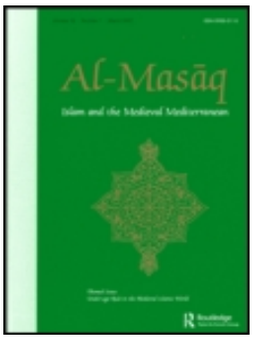

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Genoa, Genoese Merchants and the Ottoman Empire in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century: Rumours and Reality

CRISTIAN CASELLI

ABSTRACT *Among the Latin states, it was the maritime republic of Genoa that established the earliest official contacts with the Ottomans by concluding a treaty with them in 1352. This was the first step in the development of relatively smooth relations between the Genoese and the Ottoman Empire, which lasted from the mid-fourteenth until the mid-fifteenth century. Within Christendom, such familiarity earned the republic a negative reputation, which the adversaries of Genoa – Venice among others – tried to exploit for their own purposes. An element that contributed to the idea of a close connection between the Genoese and Ottomans was the outstanding position gained by some citizens of Genoa at the Ottoman court. They were influential men of affairs who owed their acquaintance with the sultans to their specific commercial activity. However, despite the fact that in some cases they held offices in the Genoese colonial administration, these merchants acted quite independently of Genoa itself and sometimes contrary to its directives.*

Keywords: Economics – trade; Genoa (republic) – trade; Genova, Italy – merchants; Ottoman empire – trade; Alum

In the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the Latin states hastily tried to minimise their own responsibility for the fate of the city. A scapegoat was found in the maritime republic of Genoa, whose long-standing dealings with the Ottomans lent itself to easy misinterpretation. Indeed, a quick look at the sources shows how other Christian governments, such as that of Venice, fostered the circulation of rumours about the connivance of Genoa with Ottoman aggressive expansion.[1] That said, it is important to ask what made these rumours effective. Or, in other words, what made them plausible? Grounds for speculation were undoubtedly provided by the good relations enjoyed by some Genoese merchants with the sultans during the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century. Their familiarity with the Ottoman leaders could be presented by anti-Genoese propaganda as revealing of the allegedly accommodating attitude of Genoa towards the Ottoman

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[1] See, for example, the testimonies collected in *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, ed. Agostino Pertusi, volumes I-II (Milano: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla-A. Mondadori, 1976).

Empire.[2] The acquaintance of these influential Genoese traders with the sultans, however, focussed mainly on personal interest and developed quite independently from the central authority of the republic, and sometimes contrary to it.

In the late thirteenth century, a number of Turcoman leaders began to establish themselves in the territories of western Anatolia that had been previously ruled by Byzantium and by the Saljūqs. Soon the commercial networks set up by Genoa and Venice between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea had to reckon with the increasing strength of these new Turkish principalities, known as emirates or beyliks, whose sea raids repeatedly disrupted Latin trade in the area. The Christian powers, however, were far from being in complete agreement with each other, and the military campaigns they launched against the Turks therefore achieved only partial and precarious results: in 1333–1334 and 1343–1351, the *Sancta Unio* and the so-called "crusade of Smyrna", respectively, managed to weaken the emirate of Aydin, then predominant among the beyliks, but in the long term the continuing commercial rivalry between Genoa and Venice was among the chief elements that caused growing turbulence in the Aegean basin. For the duration of the fourteenth century, the two Italian maritime republics took advantage of Byzantine internal strife. In an attempt to gain the upper hand, they each sided with one of the opposing factions that were tearing the empire apart and asked for trade privileges in return for aid. Shortly before the mid-eighth/mid-fourteenth century, however, a new player began to take part in this game and would soon acquire predominance. The Ottoman leaders, who ruled over one of the Anatolian emirates, started absorbing the other beyliks and realised that in pursuing their expansionist policy they could profit from the enmity between the Genoese and Venetians. Just as the two republics played on disunity in Byzantium, the Ottomans throve on the competition between Genoa and Venice by supporting one or the other according to the circumstances.[3]

It was the Genoese who first opened contacts with the Ottoman leaders. A treaty that was concluded by the two parties in 753/1352 is the oldest surviving official pact negotiated by the Ottomans with a Latin power. The agreement was reached against the background of the conflict over commerce in the Black Sea that broke out between Genoa and Venice in 1350 and lasted until 1355. The war between the two republics came to interweave itself with the fight over the Byzantine throne: while the Venetians found allies in *basileos* John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–1354) and King Peter IV of Aragón (r. 1336–1387), the Genoese could rely on the faction of John Palaeologos (d. 1391) and above all on the backing of Sultan Orkhān (r. 726 or 727–763/1326–1362). This bond, however, did not prevent the latter from holding talks with Venice at the same time. Coalitions were changeable, and in such a volatile situation the Ottomans were able to gain possession of Tzympe (753/1352) and Gallipoli (755/1354), thus securing a foothold for their expansion on

[2] After all, the Genoese were commonly described in the late Middle Ages as a greedy people: a reputation that could be easily adduced in order to substantiate the idea of their connivance with the Ottomans. See Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis: Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 10.

