corsari barbareschi*, Torino: ERI, 1964; idem, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo. Cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio*, Milano: Mondadori, 1997.
- 84] L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati. Per una storia dell'identità occidentale*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1993.
- 85] S. Bono, 'La schiavitù nel Mediterraneo moderno: storia di una storia', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 6 (2002), 1-16; <http://cdlm.revues.org/28> (access:15.11.2018); *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 87 (special edition *Captifs et captivités dans Méditerranée à l'époque moderne*, ed. M. Ghazali, S. Boubaker, L. Maziane) (2013): <http://cdlm.revues.org/7134> (access: 15.11.2018); C. Norton (ed.), *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean. The Lure of the Other*, London-New York: Routledge, 2017.

when numerous former subjects of the doge quite simultaneously attained the highest offices in the sultans' state.⁸⁶ In the ambassadors' reports these 'renegades' seem to be perceived as actors who tried to conceal their former confessional identity, accepted Turkish religious and confessional patterns and attempted to persuade other Christians to convert, or themselves avoided contact with Christians.⁸⁷ One typical convert of this type was Gazanfer Aga, a Venetian renegade who became *kapi agba* at the sultan's court (head of the eunuchs in the Seraglio who also had certain protocolar functions during the sultan's audiences). On reaching the pinnacle of his career he began to avoid contacts with representatives of the Most Serene Republic, and orchestrated his sister's relocation to Constantinople; subsequently, she also converted to Islam.⁸⁸ Preoccupied as they were with this perception of renegades, Venetian diplomats often tried to uphold a distinction between officials of the Ottoman Empire from the Muslim population and those who only went into the service of the Ottoman authorities after having converted. The area where differences between 'native Turks' (*Turchi nativi*) and renegades was most manifest was their attitudes towards Christians. Angelo Alessandri emphasized that 'native Turks' were amicably disposed towards Catholics,⁸⁹ and he maintained that converts did not observe the rites of the Islamic faith.⁹⁰ Marcantonio Donini likewise averred that only 'native Turks' were truly interested in Christian rites.⁹¹ Bailo Bernardo, who took a slightly different perspective, claimed to be able to distinguish between officials

86] M.P. Pedani Fabris, 'Veneziani a Costantinopoli alla fine del XVI secolo', p. 83, [in:] F. Lucchetta (a cura di), *Veneziani in Levante, musulmani a Venezia*, Roma, Herder, 1997 [*Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 15 (1997)], pp. 67-84.

87] Cf. also E. N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire...*, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

88] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), p. 101, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 59-166. Gazanfer and his brother were enslaved during a journey to Budva, where their father held a post in the Venetian administration. The ship on which they were travelling was kidnapped by privateers and both brothers were taken to the sultan's court, where Gazanfer was later appointed *kapi agba*, a position that he held for around thirty years. By contrast, Gazanfer's sister Beatrice, who along with their mother and second sister managed to escape and return to Venice after the kidnapping, went to Constantinople in 1591, more than thirty years after the original ill-fated journey. Her emigration was probably motivated by financial problems related to marriage. The story of Gazanfer Aga and his sister, Fatima / Beatrice Michiel, is described in detail by E.R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women...*, op. cit., pp. 1-10.

89] Report by Angelo Alessandri (1637), op. cit., p. 674.

90] *Ibidem*, p. 676.

91] *Tre Dialoghi di Marc'Antonio Donini, già segretario veneto, alle cose de' Turchi*—BMC, WL 31.10, p. 141.

who dealt with affairs of state or the army, and those with jurisdiction for justice and religious affairs: in his experience the former, who were active in building up the state's power, were usually converts, while the latter were typically recruited from among the 'native Turks'.⁹²

The Venetian diplomats also reported that converts as a group were internally heterogeneous. Bailo Moro subdivided them into two categories: those who had converted by choice, and those who had been forced to do so. He further noted that an increase in the number of renegades, reinforced by Turkish oppression of Christians, caused a sharp reduction in numbers of Christians in the Empire.⁹³ A similar division of renegades was made by dragoman Salvago, who was sent to Algiers to ransom slaves. According to his report, those who held political positions in Barbary, i.e. on the northern shores of the African continent, were 'native' Muslims, while converts tended to prefer piracy as privateers, and marine navigation.⁹⁴

Converts serving in the Ottoman administration lived outside the commonly accepted axiological system, at least in the opinion of the baili, who averred that they treated religion solely as a state-building tool, refuting any eschatological meaning. Bailo Bernardo, for instance, likened renegades to animals.⁹⁵ Other opinions on converts alleged their perfidy: Lazzaro Soranzo was of the opinion that although converts might be capable of destroying the Empire from the inside, they would not do so in view of their wicked nature.⁹⁶ These negative assertions by Venetian diplomatic officials in the Orient were probably motivated by a distrust, common to the political elites of Christendom, of complex or inconstant religious and cultural identity in individuals holding public posts or with an influence on politics. Converts who held positions within the Ottoman authorities were well cognisant of the realities of the political practices of states in Christendom, including Venice, and they tried to leverage this knowledge—which the 'native Turks' lacked—to strengthen their position at the sultan's court. Maria Pia Pedani offers justification for the negative opinions held by the baili, noting that former subjects of the doge were often

92] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 104.

93] Report by Bailo Giovanni Moro (1590), p. 18, [in:] *RAV Firpo XIII*, pp. 1-58.

94] A. Sacerdoti (ed.), *Affrica ovvero Barbaria. Relazione al doge di Venezia sulle reggenze di Algeri e di Tunisi del dragomanno Giovanni Battista Salvago (1625)*, Padova: CEDAM, 1937, p. 77.

95] Report by bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 107.

96] L. Soranzo, *L'Ottomano...*, oldprint no. 3, p. 111.

afraid of being considered by the Turks covert allies of Venice and so postured as the fiercest enemies of the Republic in the Ottoman administration.⁹⁷

But the baili also encountered converts with an amicable attitude towards the Most Serene Republic. One who made just such an impression, on Bailo Cappello, was Iaser Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman fleet.⁹⁸ Characteristically, the diplomat observed that the Ottoman official liked to drink wine in secret—to a Venetian diplomat such behaviour might be evidence of the incompleteness of his conversion, and Cappello mentioned it in a similar context to his descriptions of shahs or sultans; in their cases, wine drinking contributed to an image of a less integrist Muslim, who was as such more likely to maintain friendly contacts with representatives of the Christian world. Similarly, the anonymous author of one treatise appreciated the politeness of a convert originally from Zara / Zadar, Omar Aga, who was head of the Seraglio,⁹⁹ while the author of another treatise, recalling Sciauss Pasha, emphasized his cordiality and prudence.¹⁰⁰

Among the most problematic conversions were those that occurred within the bailate, among the *giovani della lingua*. One such case took place in 1630, as mentioned by the instructions for Baili Venier and Cappello.¹⁰¹ Eric R. Dursteler describes the case of the student Pietro Venier who converted in 1632. His decision may have been influenced by other factors, such as the deaths of his parents during the plague of 1630–1631, and his lack of other family ties in Venice.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the reports often cited the exoticism and ‘luxury of Turkish life’ as factors that attracted young adepts of Oriental languages and sometimes resulted in conversions. This threat caused the aversion to the very institution of the *giovani* that we have seen expressed by

97] M.P. Pedani Fabris, *Veneziani a Costantinopoli ...*, op. cit., p. 76.

98] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), op. cit., p. 711.

