

Air of Freedom: the Discreet Morisco Presence in Venetian Lands

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The Republic of Venice, like other sovereign Italian states, was assailed by the wave of Morisco exiles who left the Iberian Peninsula after the expulsion decrees issued by King Philip III.¹ In the Venetian case historiography has emphasized that there was less a stable Morisco presence than a temporary passage, which had begun even before the formal exile.² Perhaps for that reason the matter has not been studied in great depth, through only brief references by Spanish ambassadors in Venice or Venetian *baili* in Istanbul. There is no doubt, however, that observing Ottoman political authorities' interest in protecting the Morisco diaspora is crucial to understand the Venetians' care and concern for these refugees.

In recent years the fortunes of the Moriscos in Venice have been placed in a more detailed context.³ In this chapter, drawing on a wider range of sources (diplomatic, chancery, administrative, epistolary, investigative, criminal), as well as on other observers and fresh points of view, I shall attempt to flesh out the overall picture of this fairly obscure period in the exile of that crypto-Muslim minority. I shall follow the trails that wind through the urban space itself and Venetian possessions on the Dalmatian and Greek coasts, and as far as Istanbul—a capital sought for its reputation for religious tolerance, and for having granted privileges to the expelled Sephardim, welcomed Protestant and Armenian merchants, allowed spaces and freedoms to Orthodox Greeks, and, in particular, offered support and shelter to Moriscos.

1 Bruno Pomara, *Refugiados. Los moriscos e Italia* (Granada: Comares, 2022 [1st ed. 2017]).

2 Abdeljelil Temimi, "La politique ottomane face à l'expulsion des Morisques et leur passage en France et à Venise 1609–1610," *Revue d'Histoire Maghrébine* 79–80 (1995), 397–420; Mikel de Epalza, *Los moriscos antes y después de la expulsión* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992): 291–92.

3 Andrea Pelizza, "Quei mori di Granata, che capitano nel nostro dominio ...: Venezia e il passaggio dei moriscos," *Quaderni Storici* 48, no. 3 (2013): 779–812.

1 Venice, a Mediterranean Crossroads between East and West

The Moriscos' passage through Venice and its dominions is attested by "guide-books" *avant la lettre* that were already circulating in the first half of the sixteenth century: they described the secret routes the Moriscos should follow in order to reach the former Constantinople.⁴ Moriscos, though they were baptized Christians, were forbidden to leave the Iberian Peninsula without written permission; that was how the Spanish authorities sought to avoid the implicit danger of apostasy and political treachery. Sailing from Iberian ports was doubly risky because the authorities would assume that a Morisco was escaping to North Africa so as to return to Islam; still, some Moriscos did leave by sea, since the whole coastline could not be guarded all the time. But leaving through a Catholic country like France, though technically not allowed, was a way of avoiding a possible accusation of apostasy by the Inquisition. Therefore, the anonymous authors of the travel guides recommended following, as discreetly as possible, longer and less direct itineraries by land, usually across southern France and the northern Italian states, before reaching the hub that was Venice.

Two main routes are known. The first crossed the south of France and northern Italy; then, as the traveler approached Milan, he was advised to leave it to his right and take the long way around the mountain to avoid "the lands of the [Habsburg] emperor."⁵ From there he should ask the locals for the best way to Brescia, the first city on the route that was ruled by the Venetian Republic. There is specific advice for a smoother journey: avoid Verona, because they charge a highway tax there; head for Padua to embark on its river (the Brenta) for the price of half a *real* per person; sail around Venice so as to enter through the Grand Canal and land at St. Mark's Square. Once in the capital of the Most Serene Republic the Moriscos should find an inn, negotiating the price in advance; they should buy their food from itinerant sellers in the market, because vendors on the square charged outsiders three times what natives had to pay. To continue to Istanbul, Morisco travelers had to seek out Jews, whom they would recognize by their yellow turbans. It was they who traded with the Turks and could convey them to other Venetian possessions along the coasts

4 Joseph Lincoln, "An Itinerary for Morisco Refugees from Sixteenth Century Spain," *Geographical Review* 29, no. 3 (1939): 483–87; Luce López-Baralt and Awilda Irizarry, "Dos itinerarios secretos de los moriscos del siglo XVI (Los manuscritos aljamiados 774 de la Biblioteca Nacional de París y T-16 de la Real Academia de la Historia)," in *Homenaje a Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes* (Oviedo, Madrid: Universidad de Oviedo, Gredos, 1985), 2: 547–82.

5 This detail allows us to date the itinerary between the annexation of the Duchy of Milan by the Habsburgs (1535) and the abdication of Emperor Charles V (1556).

of Dalmatia and Albania, stopping at the ports of Durrës, Vlorë, Lezhë, and Herceg Novi.

The second route, which may go back to the late sixteenth century, goes in the opposite direction from East to West. This shows how important it was for some Moriscos to return to Spain, whether temporarily, permanently, or with the aim of maintaining secret family, commercial, or political ties with their homeland. This route had more intermediate stops but no practical suggestions. Once again, the portal to the Christian world was Venice, and it called for crossing the north of Italy before traversing the south of France.⁶

Spanish authorities were aware of these continuous streams of clandestine migrants. Iberian ambassadors kept their monarch informed about their movements from Venice: they decried the frequent contacts between Moriscos and Turks, which complacent Venetian ministers chose to ignore. In late 1560 the diplomatic Íñigo de Espinosa wrote to Gonzalo Fernández, Duke of Sessa and governor of Milan, to report on “the Moriscos who have fled from Spain (of whom there are a great number in Constantinople) ..., who have passed through Venice recently and are there in order to cross to the Levant, many of them recently arrived from Spain, mostly from Aragon.”⁷ The Spanish agent noted that he had tried to discover their plans, placing among them two “men of their own kind” as spies.⁸ It is clear that the Moriscos’ flight was motivated by the persecution they suffered in Spain; Espinosa believes that as a result, “not a man of them will fail to end up as a vassal to the Turk.” His letter recommends cutting off their emigration, because as vassals of the Sublime Porte the Moriscos could take up arms against Spain for the sake of “their religion.” It would be wise to guard the frontier towns of Salses and Canfranc in the Pyrenees, through which Moriscos often crossed into France; if they were caught there all their money should be seized and they should be sent directly to the galleys.

6 The stops in Italy were: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Peschiera del Garda, Verona, Brescia, Bergamo, Osio, Canonica d’Adda, Milan, Boffalora del Ticino, Novara, Casal Monferrato, Vercelli, Salasco, Livorno Ferraris, Torrassa, Chivasso, Brandizzo, Settimo Torino, Abbadia di Stura, Turin, Rivoli, Avigliana, Sant’ Ambrogio, San Giorgio di Susa, Bussoleno. I have been unable to identify the towns called Fukay, Carbonel, Sodara, Sakonera, and Chalas.

7 “Los moriscos huidos de España (de los cuales en Constantinopoli hay un gran número) ... que han pasado estos días por Venetia y están en ella para pasar en Levante muchos dellos venidos nuevamente de España, la mayor parte de Aragón.” Letter from Íñigo de Espinosa to Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba. Venice, 26 December 1560. The letter specifies that the Moriscos were from Pedrola, a village near Zaragoza, and that their guide was named Gonzalo Barragán: Archivo General de Simancas [AGS], *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1324, exp. 49.

8 “Yo les he puesto dos espías tan suficientes que teniéndoles por hombres de su jaez se han fiado dellos y descubierto libremente su intención”; AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1324, exp. 49.

