

Introduction

Man is such that he never relaxes
from one job than from another (Anatole France)

«The city of Venice is better placed than any other city in the world for trading, not that there is no other city better placed as regards the sea (there are many other lands better placed for sailing in the Levant and Ponant than Venice), but Venice is situated in a more convenient site for trading because it has more convenience for distributing its goods than any other city, especially because it is close to Germany and that it is easy to transport its goods there, partly by water and partly by cart at low cost and they (the Venetians) are also neighbours of Lombardy, a large and well-populated province, where many goods are sold, and a large part of which is on the plain, a large plain with large rivers through which goods can easily be transported to Venice. No other sailing nation, neither the Genoese nor the Florentines, can compete with them, as they need mules and other beasts that cost them more. Even if it were destroyed by war or some other cause, right down to the foundations, it would have to be rebuilt because its situation is so good, or a neighbouring town would have to be built to supply the same things»¹.

A remarkable text, the author has seen the advantages of Venice's geographical position and its few disadvantages, the deepest and most northerly gulf of the Mediterranean which remained, until the end of the Middle Ages, the heart of a world that could not yet be called «ancient», because, for the Europeans of the time, there was no other, the sea was the obligatory link between the three continents that bordered it, the proximity of the lowest and most easily traversed pass of the high Alps, the Brenner which opened up two valleys, the Inn to the north and the Adige to the south, through which German merchants travelled, and other rivers, notably the Po and the Brenta river which led to the rich and industrious provinces of Italy, the disadvantage, but was it a disadvantage? the lagoon made the site impregnable, but its

¹ *Giovanni Rucellai e il suo Zibaldone*, A. PEROSA ed, Warburg Institute, London 1960, p. 125.

shallow waters were not conducive to navigation, and Venice needed outports, of which there were many on the steep Istrian coast opposite. The lagoon also explains Venice's loyalty to the galleys, costly vessels with a shallow draught that were able to avoid the traps set by the unmarked channels for lagoon navigation.

These galleys were and remained the property of the State. In Venice, the State was everything, omnipresent through its councils, magistrates, courts and judges. It regulated the use of boats, both public and private, kept a close eye on the trades, and oversaw supplies, both of food for a large population but seriously weakened by epidemics, and of the raw materials essential to an industrial city turning to textiles, woollen fabrics or silk which had to be dyed, and shipbuilding at the public Arsenal and private shipyards scattered along the main canals, and glass, which people began to use extensively in their homes.

The State is everything, but the State is the patriciate, i.e. an urban nobility of merchants who established themselves as such at the end of the Thirteenth century and who monopolise power, sit alone in councils and courts, accede alone to magistracies and public functions, compete alone in public auctions and take command of galleys, monopolise the highest ecclesiastical functions of bishop or abbot. It was a privileged class, politically because it governed the city and the conquered territories, fiscally because it contributed more than any other to State expenditure, but it subscribed to public loans, which paid interest and were repayable, it is true, and let us add: if the State had the means to do so and at the rate it decided sovereignly, that is to say, at the rate dictated by the markets.

Is the patriciate, a privileged class, made up of privileged people in the sense of the 1789 revolutionaries? I'd be tempted to say no. There's no doubt that it enjoys political, religious, economic and social prerogatives, but it doesn't have the benefit of a court, and its members aren't courtiers expecting pensions and benefits from the sovereign, paid for by others. And the patriciate is diverse: it includes rich and poor alike, and alongside a flourishing oligarchy, there are more poor nobles who are ashamed of their poverty, but they all have the right to sit on or have a representative on the *Great Council*, the sovereign body of the Republic. Inequality dominated, even among the patricians. It is worth remembering this before turning to this book, which gives pride of place to the great international merchants who, on their return from their maritime peregrinations, found some rest in the palace that adorned the Grand Canal and soon left it to take decisions favourable to their interests in the *Senate* or the *Council of Ten*.

In his foreword to the second volume of *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, 15^e- 18^e siècles*, BRAUDEL analysed all the games of exchange, from elementary barter to the most sophisticated

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capitalism» (p. 7). The Venetian merchant practised both sophisticated banking operations (deferred currency exchange) and barter, but this very simple commercial activity was accompanied by an estimate of the value, expressed in local currency, of the goods exchanged by those means. Barter did not require money, and neither does our modern clearing. In a town long deprived of the countryside and agricultural resources, forced to turn to the market, the so-called market economy was very early on a widespread activity in all strata of society, and bartering, far from being rudimentary, avoided the need to travel with precious means of payment reputed to be well taken by privateers and other sea robbers. The merchant would buy here and sell there at a higher price, then repeat the operation. Everything was good for him, if he made a profit on each transaction, which he called gain and which he accumulated.

[We know that the history of Venice was written for a cultivated public by Belles-Lettres (*Venise au Moyen Age*, then *Venice. Guide culturelle d'une ville d'art. De la Renaissance à nos jours*)² the deep and sincere esteem I have for the *Storia di Venezia* published in 14 folio volumes by the Italian Encyclopaedia, a veritable monument of historical science at the end of the 20th century. I had the honour of collaborating on several volumes of this exemplary work, and I wrote for the volume dedicated to the Fourteenth century *I Meccanismi dei traffici*, pp. 529-616, of volume 3, *La formazione dello stato patrizio*, edited by Girolamo ARNALDI, Giorgio CRACCO and Alberto TENENTI. My contribution was subsequently published in French by Librairie Arthème Fayard thanks to Denis Maraval, who was then in charge of the historical collections of this famous publishing house (*Venice and the Sea, 12-15 Centuries*). This work, which won Le Grand Livre du mois, was awarded a prize by the Académie de Marine and the Académie française, and I have not reproduced it since it is available to Italian or French-speaking readers. In preparing this present book, I did a great deal of fruitful reading, which has continued to this day, but so as not to repeat what others would have said very well, I looked at the *Storia di Venezia*, in particular the two volumes IV and V that it devoted to the *Quattrocento* under the direction of Alberto TENENTI and Ugo TUCCI which are at the heart of this monumental work. In this double volume, which deals with the *Quattrocento*, commerce is not addressed, although TUCCI, a recognised economic historian, devotes a few pages to banking. Venice was a merchant Republic and the *Quattrocento* is considered, rightly or wrongly, to be the golden century of Venetian commerce. The two editors no doubt thought that giving full prominence to commerce and merchants in the 15th Century would be

² HOCQUET (1997b). See also HOCQUET (1997a).

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an unnecessary reminder of what had been written about the previous century. This book of synthesis does not pretend to make up for this oversight, especially as historical research has made progress that has profoundly changed our way of seeing things.

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A definition of the merchant class was needed: the citizens saw their activity as limited to domestic trade within the city, while the nobles were open to distant maritime trade, which generated much higher profits; they monopolised political power and were the only ones allowed to enter the *Great Council*. The merchant, an educated man who attended schools and even the University of Padua where he preferred to study law in preparation for his commercial and political duties, he learned to keep commercial records and accounts. He worked surrounded by his brothers, and the «society of brothers» remained the mainstay of his business. One of the brothers lived in Venice, while the others travelled the world; the wives, who stayed in Venice with their many children, played an important role in society during the husband's prolonged absence. The merchant also kept up a regular correspondence with his clerks, other merchants who dealt with business like his in distant places. Rather than competition, it was solidarity strengthened by family ties that prevailed. Merchants were sometimes wary of their clerks, who could be formidable competitors (chapter 1).

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There was a close bond between the great noble merchants and the State, which provided them with protection, consuls, the galleys of the public Arsenal and diplomatic and military support. The noble merchants competed together in public auctions for galleys dedicated to trade and joined forces to raise the capital, the shares of social capital necessary for a commercial expedition. These partners shared profits and losses in proportion to their investment in the business. They were also interested in the navigation through the goods they had loaded on board, but other merchants were invited to send their goods if the hold had to be filled (chapter 2).

There were many foreign merchants, from Tuscany and Germany, because Venice, a great cosmopolitan port, was renowned for its civil peace, which attracted minorities driven out of their city by the victory of an opposing party. The Florentines, masters of the silver and financial trades, lived side by side with the Lucchese who mastered the silk industry. Others, such as the German bakers, worked in the food industry. These foreigners, subject to higher taxes and excluded from maritime trade and its profits, suffered customs discrimination (chapter 3).

However, this population had to be housed³, protected from flooding, clothed, heated and fed, and the lagoon produced nothing except fish, which people reared, and less and less salt. Livestock and butchers, wheat, grain, salt and timber merchants, all carried out their activities. The state attached such importance to regular supplies for the urban population that some of these products were the subject of a monopoly responsible for supplying public granaries and sales outlets. The State also charged for services rendered, and the salt monopoly gave rise to increased taxation as State spending augmented. Any merchant loading his goods onto the ships was obliged to return to Venice with salt for which the State promised a good price. This role soon shifted from the merchant to the shipowner, i.e. the large merchant with the capital to build, equip and own the ships. Throughout the century, the Republic's highest institutions were represented by the «order of salt», which imposed strict regulations on imports, most of which were resold in north-eastern Italy (chapter 4).

Navigation was costly: this was due to the cost of protecting trade, and Venice favoured armed ships, fortified with castles (forecastle and quarter-deck) and taking on board a crew of crossbow soldiers tasked with putting the pirates to flight, and fast galleys. The shape of the shallow lagoons and the weather conditions of the Mediterranean and the coastal seas meant that certain types of ship had to be used, but these large, poorly fed crews were expensive and the *nolis* (freight rates) borne by the cargo were high. Light, luxury, and expensive goods were reserved for galleys, while heavier goods or those that took up more space went on naval vessels or cogs. The State intervened meticulously, and the Flanders auction contract illustrates its multiple interventions. The slow pace of shipping was slowed by the fact that all the merchants and sailors who had made the Republic's fortune were able to buy and sell at the ports of call (chapter 5).

Venice's fever for the Orient was fuelled by its colonial empire and its regular visits to the capital of what was once the powerful Byzantine Empire. Constantinople was still a major market, opening onto the Black Sea ports and a diverse clientele in which local Turks and Jews played a major role. Venetian merchants were numerous and active. Venice also had colonies that came under Turkish attack in the second half of the century, but it kept Crete and had Cyprus handed over to it. The century could have ended with a status-quo and flourishing business for Venetian merchants on the lookout for anything they could sell at a profit: cloth, spices and slaves supplied by the Russian plains, the Caucasus valleys and the victorious Ottoman conquest of the Balkan peninsula. Venetian merchants delivered slaves to Aragon, the Balearic

Italy? Or not? Be consistent.

³ CANIATO & DAL BORGO, *passim*.

Islands and to the Venetian colonies that needed labour for their plantations. Africa would come later (chapter 6).

As in the past, Venetian merchants remained loyal to Alexandria, where they were numerous and brought their culture with them, such as the use of wine in their taverns. They lived in their fondouks under the authority of their consul and the Muslim authorities. They waited for the merchandises that the caravans would bring after taking over from the ships ~~crusing~~ ^{sailing} in the Indian Ocean. They contributed financially to the "cotimo", a kind of insurance fund that offered them a guarantee. They also explored Syrian ports, and Damascus, also under the authority of the Mamlūk rulers, was one of the places where the caravans that had crossed the desert docked. The Orient offered spices that had made a long journey, by sea and land, before reaching the ports frequented by Venetian merchants. Spices also referred to dye products and, in general, commodities from the Orient. Finally, the Orient (the Nile delta and Syria) supplied the cotton essential for light textiles and for the industry that was developing in Lombardy and southern Germany. To supply the workshops, Venice organised the «muda», of cottons. Venetian merchants also shipped textile raw materials, linen, and silk. In fact, the trade was built on two monopolies that combined to drive up prices: that of the Mamlūk sultan and that of the Venetian merchants (chapter 7).

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Venetian merchants acted as intermediaries and in Bruges and London they encountered Hanseatic merchants from northern Germany and Holland. To the West, entangled in the wars that were bloodying France and Castile, they frequented the English and Flemish markets in large numbers, bringing back wool, woollen cloth, metals, iron and tin, refined or wrought. Wool was actively sought after everywhere, and the Venetians were active on the Catalan (merino wool) and English (Cotswolds'sheep) markets. These products were indispensable to Venetian workshops and were also used in construction and furniture. In Venice, an industrial city, merchants distributed the wool to weavers and took back the finished product for export. Wealthy clients and dignitaries from the countries of the Levant were enamoured of beautiful fabrics in shimmering colours, and Venice had no trouble selling these sought-after goods. In those oriental markets, where merchants were happy to barter, English pewter, in its various forms, was in great demand and paid for costly silk purchases. Towns in Lombardy and beyond the Alps manufactured cheap cotton textiles brought by Venetian ships. However, England was also developing a textile industry based on its wool, which would prove later to be a formidable competitor for the Venetian industry (chapter 8).

How were purchases made in the East to be financed? The precious metals mined in Bohemia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Serbia and in the Tyrol

(Schwatz) flowed into Venice, and those who profited from this mineral wealth had their branches in the city, which was strengthened by the power of its gold currency, the ducat (chapter 9). The question of settlements and payments, and the widely used barter system could not balance sales and purchases everywhere. The better-equipped West, with its already-developed banking system, accepted bills of exchange, while the East favoured precious metals such as gold, silver and copper. But the bill of exchange was an instrument of speculation, and skilful financiers played on the differences in exchange rates between the various places where merchants often needed credit. The protested bill of exchange fuelled the debtor's credit and the creditor's speculation. Every international merchant was also a banker, as well as a shipowner and shareholder, and had a seat on the councils that governed the merchant republic (chapter 10).

Venice was an aristocratic republic, and the merchant aristocracy held all the political, economic and religious powers. Bishops and abbots were recruited from among the younger members of the patriciate, but the nobles, who had no tax privileges, were subject to forced borrowing, which the State had given up repaying in the middle of the previous century. Although the State borrowed more and more, it was forced to institute a direct tax or *decime*, equal to 1/10 of income, but increasingly costly wars forced it to continue borrowing. Bankers invited or obliged to make advances, to anticipate revenues that would be collected years later, multiplied bankruptcies over the course of the century. Very few banks ~~that~~ reached their twentieth year! (chapter 11)

The merchant patriciate played a major role, commensurate with its importance in the society and government of its city, in the inventions, religious reform, embellishment of Venice and intellectual movement that have gone down in history as Humanism and that marked the Renaissance. The printers established in Venice, whose investments were financed by wealthy merchant-bankers made the most of a German invention and published and printed numerous devotional works and those by ancient Greek and Latin authors, poets and tragedians, encyclopaedic scholars and philosophers who gave a decisive boost to humanism. These Venetian merchants, faithful to a long tradition, took part in the discovery of new worlds, such as Alvise da Mosto who explored the rivers of Black Africa in search of gold. Other noble offspring of illustrious merchant families set about reforming Venetian monasteries that had fallen into decay, regenerating monastic life and founding congregations with the support of popes, some of whom came from the ruling class of Venice or were recently ennobled merchants. These congregations established close financial solidarity between all the affiliated monasteries and modelled their

organisation on that which had made the Cistercian order so solid (chapter 12). 7

The Venetian merchants had not forgotten their origins; they knew that the fortune of their ancestors had been born of the land of which they were great owners, and they also knew that possession of land was less subject to risks than commercial capital ventured out to sea, where it was often the victim of shipwreck or corsairs. It was at this time that Venice was completing its conquest of *Terraferma*, which became the *Stato da Terra*, seizing the property of the conquered lords (Scaliger, Visconti, Carrara, Este, Patriarch) and putting it up for sale. Merchant families bought up the property, inaugurating the reclamation (draining the marshes) and agricultural exploitation that made the great families so wealthy in the centuries that followed. Although the wealthy merchants were not yet indulging in the delights of the countryside in a villa designed and built by the greatest architects, they had superb palaces built in Venice itself, right on the banks of the Grand Canal, and we can see the rapid evolution that led from the *Ca' d'Oro* (the most accomplished model of the Gothic style with its flowers and flamboyant style) to the Palazzo Loredan built by Codussi, a masterpiece of the Renaissance (chapter 13). Merchants were reluctant to take advantage of these new sources of wealth and, preferring more immediately profitable activities, took over the Romagna salt works in Cervia. The importance of donations to pious charities, hospitals, parish churches and monasteries, or to the poor, is difficult to measure in merchant's wills, as the enriched merchant sought to atone for his conduct on earth and spare himself a long stay in purgatory afterwards (chapter 14).

The general conclusion does not go back over what is considered the «golden age» of Venetian trade, and we have sufficiently highlighted the many obstacles faced by merchants and the State, their emanation. But later eras were forced to revise this mode of operation from top to bottom, abandoning all attempts at politico-military expansion and adopting a prudent neutrality in European affairs dominated by more powerful powers. Venice and its timorous merchants had enough to do with the Ottomans or with newcomers to the Mediterranean.