99] *Sultan Mehmet 1603*, fol. 33r–BMC, WL 25.4: ‘Omar Agà è Zaratino, è al presente capo del Seraglio, cortese, trattabile, e si dimostra ben affetto alla Repubblica.’

100] *Discorso sopra la natura del Turco, suoi Bassà et altri particolari*, p. 7–BMC, WL 25.14: ‘Il Magnifico Sciauss Bassà è di natura dolce, affabile, molto prudente.’

101] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 125v (Ai Baili in Const[antinop]li, 24.01.1630): ‘Per li motivi della pietà christiana con molto dispiacer ricevuto havemo l’aviso di quei tristi, che si fecero Turchi, e del giovine della lingua, anco per rispetto di costesta Casa, Voi Venier conoscemo, che havette fatto quanto più era delle parti della v[ost]ra prudenza et carità in proposito di costui, et havete come preavvertito il successo, mentre scriveste qua per la licenza del ritorno di esso.’

102] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., pp. 137–138.

Bailo Bernardo. Even though there was a chaplain in the bailate to safeguard the students' confessional wellbeing, his presence seems not to have had any impact on individual decisions taken by the *giovani*.¹⁰³

However, the temptation of conversion chiefly arose among the poorest social strata,¹⁰⁴ such as artisans (in the case of Venice these included carpenters working in the Arsenale).¹⁰⁵ From the Venetian perspective a particularly dangerous form of apostasy was that prompted by a desire to realize the 'Turkish dream' (*sogno turco*), where the change in confessional identity was motivated by the ambition to improve one's fate,¹⁰⁶ or sometimes by a thirst for adventure or moral liberty.¹⁰⁷ This phenomenon was especially widespread in Candia, where the local population was growing increasingly impoverished.¹⁰⁸ It is thus unsurprising that the baili were concerned about the growing number of exiled residents of Candia who subsequently found work in Ottoman dockyards.¹⁰⁹ Lorenzo Bernardo even proposed that the baili be invested with certain rights that would authorize them to encourage the exiles to return to the Republic.¹¹⁰ Another diplomat, Simone Contarini, regretted that sometimes he had to deny *salvacondotti* to people in exile (probably due to instructions he had received); he even suggested that a kind of refuge (*rifugio*) be founded for Candiots on their own island, in order to dissuade them from leaving for the Ottoman lands.¹¹¹

There were, naturally, also conversions for other reasons, such as the need to repay loans or win over Ottoman officials.¹¹² Among the categories of people who most often migrated *in partes infidelium*, Maria Pia Pedani mentions captives, prisoners, artisans looking for higher loans, dissentients, and crime suspects seeking to escape justice.¹¹³ In some years there were increases in numbers of migrations

103] F. Lucchetta, 'La scuola dei "giovani di lingua" veneti nei secoli XVI e XVII', 25 and 33, *Quaderni di studi arabi* 7 (1989), 19-40.

104] E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 137.

105] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., p. 56.

106] Ibidem, pp. 77-79; B. and L. Bennassar, *Los cristianos...*, op. cit., pp. 413-420.

107] B. and L. Benassar, *Los cristianos...*, op. cit., pp. 290 and 298.

108] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., pp. 161 and 165.

109] Report by bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1590), p. 328, [in:] RAV Pedani, pp. 311-394. Cf. also E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 62.

110] Report by Bailo Lorenzo Bernardo (1592), op. cit., p. 76.

111] Report by Bailo Simone Contarini (1612), p. 586, [in:] RAV Firpo XIII, pp. 473-602.

112] S. Ortega, *Negotiating Transcultural Relations...*, op. cit., p. 87.

113] M.P. Pedani, *Venezia porta...*, op. cit., p. 179.

and conversions to Muslim countries, reflecting events such as socioeconomic crises or religious persecutions of adherents of a certain confession in the states of Christendom.¹¹⁴

Although conversions were usually voluntary,¹¹⁵ in some cases they were often the consequence not of the individual's volitional plan to change their fate but of their abduction by Muslim pirates or privateers. Bailo Correr observed that slaves kidnapped to Ottoman territories often converted.¹¹⁶ His opinion is confirmed by contemporary studies. The actual figures for subjects of the doge who were enslaved and subsequently converted are, however, hard to establish. Robert C. Davis estimates that around one and a half a million European Christians were enslaved on the Barbary Coast between 1530 and 1780.¹¹⁷ The largest centre of slaves from Christendom was Algiers, which was followed by Tunis and Tripoli. According to Salvatore Bono, in 1650 there were approximately 8,000 slaves in Algiers and 6,000 in Tunis; and in 1671 there were around 1,500 in Tripoli.¹¹⁸ Davis puts the total number of converts in the region at some 6,000 in 1580 and 8,000 in 1630 (the latter figure including 1,200 women). Analysing only that part of the period which interests us here, he suggests that between 1609 and 1619 28% of slaves converted to Islam.¹¹⁹ Lucetta Scaraffia offers the less precise estimate of the number of converts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of 300,000.¹²⁰ Regardless of the exact figures, it is widely stressed that the privateer slave trade in the early modern era was intense, especially along the Barbary Coast, with the culmination in the years 1580–1640. The slaves came mainly from the Italian states and the Iberian Peninsula. Beside Barbary, another major centre of trade in slaves from Christendom was Constantinople. In view of the mass character of abductions and the conversions that stemmed from them, Eric R. Dursteller refers to the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries as the 'golden age of renegades'.¹²¹

Venetian diplomatic sources do not usually draw attention to numbers of abductions or even give general descriptions of the phenomenon.

114] L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati...*, op. cit., p. 4.

115] S. Bono, *I corsari...*, op. cit., p. 253, B. and L. Benassar, *Los cristianos...*, op. cit., p. 230.

116] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), op. cit., p. 234.

117] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves...*, op. cit., p. 3.

118] S. Bono, *I corsari...*, op. cit., p. 220.

119] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves...*, op. cit., p. 22.

120] L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati...*, op. cit., p. 4.

121] E.R. Dursteller, *Renegade Women...*, op. cit., p. 111.

Bailo Correr devoted only a couple of sentences in his report to the slave market in Constantinople; he also observed that most slaves converted.¹²² Correr estimated the number of Christian slaves in the Ottoman Empire to be around 10,000. Angelo Alessandri, in contrast, calculated that there were only about 700 slaves in the Empire, and he observed a decline in their number;¹²³ he probably did not take into account those abducted and enslaved on the Barbary Coast.

In this context it should be recalled that the Mediterranean Sea was also the theatre of activity of Christian privateers, who were supported mainly by the military order of Malta.¹²⁴ Scholars emphasize the ambivalent stance on the problem taken by Venice, whose officials tried to maintain neutrality with regard to the activities of both Christian and Muslim corsairs, thereby often provoking attacks from both sides.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, it was probably an entirely logical attitude given the potential Venetian losses if it decided to lend overt support to Christian corsairs (especially in light of the Valona incident of 1638, which caused serious diplomatic repercussions).¹²⁶ For this reason the baili dissociated themselves from any attempts to link the Republic to support for Christian corsairs,¹²⁷ citing broader Venetian policy in respect of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁸

The authorities of the Most Serene Republic did, nonetheless, take action to limit conversions among slaves—mainly by attempts to ransom them, where possible at a sufficiently early juncture to prevent any change in their confessional identity. Similar policies were common among other states in the Christian region of the Mediterranean. Slaves

122] Report by Bailo Giovanni Correr (1578), *op. cit.*, p. 234.

