

**Başlık/ Title:** The Reports Of Venetians And Pilgrims On Ottoman Palestine In The İtalian Sources (Xvith-Xviith Centuries)

**Yazarlar/ Authors**

Eros Calcara

**ORCID ID**

0000-0002-8986-3093

**Bu makaleye atıf için / To cite this article:** Eros Calcara, The Reports Of Venetians And Pilgrims On Ottoman Palestine In The İtalian Sources (Xvith-Xviith Centuries), *Filistin Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, no.9 (2021): 20-39.

**Makale Türü / Type of Article:** Arařtırma Makalesi / Research Article

**Yayın Geliř Tarihi / Submission Date:** 01.05.2021

**Yayına Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date:** 27.06.2021

**Yayın Tarihi / Date Published:** 30.06.2021

**FAD- Filistin Arařtırmaları Dergisi**  
**BPS- Bulletin of Palestine Studies**  
Tarandıđı Uluslararası İndexler/ Abstracting & Indexing

INDEX COPERNICUS



DRJI



SCIENTIFIC INDEXING



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Yazar: Eros Calcara \*

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**İtalyan Kaynaklarında Osmanlı Filistinine Dair Venediklilerin ve Hacıların Raporları  
(XVI.-XVII. Yüzyıllar)**

**Özet:** Akdeniz, geleneksel olarak insanların, malların ve icatların geit yeri olmuřtur. Annales tarihisi Fernand Braudel, Akdeniz'i "tüm bilgileri yavaş yavaş emen muazzam bir sünger" olarak deęerlendirmiřtir. Burada birkaç önde gelen aktör vardı: Batı Akdeniz'de İspanyol monarřisi ve Cenevizliler, Doęu Akdeniz'de ise Hristiyan Batı'nın büyük düşmanı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile diyalog halinde olan Venedik Cumhuriyeti ile kolonileri. Konstantinopolis'in ele geirilmesinin ardından (1453), Mare Nostrum'a bakan bu yeni siyasi aktör, yalnızca Balkanları deęil Akdeniz bölgesini de içeren yayılmacı bir politika bařlattı. İmparatorluęun feodal bir yapısı ve Arap Yarımadası dahil çok sayıda vassal bölgesi vardı. Bu çok kültürlü ortamda Serenissima gibi bir ticari güç, Türkler ile Batı dünyası arasındaki dini husumete raęmen, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Filistin ve dięer bölgelerinde ıkarlarını korumayı bařarıyordu. İtalyan kaynaklarının analizi yoluyla bu alıřma, ticaret alışverişinin gerekleřtięi ama aynı zamanda hacıların Hristiyanlık için kutsal yerleri ziyarete geldięi Filistin'de Babiali ile Venedik Cumhuriyeti arasındaki iliřkileri arařtırmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Venedik Cumhuriyeti, İtalyan kaynakları, Akdeniz, Filistin.

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**The Reports Of Venetians And Pilgrims On Ottoman Palestine In The İtalian Sources  
(Xvith-Xviith Centuries)**

**Abstract:** The Mediterranean has traditionally been a place of transit for men, goods and inventions. Fernand Braudel, a historian of the Annales School, saw the Mediterranean as "an immense sponge that has slowly become imbued with all knowledge." There were several protagonists here: In the western Mediterranean, the Spanish monarchy and the Genoese, and in the eastern Mediterranean the Republic of Venice with its colonies of the State da Mar. The latter was in dialogue with the great enemy of the Christian West, the Ottoman Empire. This new political actor, following the capture of Constantinople (1453) overlooking the Mare Nostrum, embarked on an expansionist policy that involved not only the Balkan area, but also the Mediterranean. The empire had a feudal composition, with a large number of vassal territories including the Arabian Peninsula. Within this multicultural context, a commercial power such as the Serenissima managed to defend its interests in various regions of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine, despite the religious adversity between the Turks and the Western world. Through an analysis of the relevant Italian sources, this study explores the relations between the Sublime Porte and the Republic of Venice in Palestine, a region where commercial exchanges took place, but also pilgrims arrived to see the places sacred for Christendom.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Republic of Venice, Italian sources, Mediterranean. Palestine.

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\* Dipartimento Culture e Società Università degli Studi di Palermo Italy, [eros.calcara93@gmail.com](mailto:eros.calcara93@gmail.com), ORCID ID:0000-0002-8986-3093

## **Introduction**

In the sixteenth century the Mediterranean became a stage in which there were various protagonists: Spaniards, Turks and representatives of various regions of the Italian peninsula such as the Republics of Genoa and Venice. Among the characteristic features of the Mare Nostrum in this century was firstly the war between Spain and the Ottoman Empire, which did not only take place over a very large region, but was also characterized by privateers who ruled some areas of the empire and plundered the Italian coasts during their raids; and secondly the trade between certain Mediterranean powers like the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, which despite their enmity were in excellent commercial relations.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the recent research by Maria Pia Pedani shows that there was a close link between the commercial development and the evolution of the Venetian consulates.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, much research has brought to light new interpretations concerning the mercantile and political relations of the Serenissima with the main Ottoman commercial centers. This work will seek to explore, through the Italian sources, the relations between the Sublime Porte and the Serenissima in Palestine.

In 1517, Sultan Selim I (1465-1520) conquered Egypt, which until then was under Mamluk rule, and the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>3</sup> This event was important in a religious sense and also in the context of Ottoman expansionism, insofar as Arabia housed the two places sacred for the Islamic religion, Mecca and Medina. Even though the Ottomans, especially after the fall of Constantinople, were seen as a threat to Christianity and the Mediterranean, Selim gave ample commercial maneuver to the Republic of Venice.