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In preparing the English version of this new book, I would like to express two particularly heartfelt thanks, one to the publisher who courageously agreed to publish the full text with notes, bibliography, and index, to Mrs Marcella Mulder she chose with great care two anonymous experts, whose comments were of great help to me in improving the content and presentation of the book, to the *Deepl* software which has been a great help, even if careful proofreading and

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corrections are necessary. Finally, I must not forget my wife, who patiently followed the progress of the book.

Chapter One

The merchant, and his family

Legal status, activity, honours and prestige introduced differences between Venetians and imposed unequal burdens and advantages in the life of the Commune¹.

Were wealth and activity sufficient criteria for class distinctions in Venetian society? What role did birth play? Did girls and boys have the same rights, the same chance, if not to accede to office, at least to have equal access to their parent's wealth? Before the year 1000, if the chronicles and the few surviving texts refer to trade, the essential role seemed to devolve on a landed aristocracy of large landowners who invested part of their income in trade and, in their final days, to atone for their sins and greed for gain, lavishly endowed the monasteries that were so numerous in Venice. It wasn't until the 13th century that class differences were identified in urban society that were much more perceptible and precocious in rural society, for example in Chioggia among the salt workers, to whom we have devoted several previous works². But that's not our subject here: we're studying what made Venice great, the merchant, and the sources force us to distinguish between local or domestic trade and international trade, and we'll also see, later on, that a bridge was built between the two categories of merchant, as the great international merchant gave the raw material he had imported to master craftsmen responsible for transforming it and making a finished product that would be re-exported.

In Venice at the beginning of the 14th century, the merchant nobility had all the prerogatives of citizens, plus one, political power, since the «original citizens» decided that only they and their descendants would have access to the *Great Council* from which all magistrates would be drawn. This new socio-legal category therefore proclaimed itself the «nobility» at the turn of the 14th century and worked throughout the century to strengthen its position. The reform had its origins in the turbulence that gripped the Commune from around 1240 onwards, which centred on the place of the craft guilds, the producers, and their role in relation to the merchants who sought to confiscate for their own benefit the trade, and therefore the profits from the marketing of the products of the craftsmen's work, and secondly, the attitude of the old

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¹ ROMANO (1987), p. 27.

² HOCQUET (2012)

nobility who, seeking new alliances in order to preserve their prerogatives in their entirety, were prepared to accept the most influential fringe of the merchant class with whom they already rubbed shoulders in the councils. In this perspective, the core of the oldest families, the ancient nobility that formed a powerful oligarchy, would have taken the initiative to close the *Great Council* to newcomers to lock in (*serrar*) those families who, at one time or another since the creation of the Council, had succeeded in having one of their members elected and had acquired political experience. It would be dangerous to leave out those families who could lead an opposition. All these families, old and new, combined to form the patriciate³.

TWO CLASSES OF BOURGEOIS

CITIZENS (*CITTADINI*)

Citizens enjoyed the right to own property, the foundation of their freedom, from which derived the right to engage in commercial activity, in Venice, in the duchy and in the conquered territories. Among these citizens, a distinction was introduced: the «original citizens», or *de jure*, a hereditary quality recognised *jure sanguinis* to those born into families that belonged to the Venetian community, in other words the children of Venetian citizens. Below this category of citizens by birth were *cives* who had obtained citizenship by privilege. A law passed on 4 September 1305 granted foreigners who had lived in Venice or the lands subject to Venice for fifteen years and had paid taxes (*onera and factiones*) the right to trade in Venice, and those who had lived there for 25 years the right to become Venetians, i.e. full citizens like the others, with the same rights. In 1313, a new law made these naturalisations even more flexible, for children born in Venice to non-citizen foreign parents. After twelve years of residence, they would be considered *Veneti de intus*, while after a further six years, i.e. at the age of eighteen, they could become *Veneti de extra*. This law marked the birth of the dual concept of *intus* and *extra*. These new citizens, most of whom were immigrants, preferably skilled craftsmen attracted by tax breaks and established in the various trades, only had to pass through three successive stages to become full citizens, *jure soli*, at the age of 25. The granting of Venetian nationality was therefore very liberal, but to benefit from it, two conditions had to be met: stable residence and a level of affluence that placed the holder among the taxpayers granting (repayable) loans to the government. The most clearly stated aim was the expansion of internal and external trade since the main result of

³ HOCQUET (1975).

who came into conflict with his boss or the guild (*l'arte*) could appeal to a local court made up of nobles who were not involved in production and were therefore more willing to listen to and uphold the worker's claims. The Venetian courts were not subordinate to a powerful Chamber of Merchants, as was often the case in Italian communes⁵. On the other hand, Venice enjoyed a degree of tranquillity and political stability that was unusual in Italy, which had been torn apart by factional struggles.

Citizenship was proudly claimed, and so part of the Arian family, who were far away, were left out of the *serrata* and did not become noblemen; in 1361, Antonio Arian forbade his daughters to marry gentlemen and his sons to marry noblewomen. This may be seen as the resentment of a man who had been unjustly dismissed, especially as his sons, who claimed a noble ancestor, sought in vain to enter the *Great Council*⁶ after the Chioggia War and the victory to which their finances had contributed. Conversely, other citizens recommended that their offspring only marry nobles from the *Great Council*.

THE PATRICIATE

In the merchant cities of medieval Europe, the term patriciate referred to the urban nobility⁷, who held a monopoly on municipal and then territorial power when the Commune became a city-state through conquest. The War of Chioggia shook up many a patrimony through the multiplication of forced loans and other exceptional tax levies, at a time when the war and the blockade of the Lagoon ports by the Genoese fleet were drying up the revenues from maritime trade. In the darkest days of the siege, in December 1379, an extraordinary council of *savi* decided to grant the nobility to thirty citizens who would make an exceptional contribution to the war effort. In September 1381, the *Senate* decided to choose thirty from sixty-two candidates from fifty-eight families. Wealthy citizens who had armed galleys at their own expense were eliminated in favour of men who had made lesser sacrifices, but who had good-sounding names: di Mezzo, Longo, Nani, Pasqualigo, Polo, Renier and Trevisan names also borne by ruling families as early as the 13th century. According to CHOJNACKI these new nobles came from unrecognised and illegitimate branches of noble

⁵ MOLA (1994), p. 275.

⁶ MUELLER (1985), p. 64.

⁷ We persist in using the term «patriciate» to describe an urban and merchant nobility that was different from the landed nobility. These Venetian nobles had great difficulty gaining acceptance for their nobility when Venice lost its independence. From the Middle Ages onwards, these «nobles» were looked down upon by the rural nobility of *Terraferma*, which they had already conquered.

Going to use CAPS,
SMALL CAPS, or
neither.

naturalisation was the very liberal dissemination of the right to open and run shops and engage in trade both inside and outside Venice. The crisis of 1348 (Black Death) prompted the government to fill the gaps by granting even more generous citizenship to foreigners: two year's residence to become a citizen *of intus*, 10 years for dual status (*de intus and de fora*). The recurring plague and ongoing war forced these rules to be relaxed even further at the end of the century: no trade requirement and 5 years of residence (1391).

Whether you were *intus* or *extra* was important. At *Fondaco dei tedeschi*, which housed merchants from the plains of Northern Europe - Germans, Bohemians, Poles and Hungarians - but which was also an instrument of fiscal control, foreign merchants were forbidden to trade with merchants from the *Fondaco*, citizens *of intus* could only trade with them outside the *Fondaco* and in the presence of a broker (*sensale*) appointed by judicial magistrates (the *Quarante* or the Fourty), while those *from extra* could enter the building and trade freely. The State was careful to preserve the monopoly of the nobles and the wealthiest citizens⁴.

The tax census of 1379, the first of its kind to be kept, listed 917 *popolani* whose taxable real estate wealth exceeded 300 lire *d'estimo*. Among the socio-professional categories listed, in the food sector there were 15 grocers (*spizier*), 9 butchers (*becher*), 3 cheese-merchants (*casaruol*) and 3 fruit and vegetable merchants; in the clothing sector, there were 7 haberdashers (*marzer*), 2 secondhand clothes dealers (*strazaruoli*), 3 clothers, hatters, soap-makers, shoemakers and other cobblers, bootmakers, furriers as well as cutlers, ironmongers, crossbow, breastplate and sword makers, boiler-makers, 16 goldsmiths and a few jewellers, but no shipbuilders or seafarers, just a notary and a doctor. [The *popolani* who ran shops and workshops and therefore enjoyed the right to trade were, by virtue of this privilege, «citizens», and this legal class merged with a wealthy petty bourgeoisie, not whose members would have been listed in the *estimo* because it set the taxable income threshold too high (300 pounds).] At a lower level, there were also shopkeepers and craftsmen, who were citizens, otherwise they would not have been able to practise these trades, but who were not subject to loans because their means were more modest.

Venice strongly encouraged the immigration of skilled craftsmen, who were also attracted by the local legal structure: in fact, any worker

⁴ MOLÀ (1994), p. 240; BRAUNSTEIN (2016), p. 24, cites this silk manufacturer, most of whose production was sent to Germany. He had been established in Venice for 20 years, presented all the guarantees but only had the citizenship *of Intus*. He obtained a favour (*gracia*) from the *Senate* in 1377, but he could only sell to the *Fondaco* the products of his workshop (*settam, laboreria sette et auri facta et laborata in sua statione de Veneciis*). The «*gracia*» was an exceptional and individual procedure.

Why some enumerated and others not?

rework

families. The government nobility had become a patriciate with privileges⁸.

Not all the nobles were wealthy merchants; many, even if they sat on the *Great Council* were poor and sold their votes to the highest bidder, as far back as the 15th century. Let's listen to a contemporary criticise this behaviour:

«Many young nobles indulge in electoral corruption, begging for a *marcello*⁹, trying to get a job as a crossbowman on the ships or managing a *dazio*, which they are quick to sell on to others, selling their votes to whoever needs them to obtain the coveted office»¹⁰.

Among these privileges, there was one that was priceless: the galleys came out of the public Arsenal and remained the property of the State which made them available exclusively to nobles through an auction procedure (*incanto*) repeated every year for each voyage destination. The State, whose institutions of power were the exclusive preserve of the nobility, reserved the most lucrative and well-protected maritime trade for members of the ruling class. The successful bidders joined forces to raise the capital needed to win the auction, which went to the highest bidder, pay the price demanded by the State, recruit the large crew and meet the various costs of navigation. The State reserved the right to appoint the commander of the convoy, while the main bidder - the head of the company - commanded the galley to which he gave his name during the voyage. At the rank of revenue, the shipowners collected the *nolis* (freights) from the merchandise taken on board by the merchants, but all the galleys in the same convoy were shared *ad unum denarium*, i.e. all the *nolis* were divided equally between the galleys and then distributed according to each one's investment. This close-knit convoy meant that each galley captain had to lend a hand to the others. On return to Venice, the State, which owned the ships, would examine the logbooks, retain half of the *nolis* and collect a tax equal to 2 or 3% of the value of the goods. These galley voyages reached their peak from the middle of the 14th century to the end of the 15th century. Indeed, after the Pope lifted the ban on trade with Muslim Egypt, in 1346 the Venetians established the Alexandria line followed by Beirut in 1374 while in 1453 the fall of Constantinople suspended the Black Sea convoy established in 1332, but navigation recovered sporadically during periods of peace between Venice and the Ottoman Empire. To the west, a convoy left every spring for Flanders and England since 1332. In 1412, the State created the *muda* of Aigues-Mortes which

Compare Black quote
p. 23 with no
quotation marks.
Need to be
consistent.

Convoy

⁸ HOCQUET (2004²), p. 113-7.

⁹ The *marcello* was a silver coin minted under the dogate of Nicolò Marcello who was doge for 15 and a half months in 1474-1475.

¹⁰ COZZI (1970), p. 426, citing Domenico Morosini.

visited the ports of Languedoc and Provence, and in 1436 launched a new operation called the *muda* of Barbary which called at Syracuse, Tunis and various Maghreb ports before arriving in Valencia. Venice therefore offered its transport services to Muslim merchants, and in 1462 even created the *Trafego* line, which linked the Maghreb directly to Alexandria to facilitate pilgrim journeys to Mecca.

To some, the citizens, were devolved the shop and the trade of basic neCESSIties, grains, oil, wood and wine to the others, the nobles, the great international trade in the most sought-after commodities, spices, drapery, silk, in a monopoly situation. To both, salt was devolved, but it occupied a special place, it was the ballast. The former were restricted to the Ionian islands, while the latter had access to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. However, citizens could enter the service of the nobles and become their employees; on the galleys, for example, the nobles were commanders and «supracomites», while the *comite* citizens wielded the whip.

THE YEARS OF TRAINING

The future merchant's education began in his family, where he received lessons from a tutor. There were 150 such tutors in Venice at the end of the 14th century. If the number is accurate, elementary education was quite widely developed in the various strata of society¹¹, where illiteracy would have been a rarity; this tutor taught the child to read and write and gave him a few rudiments of arithmetic¹². At the age of seven, if the child was fortunate enough to enter public school¹³, he would perfect his writing, reading and accounting and learn Latin, as recommended by Alberti in his three books *Della Famiglia*, written

¹¹ From the will drawn up in 1442 by the schoolmaster Vittoire dei Rambaldoni and from his credits (the money owed to him), we learn that a *barcarol*, a mason and a certain Catarina, a leaser workwoman and bad payer, were his debtors for the instruction (*pro doctrina*) he had given to their children [ORTALLI, (1996) p. 83]. There were also girls' schools, one of which was run by a rector in Sant'Angelo.

¹² Luca Pacioli attended the Rialto school, where he studied mathematics under Domenico Bragadin. In 1470, he was tutor to his three sons, Bartolomeo, Francesco and Paolo, in the house of the merchant Antonio Bompiani in Giudecca. The Rialto school had been founded thanks to a bequest (instituted in 1397) from the wealthy Florentine merchant established in Venice, Tommaso Talenti, who bequeathed 50 *ducati* a year from the interest on his *prestiti*. The school began operating in 1408 and taught logic and philosophy. Its teachers came from the University of Padua, the most illustrious came from the ranks of the merchant patriciate [LEPORI (1980), p. 574]. Another school had been founded by the *Senate* in 1446 to teach «grammar, rhetoric and other sciences», the school of San Marco or *gymnasium literarium*, whose first masters initially taught as tutors (*ibid.*, p. 600-1). On the early formative years of the young Andrea Barbarigo, LANE (1996²), p. 14-17.

¹³ DOTSON (1984), p. 26.

between 1436 and 1440. Alberti urged the future merchant «to write down everything, every contract, every entry and exit of his shop, to always have a pen in his hand». The young teenager then went to a public school, which could be crowded with a hundred pupils, where a teacher taught him the abacus¹⁴, commercial arithmetic based on the four operations, then the fractions. He then began a practical training based on the study of the system of currencies and weights and measures, the distribution of profits and their application to concrete cases of commercial practice. At the age of 12-13, he began his apprenticeship in his father's business with his older brothers, learning the techniques of the trade from older, more experienced people who «possessed the technical knowledge and secrets of the profession». The young man would start by keeping the cash register with all the entries and exits, under the responsibility of the cashier who handled the cash, before trying his hand at double-entry bookkeeping, an intellectual exercise whose complexity required long efforts of understanding first, then execution, after which he was entrusted with the «mastro», or «ledger». As a noble merchant once said, admittedly from Genoa, but it could have been said by any representative of any merchant city: «Commerce is the science without which no money can be made»¹⁵. However, merchants did not neglect Latin; with grammar, they could understand a contract and make themselves understood, even in a foreign country, because Latin was the common language of all people with even the slightest education in the Middle Ages, a practical Latin far removed from the learned language of the humanists, but an indispensable tool for travelling or conducting business correspondence, even if it was laced with vernacular expressions.

In their epistolary writings, the merchants did not seek the splendour of words or the ornament of the verb, as they all wrote and replied to each other using vulgar languages or corrupt Latin¹⁶.

Moreover, in Venice in the 15th century, Venetian was tending to supplant Latin as the language of commercial letters. Knowing a little Latin, Latin for the use of merchants, was enough for those who would spend their lives in their father's shop. The business trip was the crowning achievement of the apprenticeship, carried out outside the family environment, and was the fundamental means of acquiring the practice of commerce. On his return, the young man was associated with his father and brothers. He was in his twenties at the time, and his

¹⁴ «No one in the Lagoon would have looked down on masters and students of abacuses, double books (double-entry bookkeeping), newspapers and learning how to keep accounts» [ORTALLI (1987), p. 80].