123] Report by secretary Angelo Alessandri (1637), *op. cit.*, p. 666.

124] On Christian corsairs cf. G. Poumarède, 'Una crisi della guerra turca: la corsa cristiana e la sua contestazione', [in:] *idem, Il Mediterraneo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 363-440.

125] A. Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice, 1580-1615*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, pp. 14 and 18.

126] In 1638 the Venetian fleet destroyed ships used by Ottoman corsairs operating in the Adriatic Sea which had taken refuge in the harbour in Valona / Vlorë. The sultan treated this move as enemy action. The Ottoman authorities arrested the bailo and there was a risk that the situation would escalate in the direction of war. Cf. M. Greene, 'The Ottomans in the Mediterranean', p. 113, [in:] V.H. Aksan and D. Goffman (eds.), *Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, New York-Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 104-116. The bailo's arrest was possible because he was not only ambassador but also consul, and Venetian consuls in the Ottoman Empire did not enjoy diplomatic immunity (as understood at that time), cf. M.P. Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*, Roma: Herder, 2002, p. 97.

127] G. Poumarède, *Il Mediterraneo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 386-392 and 402.

128] *Ibidem*, p. 440.

were also ransomed by religious orders, among them the Trinitarians (mostly active among French slaves) and the Mercedarians (among slaves from the Iberian Peninsula).¹²⁹ In the early modern era, in view of the increase in the number of slaves since the Middle Ages, many states, among them Naples, Rome, Bologna, Lucca, Palermo, and Genoa, were forced to create special institutions whose sole mandate was slave ransom. In Venice this task was entrusted to *Provveditori sopra Ospedali e Luoghi Pii*, a body created in 1566 to supervise hospitals and in 1588 further charged with organizing slave ransom.¹³⁰ The Republic earmarked 100 ducats from its budget for this purpose every year; but due to the irregularity of donations, funding this undertaking became problematic. Although there was a box for donations (*per la redenzione degli schiavi*) in each parish, the funds obtained in this way usually only sufficed for the return of one or two slaves a year. The boxes were often vandalized or looted. Another source of funding mandated by the authorities was for notaries to inform their clients of the possibility to make a donation for ransoming slaves in their testament. Clergymen also made appeals to the faithful in their Lent sermons. However, though one letter sent by the Jesuits in Venice in the 1580s attests the popularity of such collections, the research by Robert C. Davis invites different conclusions.¹³¹ He is critical of the work of dedicated state institutions, stressing their lack of funds, the meagre information they possessed on the location of slaves, and the disappointing operativity of their representatives in negotiations with Barbary Coast rulers.¹³² The inefficiency of such state institutions was, according to Davis, the reason for the increase in the activity of Trinitarians and Mercedarians in ransoming slaves in the eighteenth century.

Due to the limited nature of the funds received from collections, these were primarily dedicated to ransoming subjects of the doge, and in some cases the authorities of the Republic would not finance

129] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves...*, op. cit., p. 149.

130] *Guida generale degli Archivi di Stato italiani*, vol. IV, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994, p. 973.

131] *Le elemosine che si fanno alle nostre prediche sono grossissime et vanno tutti à monasteri o case pubbliche et lochi pii o riscatto di schiavi christiani*—ARSI (*Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*), Ven 117, c. 145r-v, quoted after M. Sangalli, *Cultura, politica e religione nella Repubblica di Venezia tra Cinque- e Seicento. Gesuiti e somaschi a Venezia*, Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1999, p. 127.

132] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves...*, op. cit., p. 177.

liberation of subjects resident outside the borders of *La Serenissima*.¹³³ In order to ensure that those who were most in need were prioritized for ransom, the request for ransom often had to be accompanied by a declaration by compatriots of the persons abducted confirming that they could not return to Christendom without financial aid (this declaration was known as a *fede di povertà*). In Venice aid was usually limited to 50 or 100 ducats, and any surplus had to be covered by other donors; nonetheless, any public contribution made private collections more credible.¹³⁴ Unlike slaves from French and Spanish territories, who were ransomed after an average of five years, enslaved subjects of the doge only returned to Christian territory after around thirteen years. This difference was due to the poor support provided to residents of Italy by missionaries. According to Davis, the average slave from Italy, if they had formerly been a peasant or an indigent craftsman, had equal chances of returning to the Christian world or dying in slavery.¹³⁵ This statistical overview suggests that ransoming of slaves in early modern Venice (and the wider Italy) was an established field of state activity that was, however, only moderately effective.

Ransoming and liberation of slaves by Venetian representatives in Constantinople played an important role in fostering the creation of an image of Venice as a defender of Christianity and Christians.¹³⁶ The Venetian authorities conveyed express orders to ransom slaves on many occasions,¹³⁷ and reiterated them to every new

133] *Ibidem*, pp. 157 and 160.

134] *Ibidem*, pp. 162-164.

135] *Ibidem*, pp. 172-173.

136] *Idem*, 'Slave Redemption in Venice, 1585-1797', pp. 476-477, [in:] J. Martin, D. Romano (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered. The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 454-487.

137] To quote several examples from one volume of instruction registers: ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 214r (*Al Bailo à Co[stantino]po]li*, 7.06.1634): '*Con tali forme d'ufficij volemo col Senato che procuriate avanzarvi nel vantaggio et facultà [facilità?] di recuperar li sudetti n[ost]ri sudditi, et altri ancora, che fossero tenuti schiavi raggiungendo voi quell'altre ragioni, che vi saranno somministrate dalla esperienza di cotesti affari, et dalla vostra virtù per conseguire il beneficio, che si desidera.*'; *ibidem*, fol. 75v (*Al Bailo à Co[stantino]po]li*, 7.06.1633): '*Volentieri vi vedemo ad insistere con la desterità de v[ost]ri officij per la liberatione de quei schiavi sudditi nostri, la congiuntura molte volte assai male, et la memoria fresca della libertà data alli sudditi del Gran Sig[no]re ci fà sperare, che haverete conseguito gl'ordini, et l'effetto stesso così delli marinari, presi s[opr]a la nave Pesce Brun, come degl'altri della Tartaria, del Biasij per procurare coll'assistenza med[esim]a il comodo e libertà a tutti li restanti sudditi nostri.*'; *ibidem*, fol. 85r (*Al Bailo in Constant[in]opo]li*, 9.07.1633): '*Nell'applicazione del v[ost]ro animo, et officij per liberar li n[ost]ri sudditi, che si trovano schiavi, voi vi adoperate, come ricerca la pietà verso la religione, il riguardo al n[ost]ro servitio. Caro*

bailo.¹³⁸ They also expressed satisfaction at every success in this field.¹³⁹ The role of this task in the work of Venetian diplomats is confirmed by mentions not only in the dispatches, but—as in the case of Bailo Cappello—also in his final report.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, pursuant to their instructions the baili were to liberate every slave originally from Christendom, regardless of their nationality; this was justified by the need to maintain good relations with all rulers in the Christian world.¹⁴¹

The aspect of concern for Venetian visibility is well illustrated by a story recounted by Bailo Venier, about two young French noblemen returning from Constantinople. Instead of choosing an overland route, they boarded a ship. The Frenchmen were members of the Habsburg ambassador's court who had travelled with him to Constantinople. There they had established friendly contacts with the Venetian representative. On their return home they stopped in Smyrna / Izmir, whence, in fear of the plague, they decided to flee as soon as possible by sea, on a small French ship; from Kythira / Cerigo they continued on a Genoese one. The misfortune occurred soon thereafter: the ship was attacked by corsairs of the Tunisian pasha, who took the Frenchmen to Chios / Scio. From there the noblemen sent letters to the ambassadors of their king, the Habsburg emperor, and the bailo.

ci sarà intenderne l'effetto per q[ue]lli promessivi.' An interesting connection between the various activities performed by the Venetian diplomats for missionaries, slaves, and converts is attested in another instruction (ibidem, fol. 223r-225v; *Al Bailo à Costantinopoli*, 9.07.1634), in which the bailo is asked to perform certain activities, all related to ransoming slaves, supporting Franciscans in the Holy Land, and monitoring the developments of 'new' orders inspired by the French king.