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<sup>1</sup> The corsairs in the service of the Sublime Porte were mostly Christians who converted to the Islamic faith. Some of these voluntarily decided to serve the sultan, while others were slaves who, in order to make a career and be favored by social mobility, embraced Islam. Among these were famous names such as Khayr Al-Din Barbarossa or the Calabrian renegade Uluç Ali. On privateers and renegades, see S. Bono, *Guerre Corsare Nel Mediterraneo: Una storia di incursioni, arrembaggi, razzie* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2019); L. Scaraffia, *Rinnegati: Per una storia dell'identità occidentale* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993); G. Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranea: Corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> M. P. Pedani, *Consoli veneziani nei porti del Mediterraneo in età moderna*, in *Mediterraneo in armi* (secc. XV-XVIII), ed. R. Cancila, vol. 1 (Palermo: Associazione Mediterranea, 2007), 175- 205; Pedani, *Venezia: porta d'Oriente* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2010), 77-178; Pedani, "Venetian Consuls in Egypt and Syria in the Ottoman Age," *Mediterranean World* 18 (2006): 7-21.

<sup>3</sup> S. Faroqi, *L'impero ottomano* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2008), 66-67.

The Serenissima, unlike the Ottoman Empire ruled only by the sultan, was a republic ruled by an oligarchic government through the modern age until the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797). At the head was the Doge, an elective office that was exercised until death. He was elected by the vote of an assembly made up of forty-one members, who were chosen by lot to avoid fraud. Once elected, the new Doge chose forty members who, together with those of the colleges, added up to 160 members. The judges rotated, starting from the colleges, whence they arrived at the Criminal Quarantia and worked for eight months in each assembly, remaining in office for two years and eight months.<sup>4</sup> The Venetian state was characterized by the Dogado, the State of Tera and the State of Mar, the latter extending along the coasts of the Adriatic and the Aegean with various domains like the Duchy of Durres and Naxos; the fiefdoms of Corfu, Kefalonia and Zakynthos; the Duchy of Candia and the Grand Duchy of Lemnos.<sup>5</sup> Outside its own state, through the colonies in the Aegean Sea and along the coasts of the Balkan Peninsula, the Republic of Venice could count on a consular system and the work of the bailiff of Constantinople.

The bailiff was the representative of the Republic of Venice at the Sultan's court, standing in close contact with the Ottoman world, a world that always fascinated Venetians. There is a testimony from that time, belonging to a cousin of Antonio Tiepolo and dated 1573, which shows the enthusiasm of having been authorized by the Serenissima to undertake the completion of a trip to Turkey. The author spoke of "such a beautiful occasion, born in such an opportune time" to come into contact with the Ottoman world and its culture. The office of the bailiff was located in the center of the Galata district, later to be moved to a peripheral area known as "Vineyards of Pera." This district was preferred by several bailiffs to Galata, as it had fewer restrictions on out-of-hours travel and its location was ideal for smuggling slaves. The house where the bailiffs resided was both the daily workplace and the place where they used to welcome prominent personalities and to organize parties.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, vol. 8 (Venice: Pietro Naratovich, 1859), 336-337.

<sup>5</sup> Within his work *Civilization and Mediterranean Empires in the Age of Philip II*, Fernand Braudel, through the analysis of the Reports by Andrea Giustiniani (1576), provides a description of the possessions of the Republic of Venice and its population number. On the population numbers in the Venetian possessions in the Ionian and Aegean, see F. Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, Vol. II (Torino: Einaudi, 2010), 897-898.

<sup>6</sup> E. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 25-27.

The main task of the bailiff was not only representing the Republic of Venice at the Sublime Porte, but also acquiring information and keeping an eye on every movement and plan of the Ottomans. They usually received this information through their extensive networks of friends, their family, and a network of spies. This latter consisted of a network of informants among merchants and their associates and included even people who from within the Ottoman bureaucracy. The development of the consular network in the Sultan's territories continued even during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was a sign of the permanent presence of Marcan ships or Venetian merchants in the Levantine markets. There were also agents in other foreign embassies.

Despite the relations that linked the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice, continuous wars took place between these two powers of the eastern Mediterranean from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. In order to maintain its possessions and its privileged position in trade within the eastern Mediterranean, the Republic of Venice continued to be one of the tributaries of the Sublime Porte, paying a tax called the *harac*.<sup>7</sup> In Palestine, the main topic of this study, the Republic of Venice not only maintained commercial relations with the Sublime Porte, but kept up a remarkable mobility of its people. All sorts of goods such as spices, soap and fine fabrics arrived from the Ottoman Empire to the Serenissima while it was not only goods that arrived from Venice to the ports of the Middle East like as Aleppo in Syria and Jaffa in Palestine, but also the pilgrims who made their own journey to the holy places of Christianity. Especially those who made this itinerary represent an indispensable source for understanding the landscape of Palestine and the culture and mentality of and its native inhabitants as well as its visitors. Especially through the accounts of pilgrims such as the Dominican Stefano Mantegazza, Giovanni Zuallardo, and Pietro Della Valle, different perspectives may be gained on Palestine and how these travelers saw it.