[3] Georg Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (München: Beck, 1963), pp. 411–56; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300–1415)* [Library of the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, volume XI] (Venice: Hellenic Institute, 1983), pp. 3–75.

the western side of the Dardanelles.[4] Half a century later, the Castilian ambassador Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo (d. 1412) visited the Straits on his way to meet the Mongol *khān* Tīmūr (r. 772 or 773–807/1370–1405). He subsequently reported in his travel diary that Gallipoli had been the first place conquered by the Ottomans on European soil and that the enterprise had been made possible thanks to Genoese cooperation. In fact Sultan Murād I (r. 761–791/1360–1389) temporarily lost control of the outpost on the Dardanelles between 767/1366 and 779/1377, but he eventually recovered it by meddling in Byzantine domestic conflicts: he backed Andronikos Palaeologos (r. 1376–1379) as pretender to the throne of Constantinople and in return the latter transferred the possession of Gallipoli to the sultan. Interestingly enough, at this juncture Andronikos was also supported by Genoa, to which he then conceded as a reward Tenedos, an island long disputed between the Genoese and Venetians. This coincidence might have contributed to the spread of the idea referred to by Gonzales de Clavijo of a connection between Genoese and Ottoman operations in the Levant. The fact that this view was mentioned by the Castilian diplomat in his narrative also suggests that this rumour was widely echoed between the second half of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. As shown by Gonzales de Clavijo's account, in time the conquest of Gallipoli was charged by Christian authors with symbolic significance, being regarded as the first Ottoman intrusion into Europe; of course, the fact that Genoa was associated with the Ottomans in relation to this particular event might have helped spread the reputation of the republic as a Turkish fifth column within Christendom.[5]

In fact, this was but one of the rumours that circulated during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and came to be instilled in the European collective imagination. The idea of Genoese collusion with the Ottomans was presented in contemporary Christian sources in relation to other crucial episodes of the Ottoman expansion, thus conveying the impression that Genoa had played a decisive part in facilitating the Turkish victories. For instance, according to the Greek chronicler Doukas (fl. fifteenth century), in 824/1421 the Genoese merchant and officer Giovanni Adorno (fl. fifteenth century) provided Murād II (r. 824–848/1421–1444 and 850–855/1446–1451) with a fleet, so that he and his army could cross the Straits westward. This allowed him to march against the troops of his uncle Muṣṭafā (d. 825/1422 or c. 833 or 834/1430), who was contending with his nephew for Ottoman leadership. Adorno accompanied the sultan on the passage over the Dardanelles and, when they were halfway across, it seems that he asked Murād to waive a huge debt owed

[4] Michel Balard, "À propos de la bataille du Bosphore: L'expédition génoise de Paganino Doria a Constantinople 1351–1352", *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (1970): 431–69; *idem*, *Les Latins en Orient (X^e^-XV^e^ siècle)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), pp. 275, 281; *idem*, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e^–debut du XV^e^ siècle)*, volumes I-II (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1978), I: 95–100; Luigi Tommaso Belgrano, "Prima serie di documenti riguardanti la colonia di Pera", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria* 13 (1877): 97–336, pp. 124–5, doc. no. 16; Alessio Bombaci and Stanford J. Shaw, *L'impero ottomano* [Nuova storia universale dei popoli e delle civiltà, volume VI:ii] (Torino: Einaudi, 1981), pp. 159, 224, 239; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), p. 24; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 437–8.

[5] Belgrano, "Prima serie", 131, doc. no. 24; Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego, volumes I-II (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2006), II: 1–210, p. 31; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 448. See also Stéphane Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l'Empire Ottoman (XIV^e^-XVI^e^ siècle): Bibliographie, itinéraire et inventaire des lieux habités* [Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınlarından, volume CXVII] (Ankara: Société Turque d'Histoire, 1991), p. 103.

by Adorno himself to the sultan, who at that very moment was obviously not in a position to deny the concession.[6]

However, the event that aroused the harshest barrage of accusations against Genoa for its relations with the Ottomans was the fall of Constantinople to the latter on 29 May 1453. An ambiguous attitude on the part of the republic and its colonies was highlighted by contemporaries. Doukas, for example, recalled that during the siege of the city Ottoman artillery sank a ship belonging to Genoese merchants from Pera, but the latter were promptly guaranteed compensation by the sultan.[7] Following the overthrow of Byzantium, the maritime republic was publicly attacked on two fronts. First, the measures taken by the Genoese colony of Pera in those critical circumstances were censured by other Latin states: as early as 30 May 1453, the enclave concluded a peace treaty with Sultan Meḥmed II (r. 848–850/1444–1446 and 855–886/1451–1481).[8] Moreover, a number of eyewitnesses strongly condemned Pera's compliance with the Ottomans, though there were others who described approvingly the contribution of Genoa to the operations as being meant to break the encirclement.[9] In addition, a flood of criticism was levelled at Giovanni Giustiniani Longo (d. 1453), a Genoese citizen appointed by Emperor Constantine XI (r. 1449–1453) as commander in chief. During the final assault launched by the Ottomans, Giustiniani was wounded and therefore decided to abandon his post, which, according to some Christian sources, ultimately caused the defence of the city to collapse. Nonetheless, some of these accounts distorted facts deliberately in order to discredit Genoa and to relieve others of widespread condemnation. Venetian and pro-Venetian authors were obviously eager to saddle the Genoese with responsibility for the loss of Constantinople. The narrative by Niccolò Barbaro (fl. fifteenth century), a doctor from Venice who was in the Byzantine capital at the time of the fall, continuously refers to the inhabitants of Pera as "treacherous dogs" as well as "foes of the Christian faith". Barbaro also reports the withdrawal of Giustiniani, but omits to mention the injury, which would eventually lead to the death of the Genoese combatant shortly after his flee from the Bosphorus.[10] Such biased testimonies were undoubtedly welcomed by Venice: by denouncing the supposed faults of its rival, the Republic of St Mark could divert general attention from its own dealings with the Ottomans, which would result in the subscription of a treaty on 19 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 858/18 April 1454.[11]