¹⁵ PETTI BALBI (2003), p. 96.

¹⁶ ORTALLI (1996), p. 79.

training had taken a dozen years. However, the technical and commercial training, open to new ideas and essential for the future merchant, was not without a traditional religious education.

Even then, advice was not superfluous and Guglielmo Querini meticulously instructed his young nephew who, despite his inexperience, had undertaken the journey to Flanders and England. The wisdom of the experienced man was evident in this aphorism: *meglio vendere e pentirsi piuttostochè tenere e pentirsi* («it is better to sell and regret than to hold and repent»), if you sell at a fair price, without losing anything, and without delay, *a remo bagnato*, «the oars still wet», as soon as the galleys arrive. Don't refuse to barter, but you should prefer cash, thanks to which you can trade at ports of call with great profit. In short, a realistic manual of commercial practice in eight chapters¹⁷. Travelling to foreign lands, learning about customs, fashions, cities, currencies, weights and measures¹⁸ and commercial practices also contributed to the training of the young merchant called upon to do business internationally.

Another aspect of the training should not be overlooked: training in the use of weapons and navigation: young noblemen also learned to use weapons and served as crossbowmen on galleys¹⁹ on «viaggi», where they carried goods without paying freight; this was their «portage», which they sold at ports of call²⁰. By the time he returned home, he already held several offices, including in the courts, and one of the most sought-after was the Court of *Petition Judges*, a commercial court where the young merchant could perfect his legal training. Then, alternating between public and commercial functions, he would return to a distant city with which his older colleagues had frequent contacts: Alexandria, Constantinople, Barcelona, Seville or Bruges and London. He served as their clerk, a position of trust because he received the goods sent by the parent companies to Venice and his masters entrusted him with the purchases²¹. Later, the political authorities would entrust him with foreign missions, first as an orator and then as an ambassador. which is still an inexhaustible source of information on Renaissance Europe.

fuller citation beyond Luzzatto?

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¹⁷ LUZZATTO (1954c).

¹⁸ Marco Bembo reproached his agent in Modon for buying raisins «by the sack» instead of by the «staio», a measure, as usual, and this was his biggest mistake [SOPRACASA (2012), p. 63].

¹⁹ QUELLER (1986), p. 34-39.

²⁰ LANE (1996²), p. 14 on the importance of the role of crossbowman in the training of young merchants.

²¹ TUCCI (2007b), p. 483-90, MOZZATO (2008), p. 30-1, SOPRACASA (2012), p. 58 and 61.

Training at the bank special care: the banker Piero Benedetto, who came from a small noble family, tried to introduce his son Giovanni. He set up a partnership of three young people, including his son's cousin and his future brother-in-law, in the hope that all three would inherit the bank. Piero emancipated his son and gave him 2,000 *ducati*. The partnership contract, a true apprenticeship contract, was signed in 1389, and in 1400 was followed by the contract establishing the banking partnership between the partners, each of whom contributed 2,000 *ducati* in capital and undertook to work only for the partnership. Profits and losses were shared equally between the partners, whose company lasted just 15 months²². Benedetto was on the lookout for good business opportunities in Venice, and on September 25 he entered into a partnership with the Menegi brothers, silk manufacturers from Lucca, and his nephew Marco Condulmer. The Menegi brothers contributed 3,000 *ducati* to the company, perhaps to cover an overdraft they had at the bank. When he made his will, the banker recommended that his nephew continue the silk company and in 1405 the company sent its first consignments of silk worth 10,000 *ducati* to its agent in Alexandria, the nobleman Jacopo Erizzo²³.

Incoherent.
Rework.

Merchants were also expected to be skilful negotiators capable of exploiting disagreements between their clients. Marco Bembo informed his brother that Constantinople was looking for scarlet gold cloths, damasks, satins and brocades, and that he had been summoned by the pasha and the *defterdār* (the sultan's treasurer) to agree the terms of trade, the prices and the measure of the cloths that the sultan could buy. The pasha, for his part, intended to limit the expenditure; but the *defterdār* sought to reassure the Venetian merchant by undertaking to discuss the matter with his master so that the latter would take all the goods. The transaction dragged on, however, because the sultan had a busy schedule and measuring cloths was an operation that required patience; the Turks could also change their minds and Marco was not completely reassured until the day the Court took delivery of the drapery and paid for it in cash.

awk.

However, Venetian merchants did not hesitate to compete harshly with one another, and Marco Bembo passed harsh judgement on those who sold at low prices, agreed to pay «bribes», had «little brains and even less intelligence», such as Alvise Pisani who, on the eve of leaving for Alexandria to sell his fabrics to the Porte, had agreed to buy alum from him at 22 *aspres* per cantar, which risked ruining Marco's deal, which had been concluded at 20 *aspres*. Bembo saw no other solution

²² MUELLER, p. 101.

²³ MOLÀ (1994), p. 257-9.

but to buy the cloth from Pisani, hoping to sell it to the sultan, who needed it to renew the janissarie's tunics²⁴.

In his daily work, the merchant could be helped by manuals known as «merchandise manuals», or «merchant's manuals», the most famous of which is that of the Tuscan Pegolotti who was a commercial clerk for the Bardi, Florentine businessmen, and travelled the world in their service, from Cyprus to London. This manual was preceded by similar manuscripts that have come down to us in fragments²⁵ and was followed by several others, at least three of which were written for the use of Venetian merchants. The oldest is known as the *Zibaldone da Canal* and was written around 1320. It was followed around the middle of the century by a *Tarifa zoè noticia dy pexi e misure di luogi e tere che 'sadvra mercadantia per el mondo*, which was published by the archivist V. Orlandini in Venice in 1936, and lastly - it was extremely successful because it was the first of its kind to be printed in its time - the manual by the Venetian Bartolomeo di Paxi, *Tariffa di pexi et misure* (Venice 1503), which was reprinted many times, but never revised. These manuals were compilations based on merchant's account books, which is what makes them so expensive, and they were intended for those venturing into the footsteps of their predecessors. They are of great use to the historian who is curious to refer to them and who is not content with the extravagant conversions written at the end of the 19th century. Weights and measures abounded in pre-decimal metric Europe, and merchants needed reliable information on the equivalences between measures of length (fabrics), volume or capacity (liquids and most solids, grains, salt, dried fruit) and mass (weights). These manuals

«provided a common base of knowledge, traditions and attitudes that enabled many Venetian merchants associated for a business to operate with the same perceptions and knowledge..., they formed an important part of a common merchant culture that ensured that everyone observed the same «rules», in the businesses in which they were associated»²⁶.

awkward

The merchant, who had first-rate mental tools at his disposal, collides with some difficulties. There is no doubt that Giacomo Badoer for example had an excellent knowledge:

- of the market,
- of the needs of the Venetian textile and glass industries at the various stages of product development,
- of commercial and accounting techniques,

²⁴ SOPRACASA (2012), p. 115-6.

²⁵ HOCQUET (1992) has given a bibliography of Italian merchant manuals, to be completed with LOPEZ (1970) and JACOBY (1986).

²⁶ DOTSON (1994), p. 25.

word choice?
writing to consult >
curious to refer

- of the subtleties of currency exchange, thanks to which he juggled three currencies, one gold, the ducat, the other, Muslim, in silver, and the third, Byzantine, in account,
- of the difficulties inherent in the variety of weights and measures he used to convert Syrian weights into Greek weights.

He's not surprised by mistakes and errors of his associate, who sometimes increased his share to collect more money from this forced sale, and sometimes decreased it. As for Badoer, who was always very attentive and proved to be an experienced dealer, we would like to know in which school and with which master he learnt his trade. But his «ledger», reduced to the dryness of accounting entries, cannot enlighten us on this point. Badoer kept his accounts with great care, but he did not write a merchandise manual to systematically present the weights and measures in use in Constantinople and in the ports trading with the capital of the empire. All that mattered to him was knowledge of his business, the profits he expected to make, the goods he hoped to sell and the income he hoped to earn from his holdings in various companies. Venetian merchants established for a few years in Constantinople usually used the weights and measures of the imperial capital, not those of Venice. Merchants had travelled the world, from Bruges to Cyprus, from Alexandria to Granada, from London to Venice and had recorded their observations in their notebooks, the scope of their information far exceeding the personal notes of the traveller²⁷.

THE MERCHANT'S FAMILY, WIFE, AND CHILDREN

The family of the noble merchant had different perimeters: the narrowest was the mononuclear family, which included the parents and their children; the widest extended to the *ca'*, i.e. the entire consanguineous group bearing the same surname, that of the common ancestor; finally, an intermediate perimeter was formed by the mononuclear families with the unmarried brothers and sisters who remained at home and lived in undivided ownership of the same palace. The acute sense of solidarity, reinforced by the institutions and presence in the councils, likened the consanguineous group to a clan (the *ca'*, Venetian abbreviation of *casa*, the noble 'house').

Approaching the intimacy of people in times gone by was not the main concern of the sources preserved - normative, legislative, administrative, judicial or notarial acts - which favoured men over women, the wealthy over those who had nothing to pass on the poor hardly appeared anywhere other than in judicial or hospital sources and in wills, and women's wealth was appreciated above all when the father

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Turn into
2 sentences

²⁷ HOCQUET (2002), HOCQUET (2006), p. 457-71, HOCQUET (2013)

endowed his daughter to be married off, which is still another way of talking about men's wealth. However, we can glean some interesting information about customs, matrimonial strategies, illegitimate children fathered by women of inferior status, even slaves and concubines, who were subsequently married. The law encouraged marriages within noble lineages, the public nature of noble status intruding into private, intimate relationships, as prescribed by the humanist Francesco Barbaro in his treatise on marriage (*De re uxoria*), written the day after his visit to the Medici family (1415). It provided information on a key legal and political fact: from then on, it was not enough to have a noble father to be admitted to the Great Council, it was also necessary for the applicant's maternal lineage to be noble, and for the applicant to have been born of a legitimate marriage between persons of noble status²⁸.

w.c.?

Families of recent nobility needed to consolidate their position, and the proven method was to form matrimonial alliances with old families to gain access to their clientele. Dowries played an important role in these strategies²⁹. Under Venetian law, the dowry was paid by the parents to the daughter's husband, but the daughter retained bare ownership of the dowry, her husband only having usufruct. The dowry was returned to the widow, and the amount rose sharply in the second half of the 14th century, tripling between 1340 and 1380, because fathers were willing to pay the price to find their daughters a handsome husband. However, not all nobles were entitled to the same amount, and only dowries for the wealthiest followed an upward trend. The dowry did not leave the restricted circle of large families, where endogamy was common. In property relations between spouses, the Venetian *repromissa* (the «promised thing», the dowry) was stipulated with the future wife and the woman remained the owner. The right of daughters to the family patrimony was partially realised in the right to request compensation in the form of movable property when they left their father's home. Through the *repromissa*, the father promised his daughter, not the husband, that part of the family patrimony that consisted of movable property. In accordance with the same principle, the widow received her share of the deceased husband's inheritance consisting of movable property and external real estate (*possessiones de foris*) located outside the Venetian dukedom, which coincided with the lagoon from Grado to Cavarzere, to preserve in the hands of the male heirs the internal real estate (*possessiones de intus*) located in Venice. The wife was not granted any rights over property acquired by the husband during the marriage, thus preserving the idea of the separation of the husband's and wife's property.

²⁸ CHOJNACKI (2000), p. 56.

²⁹ CHOJNACKI (2000), p. 95-111.

Yet women played an active part in social life, taking on multiple tasks even outside the close-knit family circle when their husbands were away on business or at work for long months at a time. The mistress of the house was assisted in her domestic duties by servants, boys and girls who were paid, fed and housed, and who were replaced or supplemented at the end of the Middle Ages by young slaves of both sexes purchased on the large Slavic or African markets³⁰.

The law gave women a legal status that was closely linked to their role. She had the legal capacity to dispose of her property, to be entrusted with the guardianship of minors, to invest in commercial affairs and to take oaths and testify in court. The statutes of Doge Tiepolo (1242) gave children the age of majority at twelve, and from then on young girls were involved in all kinds of contracts, sales and purchases, leases, loans, powers of attorney, donations, wills, etc. Widows assumed all these rights. At a lower level, the wives of commoners, artisans and shopkeepers were directly employed in production, especially in sectors traditionally devoted to women's work such as textiles, or in the retail trade.

Medieval law was concerned with regulating the property relationship between parents and children and with inheritance. In Venice, property belonged to the family, to the close-knit family of father, mother, sons and unmarried daughters, and not to the father alone, who could not disinherit a son as this would deprive him of his share of the family estate. The father was the administrator of the family patrimony; he did not dispose of it freely. In his will, he distributed his assets equitably, subject to leaving the son at least a third of the real estate to which the son would be entitled if the father died intestate (*Tiepolo Statute*)³¹. Disinheritance was granted only in cases where the son had been guilty of ill-treatment towards his parents and, above all, towards his father. The division of property between father and son was the most common form of emancipation and played an important role in Venetian family life, as it removed the son from the community. Once he had obtained his share of the family patrimony, the son separated from the father and became a stranger to the family, with no further claim to the father's inheritance. In this case, if there was no other son, the inheritance passed to the widow, provided she had taken a vow of widowhood³².

³⁰ HOCQUET (2021).

³¹ This is the «legitimate» part.

³² According to CHOJNACKI (2000), p. 100, the remarriage of widows was exceptional, affecting less than 9% of women. If the widow did not obtain her dowry (if the heirs of the deceased husband did not pay the dowry), she brought an action (*vadimonium*) before the *Giudici di petition* who handed down their judgement in a *diudicatus* (p. 97).

In most cases, the sons remained in joint ownership with the father, and they all played their part in maintaining the family unit, which was seen as a productive unit. The family was the fundamental economic structure in the organisation of the *Commune Veneciarum*, and the activities of the male children were carried out for the benefit of the family group, under the direction of the father. The son was subordinate to the father in a position aimed at the commercial development of the family. After the father's death, the need for family concentration continued for two generations in the form of the tacit family community or *fraterna compagna*, which thus extended to first cousins (brother's sons) and strongly disciplined relations between parents and children, with primacy conferred on agnates and, let's not forget, the exclusion of women from property ownership.

The palace was to remain the ancestral home responsible for passing on the clan's glorious name to future generations, and was bequeathed jointly to the brothers, the sons of the deceased, as Venetian law ignored the birthright and instituted an equal division between all the brothers after endowing the daughters. However, the family clan was scattered throughout the city: few palaces were inhabited by the families that bore their name, and many patrician residences were rented by noble families, a choice dictated by utility, convenience and taste, and which was often a practical response to a very real difficulty, to the constraints that conditioned ownership, and to the fragmentation of ownership. Joint ownership by the males and the equal right of all to enjoy the property handed down went hand in hand with a very thorough division into shares or portions: after a few generations, you found yourself owning not a palace, but a fraction of it. At first, it was still possible to envisage dividing the building into floors or wings, with access via the stone staircase outside the courtyard, but soon transformations and changes to the layout of the palace became impracticable. The solution then consisted of converting the real estate capital into income from movable property, renting it out and sharing the rental income between all the heirs bound by indivision. The law thus had unexpected effects: joint ownership led to extreme fragmentation of possession, while the use of the property as a dwelling regained its unity through rental in another palace. The minority who owned the property in which they lived owned only part of it and paid rent to their brothers, uncles, cousins or nephews. As a result, all these palaces belonged almost collectively to the entire patriciate, helping to turn the nobility into a «structure of collective interest», that merged society and the State under its undivided control.

Chapter Two

The State and market society

Venetian merchants knew they could count on the help of the authorities, particularly the *Senate* which never encouraged the formation of a permanent organisation of merchants, giving them complete freedom to choose non-monopoly goods and their prices, and acting as a board of directors at the service of the merchants.

These were «the various aggregations of merchants massively engaged in the same journey and who needed collective protection measures»¹.

Venice maintained consuls elected by the *Great Council* - who acted as ambassadors «to obtain the benevolence of the local sovereign»,
 - «for the good of the merchants who frequented these places»,
 - to settle any difficulties that might arise between its «nationals», or with foreigners²,
 - to obtain compensation for any damage suffered.

These consuls received from the *Senate* a «commission» that specified their mission and duties towards the local authorities and towards Venetian merchants who landed in these places. The merchants were represented before the consul by a «council of twelve» drawn from their ranks. The two institutions, consul and council of twelve, illustrate the close solidarity that united the State and the class of major international merchants. This solidarity was further strengthened by the annual disposal of commercial galleys built by the public Arsenal: the noble merchants, with the help of their families and close relations, allies and friends, who had bought them at auction, used them for commercial voyages to all the major terminals on the three continents bordering the Levantine and Ponant seas. Magistrates, public officers, carefully examined the solvency of the merchant and his associates, the patron who had won the auction and his friends who had helped him and would entrust him with the goods. These investors were also

¹ LANE (1996²), p. 40-1.