138] Ibidem, fol. 49v (*Alli Baili in Constantinopoli*, 6.04.1633): '*Non deve interrompersi la pratica ridotta dà voi Capello à buon segni per la ricuperazione de schiavi presi s[opr]a la nave Pesce Brun, sturbata dalle pretensioni violenti dell'Amb[asciato]r di Francia per la libertà dei sudditi del suo Re, havendo ciò dato impulsionì à Turchi di mandar altrove tutte queste povere genti, et à noi levato l'effetto della speranza [...], che fossero senza delatione liberati quei sudditi nostri; Doverete voi Foscarini continuarne la pratica per conseguirne il frutto, quando la congiuntura ne concedesse l'addito, che siamo sicuri non perderete.*'; 'Commissione al Leonardo Donado', fol. 7r, [in:] *Miscellanea*, fols. 1-11-BMC, DR 23: '*li schiavi presi in tempo di pace debbano senz'altro essere posti in libertà in ogni luoco dove si trovano.*'

139] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 22, fol. 110r (*Al Bailo à Const[antinopoli]*, 28.09.1633): '*Con molto contento intendemo, che il Cap[uda]n Bassà habbia eseguito le promesse fattevi col metter in libertà quei dieci marinari del Biasij, et quel Zantbioto n[ost]ri sudditi.*'

140] Report by Bailo Giovanni Cappello (1634), op. cit., p. 723.

141] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 18, fol. 34r (*Alli Baili à Constantinopoli*, 21.04.1627): '*termine di amicitia che tiene la Rep[ubblic]ca con tutti li Principi di Christianità, à quale sarebbe di grande aggravio fare diversamente [i.e. not to liberate slaves-PC.]; siamo ancò tenuti à ciò fare, per causa di Religione, essendo à questa pricipalm[en]te obbligati.*'

The first two diplomats were unable to provide them with assistance. The French ambassador even asked the bailo to take action in the case, but the Venetian diplomat considered it outside his official capacity. However, he unofficially contacted a high-ranking Ottoman official and explained to him that, while the young nobles were not subjects of the doge, they had not done anything wrong, and they had been visiting the Ottoman state out of curiosity about the 'greatness of this empire'. The dignitary promised to help with 'extremely efficient letters', which he indeed did. In the conclusion to his story, the bailo underlined that it was his intervention that had resolved the problem, while both ambassadors of the other rulers had been unable to help.¹⁴²

Attempts by Venetian diplomats to liberate slaves were usually successful. They employed two methods: diplomatic negotiations or ransom. Venetian diplomats residing in Constantinople had a fund for ransoming subjects of the doge. According to Dursteler, these funds were one of the bailate's biggest outgoings.¹⁴³ Even so, they were insufficient, and thus spent mainly on liberating members of the patriciate, citizens, and other people from Italy; they were rarely used for ransoming Greeks from the *Stato da Mar*.¹⁴⁴

Sometimes diplomatic negotiations were conducted to liberate slaves. Although the capitulations between the Ottoman Empire and *La Serenissima* foresaw mutual exchange of slaves, these provisions were often not observed, thus necessitating the intervention of the bailo at the Ottoman court.¹⁴⁵ Such operations frequently proved quite complex, and so naturally the baili tried to develop a network of useful contacts, and would thank the Ottoman officials for each piece of assistance in this regard.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes they also resorted to corruption. Bailo Soranzo wrote overtly that a bribe was often the most efficient way of securing the release of slaves handed over to the commander of the Ottoman fleet.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Bailo Foscarini requested additional funds, explaining that even a small token of satisfaction

142] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fols. 378r-381r (disp. 204, 7.07.1629).

143] E.R. Dursteler, 'The Bailo in Constantinople. Crisis and Career in Venice's Early Modern Diplomatic Corps', 8, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16 (2001), 1-30.

144] Idem, *Venetians...*, op. cit., p. 74.

145] Cf. ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 42r (disp. 6, 23.03.1633).

146] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* r. D20, c. 135v (disp. 141, 11.09.1628).

147] Report by Bailo Giacomo Soranzo (1582), p. 280, [in:] *RAV Pedani*, pp. 259-310.

(‘*soddisfazione*’) for the local authorities could transform efforts to have slaves released.¹⁴⁸

Studies show that Venetian officials also supported the return to Christendom of absconded slaves. The islands Tine / Tinos and Candia most frequently served as places of refuge to those on the run.¹⁴⁹ Sometimes the baili would host absconded slaves in their own residences. The sultans mentioned these facts in their letters to the doges.¹⁵⁰ One testimony to such actions is a *patente* which has been preserved among the consular acts analysed here, issued to one M. Manusso, who covertly took four slaves on board his ship.¹⁵¹

The assistance of the bailate further included performing standard official procedures for those liberated. The consular archives contain documents confirming individual cases of slavery in the Ottoman state, such as *patenti*, also known as *carte della libertà*, issued to returning liberated slaves.¹⁵² These certificates served at once as confirmation that the individual had been in slavery (useful for explaining to the Venetian authorities the reason why they had been outside Christendom), and as travel documents.¹⁵³ Sometimes they were issued to liberated

148] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 114, fol. 125r (disp. 15, April 1633): [replying to certain Fra Cornelio–PC.] ‘*li ho mostrato ogni buona volontà, et ho promesso di scriver siccome faccio, accioche, q[uan]do paresse à V[ost]ra Ser[en]ità ò con ordinar alli Suoi superiori, ò con qualche esborso delli s[u]ddetti sopra monasterij render in qualche parte contenti questi nuo[v]i, possa farlo, mentre io credo, che per facilitar la liberat[i]one di qualche altro suddito, ò Laico, ò Religioso, in quelle parti, ove li com[m]andamenti Regij non sono obbediti, qualche soddisfat[i]one, che riceversero, potria giovar grandem[en]te.*’

149] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., pp. 146-150.

150] E. Dursteler, ‘The Bailo...’, op. cit., 8.

151] ASVe, BAC 295, booklet 439, fol. 5r (4.03.1597): ‘*conduce seco esso M. Manusso sop[r]a la nave quattro schiavi in libertà da lui nascosti, per liberarli dalla gran miseria [...] per fare attione così pietosa, et christiana, onde lo riputiamo anco per questa causa meritevole di ogni favore.*’

152] Ibidem, fol. 12r (19.09.1597) – certificate (*fede*) issued without charge that ‘*Zuane, Luca e un altro nominato Zuane tutti trè da Zara bora parteno con le loro carte de libertà, per ritornare in Christianità alle case loro, et per tali deveranno esser riconosciuti, et favoriti, come ricerca la pietà christiana.*’; ibidem, c. 17v – a certificate (*fede*) issued without charge to Nicolò Vandrano that he had been in captivity (9.02.1598).

153] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 14, fols. 1v-2r (7.07.1639): ‘*Partendo di qua Pariota de Michiel Terasina dell’Isola di Mitileno per condursi in Christianità à chieder elemosina per sovenire con essa à suoi bisogni, et sodisfare alli molti suoi debiti, contrati nel liberarsi dalla schiavitù d’infedeli. Così ricercati habbiamo voluto accompagnarlo con le pre[se]nti, pregando cad[au]no Ill[ustriss]imo et Ecc[ellentiss]imo pub[bli]co Rapresentante così di Terra come da Mare à prestar le ogni aiuto, et favore pur l’essecutione del suo desiderio.*’

clergymen.¹⁵⁴ They also provided confirmation that a family member was being held in captivity,¹⁵⁵ and could be issued *post mortem*.¹⁵⁶ There were dedicated documents for subjects of other kings,¹⁵⁷ one such certificate, at the same time a *patente di sanità* and *carte della libertà*, granted to three Spanishmen, cites '*pietà Christiana*' as the golden rule for the baili's actions on behalf of all those who were in captivity. The *carte della libertà* were usually issued free of charge, as indicated by notes reading '*gratis*' in the margins of entries in the consular records. This may be another example of special treatment of slaves by the baili.

However, Venetian policy on converts and slaves went beyond the general scope of assistance to individuals returning from outside the Christian world or attempts to liberate those who had been taken captive. Studies show evidence of the practice of using converts—both people on their way back to Venice (and to re-identification with Christendom) and those still in the Ottoman Empire—as spies.¹⁵⁸ Sometimes they were also entrusted with other tasks. Giuseppina Minchella mentions a case researched by Paolo Preto, that of Girolamo Fasaneo, a former subject of the doge, who for years caused damage to Venetian trade ships out of revenge for an injustice. He was slayed by order of the Senate—an order which Bailo Cappello did much to

154] Ibidem, fol. 5r (10.10.1639): '*Partendo di quà per condursi in Venetia [...] in Patria il R[everen]do P[ad]re Fra Girolamo Cirezza [Cirella?–PC.] da Cotone Carmelitano, presso l'anno passato da Turchi nel suo monasterio, et quivi da essi con gl'altri schiavi condotto alla Valona, dopo diversi gravissimi patimenti, travagli et pericoli, essendo fuggito di mano loro per gratia di Dio, s'tratteunto qui alcuni mesi, dove ha continuam[en]te celebrato, et dato ottimo esempio di Vita Religiosa. Et noi li accompagnamo con le pre[sen]ti in fede della verità pregando Cadauno à presentarle ogni aiuto, et favore [...]*'.

155] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 13, fol. 6v (21.12.1637). This certificate was issued gratis to a Catholic Cypriot whose ears had been cut off, who was travelling to Christendom to gather alms to ransom his wife and children from captivity.

156] E.g. ibidem, fol. 2v (28.07.1639). The subject of this certificate was Pietro Cavalloni, who died during the plague of 1638. The certificate was issued on the basis of declarations by three witnesses.

157] ASVe, BAC 297, booklet 12, fols. 5v-6r (14.04.1636): '*Partendo di quà per Chistianità Michiel de Joseppe di Cattania Cesaro de Giovanni de Colaceria, e Giovanni di Aronzo spagnolo per q[uan]to affermano con loro carte di libertà havute dal Grans[igno]r per passarsene in Chistianità, ricercati da loro di n[ost]re patenti, li accompagnamo con le presenti affinche per i patim[en]ti di schiavitù sofferti e nel misero stato in che si trovano, siano ben veduti et usata loro nel camino, e nei luochi dove li occorrerà di passare quella agevolezza e charità che richiede la pietà chriatiana; et per quello tocca al stato di sanità facciamo fede non sentiti bora in questa città evidente alc[un]o di malcontaggioso.'*

158] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., pp. 178-179.

secure—at the hands of other renegades, among them a former subject of the doge, exiled outside the Republic and recruited for this task in Constantinople.¹⁵⁹ It is thus abundantly clear that the activity of *La Serenissima* was not limited to ransoming slaves or preventing conversions; depending on the situation the Republic foresaw a variety of roles for some converts (or migrants).

This treatment of converts and ex-slaves was carried over to the territory of the Republic when they returned. This is confirmed by a commission from the central Venice authorities, dated 1629, enjoining the bailo to support a subject of the doge who was returning to Christendom to enjoy all the benefits to be had from reidentification with the Republic.¹⁶⁰ People returning to Venice were received more cordially than those returning to other Italian states. There was no suspicion surrounding the return of former slaves or prisoners of war, and even returned *arsenalotti* (craftsmen who had been working at Ottoman dockyards) were welcomed with understanding. A less genial reception could be expected by those who had attempted to use conversion as a way of evading commitments or legal responsibility.¹⁶¹

The administration of the Republic also designed a symbolic celebration institutionalizing the right to residence in Venice for ‘native’ Muslims converting to Christianity.¹⁶² Control over their assimilation of the religious practices of the new faith was exercised by a special institution – Pia Casa de’ Catecumeni.¹⁶³ Most of those who converted to Christianity were prisoners of war, slaves, or—less frequently—people in mixed marriages or inhabitants of border zones. The sources analysed here record only isolated cases of people changing their confessional identity, suggesting the minor importance of conversions of this type in the work of the Venetian diplomats. One such case,

159] *Ibidem*, pp. 184-188.

160] ASVe, *Delib. Cost.* r. 19, fol. 115v (*Ai Baili in Const[antinopo]li*, 15.12.1629): ‘Quanto à q[ue]l Turco suddito n[ost]ro, che inclina al ritornar Christiano, rimettemo à Voi, che conoscete il merito dei passati, et il frutto dei futuri servigi, che possano da lui aspettarsi, il fargli con l’assegnamento già scritto l’abilità di potersi privatam[en]te includer nelle n[ost]re militie, concorrendo noi prontam[en]te per la scorta della pietà della Re[pubbli]ca à fargli sentire ogni beneficcio.’

161] M.P. Pedani Fabris, *Venezia porta...*, op. cit., p. 182. Cf. also L. Rostagno, *Mi faccio turco. Esperienze ed immagini dell’islam nell’Italia moderna*, Roma: Istituto per l’Oriente C.A. Nallino, 1983, p. 54 on the questionnaires presented to such renegades.

162] G. Minchella, *Frontiere aperte...*, op. cit., p. 220 (‘sogno cristiano’).

163] M.P. Pedani, *Venezia porta...*, op. cit., pp. 182-184; A. Vanzan, *La Pia Casa...*, op. cit.; E.N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire...*, op. cit., pp. 122-164.

according to the report by Bailo Venier, was that of a certain Carà Satti, who became a Christian.¹⁶⁴ Another piece of information reports on a group of Ottoman subjects, kidnapped by Maltese knights and liberated by Venetians, who gave a statement of their Christian faith before the consul's dragoman in Smyrna / Izmir; however, this was a forced conversion.¹⁶⁵ Generally speaking, no policies aiming to convert Ottoman subjects were implemented by the diplomats.

The Venetian diplomats paid particular attention to converts from Christianity to Islam living in the Ottoman Empire. While they tolerated conversions among senior officials of the sultans' court—which was treated as part of a system that was hostile to Venice—the diplomats actively leveraged all means available to them to liberate people who had been kidnapped or enslaved. At the same time, the diplomatic service had at its disposal instruments which they could use in respect of persons returning to Venice, from issuing the necessary certificates free of charge, to 'using' those persons to perform certain acts, including espionage. Through their involvement in issues concerning slaves, the baili tried to enhance the image of Venice and to enact, as far as possible, the declared driving force behind Venetian policy: the quest for a Christian unity that would outweigh the particularist political interests of individual rulers; this phenomenon is well illustrated by the story of the two young Frenchmen liberated by Bailo Venier.