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<sup>7</sup> Although during the sixteenth century war and peace alternated between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, the two powers always maintained relations characterized by opportunism. Indeed, the Sublime Porte, even after the battle of Lepanto (1571), continued to export to and import goods from Venice. Consult P. Baldocci, "L'impero ottomano nelle relazioni degli ambasciatori veneziani." *Nuova Antologia* 605 (2010): 333-334.

## 1. The Lion and The Crescent Moon: The Relations Between Republic of Venice and The Sublime Porte

As already mentioned, the relations between the lagoon Republic and the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century were not always exclusively of an economic nature, since during the sixteenth century the two powers entered into conflict. The so-called Turkish-Venetian wars are proof of the malleability of relations between the two states. During the fourth conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Serenissima (1570-1573), which included the defeat of the Turks at Lepanto in 1571, the Republic of Venice lost control of the island of Cyprus. With the fifth Turkish-Venetian war (1645-1669) in which the Republic lost the island of Candia, the last major Turkish offensive in the eastern Mediterranean took place. As explained in the 19th century by Romanin, author of *Storia di Venezia*:

As the Republic saw that all its projects were useless, that the Christian powers did not undertake vigorous measures and corresponding commitments in its favor, that it was very easy in the following year to lose the island of Candia where they were on the point of giving themselves over to the Turks and already many were on the run, that Dalmatia was oppressed and there were rumors of a gathering of Turkish troops preparing to rush to Friuli, it was decided to make peace with the Pascha, who showed himself very well disposed, by taking advantage of the efforts of a doctor called Rabi Salomon Askanasi, who had a great influence with the great vizier and also offered his services to the ambassador of France. Finally, after many difficulties, this man reached an agreement on May 7, 1573. The previous treaties were confirmed.<sup>8</sup>

Although the battle of Lepanto had marked the Turkish defeat and ended the unbeatability of the Ottomans on the sea, the consequences for the Republic of Venice were deleterious. The treaty that was stipulated at the end of the conflict between the doge Alvise I Mocenigo (1507-1577) and the sultan Murad III (1546-1595), whose testimony is contained in the State Archives of Venice, denotes a considerable advantage in favor of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the conditions that were listed were so clearly in favor of the Turks that, rather than a peace between the two powers, it signaled a crushing victory of the Ottomans over the Venetians. Whence the

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<sup>8</sup> Romanin, 236-237.

<sup>9</sup> A. Zorzi, *La Repubblica del Leone: Storia di Venezia* (Milano: Bompiani, 2009), 348.

following passage from the documentation contained in the State Archives of Venice:

Of all the agreements which are written in the letter of the aforementioned Bailiff, and also, which are in the continuation of the aforementioned Chapters, this is the present: May the Lords de Venetia give the three hundred thousand sequins given them in the time of this lord my father Sultan Selim II, which is written in the Chapters. And besides may they give the Castle named Soppoto along with the artillery that they have removed. Of the people who are inside, may those willing to remain do so, and those who are not willing go to wherever they like with all their goods, children, and wife, without being prevented by anyone.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the territories that were under the control of the Republic of Venice were returned to Ottoman control, such as the castle of Soppoto, currently located in Albanian territory. Venice, however, was not only forced to abandon this strategic point but also had to pay damages to the Turks in the amount of three hundred thousand ducats in three years. Despite everything, the Serenissima, as Romanin states when speaking of Venetian pride, began to raise its head and work to re-implement its trade and navigation:

The main care of the Republic after the peace was achieved was to develop trade, navigation, and national industries with prizes, encouragement, and orders... However, despite the long wars, the interruption of trade, the loss of territories, such was the Venetian industriousness at that time that the wounds soon healed, and the private and public wealth were wonderfully displayed on solemn occasions.<sup>11</sup>

In the history of the Republic there were not only moments of conflict with the Ottoman Empire. An old saying, still used today, says: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Indeed, the Republic of Venice had bad relations with the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and France in the sixteenth

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<sup>10</sup> (ASV), Documenti Turchi, f. 13r.

<sup>11</sup> Romanin, 238.



century.<sup>12</sup> In 1582 changes were made to the powers of the Council of X which delimited its autonomy in financial management and foreign policy, leaving unaltered the competences relating to justice and state security. Especially, as we have seen, great importance was held by the bailiff in the relations between the Sublime Porte and the Republic of Venice. Gino Benzoni states in this context: "It is through the mouth of Bailo that Venice speaks to the Sublime Porte because there would be no permanent Ottoman representation at the Serenissima."<sup>13</sup>

The relations between the two powers of the eastern Mediterranean, as already mentioned, were marked by periods of war and peace, but despite everything the commercial exchanges between the two never ceased. Benzoni himself observes that these never failed even during conflicts, and adds that "Venice was the city of Europe from which the most people went to Constantinople and to which the most people came from Constantinople."<sup>14</sup> Despite the divisions that separated the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, Venice always had this closeness to and fascination for the East. Indeed, coffee was drunk and the Koran translated there. A testimony by Senator Costantino Garzoni, dated 1573, stated in this connection: "The Turks have very different customs from ours, indeed many, it must be said, completely contrary, as ... burying the dead without lights... dressing with the shirt outside the pants, and many other things that would take too long to narrate them."<sup>15</sup>

There were also linguistic links between the Serenissima and the Sublime Porte, insofar as the Venetian ambassadors were fascinated by the Turkish language which they considered a glue of the imperial territories. Many terms of the Turkish political language entered the Venetian linguistic panorama: *sultan*, *pascià* (from Turkish *paşa*), *vizier*, *agà* (from *ağa*), commander of the Janissary corps, *cazà* (from *kaza*), *cadì* (from *kadı*), *dragomanno*, *sign* (from *ferman*), *sangiaco* (from *sancakbeyi*), *timariota* (from *tumar*), *odalisque* (from *odalık*) and *janissaries*. Also words of the culinary language like *bey-armüdi* which meant the prince's pear to evoke the softness and refinement of the fruit; sorbet, fruit parfait, from the Turkish *şerbet* which means a fresh drink; the tulip flower whose shape evokes the

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<sup>12</sup> M. Soykut, "Note sui rapporti tra Italia, Islam e impero ottomano (secoli XV-XVII)," *Archivio Storico Italiano* (2011): 228.