² APELLÁNIZ (2020) has described and analysed, with the help of Venetian sources, how Western merchants resolved their commercial disputes with Ottoman or Mamlūk Muslims in the Near East before the *qadi* and the courts, some of which were administered directly by the military. It was not always easy to reconcile the practices of G. Christian merchants with Islamic law, and the latter, protected by treaties, also received help from consuls if necessary.

shippers. The owner also deposited a very high guarantee with the *Procurators of San Marco*, the highest life magistracy in the Republic, second only to the Doge.

However, when it came to doing business, the merchant was left to his own devices. He endeavoured to obtain information and kept up an active commercial correspondence with his clerks, often relatives, who represented him from afar and to whom he had entrusted a «commission», but even if specialised couriers existed, the slowness of communications was a major obstacle and it could take several months to forward a letter and its reply.

THE ROLE OF THE CONSULS

The Venetian colony in Bruges was headed by the consul, a position then held by Andrea Corner³ whose transactions with the Borromei bank exceeded 4,000 pounds wholesale⁴. He was accompanied by his brother-in-law Carlo Contarini. As well as banking, Corner bought cloths from the Borromei firm and supplied it with paper. He did more substantial business, worth over £6,000, with Bertuccio Contarini who succeeded him as consul, with Vettor Cappello, Gerolamo da Molin, Marco Giustinian a galley master, with other Contarini, Giacomo Barbarigo, Francesco Bragadin and others⁵.

At the beginning of a foreign sovereign's reign, the Venetian *Senate* of Venice requested the issue of letters patent (safe-conducts) by which the king welcomed Venetians, their ships and their goods under his protection and allowed them to stay and trade in his kingdom if they paid the various taxes required. In 1399, Richard II also authorised them to sell glassware and ceramics and a barrel of wine free of charge on board the galleys, and the following year Henry IV allowed them to load wool and linen, drapery, pewter and any other goods on the return journey⁶. These advantages fuelled xenophobic feelings among the

³ In 1421, an Andrea Corner, a Venetian merchant based in Seville was forced by order of the *Senate* travelled to the Basque country to ask King John II for the return of a cog loaded with wine from Crete captured by three Basque ships off the coast of La Rochelle [GONZÁLES ARÉVALO (2020), p. 15].

⁴ When BISCARO (1913) speaks of «pounds», it is important to know what currency of account he is talking about: «the share capital called *mesa della compagnia* entered to the credit of the bank of Bruges which had provided it, was pounds 1,600 (= 16,000 ecus) of Flanders wholesale money equal to pounds 1 431.17.1 of *sterling*». In 1438, the Flanders ecu was calculated at 21 ¼ *sterling* (p. 42). The accounts kept in London by the Borromei bank are expressed in English pounds *sterling*. If there is any mention of «gros», the A. speaks of Flemish currency.

⁵ BISCARO (1913), p. 63.

⁶ BISCARO (1913), p. 67. The goods loaded onto the galleys bore the sign of the merchants for whom they had been purchased, to avoid misattribution during

population, as evidenced by a diatribe against the Florentines and Venetians, who were accused of taking over the market and infringing island traditions.

The consuls, who were elected for a two-year term, supervised court rulings, represented their fellow citizens before the local courts and before the sultan Mamlük, and defended them⁷ in accordance with the practices of the administration of their mother city or recalled the laws of the host country⁸. The consul was assisted by vice-consuls, received a commission detailing the actions he was to take and at the end of his term of office, like all magistrates, presented a report on his activities and received his salary. He had to act according to custom (*usus*) and Venetian law⁹ or according to local custom. The text adds: «and if the custom is unknown to me, I must judge according to my conscience, without fraud», an important clarification that preserved the consul's free will and freedom of judgement. The consul also had to take care of the affairs (assets and property) of Venetians who died abroad. He gave way to the vice-consul when he was unable to act¹⁰. Supervised and assisted by the Council of 12 made up of Venetian patricians, he had to «provide, examine and deliberate, and whatever was adopted by a majority would be carried out». In 1419, the members of the Council of Twelve who were assisting Biagio Dolfin in Alexandria were: Lozenzo Bembo and Angelo Michiel (who was also the consul's correspondent in Cairo), who held the rank of «chamberlains», and were responsible for the Consulate's treasury and the collection of the *cotimo*, Carlo Contarini, Francesco Zorzi, Bernardo Querini, Pietro Bernardo, Daniele Cappello, Nadal da Canal, Francesco Bon, Lorenzo Barbaro, Giacomo

unloading. The *Judges of Petition* who had to hear a case between Giovanni Marcanova and Giovanni Bragadin concerning the loss of 5 ingots of tin weighing 1,200 pounds (weight of an ingot: 240 pounds or 115 kg) wrote that this metal loaded on the Flanders galleys captain Ferigo Contarini whose importer was expecting 12 pieces, was «signo ser Johanni Bragadino signat(o)» [BARILE (2006), p. 218].

⁷ In March 1402, the Senate deemed that «it was necessary to have a consul in Seville for the good of the merchants who frequented» the city and its port, and elected Angelo Venier who went there in the autumn to take charge of the small Venetian community (GONZALES AREVALO and VIDAL, p. 204). Venier was replaced by a vice-consul elected by the Venetian merchants present in Seville, but in June 1424 he was given the task of recovering the goods from the *Pasqualiga* galley seized by the Basques [*ibid.*, p. 206].

⁸ GONZALES AREVALO (2021): Venice had other consuls in Muslim countries, in Tunis under the Hafsids, in Malaga under the Nasrids. The consul, who was paid a small percentage of the goods of Venetian merchants passing through the territory under his jurisdiction, justified his presence! The convoy of Flanders galleys reached Malaga and Cadiz and possibly San Lucar, but did not venture up the Guadalquivir to Seville. The consulate in Seville only existed sporadically.

⁹ JACOBY (2004), p. 466.

¹⁰ G. CHRIST (2012), p. 67-9.

Emo and Giovanni Trevisan. When these merchants returned to Venice, they were replaced by other influential merchants. If there were not twelve Venetian merchants present at the same time in Alexandria, the consul was authorised to convene a reduced council, but he could not give seats on the council to his employees. He resided in the *Fondaco*, whose floors contained flats for the merchants, and the *Council of Twelve* met in this building¹¹.

The consul consulted the galley loading lists to determine the amount of the *cotimo*, which belonged to the Venetian community of Alexandria and was administered by the *Council of Twelve*. This tax was earmarked for the expenses of the consul and vice-consul, at their own expense, such as the consul's trips to the sultan in Cairo or money paid to Mamlüks officers as bribes, which was corruption, or to obtain information, which was espionage. The consul only had access to the funds with the agreement of the treasurer who held the keys to the safe. In 1418, 22 carats were demanded for 100 besants (= 11/12 of a besant or only 0.875%), in 1419, only 16 carats (2/3 besant or 0.66%). At the end of the century, the *cotimo had to* be increased and, to prevent abuses, a special administration, the *Provveditori al cotimo di Alessandria*, had to be created¹².

The most important contact for the Venetians in Alexandria was the *nâz'ir*, the customs inspector, who represented the chief inspector (*nâz'ir al-khâs*) of the sultan's treasury, but the Venetians also had to deal with the port administration, which recorded the arrival of galleys and perhaps their cargo, and with the *emir* or governor of the city, who resided in the castle. Many Venetians did not know Arabic and needed interpreters, often of Jewish origin and from Cretan backgrounds. Venetian merchants bought Egyptian goods from local merchants, brokers arranged meetings, sifters cleaned the pepper of dust and impurities, and other employees weighed it before packing it. Porters loaded the packages onto the ships. Many merchants arrived with the galleys and left on the ships that had brought them. Merchants also stayed for several years. During the years 1418-20, Georg CHRIST found traces of around fifty Venetians and a dozen Cretans (subjects of Venice)¹³.

¹¹ G. CHRIST (2012), p. 70-2. This *fonduq* resembled a caravanserai with multiple shops framing a square courtyard; it belonged to the Mamlük state, which rented it out to merchant towns.

¹² G. CHRIST (2012), p. 78-81. In Constantinople the community of Venetian merchants paid the baile who was both consul and ambassador, a duty called *bailazo*, equal to 0.5% of imported goods, which included the *cotimo*, an *ad valorem* tax of 0.25% levied on all goods, whether imported or exported, to cover the expenses of the consulate [SOPRACASA (2012), p. 177].

¹³ G. CHRIST (2012), p. 91 and 95.

Rem

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MERCHANT ASSOCIATIONS

SHIPOWNERS (*PARCENEVOLI*) AND MERCHANTS

Giovanni Foscari had won the auction that provided him with a galley which, throughout the voyage, bore his name, the *Foscara* galley. He became the operator of the galley but, as a shrewd businessman, he recruited associates to whom he sold shares called «carats», in the galley. The galley consisted of 24 carats. Each carat cost 100 *ducati*¹⁴ and was divisible. In the second book of this noble merchant, the *parcenevoli* were grouped together in a separate account. The Priuli brothers were able to subscribe to the purchase of carats during stopovers in Bruges or London¹⁵ where they met merchants from the Hanseatic League ~~Error! Bookmark not defined.~~ who had trading posts there. Holding carats, i.e. shares in the capital, not only gave the holder the right to the galley's revenues (*nolis*), but also obliged him or her to assume the risks, damage and expenses incurred during the voyage.

Carat holders helped the boss to finance the company. They were presented to the so-called *Extraordinary* (Magistrates) after which he submitted to the *proba*, during which he proved his solvency before the *Avogadori di Comun* who were in fact the public prosecutors of the Commune and performed important political functions, such as determining whether young nobles were eligible to join the *Great Council*. This examination justifies the importance of recruiting parsoners, who had capital at their disposal and were therefore approved by¹⁶. On average, each patron presented 11 to 12 people who held variable shares, generally one or two carats, but some held more.

Antenard

¹⁴ MONTEMEZZO (2013), pp. 392 and 394.

¹⁵ Ser Francesco Foscarini must donate on 27 February, for Nicolò Cocco half of the *ducati* 153 d. 10 given in London for 1 carat of the *Foscara* galley. Foscarini and Cocco each had a carat in Giovanni Foscari's galley which were paid for by Tommaso Mocenigo and Bernardo Zustinian on 27 February by bill of exchange. The carat referred to the 24th part of any asset, ship, share, etc., but in Constantinople it was also a subdivision of the *perpere* and was worth 1/100 of this currency.

¹⁶ STÖCKLY (1995), p. 39 and 247-257 has commented on the register of the *Avogaria di Comun* (1444-1452), which includes a list of 1,670 names of ship-owners for the 121 galleys on the voyages. A patron could be a parsoner of another galley, as in the case of Andrea Contarini when Donato, a galley master, invested a carat in the *Dolfina* galley, which that same year reached Romania. *Qd* is the abbreviation of *quondam* and refers to the deceased paternal ancestry. It could be translated as «son of the late».

parsoner's name	1463-64		1467-68	
	ducat	gr	ducat	gr
Piero de Versi	514	7	92	13
Nicolò da Molin			46	
Ieronimo de Priuli de Nicolò	100		20	
Nicolò Gussoni, my cousin	93	21	97	20
Francesco Foscarini de Zuane			98	17
Nicolò Cocco, my nephew			87	12
Nicolò Foscari			98	23
Toma Lipamano			89	21
Triadan Gritti and his sons	800		214	
Piero and Antonio Priuli			100	
Alvise Foscari, my brother			200	
Francesco and Zuan Pisani			105	
Zuan Francesco Priuli			100	

? Tab. 1: Parsoners on the Foscara galley why 1463-68?

Andrea Contarini's galley which sailed to Beirut in 1445 had its capital divided between 11 *caratisti* (parsoners): eight of them owned one carat or a fraction of a carat, the owner (Andrea) owned 10 carats and Polo Pisani owned eight. This shows who held the power on board the galley and the extent to which merchant capital was concentrated in the hands of a small number of oligarchs. Often, the ship's master was able to achieve his goal of bringing together enough ship's masters by using family ties, Giovanni Foscari, son of the procurator Marco, Francesco's younger brother, was the nephew of Francesco Foscari elected doge in 1423, who had married Maria Priuli. Marco had children, including Giovanni and his brother Alvise, who became merchants, and several daughters. Giovanni was born in the 1430s and in 1462 married Paola Gritti, daughter of Triadan. His book also referred to two of his business partners, Homobon Gritti of Triadan and Nicolò Gussoni¹⁷. Nicolò Cocco was his nephew. Marco Foscari therefore had a sister who married into a noble family, the Cocco family. Alvise the brother was himself associated with the Priuli brothers, who had brought their cousins Francesco and Marco Priuli di Giovanni, also procurator¹⁸.

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Patrons who held a large share of the carats in the galley they commanded would also take a minority stake in another galley on the

¹⁷ CHOJNACKI (1997), p. 687-715.

¹⁸ ROLDO (2004-2005), p. 79-80.

same voyage or on another voyage. The division of risks or diversification of business was a common commercial practice¹⁹.

Patron's name	Parish	<i>Estimo</i>	<i>Patronia</i>
Giovanni Contarini	S. Marina	500	Beirut in 1400
Nicolò Contarini	S. Marina		
Nicolò Donà	S. Maria Formosa	1 000	Flanders in 1396, Beirut in 1399
Pietro Fontana	S. Maria del Giglio	1 500	Romania in 1356, cog of Cyprus in 1359
Marco Giustinian	S. Polo	2 000	Romania in 1350
Marco Giustinian qd Tomà		10 000	
Marino Malipiero	S. Maria Formosa	1 500	Flanders in 1369 (?) and 1376
Pietro Steno	S. Geremia	4 000	Cyprus in 1339, Flanders in 1357
Andrea Venier	S. Samuele	1 500	Syria in 1377, Beirut in 1393, Romania in 1373 and 1376, Cog of Beirut in 1402
Giovanni Contarini il Grande	S. Apostoli	1 000	1339

Tab. 2: Patrons of galleys or cogs and fortunes according to the *estimo* of 1379

Who? Doris Stöckly has compiled a list of galley masters and convoy captains who exercised one or other of these functions in 1379²⁰. Why choose this date on the eve of the terrible Chioggia War, when Venice was besieged by the Genoese in the Adriatic and even in its lagoons? This is one of the rare occasions on which we have a census of Venetians subject to forced loans (*prestitti*), and Ms Stöckly has compared this list with the commanders of the State's galleys and other vessels. The wealth of these men is shown in the table, evaluated in pounds of *estimo*. Which were the dominant families among those who held the position of captain from 1410 to 1457? The Contarini clan led the way with 138 entries, followed by Ca' Morosini (88), Ca' Loredan

¹⁹ STÖCKLY (1995), p. 264.

²⁰ QUELLER (1986), p. 30.

(83), Ca' Soranzo (68), Ca' Cappello (61), Ca' Michiel (55), Ca' Giustinian (51). Next came the Barbarigo, Bembo, Dandolo, da Canal, Duodo, Dolfin. The Veniers led the way with 37 galley commands²¹.

It seems that the role and responsibilities of the *parcenevoli* (parsoners) increased over the course of the 15th century and, in response to this increase in their responsibilities, they turned to guarantors who signed up on behalf of the galley's *patron*. In effect, the guarantors stood surety for the owner's bids, damages, wages and taxes. For Sebastiano Falier agreed to act as guarantors: Benedetto Zorzi, Lorenzo and Giovan-Battista Falier his brothers and Pietro Duodo; the owner and his brothers promised, each for his share, and swore for 24 carats. For Antonio Donà son of *qd* Bartolomeo, who was succeeded by Tomà Permarino when the galley was put up for auction, Antonio Donà, who swore for 2 carats, Lorenzo and Ermolao Pisani dal Banco and Giovanni son of the procurator Alvisè Pisani vouched for 22 carats. Marco da Molin and Marc-Antonio Loredan also agreed to act as guarantors for the new owner, who had therefore collected the required 24 carats. For Pietro Donà, son of Alvisè, his brother Giovanni Donà (the two brothers pledged 12 carats), the brothers Nicolò and Giovanni Venier for 4 carats, two clothers, Giovanni de Stefano and Giovan-Antonio Astor, Gabriel de Simon and his son-in-law Giovanni Sepe pledged 8 carats on behalf of their sons, Marco Antonio Astor and Alessandro de Stefano. The owner had thus collected all 24 carats. Each of the owners deposited with the *Procurators of San Marco* 1,000 *ducats* «pro suo armare», as well as offering wax for the lighting of the church of San Marco and a ducat for the Lord's Hospital, a retirement home for old sailors. The manager of the Arsenal Giacomo Michiel received from each «what was due to his office», and was thus able to pay the captain of the convoy what he expected from the said office.