In 1559 the secretary García Hernández, who was the acting Spanish ambassador, told Philip II what he had heard from an informant in Venice. "After [becoming] Christians," that is, after the forced baptisms, many Moriscos from Granada "have gone there [to Istanbul] in flight from the Inquisition."⁹ There they joined the Ottoman militias, and had "a reputation as good soldiers." Five years earlier some of them had appeared before the Grand Vizier, Rustam Pasha, to request a shipment of arms to Granada: "they offered to inflict great harm on that kingdom and other parts of Spain."¹⁰ These details were of special concern to the Catholic Monarchy, which kept a close watch on events and conflicts in the Ottoman Empire; Sultan Suleiman was ill at the time, and there was uncertainty about his successor Selim. About one year later, the same secretary reported that a large number of Morisco families from Aragon and Valencia passed through Venice every day; even as he wrote there were more than thirty individuals around the lagoon, "some with wives and children, waiting for passage."¹¹ He warned that "more will come every day," and that "others from Granada are expected"; that meant that the Moriscos with "the worst reputation," those most persecuted by the Inquisition, would be leaving the Iberian Peninsula in the coming years. Their passage to Turkey was organized by a Venetian merchant hired by Hernando Talavera, alias Abrayn, a Granadan resident in Istanbul. Talavera managed the whole business through bills of exchange that the Spanish diplomat claimed to have seen with his own eyes.

2 Inconvenient and Troublesome Characters

Although it was mostly Morisco families that emigrated, rather than individuals, Spanish diplomats in Venice reduced them all to the stereotype of future soldiers, spies, and interpreters in the service of the Ottoman Empire:

Every day, many Moriscos from Aragon and Valencia have passed and continue to pass through here on their way to the Levant, in order to become Muslims; and people who have come from there say that they are well treated by the Turk's ministers, because they use them as soldiers,

9 Letter from the secretary and acting ambassador García Hernández to Philip II. Venice, 21 December 1559. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1323, exp. 246.

10 AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1323, exp. 246. This argument would be repeated: see, e.g., note 11.

11 Letter from secretary and acting ambassador García Hernández to Philip II. Venice, 14 April 1561. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1324, exp. 38, f. 69r-v.

spies, and [for the] language. About a year and a half ago, a secretary of Mos de la Vigna told me that they have the same dealings with those who have fled the kingdom of Granada, and that in his hearing some of them had told Rustam Pasha that if the Turk sent his armada to the coast of that kingdom, well-armed, he would find men and equipment who could do great damage there, about which I warned Your Majesty.¹²

On some occasions during the massive expulsions from Spain (1609–14), *çavuş* of Morisco origin—diplomatic envoys from the sultan before the Venetian Senate—appeared in the city of St. Mark. They regularly declined the services of the dragoman, the Venetian government's official translator from Turkish to Italian, since they were able to make themselves understood in Spanish.¹³ Such men aroused distrust in the Spanish authorities.

In 1593 the Spanish ambassador to Venice, Francisco de Vera, learned of two Moriscos who were about to embark in a hired ship, first to Split and then to Istanbul;¹⁴ he asked the *capi* of the Council of Ten to arrest them.¹⁵ These were the years in which all Moriscos were ordered disarmed, and the Aragonese were still seen as potential fifth columnists and saboteurs. The actual reason for their embarkation was unclear to both the ambassador and the Venetian authorities, but the latter immediately complied with the Spanish request. It was soon, however, extended to a demand for their extradition to Spain so that

12 "Por aquí han pasado y pasan cada día en Levante muchos moriscos de Aragón y de Valencia a tornarse moros y dize personas que han venido de allá que son bien tratados de los ministros del Turco porque se sirven dellos de soldados, espías y lengua. Un secretario de Mos de la Vigna me dixo haurá año y medio que la misma quenta tenían con los que se han huydo del reino de Granada y que en su presencia había dicho algunos dellos a Rusten Baxa que si el turco embiase su armada a aquel reyno y costa, bien proveyda de armas, hallaría gente y aparejo para hazer gran daño en él, de que di aviso a Vuestra Magestad." Letter from secretary and acting ambassador García Hernández to Philip II. Venice, 2 February 1561 (received 25 March). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1324, exp. 85.

13 Pelizza, "Quei mori," 791–95, 797–803; Maria Pia Pedani and Alessio Bombaci (eds.), *I "documenti turchi" dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia, parte prima* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994), 176–78.

14 Letter in cipher from Francisco de Vera, ambassador in Venice, to Philip II. Venice, 29 May 1593. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1345, exp. 32, f. 79v.

15 A year earlier, on 28 September 1592, three other Aragonese travelers who were about to sail for Dalmatia had met the same fate. Their compatriots in Istanbul defended them before the *bailo* there and called for their release, asserting that they had not conspired against the Republic in any way. Archivio di Stato di Venezia [ASVe], *Senato, Dispacchi, Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, D4, c. 220r.

they might be tried by the Inquisition.¹⁶ The ambassador insisted that if they had only wanted to live as Muslims, they would have gone to nearby North Africa.¹⁷ It was not only a matter of principle for him; earlier he had known of *Marranos* who were passing through Venice, but had made no complaint about them.¹⁸ He assumed that many other Moriscos, about whom he was not concerned, would come; these two, however, were assumed to be “rebels against the king,”¹⁹ leaders, and dangerous spies.²⁰ “Great ... might have been the harm that could arise from the work of these two men.”²¹ De Vera asserted that the two had assumed false identities (one claiming to be from Cuenca, the other a Catalan), but he doubted them because “in their dress and many other things they seem to be from the kingdom of Aragon.”²² They were carrying only a few Castilian *reales* but did not appear to be of humble origin, and De Vera was not convinced by their statement about their native regions or their accounts of several journeys to Naples and Zara. “A thousand nonsensical statements” came from their mouths, and all of it aroused suspicion. The Ten wondered

16 Report by the ambassador's secretary before the *Collegio* and the Doge, Leonardo Donà. Venice, 21 May 1593. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, c. 81v.

17 “Questi huomini sono di quei moreschi che christiani antichi et volontari, perché del 1492 furono battegiati tutti, lasciando andar via quelli che non volessero restar. Vivono nondimeno nella Spagna secretamente et nelle lor case private alla mahometana, essendo così per il più, né è credibile perciò che questi volessero andar de qui in Constantinopoli con fine di viver liberamente, perché se a tal effetto si fossero partiti di casa, potevano passar in una notte in Barbaria dove sarebbero vivuti sicuri a modo loro, con che venivano a fuggir sì longo viaggio et la tirannide del Turco in Constantinopoli. Andavano dunque in Levante per altra causa, et è, come mi è stato prima che hora et già circa dui anni da Sua Maestà significato, che dovevano esser mandati in Constantinopoli per procurari mover il Turco a danni della Maestà del re verso le rive di Valenza, con disegno di far qualche gran solevatione et rebellione in quelle parti.” Report by Ambassador De Vera before the *Collegio* and Leonardo Donà. Venice, 24 May 1593. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, cc. 84r–85r.

18 “Si potrebbe dir assai delli molti portughesi che per di qua passano giornalmente in Constantinopoli per viver in quelle parti a lor modo sicuri, et sono assicurati con una parte publica, come hebrei levantini et ponentini. Il ché si supe senza dir mai parola, ma di questi due moreschi per le cause et ragioni importantissime che ho detto, ho convenuto hor supplicarla”; ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10.

19 “Essi non potevano partir di Spagna per le leggi del regno senza licentia, questo solo oltre il resto li condanna, come rebelli del Re”; ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, c. 81v.

20 “Oltre questi dui, hanno da venir molti altri di questi moreschi et in gran squadra, de' quali però non se n'ha da dir altro: ma questi dui ch'erano capitani di quelli et spie, per questo importava molto haverli.” Report by Ambassador De Vera to the *Collegio* and Donà. Venice, 28 May 1593. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, c. 86v.

21 ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10.