<sup>13</sup> G. Benzoni, "A proposito dei baili veneziani a Costantinopoli: qualche spunto, qualche riflessione," *Studi Veneziani* 30 (1995): 69.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 70.

<sup>15</sup>E. Albèri, *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato durante il secolo decimosesto*, Firenze, all'insegna di Clío, 1840-1863, serie III: Stati ottomani, vol. 1, 399.

enormous turban of the imperial dignitaries, as the flower was also called *lale* in Turkish; finally, one cannot do without the evocation of coffee, in Turkish *kahve*.<sup>16</sup> These terms may certainly be considered the result of close relationships and the desire for knowledge of the Turkish language and culture promoted by the activity of the bailiffs in the Ottoman capital.

## **2. The Eyes of The Lion: The Bailiffs at The Service of The Serenissima**

As previously mentioned, the bailiff was a prominent and vital figure in the foreign policy of the Serenissima. It could be said that this ambassador represented the eyes of the Republic within the court and the Ottoman capital. The bailiff is a very ancient office, whose roots date back to the Middle Ages; precisely to the period after the Fourth Crusade (1204) through which the Byzantine Empire was replaced by the Eastern Latin Empire (1204-1261). A thriving Venetian community settled in Constantinople, residing in a separate quarter, a state within the state, which was led by a man whose job was to head the same community. The Venetians of the neighborhood chose Mario Zen, investing him with the title of "Venetian podestà and despot of Constantinople, and deputy ruler of a quarter and a half of the Roman empire."<sup>17</sup> Even if the appointment of Zen by the Venetian community was not well received by the government of the Republic, Venice eventually had to accept him to maintain its control over the Venetians living in the Constantinopolitan capital.<sup>18</sup>

With the end of the rule of the Latin Empire of the East and the accession of Michael VIII Palaeologus (1223-1282) to the Byzantine throne, the office temporarily lost its importance, to gain it again in the early modern age. For the first time, the title of bailiff appeared in the documents of the time as "qui vocetur bajulus."<sup>19</sup> His duties consisted of pursuing the important businesses of state that were worthy of concern.<sup>20</sup> In addition to these, the bailiff held the position of guardian of the interests of the community,

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<sup>16</sup> M. Viallon, "Venezia ottomana nel Cinquecento," *Epirotica chronica Ioannina* 42 (2008): 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> S. Carbone, *Note ai dispacci al Senato dei rappresentanti diplomatici veneti* (Rome, 1974), 11; on the figure of the bailiff and the Venetian community in Constantinople, see also M. P. Pedani, "Come (non) fare un inventario d'archivio: Le carte del bailo a Costantinopoli conservate a Venezia," *Mediterranea ricerche storiche* 28 (2013): 387.

<sup>18</sup> C. Coco and F. Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani alla Sublime Porte* (Venezia: Comune di Venezia, 1985), 13.

<sup>19</sup> G. Benzoni, "A proposito dei baili veneziani a Costantinopoli: qualche spunto, qualche riflessione," *Studi Veneziani* 30 (1995): 69.

<sup>20</sup> Coco and Manzonetto, 14.

“rectorem supra gentem suam,” with the authority to settle legal issues, both civil and criminal.<sup>21</sup>

Although the 16th century bailiffs were scornful of Ottoman culture and customs, we can cite the cases of the two Venetian representatives at the Porta: Marino De Cavalli (1500-1573) and Bernardo Navagero (1507-1565). These were in favor of “the customs of the Turk,” despite pursuing the goals of consolidating the power of Venice and challenging its antagonist in the eastern Mediterranean by any means.<sup>22</sup> Bailiffs were also heading an espionage institute. In 1492 relations were interrupted when the sultan discovered that the bailiff Gerolamo Marcello (1447-1493) was reporting the secrets of the palace to the Republic. In 1503 relations resumed with the appointment of the bailiff Leonardo Bembo (1510-1645), although it would be necessary to wait for the peace of 1540 to see a greater continuity in line of bailiffs in Constantinople. Even at times of war, except for rare circumstances, relations were not interrupted. The bailiffs were sent to Constantinople to negotiate truces with the sultan on behalf of the Venetian Republic.