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MERCHANT'S CORRESPONDENCE AND CLERKS

«Overcoming the anguish of uncertainty, forecasting trends in the commercial and financial markets, understanding the mentality of local correspondents»²². From 1481 to 1491, Zuan Alvisè Morosini who was in Syria in Damascus or Aleppo maintained with his brother Marin a regular correspondence of which 27 letters have been preserved. Another merchant, Ambrogio Malipiero established in the ports along the Syrian coast, received 222 letters between 1482 and 1487.

²¹ STÖCKLY (1995), p. 303 and 305.

²² DOUMERC (1994), p. 99. VALLET (1999), p. 50 quotes a letter from Marin Morosini in Venice to his brother Zuan Alvisè in Syria to which Zuan Alvisè replied in May 1484: «You don't inform me of the business done or the prices».

Correspondence was at the heart of the merchant relationship; letters were an expression of the merchant bond and met both economic and moral needs²³. Business letters reflected the sound management of a commercial company. Letter-writing between branches brought together the different partners of an international company. Letters were written to give orders and to encourage or reprimand clerks. Lorenzo Dolfin was the head of a trading company with branches in Bruges and London. He was associated with other members of the merchant patriciate, Marco Corner, Michele Morosini, Hieronimo Bragadin who were «regular participants in galley convoys»²⁴. In 1445, Venetian merchants in Bruges were short of ginger, so they asked their consul to intervene with the Lordship to ensure that the captain of the Alexandria *muda* ~~to~~ give priority to this spice. In 1440, Zorzi Loredan, captain of the Flanders *muda* wrote from Southampton to his associate in Venice asking him ~~not to~~ forget to insure the goods loaded on the Trebizond galley. Back in London, he was impatiently awaiting news of the favourable outcome of the Levant voyage and of the quantity of spices he could count on to supply the English market²⁵. A small Venetian company set up in Aragon in the years 1460-70, the father, Benedetto Zion who lived in Venice, sent his three sons to buy Spanish wool and honey to sell to Venetian merchants passing through the ports of Tortosa and Valencia with the galleys of the *Muda* of Barbary or Aigues-Mortes²⁶.

Merchants complained about the slowness of transport and the highly variable delivery times. It took between 25 and 70 days for a letter sent from Constantinople to reach Venice, 20 to 75 days if the letter was sent from Valencia. Zuan Alvise Morosini wrote to his brother, but his letter of 12 December 1483 was received in Venice on the following 28 March, and that of 9 August reached its addressee on 6 December²⁷, four months later, although merchants were still completing their messages on the eve of the ships departure for Venice. Merchants looked for the quickest route, and transport times varied according to the season, the route chosen and local military or political contingencies. The company boss (*maestro*), impatient to know the

²³ VALLET (1999), p. 8 and 50. To illustrate the moral link, the A. quotes the letter of August 1484: «By the true God, here we have no other pleasure than to hear the news» wrote Zuan Alvise to his brother in Venice.

²⁴ VALLET (1999), p. 30-3 cites two «companies» mentioned in the correspondence of Zuan Alvise Morosini, that of Piero Morosini and that of Nicolò Contarini and their offshoots or subsidiaries. He is more hesitant about the clerk and the commission (p. 35 and 37, n. 50).

²⁵ DOUMERC (1994), p. 106.

²⁶ DOUMERC (1994), p. 100-2.

²⁷ VALLET (1999), p. 51.

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exchange rate, also wanted to know whether the clerk had received the goods, whether he was preparing a shipment and had collected the money, and whether the market was well supplied or suffering from shortages. The letter was folded, sealed with a small wax seal bearing the company's arm and handed over to the official postal services. At the same time, the sender used private carriers, Albanians or Bergamasks, the *Flanders cursores*, hardy men who carried the mail by different routes and covered the route from Bruges to Venice in a fortnight. To prevent the letter from getting lost and to keep the addressee informed, it was copied in several copies and sent by different routes, by sea or by road, and a copy was kept in the author's *copialettere* by his secretary (*scrivan*). Andrea Zio sent the same letter from Valencia to Venice by four routes: via Pisa, via Avignon, via Naples and Bologna, via Palermo²⁸.

Bergamaski?

Merchant letters obeyed one rule: they generally began with the news of greatest interest to the addressee, who was either a clerk or a master, depending on the status of the sender: the arrival or departure of ships or caravans, the abundance or shortage of goods on the local market, prices and exchange rates, the economic situation and politico-military events that could affect the course of business. These letters are therefore a precious mine of information, and the hundred or so letters written by the merchant Marco Bembo (1479-83) were an invaluable source of information on Venetian trade in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Quattrocento²⁹.

We have preserved the *copialettere* of the Venetian patrician Guglielmo Querini in the archives of the *Procurators of San Marco de citra*³⁰, i.e. a copy of the letters written to his associates and clerks from March 1428 to December 1461, which show the multiple activities of this patrician merchant. Querini owned several pieces of land and real estate, some of which he did not earn much from: Papozze near Adria in Ferrarese territory provided him with fishing income, Candia provided him with a small barrel of wine over a period of 14 years; land sown in the Polesine produced fruit and vegetables, including 2,000 melons, wheat, barley and wine. Having sown 8 *moggia* of wheat, he should harvest 80, of which he would give 1/9 to the harvesters, 1/15 to his farmer and 1/20 for various expenses. This would leave him with 63 *moggia*. He also owned property in Venice, such as a house co-owned with a nephew and a cousin on the *Riva del Wine* near Rialto, rented for

²⁸ DOUMERC (1994), p. 10 4-5. VALLET (1999), p. 19 makes the same observation.

²⁹ TUCCI (1980), p. 319-20.

³⁰ LUZZATTO (1954c). *De citra* refers to this side of the Grand Canal, i.e. San Marco and the ducal palace, while *de ultra* means the other side, the right bank and its three sestiers. The procurators were also responsible for the church of San Marco (*de sopra*), the ducal chapel.

22 *ducati* to a broker at the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, one third went to Guglielmo. In his will, he bequeathed almost 1,000 *ducati* in cash and the interest on his *prestiti*, which amounted to a capital of 2,000 *ducati*. In his declarations to the tax authorities, Querini estimated his assets in 1439 at 6,396 *ducati*, 4,000 of which came from trade, merchandise, profits from trips to Romania and Seville. His liabilities were limited to 1,190 *ducati* (debts of 1,140 *ducati* and rent on his home). The assessors set the tax base at 4,900 *ducati*. Ten years later, in 1448, Querini estimated that his assets had been more than halved, having fallen by 2,833 *ducati*, mainly due to the taxes paid over eight years, which had forced him to sell 2,900 *ducati* worth of *prestiti* (nominal value) from which he had obtained 628 *ducati*. His income from trade was reduced to 368 *ducati*, exceeded by his income from land and property, which amounted to 390 *ducati*.

«This merchant undoubtedly has a passion for business; he knows the techniques involved and follows with great attention the variations in the Venetian market and other markets near and far, in order to seize opportunities to make purchases or sales that promise him high profits, or, on the contrary, to follow and advise the greatest caution when the situation turns out to be alarming. The desire to enter new, less-frequented markets, to extend the network of his business, to increase it, is constantly apparent, even when he is struck by an adverse fate»³¹.

Querini had a business relationship with a former clerk who moved to Ravenna and charged him with selling iron, pepper and wool, to buy woad, wheat and wine; he then invited him to return to Venice to open a dyeing workshop with him, but the clerk preferred to set up a *fondaco* in Ravenna to trade goods imported from the Levant or Spain for local agricultural produce. On 6 July 1439, Querini accused this man of having bought too much woad because he had gone to the *messeteria* (the broker's office where transactions were recorded), where he found that the price did not exceed 22 *ducati* for every 1,000 pounds. In 1442, he wrote to Girolamo Malipiero to whom he had entrusted some precious stones and who was travelling in the Balkans to ask him if he could sell spices or other goods in these regions. or other commodities, in 1444 he reproached Piero Zentani at Constantinople for not having informed him of the price of grain of which he could have sent a large shipment. In 1436, he warned his correspondents in Constantinople not to buy spices unless they were cheap, given the state of the market in Venice. Three years later, he prohibited the purchase of pepper in Tana because the price in Venice had fallen below 35 *ducati* a load, and in 1442, he recommended to his correspondent in Trebizond not to buy

³¹ LUZZATTO (1954), p. 173.

silk as the Venetian market was saturated. Well-informed, a senator, then *Savio alla guerra* in the *College* and finally member of the *Council of Ten*, he had solid connections through which he gathered first-hand information. In July 1438, he wrote to his cousin Carlo Morosini who was on his way to Seville with Girolamo Morosini's galley his regret at having sent all his woad, 45 sacks weighing 30,812 lb at Verona weight because Venice is currently short of this dye plant³², the *condottiere* Nicolò Piccinini occupied Bologna and Ravenna and cut off communications with the States of the Church that supplied with this dye plant. A few months before the Peace of Lodi, which put an end to the exhausting wars in Lombardy (9 April 1454), the Venetian merchant informed the intendant of his lands in Polesine on 11 September that the price of grain should fall and that he would take a decision once he had seen how the price was evolving. On 2 May 1435, he asked his correspondent in Bruges, Benedetto Soranzo, to sell 4 sacks of *semenzina* (a vermifuge extracted from mugwort flowers) at a good price because, having consulted the register of *Extraordinaries*, he had noticed that the Flanders galleys had only loaded 4 parcels of this medicine, so Soranzo had nothing to fear from unbridled competition. In 1436, he informed his correspondents in Constantinople that he would do his best, after the return of the Flanders galleys, to barter the goods they sent him.

Querini was the very type of sedentary merchant; he did not venture out to sea and rarely visited his Polesine estates. He conformed to the new model of the *Quattrocento* merchant who ran his business from the centre, but his management took him to Constantinople, Tana and Trebizond, Syria and the *Maghreb*, Provence or Spain in Seville, in Bosnia and Albania, in Bruges and London wherever his business required him to maintain a network of clerks. From Venice, he directed the commercial activities in the Levant of his three brothers at Trebizond and at Constantinople. He entrusted *ducats* of gold to a man he trusted, who embarked on the galleys of Romania with the mission of changing part of it, 100 then 350, into silver in *Salonica*, then to send this money to Trebizond to his brother, who would use it to buy silk. In

³² MELIS (1972), p. 202, doc. 39, has transcribed the letter (a «rechordaxion», a reminder) from Guglielmo to his cousin. Querini and his cousin shared half the profits and losses on the woad, which belonged to both. On the galley he had also loaded, on his own account, seven clothes of gold and silk of various colours and lengths, a total of 198 ½ fathoms, 6 ounces of musk at 5 *ducats* per ounce and a ruby with a ring. Morosini had to sell everything and reinvest the money, but he also put as much money into the business as his cousin. The two merchants set up a 50/50 company for the return journey from Seville to Venice. Morosini was invited to buy oil, wax and mercury. If he did not load everything onto a galley, he would leave Nicolò Querini, Guglielmo's cousin, what he did not take.

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different from
Salonica?

In addition to this «di cassa», credit, Querini recommended the purchase of fine fabrics in Thessaloniki and sent drapery to Trebizond. In 1431, he entered into a partnership with Bernardo Navagero to purchase spun cotton in Syria, with each of the partners investing 5,100 *grossi* of silver in the business. Querini made a profit of almost 35% and reinvested capital and interest in the Syrian cotton business, to which he added velvet, 25 armfulls (*braccia*) at 2.5 *ducati* each.

In 1435, when two of his brothers died, Querini entrusted his Black Sea business to factors, notably Giovanni di Priuli, who liquidated the estates of the deceased and were reclaimed in bills of exchange sent to Venice for the money and credit they had earned by settling outstanding business. After a final attempt in Syria where he invested 400 *ducati* to buy pearls and other goods, he turned his attention to Romagna and Seville where his cousin Carlo Morosini had been trading since 1437 with whom he formed a 50/50 partnership to send him 18 bags of woad purchased from a merchant in Forli. In Seville, he also sent 7 cloths of silk embellished with gold thread and a very beautiful ruby, the proceeds of the sale to be reinvested in the purchase of oil³³, wax, wool, mercury and cinnabar. The oil, in 93 jars, was immediately shipped on the galleys of the voyage from Flanders. Morosini was unable to buy the other products, except for mercury, and substituted two bales of «grana» from which the purple colour was obtained, for which he paid 834 *ducati*. Querini, a wise and prudent merchant, advised his cousin to insure the goods in Seville and, if he could not find an insurer capable of charging him a fair premium, to write to him in Venice so that he himself could take out insurance³⁴ in the Piazza di Rialto before the goods were loaded at their destination. As luck would have it, the galley was taken by Catalan privateers and Querini reported the loss to the *Proveditori di comun*.

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After the sale of Spanish oil in Bruges he reprimanded the banker Gabriele Soranzo who had not responded to his request for a bill of exchange for his share of the oil. The banker was to use the money from the sale of the oil to pay Bernardo Portinari³⁵ of the Medici branch in

³³ MOZZATO (2008), p. 37, Antonio Contarini in 1397 was already enquiring about the price of the pepper and velvet he was preparing to send to Seville in exchange for wheat and oil that he was planning to send to Alexandria. Antonio Contarini (c. 1360-1438), who first settled in the parish of S. Moise before moving to S. Felice, had a fortune estimated in 1379 at 2,000 *lire di grossi*, which he later increased still further [GOY (1992), p. 25-7].

³⁴ For a galley voyage from Pisa to Venice, the insurance premium was 2.5%, Querini had 500 *ducati* in the deal and Carlo Morosini 300. Querini paid the broker 20 *ducati* that he had drawn from the Soranzo bank [LUZZATTO (1954), p. 180].

³⁵ Bernardo Portinari was the Medici's factor in Venice during their exile (1433-1434). His father had managed the bank's branch there for a long time (from 1417 to

Bruges the value of 100 *ducati* at 54 and a half gros of Flanders per ducat, as he had received this sum from Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici who were refugees and exiles in Venice at the time³⁶.

The Venetian occupation of Ravenna and its fertile *contado* turned Querini's attention to the grain trade, the systematic purchase of which he encouraged in letters to his local correspondents. In 1441, he is said to have completely interrupted his trading activities to worry about recovering the arrears of credit that his former business relations had improperly retained. He wrote to one of his clerks: «You know well what an honour and increase it is in your purse to have held my affairs in your hands». Querini, who used to proclaim his honesty about currency exchange, showed his devious character on several occasions. In 1442, he advised his factor to buy goods from a Genoese who, it is true, owed him money for gold cloth sold to him in 1433 and then, at the time of payment, to obtain a credit that he would keep. If the Genoese agreed to honour his debt, he promised his associate half the interest. He complained that he was running out of cash, as the tax authorities, who had increased the number of *prestiti* in wartime, had taken everything from him. He sold alum, *vallonea* for preparing skins and leather, *grana*, indigo and even crossbow barrels in the piazza di Rialto, but his big business was still grain, which he had brought in from his estates and from Ferrara and Chioggia. On one occasion he bought 727 *staia*³⁷, on another 300 *staia* at prices ranging from 47 to 53 sous de *piccoli* per *staio*. With his miller partner, he sold the flour to bakers. In contact with some of the local goldsmiths, he continued to take an interest in precious stones and rubies set in jewellery, which he sent to Milan, Rome, Geneva, Bruges and London or to France when the opportunity arose to entrust these highly prized possessions to people he trusted, or when he heard of a forthcoming royal wedding³⁸.

His nephew Giovanni, son of Bartolomeo, had reached business age and in 1452 embarked as a «scrivan», on the galleys of the Flanders voyage. Guglielmo himself won an important case before the *Giudici di petition*. Previously, in December 1438, he had given a guarantee to the powerful Corner for wool which they had sold to Jacopo dei Lamberti. The deal was a major one, with the guarantee amounting to 641 *ducati*, but Lamberti had been unable to pay on time and it was Guglielmo who was forced to honour his guarantee by selling 2,300 *ducati* of *prestiti* at 20.5 - 22.25% of the nominal value. He transferred

1435) and, having proved his abilities, he himself was sent to Bruges in 1436 to put the clerks' affairs in order, found the branch and become its director.

³⁶ LUZZATTO (1954c), *passim*.

³⁷ A Venetian measure of capacity for dry foodstuffs like grains = 83,3 liters.