[6] Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, ed. Immanuel Bekker [Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, volume XXI] (Bonn: Weber, 1834), pp. 177–8. Adorno had been granted the right to collect taxes on alum in Ottoman territories by Meḥmed I (r. 816–824/1413–1421) in return for payment of 20,000 florins a year. However, Adorno had failed to fulfil his obligations and debts had piled up: Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 90–1.

[7] Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, 163–5, 278–9. See also Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 12.

[8] Belgrano, "Prima serie", 226–9, doc. no. 148. See also Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 284–5.

[9] Among the detractors, it is worth remembering Leonardo Giustiniani, Bishop of Chio, who was himself a Genoese. With respect to favourable comments, one should not overlook such an authoritative voice as that of Cardinal Isidore of Kiev: see *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, I: 75–6, 109, 134–7.

[10] *Ibid.*, 19, 355–6. For bibliographical references on Giovanni Giustiniani Longo and a discussion of the reports on his conduct during the siege of Constantinople, see *Ad serenissimum principem et invictissimum regem Alphonsum Nicolai Sagundini oratio*, ed. Cristian Caselli [Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale, Antiquitates, volume XXXIX] (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2012), pp. 34–5, 37–42.

[11] The text of the agreements can be found in Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, volumes I-X (Venezia: P. Naratovich, 1853–1861), IV: 528–35.

Leaving aside the calumnies aired by the adversaries of Genoa, it is noticeable that, from the mid-eighth/mid-fourteenth century to the fall of Constantinople, the relations between the republic and the Ottomans were indeed comparatively smoother than those between the latter and Venice. To a considerable extent, these contacts rested on the initiative of Genoese citizens who, while holding a public office in the Levant, operated quite independently from their mother country in the interest of their commercial and financial activities. Genoa was not able to check up on these manoeuvres, but they mostly produced advantages for the city as a whole, thus earning the tacit approval of the homeland government. Cases of this kind are referred to in the sources, especially in connection with the reign of Murād II.[12]

In this period a prominent personage was the aforementioned Giovanni Adorno, merchant and governor of New Phokaea, which was the main Genoese alum production site, located on the Anatolian coast of the Aegean Sea. In fact, Adorno led the *Societas Folie Nove*, a commercial company holding exclusive rights for the extraction of alum in Levantine territories ruled by Genoa. By exploiting the means and resources provided by this activity and through his position as a Genoese officer, he was able to offer decisive military help to Murād II. In return for this aid, the sultan issued concessions in favour not only of Adorno himself but also of Genoa.[13] Thus, in his double capacity as businessman and official representative of the Genoese republic, Adorno wielded substantial power in the relations between his homeland and the Ottomans. It is little wonder then that in 1424 the *Officium Provisionis Romanie* chose Giacomo (fl. fifteenth century), Giovanni's brother, as ambassador to Murād II.[14] The envoy was ordered to urge the sultan to reconcile with Byzantium.[15] The Ottomans, Giacomo was to say, would greatly benefit from peace, especially with regard to countering Venetian ambitions in the Levant. Instead, if seriously threatened by the sultan, *basileos* John VIII (r. 1425–1448) might decide to hand Constantinople over to Venice, as he had done one year before with Thessaloniki.[16]

[12] Enrico Basso, "Genovesi e Turchi nell'Egeo medievale: Murād II e la Societas Folie Nove", *Quaderni medievali* 36 (1993): 31–52, pp. 45–7; Svetlana V. Bliznjuk, "Genovesi a Costantinopoli ed Adrianopoli alla metà del XV secolo in base a documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 90 (1997): 13–23, p. 17; Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 10–11.

[13] The latter included the permission given in 1423 by Murād for the reconstruction of Simisso (Aminso, Samsun). See: Basso, "Genovesi e Turchi", 36; Bombaci and Shaw, *L'impero*, 315–16; Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 81, 83–5; *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie (Genova, 1424–1428)*, ed. Laura Balletto (Genova: Brigati, 2000), p. 60, doc. no. 46.