22 Letter in cipher from Francisco de Vera to Philip II. Venice, 23 June 1593. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1343, exp. 36, f. 91.

whether to free them, since the Moriscos seemed like “men of little substance,” but the ambassador insisted that they remain under arrest.

As the case grew more complicated it was transferred to the Venetian Senate, the *Prega* or *Pregadi*; that institution was best placed to resolve cases of international politics. The ambassador's strategy consisted of pressuring the Senate, “persuading them the best I could of how suspicious these people are.”²³ Not these two in particular, but all Moriscos in general; their true faith was that of Mohammed, in spite of all efforts by His Majesty and the Inquisition to instruct them. De Vera also stressed the danger of their contacts with North Africa and with the Turk, whom the Granadans were petitioning to send an armada to attack the Monarchy by sea; at the same time the Valencians and Aragonese would rise up, causing chaos. Although these two Moriscos did not look capable of negotiating with the sultan, they might have revealed important details to counteract the disarming of their coreligionists in Aragon and Valencia.

Francisco de Vera's efforts might have been in vain, “because this state [the Republic of Venice] is most inclined to preserve the liberty professed within it for all those who enter, leave, and reside in these dominions—Moors, heretics, and all the nations of the world—without being disturbed. That is how [the Venetians] have preserved and attained the greatness they enjoy.”²⁴ The statement reflected a long tradition of liberality that the Holy See had not been able to combat, even less in the period of Paul V's Interdict (1606–1607) and in the following years, during which many more Moriscos would pass through.

In the end, the Spanish ambassador's pressure bore fruit: the Senate decreed that the two Moriscos, on condition of their being well treated and released if found innocent,²⁵ were to be handed over to the authorities on the frontier with the Duchy of Milan at Bergamo,²⁶ leading to “a result of friendship

23 AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1345, exp. 32, f. 79v.

24 “por ser esta señoría muy inclinada a conservar la libertad que en ella se professa de que entren, salgan y residan en este dominio moros, hereges y todas las naciones del mundo sin ningún disturbio, porque con eso han conservado y llegado a la grandeza que tienen”; AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1345, exp. 32, f. 80r.

25 “Si manderanno dunque a Milano in poter dell'Illustrissimo signor Contestabile, il quale ritrovandosi essi colpevoli nel modo che si è detto, sarà fatto quello che conviene, se anco altramente et che si trovasse che essi si fossero partiti dal paese per viver liberamente sarà un'altra cosa. Et io in ogni caso li raccomanderò di cuore, perché non son crudele. Questa gratia è stata certo una grande dimostrazione dell'amorevolezza et ottima disposizione di Vostra Serenità”; ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, c. 86v.

26 Letter from Juan Fernández de Velasco y Tovar, constable of Castile and governor of Milan, to Francisco de Vera. Milan, 16 June 1593 (received 18 June). AGS, *Estado, Milán*, leg. 1543, exp. 30, f. 61v.

and good will" between the two powers.²⁷ De Vera did not really believe in the guilt of these Moriscos, who seemed "poorly prepared to foment such an uprising";²⁸ he did not even know their names. He was simply obeying an order that Philip II had given him two years before, in July 1591: to discover the intentions of Moriscos who passed through Venice on their way to the Levant, and to determine who was sending them. As late as the 1590s, after years of negotiations and signed agreements, Philip the Prudent was still harshly forbidding the Moriscos to bear arms.²⁹ The two "poor" arrested men, De Vera suggested, even if they were not plotters, could be offered immunity and some degree of mercy in exchange for their collaboration—if they "declared openly what is happening, because in this journey they may easily have discovered many secrets."³⁰

In any case, even though they did not fit the usual profile, these men could be employed as spies; any tale they told might turn up other individuals of interest to the security of the State. Here Spain was imitating an expedient much used by the Republic: by offering bribes, pardons, and reprieves, it could persuade people to denounce the innocent. Philip II expressed this political pragmatism to the governor of Milan, the constable of Castile Juan Fernández de Velasco y Tovar, as follows: "Though they may be persons of small importance, it will matter that others know that they were caught in Venice; let those who saw them go also see them brought back."³¹ The governor of Milan wanted to study the situation for himself before sending the men on to Spain, "to learn from them more particularly the purpose of their journey, whose aim is not to be trusted; for we know their desires of old, and how they now want

27 Venice, 23 September 1593. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, c. 99r–v.

28 AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1345, exp. 32, f. 80v.

29 "Mostrano li sudetti moreschi sudditi del re in quei regni da certo tempo in qua malissima volontà verso Sua Maestà et è dall'anno 1590 in poi che ha lei convenuto incominciar a far fare in quelle parti delle essecutioni contra di loro, onde che finalmente per più assicurarli la Maestà sua è stata anco costretta levar a tutti li moreschi di Aragon et di Valenza le armi sì offensive, come difensive"; ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, cc. 84r–85r.

30 ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 10, cc. 84r–85r.

31 Letter from Philip II to the constable of Castile: "Acerca los dos moriscos que se os remitiesen de Venecia, me ha parecido ordenaros que aviéndolos interrogado como allí os dije, y sacado dellos lo que huviere, los embiéys a muy buen recaudo a Cartagena con alguna ocasión de nave que en Génova se offrecerá para allí, o Alicante, y que allí se entreguen al corregidor para que sean interrogados conforme a la orden con que se hallará para quando lleguen, pues aunque podrian ser personas de poca importancia, todavía será de mucha que los demás sepan que los han entregado en Venecia y que los que vieron yr los vean volver y los avisaréis de la orden que en esto huviéredes dado." San Lorenzo, 21 August 1593. AGS, *Estado, Milán*, leg. 1273, exp. 50.

to stir up dissent in the kingdom of Aragon, and other matters.”³² After having the men imprisoned in the castle of Milan³³ the constable did not really know what to do with them or what questions to ask them,³⁴ although Philip ordered that they be offered the impunity and mercy that Ambassador de Vera had suggested.³⁵ The governor’s inexperienced efforts, uncertain as he was about Morisco affairs, did not help him to discover much from the prisoners. They were not tortured and were allowed to speak freely, and “the substance of what they say is that they were going to serve His Majesty in the kingdom of Naples.”³⁶

Velasco y Tovar’s involvement in the affair led him to contact a Franciscan friar, a “man of secrets” to the Duke of Savoy, who confirmed the existence of a dark web of “heretics, infidels, and some Republics and Catholic princes”—in other words, Huguenots, Moriscos, Venice, and France—that worked to “send persons to different provinces of a great king to foment rebellions, and in particular had urged New Christian vassals of his to rise up against him.”³⁷ Unable to learn anything from the two Aragonese Moriscos, the governor sent them on a Ragusan ship from Genoa to Alicante.³⁸

Spanish diplomacy in general seemed more concerned with the activities of these few select individuals than with the larger, more consistent groups

32 Letter from the constable of Castile and governor of Milan to Francisco de Vera: “Yo he dado orden para que los reciban al confin y las traygan aquí, para entenderse dellos, más particularmente el designio de su viage de cuyo fin, ninguna cosa fiaría pues sabemos sus pretensiones viejas y o que incitarán agora naturalmente sus ánimos, las inquietudes del reyno de Aragón, y otras occassiones.” Milan, 2 June 1593 (received 5 June). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1543, exp. 28.

33 A search for their interrogation in the castle of Milan, mentioned in documents from the Archivo de Simancas, has been unsuccessful. Volume 325, covering October–December 1593 and including the Moriscos’ incarceration, cannot be consulted: Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Carteggio delle cancellerie dello Stato*.