³⁸ LUZZATTO (1954c), *passim*.

rem? the money to the accounts held by the Corner family in the following banks Soranzo, Garzoni and Bernardo. Lamberti was ordered to return 2,300 *prestiti ducati* to Querini and to pay him the half-yearly interest paid by the Chamber of Loans (*Camera dei prestiti*) on this nominal sum until he had paid off his debt. on this nominal amount until he had paid off his debt. Querini and Lamberti had an ongoing relationship, and the former had guaranteed four bills of exchange worth 1,350 *ducati* paid to Lamberti in Venice by Giovanni Portinari and the Medici and sent to Bruges to Bernardo Zorzi so that he could pay them to the Bardi, Bernardo Portinari and Filippo Borromei.

On his first trip, Guglielmo Querini entrusted his nephew with some merchandise, musk, gold and silver chains and haberdashery. entrusted him with some merchandise, musk, gold and silver chains and haberdashery, and asked him to buy two woollen cloths for his personal use and a brass clock of the kind made in Antwerp while he could resell in Majorca on his return, priest's headgear and fine cloth for 2,025 *ducati*, in Dalmatia cutlery and spurs; he could also buy serge and felt for resale in the ports of Barbary and 25 to 30 calfskins. If he couldn't find anything in Bruges he would wait and buy in London. On the second trip, the nephew stopped off in Crete where his uncle wrote to a cousin to give him all the wine he had owed him for the last fourteen years. To this end, the nephew took on board 31 new and empty barrels, which he would fill with malvasia in Crete, as well as goods to the value of 500 *ducati*. In Flanders Giovanni would buy crockery, fabrics and cloth. The unmistakable sign that his business was doing better: he became a shipowner and bought $\frac{3}{4}$ of a small 100-ton ship that he dedicated to transporting grain. The last quarter was owned by a Dalmatian from Trau, who also received 136 *ducati* to buy wine and 80 *staia* of nutmeg, two products to be sold in Barbary to bring back oil. The worthy senator recommended to his Dalmatian associate: «a few Negro heads to sell where the profit will be highest». But the small vessel and its cargo were captured by a Catalan corsair, and the Aragonese authorities refused to release it on the pretext that it was carrying prohibited weapons from the Muslims. On the outward voyage, the ship was carrying 120 *salme*³⁹ of wheat sold to a more from Tunis 360 *doble*, and 140 jars of oil on the return journey. The Dalmatian who commanded the ship and had a run-in with the authorities also demanded reimbursement for the nolis, the crystalware and his «capsa», money (cash). The total loss was 1,779 *doble*.

Towards the end of his life, Querini took a keen interest in the sale of jewels, rubies, sapphires and pearls to Candia, Andrea de Franceschi, he recommended buying him 4 slaves of both sexes, aged between 12

³⁹ *Salma* is a Sicilian measure, v. chap. 4, n. 14.

and 15, and to sell silk and gold thread fabrics and gold thread⁴⁰, woollen cloths and other company goods.

«Querini tried to establish business relationships in all these places, even those that were far away and little frequented (...), and he found relatives and friends, all Venetian patricians, who had been living there for many years, or who travelled constantly between Venice and these distant places, and held important commercial positions there. (He) stayed away from all commercial travel (...), but he reveals at every step the characteristics of the man who lives in a purely commercial environment, where all practical notions of banking, currency, customs and (commercial) techniques had become a common heritage, like the air we breathe»⁴¹.

In fact, the *maestro* and his clerk cascaded the services of others: Marco Bembo, his brother's factor, sent Pietro Cappello to Gallipoli to check the accounts of Stefano da Fiesco, whom he had asked to make certain purchases for which he wanted to know the exact price and the amount of duty collected by customs. He also joined forces with the Teldi brothers to buy precious stones in Tabriz. In the company, which was reminiscent of the old *colleganza*, he contributed 2,000 *ducati*, the Teldi brothers 1,000 *ducati*, their «industria e fatica» (industry and tiredness), one of the two brothers knew Turkish and Arabic, and Marco told his brother in Venice about the expected profit from a 36-day caravan journey: 200%⁴², but the two brothers, who had completed their purchases and were preparing to return via Aleppo, a route they considered safer, were robbed in Tabriz. Marco did not believe their version of events and asked for an investigation when the Teldi returned to Venice.

Marco also urged another of his young clerks to listen carefully to the advice of more experienced merchants, Venetians if possible, and informed his brother:

«Many merchants didn't know how to do things properly because they were too young and, when they had gained experience, they returned home, which was contrary to their duty; this made the Genoese laugh, as they were solid merchants who stayed where they were»⁴³.

⁴⁰ LANE (1996²).

⁴¹ LUZZATTO (1954A), p. 192-3.

⁴² SOPRACASA (2012), p. 120-1 and n. 263: the trade in precious stones was important and Venetian goldsmiths were great consumers. One of Marco Bembo's clerks in December 1479 bought 434 pearls, diamonds, rubies and earrings. Another merchant, Antonio di Corradi, also made a massive purchase of pearls, rubies and diamonds in Constantinople in 1473.

⁴³ SOPRACASA (2012), p. 63.

Not content with using clerks, Marco Bembo sometimes asked them to send him samples of the goods they proposed to buy. sometimes asked them to send him samples of the goods they intended to buy: this is what he did with Stefano da Fiesco, a Genoese, who sent him three sacks of wool from Gallipoli. Marco found two bags of good wool and one of coarse wool, and recommended that Stefano buy the «sotil», wool and not the «coarse»⁴⁴. Similarly, as his rich customers at the Ottoman Court were very attentive to the colour of the drapery («colours sell cloths»), he advised his Venetian suppliers against mixing different dyes to obtain a semblance of scarlet, which they would pass off as drapery dyed with *grana*⁴⁵ or *kermes*. It was important to avoid *archimia* (alchemy), which deceived no-one, and to go to a recognised master whose address he gave: *al ponte de Noal*. The difference in price between natural and artificial colours encouraged fraud, but the authorities were concerned about the quality of local crafts and their reputation.

BUSINESS NETWORKS

The Venetian merchant Giacomo Badoer was an experienced man in 1436, well versed in the markets, exchange rates, ships, nolis and customs of maritime trade. His admirably-kept account book sheds valuable light on the place that Constantinople continued to occupy in Mediterranean trade in Mediterranean trade, in relations across the straits between the ports of call on the Black Sea and Romania or on the shipping lines that still linked the imperial capital to all the major ports of the East and the Ponente, not just Venice and Genoa. The city and its port remained a bridgehead for shipping, attracting many merchants from the Levant, Armenia, Turkey, the Jews and Greeks, as well as from the West. These are all well represented in the book, even if, in international trade, the Italians were in first place. The Genoese and Venetians were the preferred partners of Giacomo Badoer who also maintained active relations with merchants from Ancona and bankers from Tuscan bankers. Many of the goods imported from the West or Candia were resold in the city to Greek or Jewish shopkeepers or in the hinterland to Turkish merchants. Badoer, based in Constantinople, did most of his business with merchants from nearby regions, even though they had already come under Ottoman control: he conducted numerous

⁴⁴ SOPRACASA (2012), p. 133.

⁴⁵ GOY (1992), p. 37: In 1420-21 and 1428, Marino Contarini traded in *grana*, which Goy identifies as a small insect that was dried and ground into a powder used to dye red or purple. Highly sought-after, its price was set by the pound-weight and Marino sold it to the dyers of Venice in batches of 5 or 10 pounds.

transactions with Turkish merchants from Adrianople (7 839 *perperi*), Brousse (1,847 *perp*), Gallipoli (420 *perp*), representing 40% of sales in the Levant. In Constantinople itself, he sold goods to 184 buyers, but 20 buyers bought 60% of the western textiles on sale and sold their supplier wax, spices, silk, indigo and leather⁴⁶.

	total	%	purchases		sales		% general
			value	%	value	%	
1. Greeks	148	31	34 767	24,7	9 892	9,5	18,3
2. Jews	29	6	28 611	20,4	21 386	21	20,8
3 Orientals, Turks, Armenians	40	8	14 415	10,2	10 956	10,5	10,5
total	217	45		55,3		41,2	49,6
4. Venetians	83	17,4	15 309	11	19 467	13,8	14,3
5. Genoa	70	14,7	27 420	19,7	32 412	30,8	24,6
6. westerners, Florentines Anconitains, Catalans	107	22,9	17 969	12,2	7 320	7,1	9,4
total	260	55		42,9		56,7	48,3
Unidentified			2 706	1,8	2 357	2,1	2,1
Grand total	477	100	139 239	100	103 793	100	100

Tab. 3: Giacomo Badoer's business partners

Badoer traded in 51 types of goods. Many of these goods were of European origin, especially textiles (88%), woollen, silk and cotton sheets, which accounted for around 50% of his total business. Among woollen textiles, Badoer favoured the 'bastard' sold at between 60 and 100 *perperi* a piece. These were textiles for the middle classes. More expensive textiles (silk) were sent to Andrinople, where the sultan and his court had been based since 1365. Pepper was the leading spice, accounting for 357 cantars and 26% of business (17,774 *perperi*). Other spices included cloves, ginger, incense, musk, rhubarb, *zedoaria* and camomile. He was mainly involved in East-West trade and luxury goods such as spices, raw silk and slaves. While the bulk of his business went to Venice, he did not neglect other destinations, notably Alexandria and Beirut (together 25%) alongside Andrinople (31% of goods exported, Venice being excluded from the calculation). In Constantinople itself, his business network included 184 buyers to

⁴⁶ HOCQUET (2017) based on SITIKOV (1969).

whom he sold goods worth 122,000 *perperi* (average purchase of 663 *perperi*). His customers in the capital included Jews and Muslims, while his Byzantine buyers were often bankers. Badoer's sellers, from the east and north, often bartered.

Badoer, who never neglected an opportunity to make a profit or expand his business by giving gifts to his Venetian friends, future customers, bought 11 *schienali*, 12 pieces of sturgeon (*morona*) and 12 pieces of another fish that Badoer calls «antichier», and which also produced caviar. Sturgeon *schienali* was a highly sought-after delicacy. On 14 November 1437, he bought 25 *schienali* from Francisco Corner, which he intended to send to Venice and give to his brother and friends. *Schienali* were luxury items given as gifts to loved ones. They came from the Black Sea, from Tana, where the Venetians owned fisheries. In this area, Giosaphat Barbaro had a fishery for breeding and fishing, as well as ancillary facilities for salting or drying the fish and selling it to wholesalers. The *schienali* were loaded onto the galleys of the Romanian *muda*. In 1411, Marino Contarini had nearly 8,000 *schienali* loaded at Constantinople, of which 4,000 were landed at Modon⁴⁷.

When Giacomo Badoer sent goods to a market, he would recommend the shipment to a local correspondent, using a stereotyped formula: «Viazio de Maioricha rechomandado a ser Marcho Balanzan e ser Cristofal de Franzesci». For nearby destinations, the merchant had no hesitation in sending his young apprentice, known as *fameio* or *zovene*, which underlined the quality of the «young person», living in the immediate vicinity, the «family». These young people were thus learning the ropes of business, and they themselves came from the great families of the Venetian nobility, there is a Morosini, a Tiepolo who succeeded Antonio Bragadin *mie zovene*, who fell ill and died in November. In the absence of a trustworthy local person, the merchant would recommend himself to the captain of the ship carrying his goods. Finally, this trust extended far beyond the Venetian nation, and Badoer did not hesitate to call on the services of Florentines or other Tuscans.

Companies occupied a special place in this extensive business network. These were temporary associations that linked Badoer to one or more people for the duration of a specific operation (*joint ventures*), and to which each of the participants contributed a variable share of a capital valued at 24 carats. At the end of the operation, profits and losses were shared out in proportion to the capital invested by each of the partners. Badoer also entered into a company for the sale of bed linen with Piero Michiel, Marin Barbo and Jeronimo his brother, in which the first two named each held $\frac{1}{3}$ of the shares, the Badoer brothers $\frac{1}{6}$ each and their share was equal to 1,612 *perp* 3 car $\frac{1}{2}$. ?

⁴⁷ Tsavara

With these same noble merchants, Piero Michiel and Marin Barbo for $\frac{1}{3}$ and the Greek Todaro Vatazès ($\frac{1}{3}$), he created a company for the *oripel*. Badoer also contributed a third of the capital, but this was a little short as he had borrowed $\frac{1}{3}$ of it from Todaro, the patron of the nef returned from Sicily on 2 September 1437. Vatazès had therefore invested $10\frac{2}{3}$ carats in the company, in which he held a majority stake, while Badoer had only invested $5\frac{1}{3}$ carats. Giacomo Badoer formed further companies with Michiel and his brother for pewter, sugar and wine from Sicily. In the company for tin entered Piero Michiel for $\frac{3}{4}$, the last $\frac{1}{4}$ was for the two Badoer brothers and half of the quarter, Giacomo's share, amounted to 200 *ducati*. When the pewter arrived in Constantinople on the captain's galley of Zorzi Soranzo, Sandro Zen immediately acquired almost 50 *cantars* worth. The same people, with the ship's captain still interested in the business, founded a company for Sicilian wine «de rason de ser Piero Michiel e ser Marin Barbo per $\frac{3}{4}$ et per l'altro $\frac{1}{4}$ de raxon de Todaro Vatazès⁴⁸ patron de la nave», who asked Nofrio da Chalzi to ship from Messina 169 *botti* of wine.

With other associates, he founded the Beirut companies which carried out three successive shipments of ashes⁴⁹ (Badoer in fact announced 3 *partite*), first on behalf of the Florentine Francesco degli Albizi, acting as Giacomo's clerk in the ports on the Syrian coast. On two occasions, in May 1438 and July 1439, the two partners used the services of a Rhodes shipmaster. Then, still with Francesco degli Albizi and two Greek merchants from Rhodes, Zanin Iarachès and Antumi Protochuminos, their company brought together two groups of merchants, one Greek from Rhodes, the other Italian, each of whom retained their autonomy.

Far from Venice, the noble merchant was part of a vast community that extended its reach to the local market, the surrounding area and distant markets, from Tana to Alexandria and Majorca. He practised a *comprador* trade, buying to sell, on a Mediterranean scale, his multiple activities also encompassing the trade in money and bills of exchange and insurance. He was linked to Venice by his brother Jeronimo, who stayed behind, and by the sailors and officers who brought him news as galleys and sailing ships passed through the port on the Golden Horn, which remained a major crossroads for continental and maritime traffic. In each port to which Badoer sent his goods, he sent them to a courier who was often a member of the Venetian nobility, like himself, but

⁴⁸ GANCHOU, p. 94, identified two people with the same names, one of whom lived in Constantinople and worked as a "cavo del comercio del pesse", responsible for collecting the *kommerkion* that charged fish merchants and therefore their consumers, while the other was a Greek sailor from Crete who commanded a ship.

⁴⁹ This salty ash, produced by burning halophyte plants on Syrian beaches, was used to make glass and soap, two Venetian industries [HOCQUET (2007)].

merchant solidarity did not allow itself to be confined within narrow «national» boundaries and Venice used other Italians as partners, preferably from Ancona or Tuscany, but above all from Florence. On the local market, its clientele of shopkeepers, craftsmen and retailers was made up of Greeks, Jews, Armenians and on the outskirts of the city, Turks. In his business network played a very active role Greek sailors from Candia, Modon and the Aegean islands, to whom Badoer entrusted trusted missions. His network was based on a multitude of companies formed for the occasion, each of which contributed according to its available capital and endeavoured to limit risks through maritime insurance and a whole series of cross-shareholdings in which each involved minority partners. Badoer, a typical sedentary merchant, did not refuse any transaction that brought him a profit; on the contrary, he multiplied them «so that each day brought its own profit». He used the *compagnia de viazo* and the commercial relationships he had in Trebizond, for example. In 1437, he entrusted his associate, the merchant Griguol Contarini, with goods to be sold on this market: 200 «Turkish ducats», the following year, wheat from Thrace and victuals, then millet brought from Trebizond, wool weighed in Andrinople and transported on the ship captained by Alvise Contarini, and sugar imported from Cyprus, for the sale of which Badoer joined forces with a new factor, Antonio de Négrepont, who lived in Trebizond. If his partners were unable to sell these goods, Badoer would take them back to sell them on another market or to wait for a more favourable time⁵⁰.

The merchant took every opportunity to earn money. He multiplied his activities. Even the Medici even though they specialised in banking had a branch in Venice that was actively involved in trading, for which it kept a separate account, the *libro di mercatantie*. The Medici of Venice sold saffron from Abruzzo which they had obtained from their correspondent in Aquila⁵¹, skins, amber, linen fabrics and pewter utensils which they had obtained from their Lübeck branch, *Vervi* and English cloths some from Bruges and others from London, wool from Spain and malvasia from Crete, cotton and spices bought from Venetian importers, as highly protectionist local regulations prohibited them from trading with the Levant⁵². Smaller operators, such as Andrea Barbarigo, invested in Syria and Spain, selling spices brought back from the Levant or issuing bills of exchange to raise funds. Barbarigo used the services of various factors abroad with whom he had business

⁵⁰ A. MINGHIRAS.