According to Eric R. Dursteler, among the contemporaries of the sixteenth century there was no doubt that that the bailiff was one of the most important figures of the Venetian diplomatic corps. Dursteler argues in fact that “linked to the political duties of the baili was their responsibility to collect, analyze and communicate information relating the the Ottoman Empire to Venice. The theorists were unanimous in their agreement that this was one of the main tasks of any resident representative... The bailiff obtained a great deal of information from many sources.”<sup>23</sup>

Reading the dispatches kept at the Venetian Archives, we see for example that Pietro Zen was sent to Constantinople in 1523 to congratulate Suleiman I for the success of the conquest of Rhodes. Daniello De Ludovisi was sent for delicate diplomatic issues that arose following an assault carried out erroneously against some Turkish ships; a report by his pen was read in the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> Benzoni G., “Flash sull’Europa: le relazioni dei diplomatici veneti,” *Studi Veneziani* 30 (1995): 134. Despite the tendency of some bailiffs to accept Ottoman customs and culture, they “not only did not know Turkish, but refused to know anything Turkish. And this refusal was an indication of allergy, of closure to the other, to the different.” On the bailivate of Bernardo Navagero, see E. Alberi, *Le Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Serie III, vol. I (Firenze: Tipografia e calcografia all’insegna di Clio, 1840), 35-110; A. Bombaci, *I “Documenti Turchi” dell’Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (Rome: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali Ufficio centrale per i Beni Archivistici, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> E. R. Dursteler, “The Bailo in Constantinople: Crisis and Career in Venice’s Early Modern Diplomatic Corps,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, 2 (2001): 4-5.

Senate on June 3, 1534 in which he brilliantly described the Ottoman Empire. Marino De Cavalli also gave a description of the Empire, advising the Doge to consider the Porte's practice of elevating renegades to the highest state offices. De Cavalli, like the other bailiffs of the previous forty years, faced an empire led by who was perhaps the most skilled of the Ottoman sultans, Suleiman the Magnificent. Bernardo Navagero, in his 1553 report, wrote about Suleiman: "And to come to the issues that matter most, which are those of the soul, he is reputed to be very just, so that when he is well-informed, he does no harm to anyone... He has always been by nature more inclined to peace than to war."<sup>24</sup> In addition, the bailiffs described the absolutely impeccable military organization, loyalty to the sovereign, and the practice of gifts in the Ottoman Empire: They personally observed the golden years of the Empire and were strongly impressed by it.

It could be said that the Venetian ambassadors, while always remaining aloof to oriental customs and traditions, changed these positive assessments in keeping with the events that took place in the Empire during the latter part of the century –from the short sultanate by Selim II (1566-1574) onwards– and switched to judgments characterized by a strong aversion: in these reports, the bailiffs began to speak of the dysfunctionality of the Empire, the decomposition of the military apparatus, the decay of the institution of the *timar*, the further degeneration of the practice of giving bribes into the most blatant corruption. The image of the Turk increasingly became that of the abject man, who had his cultural roots in the false religion of Islam. A testimony to this effect may be read, for example, in the detailed report by Lorenzo Bernardo, a great connoisseur of the palace, who was in Constantinople for the second time in 1592 –date of the report. In his report, Bernard wrote: "All this order is changing and decaying... the Janissaries lost their ancient worth... discord and disobedience have introduced themselves into civil and military corps."<sup>25</sup> The bailiffs, starting from observations about the decay of Ottoman institutions, generalized these to negative judgments of the customs of the Turks, and proceeded to the point of subjecting the "false" Islamic religion to a real trial. The aspects of the Empire they considered were therefore the same as in the past, but negative rather than positive evaluations prevailed.

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<sup>24</sup> B. Navagero (1553), in E. Albèri, *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti a Costantinopoli*, serie III, vol. I, Firenze 1839-1863, 85.

<sup>25</sup> L. Bernardo (1592), in *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti a Costantinopoli*, ed. E. Albèri, serie III, vol. II (Firenze 1839-1863), 334.

It is interesting to note that the relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire were not exclusively of an economic or political, but also of a diplomatic nature. Indeed, studying the relations between the two Mediterranean powers between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one may see Christian pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land to reach the holy places. It was Venice that constituted one of the starting points of these pilgrims' journeys.

### 3. Ottoman Palestine as seen by Merchants and Western Pilgrims in Italian Sources (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)

In 1516 Palestine became part of the Ottoman Empire, following the conquest carried out by Sultan Selim I in the conflict between the Ottomans and Mamluks. The following year, the Ottomans annexed Egypt, giving the territory a new administrative composition. By this time, the term Palestine had largely disappeared from the political map. Most of its historical territory ended up in the *Vilayet* of Damascus until 1660, and then in that of Sidon. During these ages, like today, Palestine was the region where the three great monotheistic religions converged.<sup>26</sup> Jerusalem, which in the Middle Ages became the terrain of encounter and confrontation between Christianity and Islam, was the seat of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock.<sup>27</sup>

The relations between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire in Palestine are evidenced by sources dating back to the sixteenth century. Among the Venetian sources it is possible to trace a close commercial link between the Serenissima and some territories of the Ottoman Empire such as Aleppo, Syria and Palestine.<sup>28</sup> These reports are registered by the Consul

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<sup>26</sup> R. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Jerusalem during the Ottoman age was a sanjak of the Ottoman Empire and was part of the vilayet of Syria together with the jurisdictions (qaḏā) of Beersheba, Gaza, Jaffa and Hebron.

<sup>27</sup> L. Rostagno, "Pellegrini italiani a Gerusalemme in età ottomana: percorsi, esperienze, momenti d'incontro." *Oriente moderno* 17, 78 (1998): 63.