[14] Basso, "Genovesi e Turchi", 45. The *Officium Provisionis Romanie* was the office that supervised the administration of Genoese colonies in former Byzantine territories between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

[15] Following Murād's accession to the throne, the Byzantines had supported his uncle Mūṣṭafā in his struggle to replace his nephew. Once he had defeated his adversary, Murād turned against the latter's allies and laid siege to Constantinople (1422). See Bombaci and Shaw, *L'impero*, 314–17.

[16] "Volumus namque quod […] cautis et prudentibus modis tentetis illum persuadere atque inducere ad pacem dandam imperatori Romeorum, commemorando ei, ut bene prudenter sciveritis, quod hec pax et concordium statui suo multum utilitatis et securitatis potest adducere; et, per contrarium, guerra imperatoris posset faciliter illi generare maximum discrimen et scandalum, presertim hoc tempore quo Veneti potentem classem instaurant et imperator est apud Venecias. Qui, si videret suarum rerum desperationem, faciliter, ut sepe faciunt desperantes, posset de urbe Constantinopolis disponere sicut pridie de Tessalonica fecit […]" (*Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, 180–1, doc. no. 159). In its turn, Venice kept an eye on Genoese manoeuvres and was well aware that the rival republic had put some ships at the sultan's

Giovanni Adorno's case was not an isolated one. Other fellow citizens of his were also well acquainted with the Ottoman court. Major fifteenth-century Genoese traders, such as Percivalle Pallavicino,[17] Jacopo and Giovanni Andrea da Promontorio[18] and Francesco Draperio,[19] enjoyed close contacts with both Murād II and his successor Meḥmed II. Due to their influential position, Pallavicino, the Promontorio brothers and Draperio became key figures for those who wanted to meet the Ottoman leaders and their viziers. Indeed, these merchants could assist diplomats in accomplishing their missions or simply help travellers gain access to the sultan's presence.

In 1427, Percivalle Pallavicino was requested by the Duke of Milan Filippo Maria Visconti (d. 1447) to cooperate with the latter's ambassador to Murād II, Benedetto Folchi da Forlì (fl. fifteenth century). Visconti's aim was to persuade the sultan to come to terms with Sigismund of Hungary (r. 1387–1437) and to join forces with him against Venice. It was hoped that the plan would then eventually divert Venetian forces from Italian soil, where the republic and Visconti himself were at war. In the accomplishment of this strategy the duke could count on the fact that in 1421 he had annexed Genoa to his lordship, and the colonial network established by the republic in the Levant would therefore lie at his disposal. Besides, acting to the detriment of Venice would also bring advantages to the Genoese themselves, whose main rivals in Levantine markets were precisely the Venetians.[20]

(*footnote continued*)
disposal (*Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*, ed. Freddy Thiriet [Documents et recherches sur l'économie des pays byzantins, islamiques et slaves et leurs relations commerciales au moyen-âge, I, II and IV] volumes I–III [Paris: Mouton, 1958–1961], II: 225, doc. no. 1979). See also Belgrano, "Prima serie", 186–7, doc. no. 58.

[17]Franz Babinger, "Relazioni visconteo-sforzesche con la Corte Ottomana durante il sec. XV", in *Atti del Convegno di studi su la Lombardia e l'Oriente (Milano, 11–15 giugno 1962)*(Milano: Istituto lombardo - Accademia di scienze e lettere, 1963), pp. 8–30, esp. 13, 18. In Doukas' narrative (*Historia Byzantina*, p. 194), Pallavicino is implicitly introduced as a sort of successor of Giovanni Adorno in his dealings with the Ottomans.

[18]Franz Babinger, "Die Aufzeichnungen des Genuesen Jacopo da Promontorio: De Campis über den Osmanenstaat um 1475", *Sitzungsberichte Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 8 (1956): 29–95; Agostino Pertusi, "Le epistole storiche di Lauro Quirini sulla caduta di Costantinopoli e la potenza dei Turchi", in *Lauro Quirini Umanista*, ed. Vittore Branca (Firenze: Olshki, 1977): pp. 163–259; Agostino Pertusi, "Le notizie sulla organizzazione amministrativa e militare dei Turchi nello 'Strategicon adversum Turcos' di Lampo Birago (c. 1453–1455)", in *Studi sul Medioevo cristiano offerti a Raffaello Morghen*, volumes I–II [Studi Storici, volumes LXXXIII–XCII] (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1974), II: pp. 669–700; Agostino Pertusi, "I primi studi in Occidente sull'origine e la potenza dei Turchi", *Studi veneziani* 12 (1970), pp. 478–80; Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs*, 106, 109 n. 1.

[19]Franz Babinger, "Lorenzo de' Medici e la corte ottomana", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 121 (1963): 305–61, esp. p. 307; Laura Balletto, "Francesco Draperio", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, volumes I–LXXV (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1960–2010), XLI: 681–4; Basso, "Genovesi e Turchi"; Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, 322–8; Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 90–1; Jacques Heers, *Gênes au XV^e siècle: Civilisation méditerranéenne, grand capitalisme, et capitalisme populaire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), pp. 273, 285.