⁵¹ According to BRAUNSTEIN (2021), p. 17, Daniele Coppo, before becoming Michele Foscari's clerk in Alexandria, had been engaged by his boss in the copper and saffron trade between the Fugger and the Venetian firm. Coppo had been to Naples and Aquila (n 15).

⁵² DE ROOVER (1963), p. 243-5.

relations, usually for a long time, so that each of them could assess the partner's commercial capabilities, his ability to sell to a customer capable of paying on the agreed date, and to buy the quality product demanded by enthusiast takers on a distant market. For each operation, he made choices that would generate profits or losses, and he was careful to ensure that his factor did not compete with him in a way that he quickly judged to be unfair. LANE uses as an example the gold wire that Barbarigo entrusted to Bertuccio Contarini in London after sending it overland because he knew that his usual factor, Alban Cappello from the firm of the Cappello brothers, well known in England, was the captain of a galley on the voyage to Flanders and that they had bought a lot of this material, which was highly prized by the royal courts. Not only did he hope that, by arriving more quickly, he would be able to sell his goods before the others, but he also wanted to hide from Alban the fact that he had changed clerks and that the gold thread did not belong to him because he had taken the precaution of replacing his seal with that of another. Competition was fierce, inciting merchants to reprehensible acts bordering on dishonesty. Barbarigo was entitled to change his factor, but the falsification of goods had to be charged to⁵³. The Senate nevertheless strove to maintain a community between the international merchants who had political support in Venice and information abroad provided by their contacts. These great merchants were able to adapt to market fluctuations better than their foreign competitors because they were at the head of a global economy that stretched from the far East to the far West of the then known world, with whom they had established relations thanks to intermediaries, whether Arab or Turkish, Flemish or English, and this unique situation had a name: monopoly.

Awk.

⁵³ LANE (1982), p.108-14.

Chapter Three

Foreign and stranger merchants ? ^{ers} ^s ^J ^{this does not work in English} Strangers and Foreigners? ^{Foreigners and outsiders?}

foreigners

To fully understand the meaning of these words, strangers and foreigners (in Italian: *stranieri e forestieri*), we need to immerse ourselves in the mentality of late medieval man and the geo-political realities of the time. The population of the city of Venice was divided into several categories: patrician nobles, citizens and *popolari*. The lagoon communities that formed the ancient duchy (*dogado*) of Venice were populated by *fideli subjecti* (to the authority of the Doge and the institutions of Venice). Outside Venice, the inhabitants of the territories that the city had conquered since the 13th century were foreigners (*forestieri*) administered by the Venetian authorities; they came from outside (*foris*), from the colonial empire, particularly the *Stato da mar*, or the territories conquered during the first half of the 15th century and which formed the *Stato da Terra*, those living outside these territories, whatever their language, were strangers (*stranieri*). In this book, we are talking about noble merchants (patricians) living in the capital of the state, their associates who did business outside, or strangers whose know-how and technique invited them to settle in Venice, where the authorities called them. ^{ed. of outside}

Gino LUZZATTO insisted on the cosmopolitan character of Venice, without which the great city would not have become an artistic metropolis, and he added that there were no cities in northern Italy, from Tuscany to the Marche and Umbria that did not send its technicians and their know-how, renowned artists or craftsmen who gave birth to dynasties of highly skilled workers¹, to which should be added the architects and sculptors-stone masons who came down from the Lombardy valleys. Among these foreigners, Tuscans and Germans took pride of place, the former driven out of their native city by the factional struggle, the victor banishing the supporters of his adversaries, attracted to Venice by the reputation of Venetian industry and the extension of its market. These exiles brought with them their know-how and capital, founded banks and opened numerous textile workshops. Without the people of Lucca who arrived in the previous century, Venice would not have been able to develop the silk industry that made its reputation among wealthy customers in the West and the Levant.

¹ LUZZATTO (1961), p. 203.

Venetians outside the city prided themselves on the freedom that was inseparable from commercial exchange and put up with feudal, communal or corporatist constraints as best they could. At home, on the other hand, they were fastidious in defending their privileges and left foreign merchants very little room for initiative². Venice prospered as an intermediary in the trade between the ultramontane countries and the Levant, provided that all the exchange of goods took place within its sphere of power. As early as 1177, it had forbidden subjects of the Empire to trade directly with the Levant. It limited the exchange of goods to the territory of the city itself and prohibited the acquisition of foreign goods in the Italian «terraferma». However, in the business relations between Venice and Germany in the Middle Ages, German merchants played an important role, coming themselves to do business with Italian merchants in the various commercial and financial centres on the borders of the Germanic world. In Venice, these merchants were subject to the accommodation, discipline and constraints of the *Fondaco dei tedeschi* which was set up in response to a tightening of the organisation of control over Venetian foreign trade. The institution was modelled on the *fonduks* or *khans* of Byzantium and Muslim countries. However, the Venetian *Fondaco* was very soon (1268) placed under Venetian administration and became an *officium* headed by three *visdomini* and governed by a full set of regulations: compulsory residence for German merchants, Venetian mediation and control in all matters, registration and customs clearance of goods imported or intended for export. The annual turnover at the *Fondaco* was considerable, and the state's tax revenue substantial.

THE TUSCANS

THE FLORENTINES

At the end of the 14th century, Venice had a *universitas mercatorum florentinorum*, which brought together the merchants of the Florentine colony³, headed by a consul, and a Florentine brotherhood that was responsible for worship, charity, mutual aid and funerals whose patron saint was John the Baptist, protector of Florence (his feast day was 24 June) and whose altar was in the Dominican church before being transferred to the Franciscans. The Florentine members of the *scuola*

² LUPFRIAN (1978), p. 20, SIMONSFELD (1887) remains irreplaceable for the *Fondaco*, highlighted by BRAUNSTEIN (2016), who used notarial sources.

³ CIRIACONO (1996), p. 526, links the arrival in Venice of Florentine wool weavers in 1383 and the demographic gaps created by war and epidemics. This explanation needs to be completed: Florence was not spared from epidemics, civil struggles and wars with its neighbours.

were 97 at the time. Alongside the *guardiano* sat two syndics, Tanino Bozzi and Antonio Martelli, who ran the branch of the Medici Bank in Venice. They requested financial assistance from Como de' Medici and asked Donatello to make them a wooden statue of Saint John the Baptist⁴. The consul and his two assessors, elected for one year, administered and dispensed justice «to the merchants and to the entire Florentine nation», and their decisions, which could not be appealed, had the same value as those of the *Mercanzia* court in Florence. Everyone paid 0.25% on transactions to cover administrative and religious costs (alms, rent for the chapel, etc). The Florentines brought with them the quarrels that bloodied their city, and their ranks also included exiles banished following a change of power, or henchmen (*bravi*) who did not hesitate to murder and instilled «terror in the good people and merchants who came to Venice and intended to live there peacefully». Among the Florentines was Saminiato de' Ricci, author of a merchandise manual⁵ that demonstrated a good knowledge of the Venetian money market. The Florentines lost 10,000 *ducati* in the bankruptcy of Piero Benedetto's bank in 1400.

mercant?

substantial?

Between 1305 and 1500, 260 privileges were granted to 247 people who declared Florence as the city where they were born and chose to reside permanently in Venice. They had a professional qualification (only 60 declared their trade, many were clothiers, silk manufacturers, linen manufacturers or dyers) or capital. In 1377, Venice had refused to publish the papal interdict against Florence, with whom the Holy See was at war, because, said the *Senate* with its usual clear-sightedness,

«Our city is sustained, preserved and increased by trade alone, and the Florentines are particularly those with whom our people trade the most and do the most business»⁶.

MUELLER underlines

«the one-sided nature of the relationship between the two cities: Venice was teeming with Florentine merchants, organised and officially represented, while Venetian merchants had no personal presence in Florence, where there was not even a Venetian consulate

⁴ The small statue can still be seen today in a side chapel of the Franciscan church of the *Frari*.

⁵ Antonia BORLANDI (1963).

⁶ Cited by MUELLER (1992), p. 8 about the Florentine merchants in Venice : «civitas nostra substantatur, augetur et conservatur ex solo exercicio mercandi et isti [Florentini] specialiter sunt de illis, cum quibus magne, ymo maxime, nostri traficant et mercantur...» (<http://www.rmoa.unina.it/999/1/RM-Mueller-Mercanti.pdf>, 15/2/2024).

and where they did business through the networks set up by Florentine companies»⁷.

Venice could not expel the Florentine merchants who owed the Venetians money, as such a measure would have caused the bankruptcy of local banks and merchants. Florentine bankers were active in Venice during the first third of the 15th century, particularly the Borromei, family of Florentine origin, which had three branches in Venice, Bruges and London, and whose business covered Western Europe, both in Barcelona and Milan. However, their profits, while not negligible, lagged far behind those subsequently made by the Medici bank⁸. The Medici bank, founded by Giovanni di Bicci, father of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, had a branch in Venice from 1398 to 1481, which acted mainly on the foreign exchange market and, secondarily, sold top-quality cloth, saffron and linen on commission⁹, and bought Spanish wool, pepper, cotton, malvasia and other goods. This Venetian subsidiary served as a training ground for the bank's future senior executives; in the years 1435-1440 alone, five of the future directors of the European subsidiaries were based in Venice. Profit rates were very high from 1433 to 1463, in some years reaching 100% of the capital invested and generally staying between 40 and 75%, but after 1463 they declined and in 1479-1481 the directors decided it would be wiser to liquidate.

Florentine craftsmen included weavers who sought to group together and organise themselves along the lines of the *arte della lana* in Florence, Baldassare di Simone Ubriachi, who arrived in Venice in 1393 and immediately set up an ivory and bone workshop in his house in Sant'Angelo with workers brought from Florence, which soon became the most renowned in Europe - Baldassare was the entrepreneur who took orders and delivered the finished product - or Donato di Filippo Nati, a silversmith, gold spinner and banker associated with the Rialto bank Miorati-Corner (1409) and then one of the Priuli banks (1426), who sought him out as an expert silversmith, refiner and merchant of precious metals. He was granted the privileges of *intus* in 1404 and *extra* in 1414. Donato had two gold-spinning shops, managed by others and employing workers, *garzoni* who kept the records and female workers known as «maistre», who spun the gold with silk. He had a Florentine factor in Venice because he himself

⁷ Throughout this section on relations with Florence we follow the work of our colleague. See also TOGNETTI.

⁸ BOLTON and GUIDI BRUSCOLI (2007) p. 464-465.

⁹ The «commission» was in general use in the Quattrocento. LANE (1996²), p. 108-116, demonstrated this for Andrea Barbarigo and his successive factors in Bruges and London. Barbarigo crossed the line between sound commercial practice and double-dealing by concealing his goods from his regular clerks.

< ,

Rework into one sentence.

24

«speculated in precious metals, had coins minted, especially large quantities of silver, at the Zecca by the hundred kilos, worth thousands of *ducats* at a time, and distributed coins and ingots to customers through his clerk»¹⁰

which he paid just 60 *ducats* a year. But in this risky business, he failed, fled, returned, his shops were sold to pay off his creditors, and in 1435, having lost his court cases, he found himself imprisoned for his debts.

The most important sector for the foreign companies that came to set up in Venice was textiles¹¹, and for the Florentines, above all the art of wool, the silk industry came second. Florentine woollen cloth manufacturers and merchants often forced into exile, had taken refuge in Venice and brought with them a skilled workforce. Francesco Arnoldi ran two silk fabric shops, one in Florence the other in Venice. He declared in the *catasto of 1427* that he had 3,300 *ducats* in silk cloth and claims on five Venetian nobles, but at the same time he was 1,460 *ducats* in debt and complained that to pay the *prestiti* (he declared 2,100 livres of *estimo*), he had to borrow on the foreign exchange market. Florentine merchant-bankers such as the humanist (and banker) Giovanni Rucellai and the silk manufacturer Mariotto Banchi, together with others, founded a company that invested 12,000 florins with the aim of

«to trade and negotiate foreign exchange and make the art of silk among other things in the city of Venice, and to keep a house, shop and warehouse (*fondaco*) there».

In 1450, Cosimo de'Medici decided not to renew his age-old alliance with Venice and to support the condottiere Francesco Sforza in his efforts to seize the Duchy of Milan. In retaliation, Venice expelled the Florentine merchant-bankers who held more than 150,000 florins in cash. At the Peace of Lodi, which put an end to the wars in Lombardy, they were allowed to return.

LUCCHESIANS AND THE SILK INDUSTRY

Companies set up in Venice by merchants from Lucca specialising in the art of silk were usually endowed with abundant capital of around 10,000 *ducats* or more, which was needed to finance the purchase of expensive raw materials. In addition to the capital contributed by the

¹⁰ MUELLER (1992), p. 12.

¹¹ BISCARO (1913), p. 124 quotes the English cloth merchant Guifredo Citoco, who ran a shop in Venice, had a clerk in London in 1438 and, when he returned to England the following year, he entrusted his Venetian business to another clerk. Exchanges between his parent company and the Venetian branch were carried out between the Borromei Bank in London and the Tommasi bank in Venice.

partners (*soci*), the company had a «sopracorpo», i.e. capital it had received as deposits from *soci* or third parties. Around 1360, the Lucchese merchant Pietro Antelmini received 1,000 *ducats* from the nobleman Andreolo Malaspina, to whom the powerful Cansignorio della Scala was heir, «to trade and negotiate with them in the art and commerce of silk and silk fabrics». In 1415, Giovannino di Antonio and the Lucchese Ettore Belloni founded a company for a period of three years, with the Venetian putting up 2,780 *ducats* (81.3%) and his associate 640 (18.7%). The active merchant was Belloni, the other was an investor, and the profits would be divided in half. One entrepreneur had associates in various places, including Flanders. With these associates, he created various companies in which he held the majority of the capital and which therefore remained under his control. The entrepreneur sourced raw materials, produced fabrics and sold his goods on the market. The division of roles was based not on a split between capital and labour, but on a division between the technical aspects of manufacturing the product and marketing it: in the workshop run in Venice by Bartolomeo Cristofani in the 1420s and 30s, the partner Guido Orselli, his brother-in-law, oversaw production, while another, Piero Guidiccioni, kept the accounts and handled the paperwork with the factories in Bruges and London and, together with Cristofani, travelled to Rialto to pick up the merchandise or meet with debtors and creditors.

The *fraterna* of Francesco Guidiccioni's sons, who had been granted Venetian citizenship at the end of the 14th century, had a capital of 21,000 *ducats* in 1402; one of the brothers, Marco, lived in Bruges, Another, Nicolò, declared in his will drawn up in 1408 that he had 7,000 *ducats* more in the *fraterna* than his brothers. In 1414, the brothers entered partnership with the Sandei «to produce and trade in silk fabrics and other goods in Venice and other parts of the world». Silk was not, therefore, the exclusive element of the company in 1427 when the society was renewed with the sons of Francesco Sandei, this company traded in other products. At the beginning of 1425, the Sandei brother's *fraterna*, which had drawn numerous bills of exchange in Bruges for a total of 9,276 *ducats*, naming Giovanni Arnolfini as the drawee, went bankrupt. When Arnolfini withdrew the same sum in Venice from the Sandei, the latter had gone bankrupt and returned the protested bill to Arnolfini. Aliprando Guidiccioni, son of Francesco, agreed to repay the debt to Arnolfini and received as collateral the numerous houses and 960 *campi* that the Sandei owned in the vicinity of Treviso and Mestre. Guido Orselli wrote to a merchant based in London that he was living in anguish because in the deal they had loaned the Sandei 4,200 *ducats*.

define?

< ; or :

Tana and Trebizond after the break-up of the Mongol empire into rival dynasties became outposts for Venetian merchants¹² trading with the East via Sarai the Tatar capital on the Volga, Urgentch and Samarkand or via Tabriz where the road to Lias in Little Armenia¹³. In Sarai, the Venetians brought cloth, coral, paper and tin, which they exchanged for silk, spices, gold thread and leaf, horsehide and *cambellotti* (cloth made from goat or camel hair). The Romania galleys were loaded mainly of silk, but also wax and *grana*. However, Chinese and Persian silks arriving via the Black Sea accounted for less than a third of imports between 1386 and 1400, due to the incursions of Tamerlan and the destruction of Tana in 1395. Venice turned to Negrepoint, Modon and Corfu, where the silks from Morea and Albania arrived. The nobleman Ermolao Coppo was entrusted by another nobleman, Nicolò Venier 1,300 *ducats* and promised to invest in buying silk from Patras, the port of Morea. Coppo then embarked on the Romania galleys, listened to the advice of Jewish merchants, met other Venetian merchants who visited the farms of local peasants and returned to Venice with 2,500 pounds of silk in skeins, which he shared with Venier.