<sup>28</sup> Aleppo, in addition to being an important commercial center, was the place where pilgrims went to begin their pilgrimage. In the city there was a building called the Custody, in which the procurator of the Holy Land held the sum of money necessary to allow pilgrims to visit the holy places. As witnessed by the various travelers about the Custody: "This is a deposit, which each secular pilgrim is obliged to make when he leaves Jaffa for Jerusalem, and that money is used for the expenses which are necessary when visiting the several Shrines of Palestine. This is a very convenient practice insofar as you no longer think of anything until your return to Jaffa, since the Jerusalem Public Prosecutor's Office is responsible for doing all the shopping". G. Mariti, *Viaggi per l'isola di Cipro...*, cit., II, 321-322.

General of the Republic of Venice, Giovanni Antonio Maria Morana, in *Relazione del commercio d'Aleppo ed altre scale della Siria, e Palestina* (1816). While this work mainly refers to the nineteenth century, it can also provide an interesting insight into the commercial relations between the two powers during the previous centuries. As indicated by Morana in his report, the Venetians exported goods of different types from the regions in question: "maize or Turkish sorghum, fodder of all kinds, oil, pistachios, silk, wax, cotton, hides, linen, lane, tobacco, saffron, drugs, rubber, copper from the Tucac mines, honey etc. etc."<sup>29</sup>

Palestine, as evidenced by Morana's work, was linked with Syrian ports which were in turn well connected with other trading posts in the Mediterranean. The city of Jaffa was a strategic point for commercial relations between the Serenissima and the Sublime Porte, as it was a landing place for merchants and Christian pilgrims who arrived in the Ottoman Empire. Jaffa had great importance for the production of soap and cotton, which in Europe, especially in the following centuries, had great success.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to economic and commercial issues, another practice that the Christians carried out in this period was pilgrimage. However, the sharp decrease in the number of pilgrims in the 1500s made the system uneconomical, and the few Europeans who wanted to undertake the pilgrimage to Palestine had to organize their trip independently. The laity and ecclesiastics who made the pilgrimage had to be well equipped with the means necessary to undertake an expensive journey of unpredictable duration, and also endowed with a certain spirit of adaptation and the ability to cope with unknowns and dangers. In this context, the Belgian Giovanni Zuallardo spoke of a "very cool devotion" and a decline in the number of pilgrims.<sup>31</sup> This decline was caused by the shift of the spiritual center of gravity from Jerusalem to Rome. Indeed, in a letter Pope Paul III urged Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order, not to make his

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<sup>29</sup> G. A. M. Morana, *Relazione del commercio d'Aleppo ed altre scale della Siria, e Palestina* (Venice: Per Francesco Andreola Stampatore dell'E. Governo, 1816), 8. From what Morana describes, Ottoman wheat not only supplied the territories of the Ottoman provinces, but also reached Europe.

<sup>30</sup> F. Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, vol I (Torino: Einaudi, 2010), 591. On the production of soap, which took place in Aleppo, we can cite the testimony reported by the Ragusa agent Cristoforo Allegretti, who stated "I believe that this country Aleppo has never been so empty of goods, so much so that nothing is found except soap and the ashes."

<sup>31</sup> G. Zuallardo, *Devotissimo viaggio di Gerusalemme...* (Rome: F. Zanetti & Gia Ruffinelli, 1587), 40.

pilgrimage. He stated: "Why do you so ardently desire to go to Jerusalem? Good and true Jerusalem is in Italy."<sup>32</sup>

Another point of interest was the low percentage of women who made pilgrimages to reach the holy places. The few women who visited the Holy Places stayed in private homes, albeit with the mediation of the *Custodia*. In the late 1500s, however, despite the general decrease in pilgrimage to Palestine, Gregory XIII felt the need to prohibit it for women under pain of excommunication.<sup>33</sup>

Through its network of connections in its colonies in the Levant, Venice guaranteed pilgrims tranquility and safety in their journey, but pilgrimage was still not within everybody's reach. In the seventeenth century Angelo Legrenzi (1643-1708), a physician at the Venetian consulate in Aleppo wrote:

The Christians of Aleppo habitually leave with caravan the first days of Lent, and passing through Damascus they arrive before the Holy Week, but I abandoned that road for another that was less frequented but longer and more expensive. I took this road to Tripoli to enjoy greater freedom away from the confusion that would be present among so great a number of Pilgrims. So, when I got on horseback with the provisions entrusted to the servant, and in the company of two passengers, the march started.<sup>34</sup>

At the turn of the 16th-17th centuries, those who intended to reach Jerusalem had various alternatives available also for the maritime stretch of the pilgrimage. Among the Italian maritime powers, which enjoyed the privilege of having a dialogue with the East, Venice continued to be the city that offered the best chance of finding passageways to the Levant. There were also other ports from which one could reach Palestine: Marseilles, Palermo or Messina. The itinerary consisted of reaching the island of Zakynthos, a possession of the State da Mar of the Republic of Venice, whence to proceed to the island of Cyprus.<sup>35</sup> Obviously, those headed to Palestine could choose the port to land. They could go directly to Jaffa, from where a short route by land made it possible to reach Jerusalem quickly; or perhaps to Alexandretta or Tripoli, or more rarely to Alexandria. In these

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<sup>32</sup> P. De Leturia, *Estudios ignacianos*, vol. I (Rome: Bibliotheca Instituti Historici Soc. Iesu, Institutum Historicum, 1957), 261.

<sup>33</sup> Da Maleo, 3.

<sup>34</sup> A. Legrenzi, *Pellegrino nell'Asia...* (Venezia, 1705), 50-51.

<sup>35</sup> Zuallardo, 91.

cases, it was better to wait until the caravan of Eastern Christians was set up to travel to Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> One of the most important aspects of the travel was currency.