Venetian policy on individuals in the Orient had to take account of factors that went beyond the scope of classic foreign policy consisting in maintenance of relations between states. When establishing policy in respect of individuals living in their country of mission, the Venetian diplomats were conscious of the need to be aware of the position of the Ottoman Empire, as well as Venice's current political relations with other rulers of Christendom, particularly the French king and the pope. A further difficulty was Venetian relations with certain Christian orders. In this context it seems that action inspired by the idea of *antemurale* and aimed at individuals could be much more difficult to implement than that at state level. This is why the efficacy of the realization of that idea in the practice of representatives of the Venetian state in the Ottoman Empire can be assessed mainly through the acts that they performed for missionaries or slaves—as the most practical expression of

164] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 108, fol. 298r (disp. 199, 9.06.1629): 'un tale Carà Satti, buono molto bravo [...] dodeci an[n]i sono si fece Christiano.'

165] ASVe, *Disp. Cost.* f. 104, cc. 459r-v, (disp. 34, June 1627).

the concept of the unity of the Christian world. The visible expression of this unity was the impact on the image of Venice of their actions, such as protection of sacred sites and Christians living in the Ottoman Empire, facilitating returns to Christendom, preventing conversions, and supporting the expansion of Christianity in the Orient as far as possible. With these ambitious goals before them on the one hand, and a difficult negotiating partner (the sultan's court and the Ottoman administration) on the other, as well as the need to factor in other players in international policy, including the religious orders, it seems clear why certain baili and consuls placed such emphasis on the work they did for individuals. While they were powerless to influence big politics, such as the creation of broad alliances or declarations of war, the extent of their work for missionaries, converts, and slaves largely depended on their initiative, contacts, and skills, and was thus the most objective measure of the success of their mission.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to propose a model for interpretation of the idea of the bulwark of Christendom (*antemurale Christianitatis*) in the context of the practice of the Venetian state's diplomatic apparatus in the Ottoman Empire. The period covered was 1573-1645, the longest period of peace between the two states during the time of the Empire's active expansion towards Christendom. From the Venetian perspective, the beginning of this expansion is identified with the conquest of Constantinople by the army of Mehmet II (1453), and the end with the peace treaty of Passarowitz / Požarevac (1718).

The analysis was based on a number of assumptions that were instrumental in determining its direction. First of all, any attempt to understand the idea of *antemurale* had to take into account its nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations, which either considered the idea one of the main elements of the Venetian (like the Polish, Hungarian, Croatian, etc.) identity in the early modern age,¹ or categorically contested it. The latter stance stressed the primacy of economic interests in the policy of the Most Serene Republic, and saw these as the reason for Venetian attempts to keep peace with the Ottoman state throughout the Republic's existence.

While exclusion of later interpretations from the source materials employed in this work did not present major conceptual problems, the second assumption—to analyse the *antemurale* idea on the basis of early modern Venetian sources—was much more difficult to adopt in practice. The main problem was the lack of a contemporary definition

1] Cf. the opinion by A. Tenenti (Chapter II, note 58).

of the idea. Although the word '*antemurale*' itself recurred frequently in Venetian texts, its use was not accompanied by any explanation of its meaning, which had to be deduced from the context of the Venetian political and identity discourse. The expression '*antemurale*' should thus be seen as a kind of metaphor that functioned in the diplomatic language as well as in political treatises, a metaphor that likened a specific object—an element of fortifications distant from the centre—to certain territories of the Most Serene Republic (such as Cyprus or Corfu), or to the whole state. The metaphor functioned in the context of Venice's neighbourhood with the Ottoman Empire and was related to the fear within the Republic of the expansion of, or at least potential conflict with the Empire.

Thirdly, given the difficulty in finding an explanation of the *antemurale* idea in the contemporary sources, a definition had to be retraced from the various manifestations of the concept. One way of doing this would have been to seek evidence of the threat of Ottoman expansion in various types of cultural products. This approach to the research, however, would probably have produced some form of analysis of the image of the Turks, perhaps supplemented by elements of Venetian self-reflection on the condition of the Christian world. As something similar has already been done in numerous studies, this was not my aim. I therefore decided to concentrate my search for manifestations of the *antemurale* idea in political practice, and to focus on the activity of the Venetian diplomatic service. Research thus defined was easier to conduct, due in part to the consistency of the sources: diplomatic documents related to Venetian missions in the Ottoman Empire (i.e. to the mission of the baili in Constantinople and the consuls in Aleppo), supplemented by treatises produced within or for the Venetian diplomatic milieu. This attempt to retrace the functioning of the idea in the activity of the foreign service of the Most Serene Republic, i.e. in the administrative and political practice of that state, was also expected to shed some light on the idea of *antemurale* as one of the values that inspired Venetian diplomacy. In order for this to be possible, it was necessary to impose a relatively broad chronological framework on the book, and above all to exclude periods of wars with the Ottoman Empire, when the threat of its expansion naturally had to be formulated more strongly than in times of peace.

These three assumptions—i.e. the intention to go back beyond interpretative concepts created later than those under study here,

to treat *antemurale* as a metaphor with a clearly defined meaning (and not merely as a convenient rhetoric motif), and to describe it in terms of mechanisms visible in the functioning of a particular structure of the Venetian state (its diplomacy)—were the starting point for the reflections that form the body of the book. Further findings served to identify the constituent elements of the *antemurale* model that was created as an interpretation of the set of beliefs and actions of Venetian diplomats.

As observed above, the word '*antemurale*', used as a metaphor, referred certain elements of military constructions either to particular territories of the Venetian state or to the Republic as a whole. This was done in the context of the threat of Ottoman expansion, or at least of potential conflict with that state. According to the sources, the threat concerned states that were 'fortress and border', 'shield', 'bulwark', or 'key', whose fall would precipitate the 'easy surrender of the unfortunate Christian world'. The *antemurale*, in reference to Venice, was also defined as a 'bulwark against barbarians' and often accompanied by expressions such as 'refuge from the anger of rulers', 'real throne of outstanding liberty', 'salt of human wisdom', etc.² These quotations confirm that the essence of the threat was not so much the fear that Venice—or its parts, or Italy, or the whole Christian world—would be conquered by the Ottomans. It was about the otherness of the Empire, and about the danger of the imposition of foreign constitutional principles in case of a Turkish conquest of Venice and other lands. The third element of *antemurale*, beside the fear of expansion and otherness, was the need for the cooperation of the whole Christian world if the menace of Ottoman expansion was to be neutralized.

These are the three elements that I perceive in the *antemurale* idea as it functioned among the Venetian political elites. The first element, here defined as an awareness of Turkish expansion, is in fact the most nebulous and difficult to define. The fear of this continuing expansion—which would endanger Venice's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean—echoed the fears of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that the advances of the sultan's army would present an existential threat to the Christian world. This apprehension contributed to the development of the concept of the bulwark of Christendom, visible

2] The quotations here referred to are drawn i.a. from sources referenced in Chapter II (notes 59-64) and Chapter III (n. 108).

in the states that bordered with this new, expansive neighbour. One Venetian response—more conceptual than real—to this expansion was to assume responsibility for care of sacred sites in the Levant and the Christians who lived there, a gesture with overtones of the old idea of crusade. Ultimately, however, that response took on a different form, aptly termed a ‘Turkish war’ (Géraud Poumarède).³ This took as its aim the preservation of the common territory and culture of Christendom, so it was, in fact, a fight against the consequences of territorial expansion of the region in which principles indicative of the Ottoman otherness were implemented.