34 Letter from the constable of Castile to Francisco De Vera: “Será bien que Vuestra Señoría me diga, si sabe algo que se les pueda preguntar demás de la generalidad, porque sin esta luz o la de su Majestad, yo no los he querido hasta agora, y en caminarlos después la vuelta de Génova para que de allí los remitirá a España como me lo manda su Majestad.” Milan, 8 September 1593 (received 10 September). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1543, exp. 40.

35 Letter from Philip II to the constable of Castile. San Lorenzo, 21 August 1593. AGS, *Estado, Milán*, leg. 1273, exp. 51.

36 Letter from the constable of Castile to Philip II. Milan, 2 November 1593 (received 21 November). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1543, exp. 214.

37 Letter in cipher from the constable of Castile to Philip II. Milan, 9 September 1593 (received 1 October). AGS, *Estado, Milán*, leg. 1272, exp. 194.

38 Letter from the Count of Viñasa, Spanish ambassador in Genoa, to Philip II. Genoa, 3 November 1593. AGS, *Estado, Génova*, leg. 1425, exp. 53.

of exiles.³⁹ In the critical year of 1567, on the eve of the Alpujarras revolt and the formation of the Holy League, word came of the presence of seven spies from Valencia and Granada who were passing through Venice. The warning originated in the Levant and was sent on from Vienna by Thomas Perrenot de Granvelle, lord of Chantonnay, Spain's ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire. The men were sent by Mehmet Pasha, disguised as merchants, and sheltered in the home of a renegade from Granada; they were to study "in greatest secrecy" everything that went on between Sicily, Spain, Germany, and the provinces ruled by the emperor, and to pass on the information to the Turk.⁴⁰

A few years later, in 1608, the movements of another Aragonese Morisco drew mistrust. Finding him in Split with two companions, wearing Christian clothing and a gold chain and with "his crowns in his pocket," the local *rettore* let him go without confiscating the 112 *reales* he carried, since Spanish money was forbidden in Venetian territory.⁴¹

In 1610 Ambassador Bedmar asked the Republic for its immediate help in halting the flow of refugees; children should be separated from their parents and placed in appropriate situations. The true aim was to detain and punish "the principal Moriscos."⁴² Bedmar was especially alarmed by the presence of two individuals who were pursuing acts of doubtful legality in Venice. The first was Gaspar de Raya, a merchant resident in Madrid⁴³ who had lived by the Guadalajara Gate (in the present Calle Mayor).⁴⁴ He was accompanied by his wife, who, the ambassador noted, was an Old Christian—a malicious detail meant to arouse suspicion, because if the authorities were disinclined to act, a Christian woman in danger of apostasy might make them take notice. Bedmar's first letter declared that they were about to embark for Istanbul, but in time that prediction proved false.

39 There was a significant exception in 1557: in that year Sultan Suleiman I complained to the Doge Priuli on behalf of about one hundred Moriscos bound for Istanbul who had been imprisoned by the Venetian authorities at the request of the Spanish ambassador. But the Republic assured the Porte that it had never detained that group nor felt any pressure from the Spanish envoy. See Pelizza, "Quei mori," 787.

40 AGS, *Estado, Alemania*, leg. 657, f. 21. Avisos de Levante, 1567. I thank Gennaro Varriale for allowing me access to the document.

41 Letters from General Zangiaco Zane in Dalmatia to the *bailo* in Constantinople, Ottaviano Bon. Zadar, 5 and 26 July 1608. ASVe, *Bailo a Costantinopoli, Lettere*, 108 II, fasc. X, n.n.

42 Cited in Pelizza, "Quei mori," 795.

43 His surname suggests that he was originally from the Morisco town of La Raya (Murcia).

44 Letter in cipher from Ambassador Alonso de la Cueva to Philip III. Venice, 9 January 1610 (received 17 February). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1354, exp. 22.

De Raya carried his money in the form of letters of credit, issued by a Genoese⁴⁵ in Madrid. The same man helped him to transfer his savings to Turkey; since the Moriscos could not carry large sums out of Spain, the letters of credit were a subterfuge that the Crown promised to look into. Further, the Morisco met frequently with a Portuguese Jew,⁴⁶ who had come from Dalmatia to recover 50,000 dinars left by his brother, who had died in Madrid. The ambassador made much of this friendship in which a Sephardi treated a Morisco "with familiarity."⁴⁷ He turned his attention to De Raya's relatives and contacts in Madrid. Thanks to a careful account that some Morisco spies gave to the Council of State, we find that De Raya belonged to an extensive international network that was pressuring the Grand Turk to remedy "Spain's offenses," that is, the persecution of its Muslims.⁴⁸ The informers also claimed that many Moriscos returned to their country by buying, for inflated sums, licenses bearing the forged signature of the Count of Salazar. (Salazar was the king's customs officer in Burgos, charged with confiscating goods that the Moriscos were trying to export illegally).⁴⁹ The network linked Madrid with Saint Jean de Luz, Marseille, Venice, and Istanbul, creating a secure corridor that protected the expelled Moriscos' assets, private correspondence, and personal safety.

The second person that Bedmar had in his sights was Mehmet Çelebi,⁵⁰ who also used the Christian name Manuel Henríquez. A longtime and multivalent resident of Venice, he was a go-between for the affairs of Spanish renegades in Bosnia. He also served as an agent for Castilian and Aragonese Moriscos in Venice, where he received their Spanish letters of credit worth at least 200,000

45 A certain Giovanni Filippo Passalviro.

46 Abraham Abenun, from Vila do Conde.

47 Letter in cipher from Ambassador Alonso de la Cueva to Philip III. Venice, 1 February 1610 (received 15 March). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1354, exp. 29.

48 Appended document in Jorge Gil Herrera, and Luis F. Bernabé Pons, "Los moriscos fuera de España: rutas y financiación," in *Los moriscos, expulsión y diáspora. Una perspectiva internacional*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers (Valencia, Granada, Zaragoza: Universitat de València, Universidad de Granada, Universidad de Zaragoza, 2013), 228–30.

49 Jesús Carrasco Vázquez, "Moriscos y marranos. Colaboración interesada de dos colectivos marginados en tiempos del Quijote," in *La Orden de San Juan en tiempos del Quijote*, ed. Francisco Ruiz Gómez and Jesús Molero García (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2010), 198.

50 His surname is an honorific title, used in the Ottoman world after the given name by distinguished persons: Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore. Inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia* (Venice: Deputazione editrice, 1994).

ducats, to be cashed in the city of St. Mark.⁵¹ Çelebi, whom Ambassador Bedmar considered a spy, tried to convince Moriscos who arrived in Italy to go on to Turkey and enlist in the armies of Ahmed I, but most of them refused, preferring to remain in Venice.

Bedmar proposed, the Council of State countenanced, and Philip III authorized Çelebi's secret assassination. Luis Aliaga, a councilor of State and the king's personal confessor (and a future Grand Inquisitor), often soothed the king's doubts about the legality of certain extreme measures; he opined that his monarch "would not sin in punishing this vassal, because of his offenses of treason and apostasy in the faith." Çelebi had left Spain without authorization, though before the decrees of expulsion were issued. Aliaga asserted that the king would not have this homicide on his conscience, and that with so many Moriscos present in Venice it would scarcely be noticed.⁵² We do not know the outcome of the plan.