[20] This was one of the earliest examples of a strategy that was to be repeatedly adopted by the Italian states during the ninth/fifteenth century: the instrumental use of the Ottoman threat – be it real or not – for the purpose of influencing the political balance in the peninsula. See for example: Babinger, *Lorenzo de' Medici*; *idem*, "Maometto II, il Conquistatore, e l'Italia", *Rivista Storica Italiana* 63 (1951): 469–505; *idem*, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit: Weltenstürmer einer Zeitenwende* (München: F. Bruckmann, 1953), pp. 540–1; *idem*, *Relazioni visconteo-sforzesche*, 17–18; *idem*, "Sechs unbekannte Aragonische Sendschreiben im Grossherrlichen Seraj zu Stambul", in *Studi in onore di Riccardo Filangieri*, volumes

That was not the only Milanese delegation to visit the Ottoman court during these years: one had been sent there in 1426, while Benedetto Folchi himself would undertake the same itinerary in 1429 and in 1433, always with the purpose of damaging Venetian interests by negotiating a settlement between Murād II and Sigismund. Only on the second occasion, however, did he succeed in his task.[21] His last mission was witnessed by the Burgundian traveller Bertrandon de la Brocquière (d. 1459), who toured the eastern Mediterranean between 1432 and 1433.[22] What matters here is that he met Folchi in the Genoese colony of Pera: this detail clearly suggests that Visconti's envoy relied once again on Genoese backup – supplied by merchants in particular – in order to achieve his goal.[23] On the other hand, during his voyage, de la Brocquière was able repeatedly to observe a special link between Genoa and the Ottomans. When returning from the Holy Land, for example, it was through the mediation of Genoese tradesmen that he was granted an Ottoman safe-conduct to cross the Bosphorus and reach Constantinople.[24] He then disembarked in Pera, where he noticed an anxious deference towards the sultan. In fact, in this period the

(*footnote continued*)
I-II (Napoli: L'arte Tipografica, 1958–1959), II: 107–28; Alessio Bombaci, "Venezia e l'impresa turca di Otranto", *Rivista Storica Italiana* 66 (1954): 159–203; Sydney N. Fisher, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey 1481–1512* [Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, volume XXX] (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,1948); Luigi Fumi, "Il disinteresse di Francesco I Sforza alla crociata di Callisto III contro i turchi", *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 39 (1912): 101–13; *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane coll'Oriente cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno 1531*, ed. Giuseppe Müller (Firenze: Cellini, 1879), pp. 181–2, doc. no. 131; Gian Giacomo Musso and Maria Silvia Jacopino, *Navigazione e commercio genovese con il Levante nei documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova (secc. XIV–XV)* [Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, LXXXIV] (Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1975); Sandra Origone, "Genova e i Genovesi tra la fine di Bisanzio e i Turchi", in *idem*, *Gli Italiani e Bisanzio: Saggi per una storia delle relazioni fra Oriente e Occidente nel basso Medioevo* (Genova: Effeemme, 1988), pp. 389–402; Ernesto Pontieri, *Per la storia del regno di Ferrante I d'Aragona re di Napoli* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1969), pp. 248–50. As for Visconti's authority over Genoa, it would come to an end in 1435.

[21] *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivi milanesi*, ed. Luigi Osio, volumes I–II (Milano: G. Bernardoni di Giovanni, 1869), II: 405–8, docs no. 174–6.

[22] He had been sent on his voyage secretly by his patron, Duke Philip III of Burgundy. See *Le Voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière, premier écuyer tranchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne*, ed. Charles Schefer (Paris: Leroux, 1892). See also Jörg Wettlaufer and Jacques Paviot, "Französische Reiseberichte", in *Europäische Reiseberichte des späten Mittelalters. Eine analytische Bibliographie*, ed. Werner Paravicini, volumes I-III (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994–2001), II: 82–90; Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs*, 106–7.

[23] *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 141–2: "Je trouvay en ceste dicte ville de Pere ung ambaxadeur que le duc de Milan envoioit devers le Grant Turc et l'appelloit on Messire Benedic de Fourlino, lequel pour l'onneur de Monseigneur me fist bonne recueillote et l'envoioit ledit duc de Milan pour trouver ung appaisernent entre l'empereur Sigemond et son royaulme de Honguerie et entre le Grant Turc pour ce que, celluy temps, ledit duc de Milan se aidoit de l'Empereur encontre les Venissiens". While explaining his task to Bertrandon, Folchi claimed that his talks with Murād II in 1429 ultimately paved the way for the fall of Venetian Thessaloniki to the Ottomans the following year: "Et me dist ledit Messire Benedic qu'il avait este cause de faire perdre Salonique aux Venissiens pour leur faire dommage et la faire gaignier au Turc" (*ibid*., 142). Folchi's assertions, boastful as they may sound, can be justified by the fact that his mediation persuaded Murād II and Sigismund of Hungary to sign a truce, which certainly allowed the sultan to focus on his long-coveted project to conquer Thessaloniki: Babinger, *Relazioni visconteo-sforzesche*, 19; Giacinto Romano, "Filippo Maria Visconti e i Turchi", *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 17 (1890): 585–618, p. 606.