Ottoman otherness as it functions in the discourse is first of all a description of the reality of the Empire: fascinating in its size and good organization, above all of its military aspects, and for the obedience, discipline, and conformity of its subjects, but at the same time in permanent crisis, as exemplified by the widespread corruption and internal confusion. The description of the Ottoman otherness was an attempt at resistance on the part of the Venetian officials against those of the Empire’s constitutional principles that were incomprehensible and worrying to them, above all the tyranny and the enslavement of its subjects. Perhaps the most fundamental evidence of the Ottoman otherness as these representatives of Christendom saw it, however, was to be found in religious differences, which by definition set the Empire apart from the Christian world; though naturally there were also cultural and constitutional differences. These latter were the source of no less concern among the Venetian political elites, as they were considered entirely irreconcilable with values typical for the Christian world.

Consequently, the fight against the expansion of this otherness had to incorporate attempts to create an alliance whose existence was implicit in the very rhetorical concept of *antemurale* (i.e. if there is a bulwark, then there must be a fortress behind it: the Christian world). The idea of such an alliance in turn increased the imperative for proper definition of the political and cultural community for whose defence that alliance was envisaged. At the same time, the idea incorporated the facility to test whether certain of the elements of Christendom could be redefined if the projected alliance were joined by other states or actors located outside Christendom as it was traditionally understood. This latter notion was defined by Venetian diplomats as the community

3] Cf. Chapter II, n. 103.

and geographical area of the states of Latin Christendom. The Eastern Christian sphere, politically dependent on the Ottoman Empire or on other states, or simply outside the Venetian political consciousness (like the Muscovite state) was not part of it. The diplomats of the Most Serene Republic did not, in fact, harbour significant hopes of inspiring a large-scale anti-Ottoman uprising among the Greek population, but they did analyse the situation of the Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire with great interest, and they also kept abreast of the dynamic situation in the Caucasian states. Aside from the world of the Eastern Christians, Safavid Persia might also be considered as a potential member of an alliance for the protection of Christendom. To this end, the Venetian political elite deliberately created an image of Persia as a country with a sophisticated political culture among the elites of noble origins, enjoying extensive liberty, and ruled by a monarch who had many of the attributes of a Renaissance ruler.

It seems that all these elements were present in the minds of the Venetian diplomats who served in the Ottoman Empire. The foreign service of the Most Serene Republic, which was impeccably organized and boasted an extensive network of missions, informers, and collaborators, was able to effectively perform the tasks set it. Implementation of general foreign policy directives and pursuit of current political interests had to be tailored to local diplomatic practice in the capital of the receiving state, and this often forced some compromises. On the other hand, by transmitting news from their placements, the Venetian envoys contributed to the formation of Venetian foreign policy and to verification of the central government's plans. The influence of the ideological component of *antemurale* is clearly visible in the news as conveyed by the diplomats, which confirmed the otherness of Ottoman internal solutions, upheld expectations of the expansion of the Empire, and provided evidence of research into potential allies for the fight against the Empire. In the case of some states, such as Persia or the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the main motivation behind the contacts forged by Venice was the intention to establish such cooperation to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. The many mentions of these issues in the diplomatic sources attest to the longevity of this idea in Venetian political concepts, despite the unfavourable conditions that made creation of a wide-reaching political alliance almost impossible throughout the early modern period. Realization of the *antemurale* idea and of the ideal of unity in the wider

Christian world was largely at a lower level, i.e. in diplomats' contacts with individuals. Reports of action taken to assist such individuals, in particular Eastern Christians, missionaries, and slaves, are common in consular records. These mentions attest that the Republic attempted to ease their movement from the Muslim world to Christendom by issuing the necessary certificates, often waiving the statutory fees. The diplomats of *La Serenissima* financed the activity of clergymen who were members of 'old orders', and ransomed slaves or liberated them in other ways. The Venetian diplomatic service found gainful roles for people from all these categories, employing them as dragomans, teachers of Oriental languages, and sometimes as spies or agents. The work of the foreign service of the Most Serene Republic, especially that performed on behalf of individuals, evinced its operatives' concern to safeguard the Republic's prestige both in the Ottoman Empire and among the rulers of other Christian states, and was at the same time an exemplification of the Venetian myth in the foreign policy of this state.

The findings discussed in this book may contribute to discussions on the functioning of early modern Venetian diplomacy, the perceived borders of Europe and its divisions in the early modern period, the policies of the states of Christendom towards the Ottoman Empire, interpretation of the imagined Ottoman otherness, and political and cultural relations between Europe and the Muslim world. Unlike some scholars (such as Charles Carter and Donald Queller),⁴ I believe that the diplomatic service of the Republic functioned without major problems, and both the standard of its organization and the breadth of interests of the Venetian diplomats should be considered impressive. The findings of Haitsma Mulier, Giuseppe Trebbi, and Andrea Zannini, which stress the role of lower-ranking diplomatic personnel in the activity of the Venetian missions in the Ottoman Empire, require confirmation, but it is hard to see any consequences of this situation for the practice inspired by the *antemurale* idea.⁵ Nonetheless, the postulates of these scholars have an important role in broadening the field of research into the Venetian foreign service. I also agree with the role of the myth of Venice in Venetian diplomatic practice as underlined by Robert Finlay and Donald Queller.⁶

4] Cf. Chapter I, notes 71-72.

5] Cf. Chapter I, notes 105-107.

6] Cf. Chapter I, notes 75-76.

The research I have done here has led me to greater criticism regarding the interpretation of certain notions of political and cultural geography in the early modern Venetian discourse. There is no doubt that this discourse perceived a difference between Europe understood as a geographical unit (continent) and Christendom as a political and cultural community. I nonetheless believe that great caution must be exercised in formulating generalized conclusions on the basis of analysis of the use of early modern notions of political and cultural geography. The meaning of such terms as intended by Venetian diplomats often differs from their equivalents employed by contemporary authors of political or ethnographic treatises; and a distinction between Europe and Christendom can be confirmed even up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, a reading of diplomatic documents generated by the Most Serene Republic leads to many surprising conclusions regarding the meaning and usage of given geographical names, such as the contemporary divisions of Europe, or attempts to define its centre and peripheries. These facts lead us to reconsider whether the Venetian political geography of Europe as perceived by the diplomats of that state was not in fact more ‘modern’ than ‘early modern’, and thus add to the arguments for a discussion on the genesis of the idea of nation in the present-day understanding of the term.

On the whole I agree with the conclusions of Paolo Preto and Lucette Valensi⁷ regarding the definition of the category of Ottoman otherness. Nonetheless, my analysis leads me to take a critical view both of the inclusion of manifestations of the *antemurale* idea—alongside sporadically repeated papal calls for ‘holy leagues’—in the phenomenon defined by Giovanni Ricci as a ‘delayed crusade’,⁸ and, more broadly, of comparison of efforts to create an early modern anti-Ottoman alliance with medieval crusades. Early modern attempts to formulate anti-Ottoman leagues were based on different premises than the crusades. They took place in different conditions, no longer those of medieval universalism, even in respect of the role of the papacy (something which is, moreover, very clear from the perspective of Venice). My view is closer to Géraud Poumarède’s interpretation of the tensions between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire (the concept of a ‘Turkish war’). Neither do I agree with Almut Höfert’s

7] Cf. Chapter III, i.a. notes 17-20.