Aside from these supposed spies for the Turk, and against Iberian interests, in 1620 the State Inquisitors, heads of the Venetian secret services, began to keep an eye on a Morisco named Don Alonso who maintained a close relationship with the new Spanish ambassador, Luis Bravo de Acuña, and was often seen in his company.⁵³ These were the years immediately following the famous "conspiracy" against the Republic by the previous ambassador, the Marquis of Bedmar (1618).⁵⁴ This supposed *congiura del Bedmar*, probably the result of a paranoid fantasy by the leaders of the Republic, reflected a popular and political psychosis that led the State Inquisitors to search for more possible Spanish plots; an expanded intelligence service extended even into the new

51 Letter in cipher from Ambassador Alonso de la Cueva to Philip III. Venice, 15 September 1610 (received 16 November). AGS, *Estado, Pequeños Estados italianos*, leg. 1494, exp. 15, 16, 17. *Actas* of the Council of State, Madrid, 9 December 1610. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1929, exp. 11–12. These documents are cited in Gil Herrera and Bernabé Pons, "Los moriscos," 226, 230–31 (appendix). The Venetian ambassador to Madrid, Pietro Priuli, had intercepted the contents of one of these letters to the king, dated 18 December 1610 and directed to Alonso de la Cueva, and revealed them to the secret services in Venice: ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 483, n.n.

52 Opinions of Father Luis Aliaga about Mehmet Çelebi. Madrid, 4 February and 13 March 1611. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1929, respectively exp. 41 and exp. 52.

53 Venice, 13 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

54 Giorgio Spini, "La congiura degli Spagnoli contro Venezia del 1618," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 107, no. 1 (1949): 17–53; 108 (1950): 159–74; Carlos Seco Serrano, "El Marqués de Bedmar y la conjuración de Venecia de 1618," *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid* 4, no. 15 (1955): 299–342.

ambassador's palace.⁵⁵ The obsessive surveillance of Alonso reveals fascinating details about the everyday life, habits, and movements of this prominent Morisco in the city on the lagoon.

Alonso was distinguished by his "Spanish-style" clothing: a long cape of an expensive material, a black cap without ties, black stockings, slippers on his feet and a sword at his waist.⁵⁶ He was described as a man of normal height, with dark skin, black eyes, and a black beard. He ate and slept daily at the Ostaria a la Campana, which still exists in the Calle dei Fabbri, near the Rialto Bridge; he heard mass at San Geremia; he frequented the home of the Spanish ambassador; he moved around by day and night from inn to tavern, eating roast meat and drinking red wine.⁵⁷ He had also been seen buying several types of axes on Saint Mark's Square, just below the palace of the constables (*alguaciles*).⁵⁸ On the Riva degli Schiavoni along the Grand Canal, Alonso had asked a Sclavonian about his ship but was rebuffed.⁵⁹ Where did he want to go? His actions must have awakened doubts in the State Inquisitor's secret informer.

This time, however, a Morisco was spying for the Spanish Monarchy and not against it.⁶⁰ The anonymous informant reported that Alonso, under the ambassador's orders, was preparing to travel to Istanbul (a city he already knew) "to discover what the Turk and the *bailo* intend to do."⁶¹ Traveling there to advance Spanish interests carried an enormous risk, and sending him under cover of French diplomacy caused "great fear" to the Spanish ambassador, the head of this secret mission.⁶² At this point Alonso disappeared, probably kidnapped by the Venetian intelligence services.

55 Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia. Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2016 [1st ed. 1994]), 128–35. On the construction of Venetian counterintelligence networks in this period see Filippo De Vivo, *Patrizi, informatori, barbari: politica e comunicazione a Venezia nella prima età moderna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012), 194–98.

56 Venice, 19 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

57 ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

58 Venice, 16 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

59 ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

60 "Intenso e sistematico è per tutto il Seicento lo spionaggio spagnolo in Venezia dove non rifugge da nessuno dei tradizionali mezzi: corruzione di nobili, arruolamento di confidenti nelle varie categorie professionali (segretari, gondolieri di personaggi politici, speciali, riportisti e novellisti, ecclesiastici), il tutto con la regolare supervisione dell'ambasciatore"; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, 122.

61 Venice, 13 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

62 ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

Ambassador Luis Bravo, in despair (“Alas, poor me! All my affairs and those of my king are going to the devil”),⁶³ searched for Alonso everywhere by paying informants and ruffians. He feared that if the Venetian authorities had detained Alonso, they would have discovered a secret anti-Ottoman and anti-Venetian treaty among Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Duchy of Milan. In that case Bravo would have appeared in person before the Collegio, the executive arm of the Republic of Venice, to request Alonso’s release.⁶⁴ But he preferred to believe that Alonso “had escaped, and he did not care if he turned Turk so long as he is not arrested; and if he were in jail, may they not find the coded document in his possession; the rest does not matter, only that the Most Serene Republic not discover it.”⁶⁵ In an apparently casual fashion the Spanish diplomat’s son, Francisco, revealed the Morisco’s plans to a supposed friend, the shipowner Domenico, who was actually a Venetian informer. “He was supposed to do two things,” Francisco admitted, “to set fire to the Arsenal and then Saint Mark’s Square,” and to burn the old city of Constantinople. He did not know the order of these acts, but in any case, Alonso lacked both time and trusted helpers.⁶⁶

3 Ottoman Protection

We have already noted how for decades, up to the middle years of the expulsions from Spain, the Venetian Republic had to manage an ever-increasing flow of Morisco refugees through its territory. Caught between the demands of the Ottomans on one side and the Spaniards on the other, Venice tried to satisfy both parties. As Andrea Pelizza states:

The flight or passage of the “Moors” through Venetian territory, seen as a whole, became an extremely delicate matter whose handling required a prudent balancing act. The Republic could not afford to irritate Spain, which was always quick to exploit any embarrassment or false step by the

63 Venice, n.d. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

64 Venice, 22 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

65 Venice, 24 May 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n.

66 Venice, 1 June 1620. ASVe, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 638, n.n. The Venetians had a genuine phobia about fires and their possible effects on the city, to the extent that they disbelieved “natural events” and always suspected “malice and vile treachery”; Paolo Preto, “Le ‘paure’ della società veneziana: le calamità, le sconfitte, i nemici esterni e interni,” in *Storia di Venezia*, vol. 4, ed. Gaetano Cozzi and Paolo Prodi (Rome: Istituto Enciclopédico Italiano, 1994), 215–38.

Venetian government; but neither could it depart too far from the orders of the Holy See by giving shelter and protection within its borders to suspicious groups of “infidels.” Much less could it undermine its ongoing strategic accommodation with the Porte, achieved through continuous efforts.⁶⁷

With the expulsions recently begun, Philip III asked the Venetian Collegio through diplomatic channels to arrest and punish any refugees found in the city, and to separate them from their children.⁶⁸ The Collegio protested its ignorance of the matter, but promised to inform itself;⁶⁹ in fact, it was fully aware of the large Morisco presence in the city and their comings and goings through its dominions. In 1608 Moriscos residing in Istanbul⁷⁰ had complained to the *bailo* that voluntary exiles who passed through Venice felt badly treated by officials of the Republic; they had also presented their grievances to all the pashas and aghas. Now they were prepared to finance a mission by a Bosnian çavuş, costing more than 1,000 *cecchini*, to demand fair and respectful treatment for Moriscos who passed through Venice and its domains.⁷¹ For the moment the *bailo* had managed to discourage them, promising that the Collegio would look into the matter as a private petition and not one of State.⁷²

In the following years at least three messengers were sent from Istanbul to the Collegio of Venice on the subject of Morisco refugees in transit: they declared that the sultan and the grand vizier still showed a special concern for

67 Pelizza, “Quei mori,” 788–89.

68 Report by the Spanish ambassador’s secretary to the Collegio. Venice, 20 October 1609. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 21, c. 100r.

69 Reply by Andrea Gussoni, senior councilor in the Doge’s absence, to the Spanish ambassador. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 21.