[24] *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 135, 137. See also Heers, *Gênes*, 271.

prosperity of the Perotes depended heavily on their commercial relations with the Ottoman city of Bursa.[25]

De la Brocquière's remarks seem to be confirmed by the Iberian traveller Pero Tafur (d. c. 1484), whose journey in the Levant took place a few years after Bertrandon's, in 1437–1438. While in Constantinople, he met Constantine Palaeologos (d. 1453), who would subsequently become the last Byzantine emperor (r. 1449–1453) and was then serving as regent for his brother John VIII (r. 1425–1448).[26] Tafur expressed to Constantine his wish to go to the Ottoman capital, which was at that time the Thracian city of Adrianople, and see the sultan in person. Palaeologos recommended then that he should be accompanied by some Genoese merchants. In the end, Pero was assisted by two brothers in particular, one of whom was extremely familiar with Murād II. No explicit identification is given, but they might have been the aforementioned Jacopo and Giovanni Andrea da Promontorio. In any case these traders had some ease in frequenting both the Byzantine and the Ottoman court, possibly also because they could keep both parties abreast of each other's plans.[27]

Francesco Draperio also interceded with the Ottoman sultans on behalf of travellers and ambassadors. In 1444 and in 1446, the well-known humanist Cyriacus of Ancona (d. c. 1452) was able to meet Murād II thanks to Draperio's mediation.[28] In 1449, the doge of Genoa asked for Draperio's intervention in the purchase of wood in Ottoman dominions.[29] Again, in 1454 Genoa sent envoys to Meḥmed II and recommended them to seek aid from the Genoese of Pera, and in particular from Draperio himself. Significantly enough, however, they were not to reveal the details of their mission to their interlocutors, and they should "listen more than speak".[30] From such advice one may infer that Genoa

[25] *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 141: "Et [Pere] est une ville bien marchande et ont grant hantise avec les Turcs, lesquelz ont en ladite ville une telle franchise comme il me fu dist que se ung Crestien esclave se eschappoit desdis Turcs et s'en venist là à refuge et lesdis Turcs l'envoient requerir, il fauldroit que ilz leur rendissent". See also Heers, *Gênes*, 271, 273.

[26] Pero Tafur, "Andanças e viajes", ed. Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego and Joaquín Rubio Tovar, *Viajes medievales*, volumes I–II (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2005–2006), II: 211–380. See also Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs*, 108–9. At that time, the *basileos* was in Italy, where he was attending the Council of Ferrara-Florence in hope that he would obtain military support from Latin powers.

[27] "Buelto a Constantinopla, pedí por merced al díspota Dragas, que estava en lugar del emperador, que me encaminase para ir a Andrinópla, una cibdad la mayor que ay en toda la Grecia, afueras de Constantinópoli, donde el Turco teníe su hueste. E el señor mandó luego por unos ginoveses que allí estavan faziendo su mercaduría e mandoles que me encaminasen en manera que yo podiese ir al Turco e ver su persona e estado e bolver sin peligro. E fallose que era venido allí un hermano de un mercader de los que allí estavan, que era ombre muy acepto al señor e teníe gran crédito de él, e dixo que, por le servir, él me levaría e mostraría todo e me traería" (Tafur, "Andanças", 298). See also Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs*, 109 n. 1.

[28] Franz Babinger, "Cyriac of Ancona and Some of His Friends", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25 (1962): 321–3; *idem*, "Maometto il Conquistatore e gli umanisti d'Italia", in *Venezia e l'Oriente fra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. Agostino Pertusi (Firenze: Sansoni, 1966), pp. 433–49, esp. 442, 448; *idem*, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 28–9, 45–6; Julian Raby, "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 242–6; Roberto Weiss, "Ciriaco d'Ancona in Oriente", in *Venezia e l'Oriente*, 323–37; Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs*, 104–6.

[29] Heers, *Gênes*, 279.

[30] "Cum ex Pera perveneritis ad eam urbem in qua Rex ipse fuerit, utile putamus ut Ianuenses qui ibi fuerint ad vos vocetis, presertim si tunc erit spectatus Franciscus de Draperiis qui maximam solet habere cognitionem rerum curialium, eisque vel omnibus vel paucis qui prudentiores videantur exponatis non quidem omnes commissiones vobis datas, nam id esset levitatis et imprudentie, sed superficialiter et