8] Cf. Chapter II, note 102.

deconstruction of the notion of the Turkish menace (*Türkengefahr*).⁹ I also have the impression that the frequent stress on the lack of an ideological (or more precisely: religious) component in Venetian policy on the Ottoman Empire and the simultaneous emphasis on the Orientalist approach of the Venetian (and, more broadly: Italian) discourse on Turkish issues is a manifestation of a historiographical trend which seeks to describe the early modern particularity of images of non-Europeans using interpretative paradigms designed to describe later times. It also seems like an attempt to include Venice, in view of her republican constitution, maritime trade-based economy, and contacts with the world beyond Europe, in the group of European states which over time contributed to the success of modernity, thereby, according to this theory, differing from states in the eastern part of the continent, which, while likewise affected by the Ottoman expansion, responded to it with religiously (i.e. non-rationally and anachronistically) motivated political concepts. Although this conclusion is only an intuition of mine, I consider that it suggests a certain historiographic fashion with the potential to become the subject of a similarly interesting analysis to that of James S. Grubb's image of the Venetian myth in historiography, for instance.¹⁰

Another aspect to note is that analysis of the *antemurale* idea according to the model I propose here shifts accents in the spatial approach to the history of Venice, reorienting its centre towards the (mental) East. At first glance it might seem that this shift is only ideological in character, lending more importance to regions less frequently described in the historiography, and in objective terms does not add any substance to the historical research. It is also important to point out that this shift does not refer to relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, which have already been the subject of many works. It is more a matter of shifting the focus to the region of Central Europe. Analysis of concepts such as *antemurale*, which were typical for many (proto-)national cultures in the region, as an answer to the Ottoman expansion in this part of Europe, but also in Venice, allows us to link in one interpretative thread phenomena that affected both 'eastern' and 'western' Europe, i.e. both parts of the continent, which is still divided by the humanities, in thrall to the Enlightenment

9] Cf. Chapter II, note 71.

10] Cf. Chapter I, note 82.

creation of a backward Eastern Europe and its consequent long-term political marginalization.¹¹

Returning to the summary of the findings presented in this book, the next thing to add is that the diplomats' interest in Persia and the Caucasian world is remarkable, as is their good knowledge of ethnic and geographical issues in the Georgian states, and the relations of those states with the Ottoman Empire. One interesting motif which reinforces the justification for a joint presentation of Persia and the Georgian states as diplomatic actors that the Venetian diplomacy wished to list among the states of Christendom is that termed here the 'king's two faiths', i.e. the attempt to prove the alleged profession of the Christian religion by Muslim rulers of Persia and the Georgian monarchs who converted to Islam.

The book's conclusions regarding the role of the Venetian diplomatic service in its contacts with missionaries, converts, and slaves do not open up the field of discussion further than the theses already formulated in the numerous works dedicated to these groups of individuals in the early modern period. The analysis in this book merely fills out the picture already functioning in the literature, by showing the important role of the work of the baili and consuls in the cause of sacred sites, local Christians, and missionaries, and by drawing attention to the rivalry in the Orient between certain states. The object of this rivalry was the activity of certain religious orders supported, respectively, by Venice, France, and the papacy. The research undertaken for the purposes of this book sheds light on the specific importance attached by Venetian policymakers to ransoming and liberating slaves. It also stresses the consular role in the provision of aid to slaves and freedmen analogous to that extended to Eastern Christians and Latin clergymen.

Finally, the question remains as to how far the idea of *antemurale* is useful as an analytical category indicating directions for further research into both early modern reality and, more broadly, imagined geography; the idea of Europe and the Orient; national, ethnic, and religious identities; and the history and role of diplomatic services. Examination of these questions would certainly demand expansion of the area of study, above all in the spatial dimension. For the period addressed here, it would be necessary to look at manifestations of this

11] L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1994.

idea in the diplomatic practice of the Christian (Habsburg) Empire, and possibly also in the foreign policy of the Republic of Ragusa. The very undertaking of comparing these states would engender difficulties stemming from the broadening of the geographical field of research, due to the differences in the political, economic, and military circumstances of the states bordering the Ottoman Empire. The selection of suitable sources for such an analysis could be similarly problematic. Indeed, these difficulties emerged at the very beginning of my project, when I was considering whether to include the manifestations of the idea of the bulwark of Christendom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Despite these objective problems, it seems that a comparison of the Venetian model proposed here with expressions of the *antemurale* idea in the practice of other states could produce interesting results.

Paradoxically, despite the long tradition of research into the diplomatic sources of the Most Serene Republic, and the impressive body of material gathered in the archives of Venice, there is still a lack of works on the functioning of Venetian diplomacy in practice. I refer here not to studies on its organization, structure, protocol, etc., but to research into the influence of certain ideas on the practice of the diplomatic service of the Venetian Republic. The model analysed here of tensions between the desire for unity in the Christian world and Venetian interests in the Ottoman Empire on the one hand, and between instructions issuing from the central authorities and the realities of operating in the receiving state on the other could be an interesting starting point for further research into the practical realization of other ideals of Venetian political thought. What was the role of '*prudenza Venetiana*' and '*reputazione*' in the practice of Venetian diplomats? Were disputes over proper display of state prestige merely a manifestation of the way in which the rules of protocol were formulated in the international practice of the period? Finally, from another perspective, it would be useful to reflect on the extent to which the notion of the expansion and otherness of the Ottoman Empire that reigned in the political class in the Republic, including among future diplomats, shaped the image of the Empire with which diplomats arrived in Constantinople. In other words: were their views on the Ottoman Empire extensively influenced by what they learned before their departure, or did they allow themselves to form their own opinions based on observations in Constantinople or Aleppo? Clearly,

this question necessitates much broader research than simple analysis of the baili's observations expressed in their dispatches and reports and reference of those observations to present-day cultural frames of analysis or the ethnographic approach to knowledge about the Turks among Europeans in the early modern period.

Yet more potential starting points for further research invite themselves. It would be interesting, for example, to verify theses that identify the motives behind some practices by the Venetian political elites as typical for a city republic culture. However, this argument, cited in cases including various diplomats' positive evaluations of the Ottoman ideal of obedience, and their interest in the influence of the Ottoman court on the sultans' activity, is difficult to verify, even though the research challenges inherent therein are tempting.

We also have to admit clearly that the lure of anachronism—particularly strong in a book that draws extensively on an approach typical for cultural studies, and is thus based on a theoretical framework usually applied to periods later than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—might be difficult to be overcome. This book was written over several years at a time when many of the phenomena or ways of interpreting reality it describes could easily be likened to current developments in international relations. And indeed, one such comparison should not be considered anachronistic, and in fact exemplifies the relevance of this research for the present. This is the idea that Europe was not only the direct successor to Christendom but also, in its current political form, an idea with a strong component of postulated unity, which was, as noted, an important element of the *antemurale* concept in the sources analysed for this book. The vitality of the 'bulwark of Christendom' idea in the discourse and practice of Venetian diplomacy thus becomes more understandable if we compare it to the longevity of the political, or political and cultural, idea of Europe and of its unity. On the other hand, perhaps the reason for the functioning of both ideas in the *longue durée* paradoxically remains unclear despite the proposed comparison. This is why there is still a need for further studies on the unity of Christendom and the model of *antemurale*, to contribute to explaining the crux of the project that today connects the states of the Old Continent.

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