70 Tijana Krstić has studied most closely Morisco settlement in the Galata quarter after 1609: Tijana Krstić, “Los moriscos en Estambul,” in *Los moriscos, expulsión y diáspora: una perspectiva internacional*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers (Valencia: UV-UGR-UNIZAR, 2013), 257–73; and “Contesting Subjecthood and Sovereignty in Ottoman Galata in the Age of Confessionalization: The Carazzo Affair, 1613–1617,” *Oriente Moderno* 93, no. 2 (2013): 422–53. But there is little information about their presence in Istanbul before the expulsion.

71 Letter from the *bailo* Ottaviano Bon to the Doge. Istanbul, 11 June 1608, first letter. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacchi, Ambasciatori, Bailo a Costantinopoli*, fz. 66, doc. 15, cc. 156r–159r (see also summary in Dg, c. 106v).

72 Letter from the *bailo* Ottaviano Bon to the Doge. Istanbul, 26 June 1608, first letter. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacchi, Ambasciatori, Bailo a Costantinopoli*, fz. 66, doc. 17, cc. 170r–171r (summary of document in Dg, c. 109v).

them and expected them to be treated well, as in earlier years.⁷³ Those envoys then continued on to France with the same mission.⁷⁴

As other historians have noted, Venice enjoyed many more years of peace with the Ottoman Empire than years of war.⁷⁵ The Republic, together with France, was the European sovereign power with the longest continuous diplomatic presence in the former Constantinople,⁷⁶ and it admired certain aspects of Ottoman governance and culture.⁷⁷ Viziers and sultans often exchanged representatives with Venice's Collegio, in numbers far exceeding those they sent to other Christian principalities. Although the Venetian state formed part of *Dār al-Ḥarb* (the lands governed by non-Muslims), merchants from the Ottoman Empire regularly disembarked and stayed there, rarely with women; some even lived freely until they died, though without ever forming a true community or organizing as a nation.⁷⁸ In 1621 Venice could even boast a stable *fondaco*, an inn and warehouse where goods were bargained for, as a safe place for Muslim merchants from the Ottoman Empire; while it segregated them as a minority, it nonetheless showed "a certain tolerance in the city of the Doges toward the Islamic world."⁷⁹ Up until then they had stayed in the parish of San Matteo in Rialto, especially in the Osteria dell' Angelo; many others were dispersed

73 See Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, 176–78.

74 Temimi, "La politique ottomane"; Pomara, *Refugiados*, 123 n. 296.

75 Maria Pia Pedani, *Inventory of the Lettere e Scritture Turchesche in the Venetian State Archives* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 171.

76 Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

77 Lucette Valensi, *Venise et la Sublime Porte: La naissance du despote* (Paris: Hachette, 2005).

78 Maria Pia Pedani, "Turchi in Canal Grande," *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 46, no. 2 (2007): 44–49; Giuliano Lucchetta, "Note intorno a un elenco di turchi morti a Venezia," *Veneziani in Levante, Musulmani a Venezia*. Special issue. *Quaderni di studi arabi* 15 (1997): 191–217. In the death registries for 1610 (ASVe, *Provveditori e sopraprovveditori alla Sanità, Atti, Necrologio*, reg. 841, n.n.) we find two Moriscos among the non-Christians: Ángela Cortés, "una delle granatine," aged 40, ill with a "flux" for 20 days; and Miguel Serrano, Aragonese, aged 18, who suffered from a "fever for a long time." Both died in October 1610 in the quarter of St. Mark, she in the Ostaria della Luna in the San Moisè parish, he in the San Luca parish. While anecdotal, these details are a clue to the Morisco geography of the city, of which we possess little information.

79 Mathieu Grenet, "Institution de la coexistence et pratiques de la différence: le *fondaco dei Turchi* de Venise (xvi^e–xviii^e siècles)," *Revue d'histoire maritime* 17, no. 1 (2013): 276–79. In the building, once an occasional residence for the Duke of Ferrara, different groups of Muslims separated themselves: Albanians and Bosnians on one side and Easterners on the other. Persians and Armenians found spaces elsewhere in the city.

in many parts of the city, in private homes of Christian men and women, who do not charge high rents; rather, to gain the most money, they are loose women who commit many obscene offenses against God, causing scandal to the neighborhood and lowering its property values.⁸⁰

For all these reasons the Venetian Senate had to satisfy the Ottomans—as in the case of the Moriscos—and attend to the demands of the Porte, which it was prudent not to offend. Turkish complaints invoked the “love and affection” that the Republic had long shown toward the “imperial house and the whole Muslim nation” (a sign of “sincere friendship”), while naming the harassment and obstacles met by fugitive Moriscos who dressed as Spaniards when crossing Venetian territory, “lacking the opportunity and comfort of wearing Turkish dress.”⁸¹ Perhaps in Old Christian clothes they were taken for renegades who were traveling East to embrace Islam. The Ottomans wanted Moriscos to be able to dress as they liked and not to be harassed, expelled, or returned to Spain while in Venetian lands, “offended or secretly persecuted in their private lives.” The Turks would be grateful for a preferential treatment of Moriscos that would ensure “peace and concord” between the *Serenissima* and the Sublime Porte.

Venice was still a Catholic city in its way, though unusually open. The problem of clothing was not easily overcome. The refugees could not afford to buy new garments, and the potpourri of styles they wore stood out even in Istanbul, as the *bailo* Simone Contarini noted: they offended the Turks and made the Europeans laugh.⁸² Local authorities in Venice suggested that they violate the Christian rules about dress, since only as Muslims could they pass borders and customs posts freely, and be “welcomed and favored” by the leaders of even the remotest areas.⁸³

80 Venice, 11 December 1620. ASVe, *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, 11 serie, b. 187, fasc. 1 and 2, n.n.

81 Venice, 1 September 1609. ASVe, *Collegio, Esposizioni principi*, reg. 21, c. 89r–v. These words, spoken in *lingua franca* by the çavuş Hacı İbrahim Mutaşaragâ from Cairo, reflect the sealed letters that he presented to the Collegio in Venice, sent from Istanbul by Sultan Ahmed I and Grand Vizier Murad and dated in April 1609. See their *regesta* in Pedani, *Inventory*, 154; on the incident see also Pelizza, “Quei mori,” 793. Ahmed I sent similar formal protests to the Doge Marcantonio Memmi in late June 1614; Maria Pia Pedani and Alessio Bombaci (eds.), *I “documenti turchi” dell’Archivio di Stato di Venezia, parte prima* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994), 309.

82 “Arriva qui continuamente gran quantità di moreschi discacciati di Spagna. Se ne veggono alcuni vestiti mezi alla spagnuola et mezi alla turchesca, con il feraruolo, le latuche al collo, et la toca in capo; muovono isdegno a’ turchi, et riso agl’altri.” Cited in Pelizza, “Quei mori,” 793.

83 Letter from the Doge Donà to the sultan and the grand vizier. Venice, 1 September 1609. ASVe, *Senato, Deliberazioni, Constantinopoli*, reg. 10, cc. 168v–170r.