could hardly keep watch on the actions of its own citizens and that the republic did not completely trust them. On the contrary, it seems that it feared that they had gone too far in their association with the Ottomans, to the point that they might be suspected of double-dealing. To be sure, at times Pera had shown excessive autonomy in its relations with the sultans. For instance, in 1424 the colony had been reprimanded by the *Officium Provisionis Romanie* for allowing the discussion of a measure that the Genoese government deemed utterly inappropriate: the citizens of Pera, "either out of a wicked intention or lacking knowledge of facts", were planning to ask Murad II for 300 *hyperpera* to be employed for the construction of a tower, which would bear the Ottoman emblem as a visible sign of gratitude towards the sultan.[31] As for Draperio, the doubts insinuated by Genoa as to his trustworthiness proved only too justified. In 1455, he asked for the help of Meḥmed II in order to claim a sum of money he had lent to the Mahona of Chios, the company that ruled the Aegean island within the Genoese colonial system. Thus, Meḥmed had a pretext to attack Chios, but failed to take it. Then Draperio and the sultan struck a bargain: the former was relieved of a debt he owed Meḥmed in return for rights over the debt that the Mahona of Chios owed to Draperio himself. Once they had come to this arrangement, the sultan immediately doubled the amount that the Mahona should pay. After these events, no further reference to Draperio is made in extant sources, while Chios eventually paid 30,000 ducats to the sultan and temporarily averted the Ottoman threat.[32]

The traders cited above represent but the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, as reported by Bertrandon de la Brocquière, in the first half of the fifteenth century the two main cities of the Ottoman Empire were thronged with merchants of various origins. Genoese and Venetians of course, but also Catalans, Florentines, Anconitans and Ragusans all frequented or resided in Adrianople and in the former Ottoman capital, Bursa, in Bithynia, and while there they undoubtedly competed for the sultan's favour.[33] Still, it appears reasonable to assume that the prominence given to the Genoese by the sources mirrors to a certain extent the actual situation – one in which they were dominant within the commercial network developed in the orbit of the Ottoman court. If so, an explanation for their privileged status might be found in their specific area of business. Giovanni Adorno, Percivalle Pallavicino and Francesco Draperio were all actively involved in mining and trading in alum, a material that was especially critical to Mediterranean trade. It is hardly

(*footnote continued*)
brevissime causas legationis vestre, multa audiendo et pauciora referendo, et ab eis consilium petatis quibus verbis quibus titulis quibus nominibus dignitatum uti vos deceat": Belgrano, "Prima serie", 263, doc. no. 154. See also Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 128–9.

[31] "Nos absque cordis amaritudine ac gravi mentis turbatione nuper audivimus nonnullos, vel in pessimum finem tendentes vel rerum penitus ignaros, hoc persuasisse opera dedita, ut videlicet dominus Morath bey, Teucrorum princeps, donata prius tracta lapidum et calcis, tricentia etiam perpera donet comunitati Peyre, ex quibus iuxta pondus et comerihium Peyre turris fabricetur fortis et alta, hac etiam adiecta lege, quod sit in voluntate comunitatis Peyre super ipsa turri pingi facere ipsius principis Teucrorum insignia. Horum siquidem temeritas et imprudentia nos non mediocrem irritavit ad iram": *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, 31–2, doc. no. 25. See also Belgrano, "Prima serie", 187–8, doc. no. 59.

[32] Philip P. Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island, 1346–1566*, volumes I–III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I: 208–9; Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer*, 137–9; Doukas, *Historia Byzantina*, 322–8. On the Mahona of Chios, see Balard, *La Romanie*, I–II.

[33] *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 167, 171.

surprising, then, that they could have close contact with the sultans.[34] On the other hand, the Genoese had long experience of exploiting Anatolian alum and negotiating settlements with the political entities under whose rule the alum deposits lay: in the spring of 653/1255, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck (fl. thirteenth century) visited Iconium, the Saljūq capital, and met two merchants, the Genoese Nicola di San Siro (fl. thirteenth century) and the Venetian Bonifacio del Molino (fl. thirteenth century), who led together a company that had been granted the exclusive right to export alum from Saljūq dominions. Like his fellow citizens almost two centuries later at the Ottoman court, the Genoese merchant made use of his influential position in order to secure the sultan's benevolence towards the traveller.[35] Similar situations took place in Mamlūk Egypt: the slave trade was essential to the Cairene rulers and some citizens of Genoa who controlled that branch of commerce were able to establish solid connections with the Mamlūks. Thus, between 703/1303–1304 and the year of his death, the Genoese Segurano Salvaygo (d. 722–723/1322–1323) and his associates interceded in favour of Christian pilgrims and prisoners and even intervened in diplomatic relations between Mamlūk Egypt and other powers. Salvaygo too was criticised by his Christian contemporaries for his acquaintance with Muslim leaders.[36] A century later the citizens of Genoa who lived in the Egyptian entrepôt of Alexandria had to cope with Venetian primacy. In this unfavourable context, it is noteworthy that some individuals from the Genoese community were still able to acquire influential positions at the Mamlūk court. Again, that happened precisely thanks to their involvement in the slave trade.[37] In other words, their dominance in trade of goods that were in high demand – such as alum and slaves – gave some Genoese a privileged status from which they were able to profit in their dealings with the Mamlūks and the Ottomans, and to do so quite independently of Genoa itself.