Corfu organised the cocoon trade through a *societas folixellorum* founded in Venice by Lucchese silk merchants in 1368. These cocoons were imported into Venice in cogs and on unarmed ships, at a price 20% higher than the purchase price on the Ionian markets. Jewish merchants in the ports of Albania conquered by the Venetians in 1396 played an active role in this trade and Venice, which had limited the stay of these merchants to 15 days, saw them divert their business to Ancona, Abruzzo and Apulia. As a result, Venice suffered losses estimated at 60,000 *ducats* a year, to the detriment of «the *arte fullicellorum* and many families of this city». In October 1408, the *Senate* abolished the restrictions, returning to them in 1410. Venice also used the silk produced in the vicinity of Modena and Bologna.

The galleys of Beirut and Romania also imported silk which was vital to Venetian industry. The Lucchese who enjoyed Venetian citizenship had permanent clerks in Constantinople and Tana who also

¹² In the first half of the 14th century, Venetian merchants travelled to Cathay, from where they brought back raw silk. Their journeys were facilitated by the unification of the Mongols, an immense empire stretching from the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean, but the *pax mongolica* did not survive the middle of the century and broke up into rival states that closed the routes to Central Asia. Silk did not only come from China, and Pegolotti identified fifteen or so supply points in Persia, Syria or Armenia. The Polo and Loredan families distinguished themselves on this voyage to China. Other companies were founded for the voyage to China, by the Duodo brothers in 1335, by Andriolo Balzano and Francesco Condulmer before 1350 [TUCCI (1980 and 1987a)].

¹³ HOCQUET (2015b).

dealt in Russian and Tatar slaves¹⁴, honey, mercury and bills of exchange, or in Romania, in Negrepoint (Eubea island), Modon and Patras. However, Lucchese clothmakers were only involved to a minor extent, as most of the raw silk and cocoons destined for the Venetian market were in the hands of Venetian or Jewish merchants. Venetian noblemen imported the most sought-after qualities (*leggi* and *talani*) and Lucchese entrepreneurs purchased the goods stored in Venice by merchants Marco and Bernardo Giustinian, Filippo da Molin, Donato Tron, Moretto and Bernardo Bragadin¹⁵.

Luccans ?

The brothers Martino and Francesco Martini, who had apprenticed in various silk workshops in Lucca and Venice, where they lived together in the *contrada* of S. Bartolomeo, acquired *extra* Venetian citizenship after the Chioggia war. They were in contact with various workshops whose interests they managed when their masters returned to Lucca to follow their business. In Lucca, Francesco imported silk from Venice to resell or transform it in his workshop into fabrics for export. When Martino died, his brother returned to Venice to invest the capital that the deceased had left to his minor children. In June 1411, with this money, he opened a silk shop, which he entrusted to two Lucchesians. In 1417, he and one of his partners from 1411 drew up a new contract («in arte sirici»), in Venice with a capital of 7,225 *ducati*, a contract renewed in 1422 with an increased investment. The company prospered, gaining ownership of houses and workshops in the city and acquiring tools for spinning and weaving that were rented out to craftsmen. It was also able to build on a solid network of commercial relationships, with its partners having founded a branch in Paris in 1417. At the same time, the Bandini brothers were doing similar business.

In 1412, Filippo Rapondi, a long-standing Venetian citizen, had two bales of cloth worth 1,500 *ducati*, which consisted of :

«cloths of silk and gold thread made in Lucca which he wanted to send to Paris but because of the wars and recent events in these regions, he could not send them by land».

?

and asked his the *Serenissimo* Lordship to bring them to Venice to embark them on the Flanders galleys. The Republic agreed to his request. In 1417, the Lord of Lucca, Paolo Guinigi, made a similar request to the Doge on behalf of Jacopo Bandini, who wished to export 12 bales of silk fabric from Lucca. and in 1420 it was Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, who requested permission to import three *fiardelli* of drapery of silk woven with gold and silver thread, worth between 3 and 4,000 *ducati*. The Lucchese Tommaso Sandei, a well-known figure

¹⁴ HOCQUET (2022).

¹⁵ MOLÀ (1994), p. 197-217.

in Venice, was commissioned to carry out the operation¹⁶. A large quantity of silk cloth was also shipped to Treviso, Padua and Verona, Mantua and Lombardy, much of it was sold to fairground merchants, who transported them to their town and sold them. There was also a Venetian clientele among the nobility, wealthy citizens and prelates, who were great fans of silks, brocades, baldachins and altar ornaments, but the sources are silent on this subject.

Lucchans

The free entry of the Lucchesians, who became citizens of *Extra*, to the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, their frequent contacts with German merchants, their contacts with Hanseatic merchants they met in Bruges or in Cologne, where a small colony of Lucchesians lived, created mutual trust and encouraged the learning of the German language, from which the Lucchesian took advantage by applying for the position of broker (*sensale*), which could favour both personal and community business, as German customers would more easily buy the goods offered to them by the broker with whom they were used to dealing. In 1420, Francesco Brunicardi, who had rendered outstanding services to the Venetian ambassadors sent to the Transalpine countries, was admitted as a *sensale*, but as he had nine mouths to feed at home, he decided to terminate his mission in order to take up a better-paid trade and asked that his nephew succeed him, which the *Quarantia* accepted as this young man «optime scit linguam theotonicam»¹⁷. The Venetian authorities made use of this «excellent knowledge of German», when they needed to have a text received by a court of law translated, but the Lucchesians sometimes used their skills as interpreters and their access to the *Fondaco* to commit fraud at the expense of the Commune's taxes. In 1414, a dyer recalled in his will that his son, who had returned from Germany where his father had sent him, would receive 500 *ducati* to go to the *Fondaco*¹⁸.

why not we broker?

When Lucchesian merchants sold raw silk or silks in Bruges, they obtained cash which they remitted to Venice by means of bills of exchange. When, on the other hand, they reinvested the profits from the sale locally or resorted to bartering, the merchandise they preferred for export was woollen cloth, Flemish, French or English. They sometimes sent this cloth directly to the Orient: in 1392, Francesco Sandei exported to Constantinople by the galleys of Romania 256 cloths in 32 bales, worth 6,019 *ducati*, which he entrusted to Zaccaria Foscarini to sell. In February 1393 he acquired 13 bags of silk from the company formed by Pietro Regla and the Contarini brothers, Domenico and Giustino to

¹⁶ MOLÀ (1994), p. 221-236.

¹⁷ BRAUNSTEIN (2016), p. 132-3, published a list of 28 brokers at the *Fondaco* in 1412, when, during the war with Sigismund they were subjected to a monthly tax of 50 *ducati*, and pointed out that «the Venetian element overwhelmed the Germans».

¹⁸ MOLÀ (1994), p. 239-47.

whom he transferred the rights to the woollen cloths sent to Foscarini. The sale price of the silk would be deducted from this sum. The same observation applied in August 1425 to Antonio Deodati, who had imported eight Flemish cloths to Venice with the Flanders galleys. These were delivered to Filippo da Canal who promised to take them to Candia to sell or exchange them, and to bring the proceeds back to Venice¹⁹. Venice exploited its role as an intermediary at the crossroads of the trade routes that linked the West and the East, and among the goods traded, silk cloths and raw silk from the South or woollen cloths and wool from the North prevailed.

The Italians succeeded in reversing the flow of trade with the Levant which was struggling to recover from the ruins left by Tamerlan's incursions and to sell silk fabrics to the rich clientele of the Mamluks. These fabrics had to be of the highest quality obtainable in Venice, and Bernardo Morosini took the silk manufacturer Tommaso Deti to court for failing to supply him with velvet woven to perfection «as the silk cloths sailed for Alexandria should be»²⁰. At the beginning of the 15th century, the di Poggio brothers, silk manufacturers from Lucca, joined forces with the noblemen Pietro Bragadin and Marin Contarini for the sale of their fabrics, velvets and brocades; the di Poggio brought into the deal fabrics worth over 1,500 *ducati*, Contarini set sail with the silks on the galleys of Romania, he sold some of the merchandise in Constantinople and then continued his journey to Trebizond, then to Persia, exchanging the silks for horses as he went. In 1409, his associates accused him of having squandered the merchandise; he had distributed generous *baksheesh* to dignitaries in the regions he had crossed and had allegedly mismanaged the barter operations²¹.

During the same century, Venetian nobles belonging to the Barbarigo, Bembo, Cappello, Contarini, da Molin, Morosini, Nadal, Salamon and Zane became exporters of silk, not only to Flanders and England but also to the Levant, Alexandria, Tripoli, Damascus and Cyprus, wherever they had agents. From the Venetians, the Lucchesians sought «a centuries-old baggage of knowledge, experience and business contacts in this area» (Molà). These nobles entered the silk industry where they had been preceded a century earlier by the da Pesaro, owners of silk mills for spinning, they came into contact with dyers and weavers

¹⁹ MOLÀ (1994), p. 251 -2.

²⁰ MOLÀ (1994), p. 256 (in 1457 the *Senate* distinguished between cloths «da parangon» and cloths «per navigare»). RAUCH (2009), p. 156: the municipal provost Bernardo Giustinian pointed out to his colleagues on 5 July 1457 that «*navegar* cloth and work are more profitable for our city than *parangon* cloth», even though they were renowned for their «finesse and perfection» (BOERIO, *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano*, 1856, p. 471).

²¹ MOLÀ (1994), p. 257.

and sent the silks they produced to England. A Venetian opened a silk workshop in 1424 «because he had been told many times that there was a lot of money to be made in the silk trade»²².

In 1455, the *Senate* whereas

«the art of silk and gold, as everyone understands it, is one of the main profitable trades in our town (wanted the Lucchesian Matteo Dati) in the said very intelligent and learned trade».

Rework

who, covered in debts, had fled to Milan where he had set up a flourishing workshop for which he had attracted Venetian weavers, returned to Venice with a safe-conduct, where he could continue his business. Since 1442, Milan had been trying to attract foreign specialists and build up a silk industry that would compete with both Venice and Lucca. In 1459 Francesco Sforza promised immigrant silk artisans citizenship and the same benefits as in Venice, Genoa or Florence. Dati did not stay in Milan, nor did he return to Venice; in 1460, he claimed to be «living in Ferrara»²³. In fact, competition was fierce between the Italian cities and Venice had attracted many Florentines: we have already mentioned that Francesco Arnoldi ran two silk workshops in Venice and Florence in 1427, while the Florentine bankers, Giovanni Rucellai, Giannozzo Manetti and Giovanfrancesco di Palla Strozzi, invested capital in the silk shops set up in Venice, which had protected itself from 1424 by prohibiting the entry of velvet and drapery of silk and gold made in Florence and reputed to be smuggled.

GERMAN BAKERS

Philippe BRAUNSTEIN drew attention to the importance of German bakeries in Venice, Treviso and Padua. However, bread-making remained a domestic activity, by which I mean a family activity, the monasteries also baked their own bread and peasants offered theirs to shoppers near the Rialto bridge. According to the *Provveditori ai frumenti*, bakers supplied only 20% of the bread consumed in the city. In 1472, near the Arsenal there was a state bakery that supplied biscuits to the crews of public ships. Marin Sanudo reportedly saw 32 ovens built at a cost of 8,000 *ducati*, which goes to show the size of this workshop, the rationality of the facilities used for the State's maritime defence, the proximity of the Arsenal and the provisioning of the crews, all of which justified its location at the end of the *Riva degli Schiavoni*,

²² MOLÀ (1994), p. 260-1.

²³ MOLÀ (1994), p. 266-7.

where the crews embarked. Later travellers counted 80 German workers toiling to bake and anneal «biscuit», bread.

In 1471, the city had 39 bread shops, 22 in Rialto and 17 in S. Marco²⁴. The bakers, most of whom were German, employed two or three workers, also German. There were three fraternities, one for the master bakers and two for the workers, both Lombard and German. The latter, attested to as early as 1402, brought together only the workers, who thus enjoyed freedom of assembly. Its headquarters were in the Church of the Apostles Philip and James (at the entrance to Castello), where it maintained an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Worker's autonomy displeased the masters and the Council of Ten punished with a heavy fine any attempt to register and discuss a professional matter. The brotherhood's only functions were almsgiving and devotion, and in 1422 the Council authorised the masters to accept into their brotherhood the best of their workers, the most docile «provided they were in good condition», and the enlarged brotherhood moved to S. Stefano²⁵.

These German bakers, who lived among a clientele of modest means, often obliged to buy on credit, were themselves modest people, often in debt, with embarrassing cash flow, sometimes struggling to pay their worker's wages. If so, were these foreign-born immigrants *Intus citizens*? The first question can be answered by chance discoveries in the archives: the tools of the trade were assets like any other and lent themselves to the *colleganza*, with one person contributing the capital and the other the work, and profits and losses being shared. A German baker from Speyer, who lived in S. Marcuola, owned a total of 6 bakeries in this area and left them and their equipment to his wife. Others had fortunes ranging from 1,600 to 2,700 *ducats*, paid the *decima* - the direct tax (one tenth of the income) - and advised people to buy bonds at *Monte Nuovo*²⁶. This was a community that was ethnically homogenous and socially highly differentiated. The group of workers who had nothing to bequeath was even more elusive! Although well established, these Germans do not seem to have jostled one another to acquire Venetian citizenship. They had to meet precise criteria (which varied according to the city's demographic situation) and have the financial resources²⁷ to enable the new citizen to take out his share of

²⁴ BRAUNSTEIN (2016) p. 841-2, provides a list of these 39 *botteghe*. The Rialto bridge formed a dividing line. Rialto included the three *sestieri of ultra*, plus Canareggio. The shops of San Marco occupied two *sestieri de citra*.

²⁵ BRAUNSTEIN (2016) p. 628.

²⁶ BRAUNSTEIN (2016) p. 650-2, p. 657 he drew up a table of testamentary donations made by the baker Johannes from Nuremberg in 1457.

²⁷ BRAUNSTEIN (2016) p. 27-28, has published a brief list of the Germans who became Venetian citizens *of intus*. The *Provveditori di comun* had a marked preference for goldsmiths, furriers, watchmakers, tailors and painters.

the forced loans. As for children born in Venice, they followed common law: they were Venetians.

SUBJECTS

Merchants from Dalmatia had been «subjects», since the beginning of the century, when Venice had regained Dalmatia, which it had lost to the Hungarians in the middle of the previous century. They brought local products to Venice, from wine to locally woven woollen cloths, leathers and furs. They also brought with them various Venetian products destined for Balkan and Greek customers. Around the middle of the century, a company founded in Spalato (Split) imported local products to Venice, including wax, skins, figs, cheese and «coarse white cloth for dyeing» which would be resold in the Balkans once they had been finished²⁸. However, the *marciliane* led by a patron from the Dalmatian island of Liesina (Hvar) was caught in a violent storm as it approached the lido and was shipwrecked. The crew and merchants managed to save themselves, but the entire cargo was lost. In 1473, another company, also founded by merchants from Spalato who had joined forces with a sailor from Chioggia who had lent them 20 *ducats*, traded in wine imported into Venice. The sailor chartered his ship and sold the *amphorae*²⁹ of wine to retailers. In November 1461, a citizen and two or three noblemen founded a company to sell or barter 420 pounds of kermes at 10 *grossi* a pound in the piazza di Rialto. *Cremisi* (purple) was a very expensive product that the company wanted to exchange for Venetian silks («damaschini, pavonacci, centanini») that would be sold to wealthy customers in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The Venetian patriciate thus made space for state merchants, and the Dominante was satisfied with this state of affairs, which strengthened its tax revenues³⁰.

Venice opened its doors to foreigners on two conditions: that they had a technical and intellectual background from which the Republic would benefit by exporting their production, and enough goods and wealth to contribute, through their income and capital, to public spending and the financial health of the State. Certain trades, such as baking, were reputed to be difficult and repelled Venetians, so they

²⁸ About commercial activity in Split in the late Middle Ages, ORLANDO (2019), F. FABIANEC. Inhabitants of the Lagoon who were not Venetians, but who resided in the Duchy of Venice, were known as *fideles* to underline their loyalty or fidelity to Venice, as was the case with Chioggia.

²⁹ The *amphora* is a large-capacity unit of measurement, not the modest ancient terracotta vessel that underwater archaeology brings to the surface when it discovers and explores a Roman shipwrecked vessel.

³⁰ ORLANDO (2019), pp. 322-4.

were left to foreign labour. Others, who had gained experience in the great industrial cities of Europe, took advantage of the knowledge they had accumulated to make fruitful contacts with other merchants confined to their *fondaco*.