In the Ottoman territories, the most commonly used foreign currency was the Venetian zecchino. Indeed, the knight Aquilante Rocchetta by Palermo (1504-1589) advised pilgrims to have 200, or at least 150, Venetian sequins at their disposal if their pilgrimage was limited to visiting Jerusalem and its environs. Otherwise, it was better to bring along 300 sequins, because "today the expenses have almost doubled."<sup>37</sup> He also issued some warnings to those planning to make the journey to the Holy Land:

When you read in this Journey of mine, or of others, the sinister encounters, and dangers that pilgrims undergo both by sea and by land, do not lose heart. Because many times people sail only for few days and even on such a short journey it is often usual to stumble on storms and most grave fortunes of the sea. Thus, it is no surprise if one suffers the same while sailing for so many days in such a long stretch of sea. Even when walking by Christian lands, it is sometimes common to fall into the hands of bandits and murderers who habitually rob, maltreat and oftentimes kill travelers. In contrast, in this most holy journey, we have almost never heard the pilgrims being killed by Arab thieves, or captured by Turks. However, when you go to sea, all the danger of being taken by Turkish or Moorish corsairs is confined to the area within 50 or 70 miles of Sicily, where some pirate ships roam for prey, but once these 50 or 70 miles are left behind there is no longer any ship of robbery. Those vessels that are encountered belong to merchants that do not capture or rob even if they are Turkish ships, but often come to our aid to meet our needs, giving us wood and water that we lacked, as I can personally believe from my experience. This also holds true on land, traveling with caravans of many people, and with the Janissary guards. Even though Arab robbers are encountered who are after prey in the countryside, it hardly ever happens that someone is robbed by them or captured.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Rostagno, 76-77.

<sup>37</sup> Rocchetta, *Peregrinatione di Terra Santa...*, cit., 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.



A different opinion was voiced however by Zuallardo, who believed that only 100 sequins were needed. This view was shared by the Franciscan friar Mariano Morone from Maleo.<sup>39</sup>

Beside the pilgrims, merchants could also be found in the caravans heading from Venice to Palestine. In the main trading cities, warehouses, generally managed by individual trading companies, were used to house men and goods. In smaller localities and resting locations of the caravans there was accommodation specially prepared by the authorities for all travelers. Given the possibility of finding colonies of Western merchants in the ports and trading centers of the Levant, the use of letters of credit was recommended, so as to be able to deal with any eventuality:

You should also not fail to have (if you can) letters of recommendation for all the places you will pass through, like Cyprus, and Tripoli, to the Merchants resident there, and also letters of credit if you (because of illnesses or misfortunes) need more money than you take with you. Or you should not fail to leave the money to their advantage under their custody, in case there is the suspicion of being murdered in the street. And for the sake of being able to receive support if a Turk wants to do you wrong, you should also take letters addressed to the consuls and vice consuls, and likewise to the said Father Guardian, or some man of religion in Jerusalem, with the testimony of a good Catholic.<sup>40</sup>

In September 1600, another pilgrim embarked from Venice for the Holy Land. It was the Dominican Stefano Mantegazza, who, having left Milan, made the voyage by sea to Alexandria and from here, again by sea, reached Jaffa and then Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup> The return to Cairo was made by caravan. Yet another 17th-century pilgrim who decided to embark on the journey to the

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<sup>39</sup> M. Morone, *Terra santa nuovamente illustrata dal Fr. Mariano Morone da Maleo...* (Piacenza: Stamperia ducale di Giovanni Bazachi, 1669).

<sup>40</sup> Zuallardo, 36-37.

<sup>41</sup> Mantegazza observed that pilgrimage was not only a spiritual affair, but also a way to study and learn about places that were unknown to many Europeans, looking to them almost like a new world, even another dimension. Indeed, Mantegazza stated: "When we landed I was very amazed, feeling that I had entered a new world, gazing in every part... Just as the city was new to me, equally new was the mixed language of Moorish, Arabic, Slavic, Turkish, Hebrew, Ragusean and other unknown languages, such as Greek, Indian, and Syrian, the customs, and the new animals of which in our countries there are none, such as dromedary camels, which we found on the street carrying merchandise". S. Mantegazza, *Relatione tripartita del viaggio di Gierusalemme...* (Milano: Stampatori Archiepiscopali, 1616), 62.

Holy Land was Giovanni Paolo Pesenti (1579-1658), a knight of Bergamese origin from Jerusalem and author of the *Pellegrinaggio di Gerusalemme* (1612-13). In his travel report, Pesenti described the pilgrimage made from September 1612 to August 1613 in Syria, Palestine, Sinai and Egypt. From north to south, in the company of a Bolognese he met in Cyprus, he joined local caravans and traveled the road leading from Alexandretta via Aleppo and Damascus to Jerusalem, and from here, crossing Gaza, entering the Sinai desert to reach Cairo. Following the example of Rocchetta, he followed the longer route, which allowed him to make better use of such a travel opportunity.<sup>42</sup> Various descriptions of localities were made by Pesenti in the course of his pilgrimage. For example, the village of Jericho, "being already a great and beautiful city, favored by the presence and miracles of the Lord, is now all destroyed and reduced to the status of a poor village".<sup>43</sup>

The last case analyzed here is that of the journey made by the Roman Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652) who provided a description of his itinerary in Persia, India and various areas of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup> In 8 June 1614 he left Venice, arrived in Zakyntos, and passed through Constantinople, eventually arriving in Egypt and finally Jerusalem. What Della Valle's account disclosed was not the commonly expressed fascination for a "mysterious East," but feelings of contempt and superiority toward Muslim customs and habits.<sup>45</sup> An example of such contempt on the part of Della Valle may be observed in a passage where he described his impressions on the banks of the River Jordan, the place where Christ had received baptism:

Eventually I came to the water, on one side, which many others with me also reached. And here there was a very curious thing to see. Because, some drank, some swam, some washed all his clothes and shirts, and some stripped naked on the ground and had a large basin of that water thrown on himself by some friend for devotion. This was indeed a very strange thing, for many women did it without being ashamed of standing naked in front of all the people, and also because it was very cold. To see those naked people who let cold

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<sup>42</sup> Rostagno, 103-104.