Adorno, Pallavicino and Draperio were dominant figures in the alum trade during the first half of the fifteenth century, and in 1449 Draperio, in particular, was able to gather under his direction all the existing Genoese alum companies. These businessmen could take advantage of their position not only to their own benefit but also in order to facilitate diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the Christian powers. Their own homeland was able to profit from their mediating role, which almost certainly gave rise among contemporaries to the abused idea of a secret alliance between Genoa and the Ottomans. However, one should notice that collision between the republic and its citizens overseas was not uncommon: indeed, the latter acted quite freely and a number of reasons may contribute

[34] On Draperio's agreements with the Turks concerning the alum trade, see Argenti, *Occupation of Chios*, III: 658–9, doc. no. 222.

[35] Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 81.

[36] Benjamin Z. Kedar, "Segurano-Sakrān Salvaygo: un mercante genovese al servizio dei sultani mamalucchi, c. 1303–1322", in *Fatti e idee di storia economica nei secoli XII-XX. Studi dedicati a Franco Borlandi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1977), pp. 75–91, esp. 79–86.

[37] Gentile Imperiale's activity, for example, carried notable weight with Sultan Barsbāy (r. 825–841/1422–1438): Giovanna Petti Balbi, *Negoziare fuori patria: Nazioni e genovesi in età medievale* [Itinerari Medievali, volume X] (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005), p. 213. In addition, in the aftermath of the attack launched by the Mamlūks on Cyprus in 1426, four Genoese merchants who were then in Rhodes were requested by the *Officium Provisionis Romanie* to investigate "cum potestate plenissima" the future plans of Barsbāy. Given the task with which they were entrusted, it is safe to assume that these tradesmen were well acquainted with the sultan. See *Liber Officii Provisionis Romanie*, 236–8, docs. no. 210–11.

to explaining this attitude. First of all, from the early decades of the fourteenth century Genoa was continuously troubled by internecine struggles, which also jeopardised the metropolis's control of its colonies. Thus the Genoese republic was prevented from keeping a firm hold on its Mediterranean outposts by to its long-term internal difficulties. In addition, disagreements – such as those mentioned above between Genoa and Pera – and even more serious incidents are recorded.[38] Furthermore, as a solution to social unrest the Genoese government on various occasions accepted foreign domination, which, however, also meant submission to foreign interests. As one might expect, this was sometimes experienced by colonies as an unwelcome imposition, and endangered their bond with the distant metropolis.

To put it in comparative terms, while in general the Venetian ruling elite was able to stand firm against any sign of public disorder, the Genoese elite, divided as it was, became itself the primary cause of social trouble. This distinction was mirrored in contemporary chronicles and literary writings: Venetian and pro-Venetian authors praised the wise government of the Republic of St Mark and contributed to its self-representation by emphasising Venetian devotion to such principles as unity, scorn of any political intrusion by foreign powers, and loyalty to the mother country; in comparison to this perspective, partial though it may be, it is significant that Genoa was criticised for the lack of these same values, even by some of its citizens. The two republics were further distinguished by their highly dissimilar policies concerning citizenship. In this respect Venice was more rigorous than Genoa and so it would have been logical that the great effort one had to make in order to be granted full Venetian citizenship would create in the individual citizen a deep sense of identification with the republic. In contrast, Genoa was more generous, so to speak, in accepting foreigners as full citizens in order to attract their capital. However, as Genoese citizenship was so relatively easy to obtain, it may not have had such strong implications for the personal self-perception and conduct of individual citizens as was the case in Venice. Again, when it came to trading practice, Venetian rules were tighter than Genoa's: it is worth remembering here that the role played in Venice by the communal construction and use of merchant galleys increased between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries; in contrast, in Genoa privately-owned ships prevailed and they could be used for a variety of purposes that did not necessarily depend on the orders of the mother country. In short, Genoese society was far less cohesive than Venetian. In Genoa, it was individualism that predominated, in the commercial as well as in the political sphere.[39] Some Genoese, such as Francesco Draperio, pushed themselves so far in their cooperation with the Ottomans that the republic itself no

[38] An episode worth mentioning occurred at the beginning of the fourteenth century: between 1318 and 1331 Genoa was torn apart by hostility between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines; while the former gained the upper hand in the city itself, the latter could rely on Pera for support, which seriously affected Genoese commerce. This example, though not directly connected to the specific topic of this article and occurring before the rise of the Ottomans, shows how badly internal instability could impact on relations between Genoa and the Genoese overseas: Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis*, 6–7. See also: Balard, *La Romanie*, II: 779; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 194–202, 325–7 (for a list of the rebellions and the subsequent changes in government which occurred in Genoa from 1257 to 1528); Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 9; Heers, *Gênes*, 162, 259, 264–5, 280; Petti Balbi, *Negoziare*, 218.

[39] On the other hand this also prompted the emergence of outstanding figures: Kedar, "Segurano-Sakrān", 75. See also Heers, *Gênes*, 158, 164–5, 216; Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis*, 7–10.

longer trusted their reliability. The fact that these merchants sometimes held posts in the Genoese colonial administration did not restrict their activities. Rather, such posts were an additional asset to them in the pursuit of personal profit. They did not strictly abide by homeland directives and their schemes were sometimes contradictory to them.