In 1615 in Istanbul, a Granadan named Süleyman or Diego de Córdoba visited the *bailo* Almorì Nani; he tried to blackmail him by threatening to reveal the content of a supposed letter in cipher he possessed that would compromise the dignity of Venice. During the meeting Süleyman also told the envoy that while he was in Venice, a gentleman had tried to seize him by the beard; he had sued in court but had not received satisfaction. Nani promised to try to pursue the case, and was certain that the guilty man could not have been a true gentleman: “for in Venice each one has the freedom to dress as he wishes, and in the great cities there are benign and pernicious people, among whom are those who do not wish to do good.”⁸⁴

4 Silent Presences. The Refugees between the Adriatic and the Aegean

Meanwhile, diplomatic correspondence to and from Venice described travel routes and settlement attempts between Venetian territory and the Ottoman Empire that were unknown until now. In early 1610 Don Alonso de la Cueva wrote about a group of Moriscos who passed through Venice on their way to Bosnia “and other lands subject to the Turk.”⁸⁵ Their presence there is confirmed by reports three years later about an epidemic in Sarajevo: one of the

84 “Mi disse poi che a Venetia era stato malissimo trattato da uno gentilhuomo, havendolo preso per la barba pubblicamente. Et essendo de questo querellato non gli era stata fatta altra giustizia che da parole che mostrava dispiacer di ciò ch'era seguito et laudava Idio che l'aveva ricondotto in quiete [...]. Risposi che non credevo certo che alcun gentilhuomo havesse potuto usar verso di lui questo termine che sarebbe stato indiscreto quando poi non gliene havesse dato occasione, et che forse deve argomentar dall'habito che quel tale [non] fosse nobile, che senza dubbio non sarà stato, poichè in Venetia ogn'uno era in libertà di vestire come meglio gli pareva, che nelle città grandi vi sono delli buoni et delli tristi et di quelli ch'hanno poca voglia di far bene et che mi assicuravo che se le Signorie Vostre havessero potuto haver nelle mani quel tale che gli usò quella discortesia, che l'haverebbero castigato come convenia.” Letter in cipher from the *bailo* Almorì Nani to the Doge Memmi. Istanbul, 25 July 1615 (second letter). ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, fz. 79, cc. 364r–369r (summary in reg. D12, c. 73r). On Süleyman's mission in Venice see Pelizza, “Quei mori,” 798–99; Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, 178; Pomara, *Refugiados*, 127.

85 Letter from the Spanish ambassador in Venice to Philip III. Venice, 9 January 1610. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1354, exp. 21, f. 44v. The pressure from Aragonese and Valencian Moriscos who were already in Istanbul to be assigned “places where they, and those of their nation who went to those parts, might live” led the Ottomans to direct them to Morea. Notices from Constantinople, 12 and 13 June 1610. AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1354, exp. 157.

dead was a porter, “a white Moor ... of those who had come from Spain.”⁸⁶ Some Moriscos described as “very rich” were despoiled in Dalmatia in November 1610 by Turks from Klis and other Ottoman fortresses.⁸⁷ Another report of the same year described 150 Moriscos who, after eight days in Venice, left carrying their bundles and intending to settle in some empty part of Istria,⁸⁸ an area where the Venetians encouraged colonization by poor foreigners. Such persons were not welcome in the city itself, which had strict laws against beggars and vagabonds.⁸⁹

Poor refugees were considered a danger to public order in the city on the lagoon. A few families from Toledo who had been reduced to beggary were finally given permission to return home.⁹⁰ The Spanish ambassador, Alonso de la Cueva (marquis of Bedmar), also touched on the subject of the refugees’ return: he reported that for several months Moriscos who had abandoned the “lands of the Turks” were passing through Venice once more. They all told him that

they wanted to be regular Christians, and it is very credible; especially for those who were born outside the kingdom of Granada in places where they had no contact with those who could teach them and keep them from forgetting the sect of their ancestors; they were better versed in our holy Catholic faith than their elders.⁹¹

86 Split, 11 October 1613. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci dei Rettori, Dalmazia*, filza 12, n.n.

87 Report from Venice, 27 November 1610. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [BAV], *Barb. Lat.*, vol. 6344, c. 305r.

88 Report from Venice, 2 October 1610. BAV, *Barb. Lat.*, vol. 6344, c. 288v. It seems that this was a rumour without foundation. From research I have carried out both in the archival collections ‘Dispacci dei Rettori, Istria’ of the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, and ‘Capitano di Raspo’—a magistrate that dealt with the colonisation of new settlers in Istria—stored by the Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria, there is no documental track of them.

89 Pelizza, “Stranieri nella Venezia medievale,” *Archivio Veneto* 6, no. 18 (2019): 13.

90 “Sono capitate qua alcune famiglie de moreschi che furono cacciate di Spagna, quali essendo de regno di Toledo e non colpevoli della congiura fatta da quei di Valenza, hanno havuto gratia di ritornar alle lor case ma sono mendichi, è malissimo all’ordine.” Report from Venice, 16 June 1612. BAV, *Barb. Lat.*, vol. 6348, c. 44v.

91 “De algunos meses a esta parte vienen aquí muchos moriscos de los que pasaron a tierra de turcos, quando la expulsión general. Y habiendo procurado saber dellos la causa que les mueve a volverse, me dizen todos que el querer ser christianos sin otro respecto, y es cosa muy creíble, especialmente de los que habiendo nacido fuera del Reyno de Granada en partes donde no tenían comunicación con quien los enseñasse o no dexasse olvidar la secta de sus antepassados, estaban mejor instruidos que los viejos en nuestra santa fee catholica; y assí les digo que busquen asiento adonde puedan vivir christianamente. Y ellos lo ofrecen assí y estoy informado que no faltan a la promessa, a lo menos la mayor

Therefore, Bedmar merely encouraged them to find a place where they could live a Christian life.

The Venetian superintendent of the island of Zakynthos rescued five families from Granada—thirty individuals, most of them children—from capture by the Turks; he felt he was preventing them from converting to Islam. The escapees set about to work the land and practice their other crafts, with dignity and good will, while many others waited out the quarantine in the *lazzaretto* “with the intention of moving to some safe place where they need not become Turks.” The local people had accepted them and some employed them on their lands.⁹²

In 1612 one hundred Moriscos had populated the countryside of Ottoman Epirus, only six miles from the citadel of Parga, a Venetian protectorate that enjoyed a certain degree of liberty. The Ottoman authorities wished to use this opportunity to encourage settlement in a village called Koroni, in an area of fertile hills inhabited and worked by Turks, three miles from the streams of Fanari and from a forest “from which each year much wood is harvested for the gun-carriages of these fortresses [especially Parga] and the kingdom of Candia.”⁹³ The project must have failed thanks to the actions of the *bailo* in Constantinople, who sought to defend Venetian interests in the area: at risk were its production and free passage of peoples, “the quiet and security of the poor subjects of Parga,” and “the interest of the fortress of Corfu” (which apparently had already received a significant number of Moriscos).⁹⁴

These were not the only Moriscos whom the Venetians worried about. According to information given by a mole of the Ottoman admiral Alil to a rebel Candiotte (who in turn told the *bailo*), in 1614 about one hundred Moriscos

parte dellos.” Letter from Ambassador De la Cueva to Philip III. Venice, 15 March 1613 (received 18 April). AGS, *Estado, Venecia*, leg. 1357, exp. 56.

92 Report from the *provveditore* Francesco Donado to the Doge. Zakynthos, 16 December 1611. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Dispacci dei Rettori, Zante*, filza 4, n.n. When plague struck the island the next year a group of Moriscos fled from Zakynthos to Ancona, claiming that the Venetian authorities had expelled them: Pomara, *Refugiados*, 79–80.

93 Letter from the *bailo* Almorì Bragadin to the Doge. Corfu, 28 April 1612. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Corfù*, filza 7, n.n. The sender mistakenly calls the Moriscos “marrani cacciati già di Spagna” (as does the document cited in the next note). I have located the village of Koroni near Parga (not to be confused with the Koroni in the Peloponnese) thanks to the help of Olga Katsiardi.

94 Letter in cipher from the *bailo* Cristoforo Valier to the Doge. Istanbul, 24 August 1612. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 73, ff. 368r–369v. The document is accompanied by its translation by order of the sultan, dated 15 August, addressed to the sanjak of Delvino and the qadi of Aidonat. They were to dissuade the qadi’s brother-in-law, Husain of Aidonat, from organizing the colonization of Koroni.

enlisted under false names in the Venetian militias that would be sent to Candia. The local Jews, for a sum of money, allowed them to exchange letters and reports with Granadans living in Istanbul; the papers were hidden in fishnets on the boats that carried sponges from Samos.⁹⁵ It was feared that these Moriscos were undercover agents bent on establishing a link between the easternmost Christian lands of the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire.