<sup>43</sup> G. P. Pesenti, *Pellegrinaggio di Gierusalemme*, Libro II, (Bergamo: Per Comin Ventura, 1615), 85.

<sup>44</sup> On Pietro della Valle consult G. Pennesi "Pietro Della Valle e i suoi viaggi in Turchia, Persia e India," *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* (1890); T. Zachariae, "Pietro della Valle über das Nāgarī-Alphabet," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 16 (1902): 205-210; E. Rossi, "Poesie inedite in persiano di Pietro Della Valle," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 28 (1953): 108-117.

<sup>45</sup> F. Gaeta, "Viaggi di Pietro della Valle," in *Lettere dalla Persia*, eds. F. Gaeta and L. Lockhart, Libro I (Rome, 1972), xi-xxvii.

water be thrown on them and trembled from the cold, with their teeth clattering, was a thing to relish. For I myself have never seen a more extravagant affect of devotion from, all in all, barbarians, as such in fact are all these people, even Christians.<sup>46</sup>

For more than a century, from the second half of the sixteenth to the second half of seventeenth century, the reports of Italian pilgrims document their extraordinary experiences. Ottoman power was still intact; the political and economic crisis which was beginning to undermine it from within and without had not yet undermined the renown that the Empire enjoyed in the West. The Italian pilgrims were almost unanimous in expressing their admiration for the beauty of the cities they crossed. Foremost in this sense was Damascus, so much so that a traveler said he was not surprised "if some writers have said that it was the Earthly Paradise".<sup>47</sup>

Alcarotti himself, a sixteenth-century clergyman who made his pilgrimage between 1587 and 1588, gave very precise information and warnings, especially about the local population, to those who wanted to undertake a pilgrimage to Palestine. He advised to avoid contacts or discussions with the local population as much as possible. Nevertheless, according to his indications he himself refused to dress in "oriental" style for the duration of the trip, despite the advantages that could have accrued from not being recognized as a "Frank" and proudly wore his own clothes, even though he was the only westerner in the caravan. He was also the only one among the authors under consideration to use the term "infidels" habitually to indicate the Muslims and to designate the Bedouins only as "thieves."

However, a reading of his account shows how he underwent a change of heart in the direction of open-mindedness and acceptance of the other. Little by little, his distrust diminished and he ended up recognizing, almost in spite of himself, positive aspects in the people and cultures with which he came into contact. An example of this is his observations on the care with which the Muslims guarded Christian shrines, on the attention they devoted to the places hosting pilgrims, or on the memory of a dinner attended by 'Uyun al-Tuggar in an inn still under construction, located on the slopes of Mount Tabor. Thanks to the report of Alcarotti, it is possible to understand the customs and diet of the local population:

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<sup>46</sup> P. Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino*, vol. I (Venice: G. Gancia, 1681), 290.

<sup>47</sup> F. Alcarotti, *Del viaggio di Terra Santa: Da Venetia à Tripoli, di Soria...* (Novara: Eredi di Francesco Sesalli, 1596), 50.

They did not exercise much courtesy themselves, introducing us while we were eating on a carpet spread on the ground, according to their custom, some cooked pasta and fruits, including green and dried dactyls, pistachios, Pharaoh's figs and other things that were not found in much abundance. Besides that, more dearly to me, they made me grasp how many things of our Holy Faith had happened in those sites, still held as true by the Mohammedans, including the transfiguration of Our Lord on the same mountain, his most sacred incarnation in Nazareth, and other holy things.<sup>48</sup>

The considerations outlined by the travelers are those of devoted men, who decided to undertake these journeys for a purely spiritual purpose. They did not know in depth the Islamic or Turkish culture, as evidenced by the repulsion of certain bailiffs in Constantinople towards oriental customs and traditions, which they dubbed "barbarian." This mentality was not far from those of Columbus and the conquistadors in the New World who confronted "the other," or of the Spaniards in the Reconquista process who first raised the banner of the racial ideal of *limpieza de sangre* that would endure through the modern age of Spain.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Alcarotti, 77.

<sup>49</sup> This analysis of the relationship of Venetian pilgrims with Palestine analyzed, reveals the representation that they had of "the other," be him Muslim or Jew. The Mediterranean experience served as a preparation for Europeans like the Spanish, who in 1492 would confront the indigenous peoples, their culture and their religion. See T. Todorov, *La conquista dell'America: Il problema dell'altro*, ed. A. Serafini, Second Edition (Torino: Einaudi, 2014); A. Prosperi, *Il seme dell'intolleranza: Ebrei, eretici, selvaggi: Granada 1492*, Second Edition (Rome-Bari: Edizioni Laterza, 2013).

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