Also worthy of mention are shipwrecks that occurred during the expulsion years on the coasts of Venetian Crete. The relevant documents not only relate the dramatic events but list the numbers of persons embarked, the merchandise and equipment they carried, the ships' home ports, and their intended destinations. From them we learn of previously unsuspected sites of the Morisco diaspora. But of special interest is how the authorities of Candia rescued the survivors and recovered the goods and assets of both survivors and those who perished, all to maintain good relations between the Venetian Republic and the Sublime Porte.

In 1611 the French ship *Sainte Anne Bonaventure* had sailed for twenty-six days from Sousse in Tunis toward Alexandria, carrying about 200 men, women, and children. There was a crew of fourteen men from France, Candia, and Patmos, and about fifty Turks, merchants, and Arab pilgrims on their way to Mecca, plus more than 120 Moriscos. The latter group had been promised a landing in the Peloponnesian town of Methoni, or at least in one of the first ports controlled by the Ottomans. The group decided to shorten the voyage by disembarking in Milos, a former Venetian colony then under Ottoman rule, and there pay the owner the five thalers they owed him. It was a lucky choice: the ship with its remaining sixty-seven passengers then sank off Standia, an uninhabited islet a few miles from Crete.⁹⁶

A few months later and not many miles away, a ship from Algiers headed for Constantinople landed at the port of Marathi, near the fortress of Souda. Its passengers included several Aragonese families who said they were bound for Chios, an island under Turkish rule but settled mainly by Greeks and Genoese—it had been a Genoese colony until the mid-sixteenth century. During the night a furious north wind dashed the ship against the rocks. Many of its 120 passengers drowned (about eighty Aragonese, fifteen Turks, and six French, as well as slaves and sailors), and only thirty-three survived, causing “a

95 Letter from the *bailo* Cristoforo Valier to the Doge. Istanbul, 17 April 1614. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 77, f. 91r–v (summary in reg. D12, c. 14v).

96 Letter from the duke and captain of Candia Antonio Grimani to the Doge. Candia, 14 October 1611. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 6, n.n.

most lamentable spectacle.”⁹⁷ In this tragic event, which even resulted in the loss of the Turkish shipowner, the local Venetian ministers made every effort to rescue and preserve the goods of the survivors.⁹⁸ These included oil and soap bought in Methoni and a few hides belonging to a Spaniard.⁹⁹

The third shipwreck affected twenty-five Granadans, including fifteen women and three small girls, eleven Turks, and sixty-one raiding soldiers (*ghāzī*) on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Some of them were traveling with weapons, empty vessels, and a considerable sum of money: Spanish *reales* and gold *sultani* equal to about 2,000 Venetian ducats.¹⁰⁰ The ship had sailed from Tunis and was wrecked on the northern coast of Crete on 19 November 1613. Though understandably fearful that the main passengers might be corsairs, the local authorities decided to return all the goods and money promptly. The Moriscos, “very satisfied,” were able to embark for Chios.¹⁰¹

5 Conclusions

In light of the current state of research, we cannot confirm that the lands of the *Serenissima Repubblica* were places of passage or permanent settlement for Spanish Moriscos. Whether they were temporary or long-term sites of migration, we can ask this question: Why did the Moriscos choose Venice and its dominions? We can review a few outstanding points. Venice was the gateway between East and West, a place where the Moriscos felt especially protected by the agreements between the Republic and the Sublime Porte. It was the city of espionage *par excellence* in the whole European Mediterranean, a

97 Letters from the *rettore* of Canea, Stefano Tiepolo, and from the *provveditore* of the fortress of Souda, Anzolo Cabriel, to the duke and captain of Candia. Canea and Souda, 7 January 1612. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 6, n.n. News of the shipwreck is reported in the letter from the duke and captain of Candia Antonio Grimani to the Doge. Candia, 26 January 1612. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 6, n.n.

98 Letter from the *provveditore* of the fortress of Souda, Anzolo Cabriel, to the duke and captain of Candia. Souda, 5 March 1612. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 6, n.n. Only few survivors were able to continue on to Alexandria in a Candiot ship.

99 Letter in cipher from the *bailo* Almorani Nani to the Doge. Istanbul, 29 March 1617. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 83, cc. 29r–31r (summary of the document in D12, c. 200). However, a Moorish survivor, favorite of the head of the eunuchs (*kizlar ağası*), sued for 2,000 *cechini*. He went to “protest vigorously” in front of the *diwan* and demanded justice from the pasha. On this affair see also ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 83, cc. 81v–82r. Istanbul, 15 April 1617.

100 Letter from the officer of the Rethymno regiment, Marco Antonio Menio, to the Doge. Rethymno, 24 November 1613. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 7, n.n.

101 Letter from the *rettore* of Rethymno, Lodovico Baffo, to the Doge. Rethymno, 14 December 1613. ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci, Rettori, Candia*, filza 7, n.n.

place where go-betweens, trans-imperial subjects, and enigmatic strangers could pass largely undetected.¹⁰² Finally, Venice was the most multicultural of Mediterranean cities: it saw the comings and goings of thousands of Jews (Ashkenazis, Levantines, and Sephardim), Marranos from Iberia, Orthodox Greeks, Armenians, Albanians, Dalmatians, German Protestants, Frenchmen, Persians, Turks.¹⁰³ All these individuals, depending on their origins, experienced the Orient or the Occident in a syncretic atmosphere of cultural contact.

A significant metaphor for all this is found in a passage from the trial of Antonio Bermejo (Italianized into Vermecco), a baptized Morisco. He was charged in 1627 for Islamism by the *Savi all'Eresia*, the Venetian ministers who pursued crimes against Catholic orthodoxy.¹⁰⁴ Bermejo had lived in Pisa for ten years with his Spanish wife, and had maintained a façade of religious orthodoxy, confessing and taking communion in spite of his hidden Muslim faith. With three Italians¹⁰⁵ (all, like him, in their thirties) he traveled to Venice, and there refused to attend church despite the pleas of his companions. Once they were installed at an inn, he confessed to them that he wished to travel to Turkey, and they denounced him at once. His willingness to confess to them was inspired by Venice's reputation as a tolerant city: "there is no Inquisition" there, he argued, and everyone could behave openly, "say what he thinks and live in his own way." Declaring himself a direct descendant of the Great Khan, Bermejo had more contact in Venice with Jews than with Turks. "Venice is the land of liberty," he insisted. Bermejo's perception reflected a widespread reputation and explains why the Moriscos chose the city and its dominions as destinations where they could at least pause and rest, while deciding where to settle permanently and in peace. Last but not least, the "friendship" between the *Serenissima* and the Sublime Porte offered them full confidence and security for facing more calmly the challenges of their diaspora.

102 On the wider meaning of "go-betweens" employed here see Bruno Pomara, "Go-betweens, Revisited: A Historiographical Proposal through the Trial of an Indefinable Man (Sixteenth Century)," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 24 (2018): 27–36. On their role between Venice and Istanbul cf. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

103 On these aspects see Donatella Calabi, "Gli stranieri e la città," in *Storia di Venezia*, 5, *Il Rinascimento. Società ed economia*, ed. Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1996) 913–46; Alessandro Zannini, *Venezia città aperta. Gli stranieri e la Serenissima, XIV–XVIII sec.* (Venice: Marcianum Press, 2009); Benjamin Ravid, "Venice and its Minorities," in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 449–85.

104 Venice, 12 August 1627. ASVe, *Savi all'Eresia*, b. 85, unnumbered fascicle.

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