The Venetian community in early-seventeenth century Istanbul: a negotiated and contested membership to a privileged socioeconomic group

In September 1616, Ali Efendi, the Qadi (Islamic judge and local administrator) of the Istanbul’s commercial district of Galata, conducted a census of all Europeans (called “Franks” in Ottoman parlance) residing in Galata and its surroundings in order to impose on them the harac, the Islamic poll tax on non-Muslim subjects of the Ottomans. This act was part of the “Carazo affair,” a diplomatic crisis (1613-1617) pitting European diplomats against many Ottoman authorities in Istanbul originating from the latter’s intention to impose this tax, which was prohibited according to the international treaties.\(^1\) The Ottoman census identified 108 individuals as part of the Venetian community (Venedik taifesi). In his report (dispacci) to Venice following the drawing of these census, the bailo, Venice’s ambassador and consul in the Ottoman capital, wrote that the entire Venetian community was actually much larger than 108 persons, while in other reports of the early seventeenth century the baili put the numbers of Venetian subjects to several thousands.\(^2\)

Who are those individuals identified by both the Ottomans and the baili as members of the Venetian community? Why do the baili and the Ottoman authorities disagree over the number Venetians residing in Istanbul? Did those identified subjects play any role in processes of identification? What did entail being included to or excluded from the Venetian community? This chapter will address these questions by focusing on identification practices of Venetian subjects from the vantage point of Venetian and Ottoman legal institutions in Istanbul, the Venetian chancery and Ottoman courts, and of international diplomacy. The focus on institutions allows us to understand the role played by different categories of belonging, such as religion,

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1. Krstic (2012), VGM
2. Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Senato Dispacci Constantinopoli
legal citizenship, professional identity, in the workings of institutions regulating legal interactions and business exchanges. It will put forth three interrelated arguments: membership to the Venetian nation was not dependent exclusively on the state practices but individuals enjoyed considerably agency, institutions played a role in creating membership to the Venetian nation and such membership was never fixed but it was dependent on constant reaffirmation and negotiations between the individuals and Venetian authorities and between the latter and Ottoman officials.

The chapter will focus on processes of identification and membership to a community rather than on individual identity. Despite the popularity of scholarly studies of religious, political, ethnic identities in the early modern Mediterranean, an exclusive focus on individual identity, taken either as fixed or flexible, mask the dynamic processes that created and shaped identity and the multitude of actors who played a role in them. Procedures of identification, or registration, of individuals entailed either conferring on or denying to an individual membership to a particular human group, like urban, territorial or religious communities, or a lineage. They were means of inclusion to or exclusion from material and immaterial resources of a community, such as a web of social relations, occupation, trade rights, assistance and welfare, inheritance rights, and diplomatic support. Together with granting access to communal resources, a recognized membership to a community involved several duties, including tax payment, residence, taking part to local ceremonies, and other social practices, whose performance was necessary in order for the upkeep of such membership.

Scholarship on the identification in the early modern and modern world have seen an upsurge in the last two decades. Two approaches prevail in this field of research. First, influenced by Weberian notions of the bureaucratic state and Foucault’s concept of
governmentality, one strand of scholarship focuses on the role of the state and its growing monopoly over means of identification from the late Middle Ages onwards. From this perspective, the gradual importance of written identification, such as travel documents, was result of the birth of the modern state and modern bureaucracies. Registration procedures were uniquely a work of the state and their development was corollary to the state’s growing power to control and coerce individuals. A second strand of scholarly literature deals with the “more positive” aspects of identification such as access to communal resources thanks to inclusion to a human group. Rejecting the view that processes of registration are exclusively state-driven and they aimed foremost to social control, this growing literature focuses on the role of the individuals in such processes. Individuals negotiated their membership to a community through behaving like its members, claiming its rights and accepting its duties. In this perspective, identification assumes a strategical and emancipatory nature and the individual becomes active actors in registration processes.

This chapter aims to bridge these two approaches by focusing on identification practices carried out by different actors in early seventeenth-century Istanbul: individuals claiming membership to the Venetian community, the Venetian chancery, and Ottoman institutions, and Ottoman and Venetian officials. The capitulations (ahdname in Ottoman Turkish), the diplomatic and commercial agreements between the Ottoman and the Venetian governments, provided the legal framework for the conduct of long-distance trade and the safe residence of Venetian subjects in Ottoman cities. In particular, they established the privileges and duties of “protected foreigners (müstemin).” However, they did contain specific instructions on how to identify Venets coming to the empire. At the same time, Venetian citizenship laws restricted trade

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between the Levant and Venice to a small number of Venetian subjects. However, many non-citizens took part to this flow of trade becoming recognized as “Venetian.” As we will see, the registration as Venetian subject was contingent on constant negotiations between different actors and on the workings of institutions.

1) The Venetian chancery and the strategical nature of membership to the community

In the early seventeenth century, the Venetian community (nazione veneziana) in Istanbul was the largest European community in the Ottoman capital. It was a highly heterogenous community of diplomats, merchants, ship captains, artisans, sailors, bandits, slaves, and many more individuals of different ethnic, social, economic, and religious backgrounds. These individuals hailed from different parts of the Venetian Empire: Venetian-held North Italy (Terraferma), the city of Venice, Dalmatia, and Greek islands under Venetian suzerainty. The centers of the community were the Venetian embassy in Beyoğlu and walled town of Galata, the commercial hub of Ottoman capital, where most of the Venetian merchants and other subjects resided and conducted business.

In an important study of the Venetian community in Istanbul during the early modern period, Eric Dursteler highlights the heterogeneity of such community which contrasts to previous accounts of homogenous mercantile communities in the Levant as composed of individuals sharing a common social and ethnic background. He distinguishes between an “official” nation, composed of Venetian citizens, and a much larger “unofficial” nation which included subjects from the Terraferma, the Stato da Mar, and even Ottoman subjects. As he shows by providing numerous cases studies, members of the latter enjoyed right to trade and

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5 It is important to stress that such heterogeneity was not exclusively early modern phenomenon. Jacoby (1987).
6 Dursteler (2006).
consular protection like Venetian citizens though legally they were not entitled to them. Ethnic, religious, and occupational heterogeneity supports Dursteler’s argument about the hybridity, flexibility, and social nature of identity in the early modern Mediterranean: identity was composed of several elements (and not only of religion and political status) and, in response to specific contexts, individuals shifted their identity in order to gain specific legal and economic privileges.⁷

Dursteler’s study provides a compelling case about the flexible and dynamic nature of early modern identity. However, his stark distinction between an official and an unofficial nation implies that membership to the Venetian community depended exclusively on a normative system imposed from the capital city. Such distinction is fallacious because membership to the Venetian community in Istanbul, similarly to other human groups in the early modern Mediterranean, was not determined exclusively by legal enactments but social practices too played an important role.⁸ It is my contention that practices like long-term social relations with Venetian citizens (both diplomats and merchants), participation in activities traditionally conducted by latter, such as the conduction of long-distance trade and the payment of consular duties (the cottimo and consolato taxes), the respect of communal rules, and a recognized loyalty to the Venetian cause could become markers, or “proofs,” of belonging. These activities created public reputation and mutual trust, producing what social scientists call “social capital,”⁹ and they were key factors, together with written records and the deeds of state institutions, in processes of registration to the community. Such registration did not perpetually fix membership to a community but the latter had to be socially repeated by performing social actions.

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⁷ His work is part of a larger historiographical emphasis on the multilayered, flexible, and dynamic nature of early modern modernity. Other important studies are Molly Greene (2010), ..
⁸ Herzog (2003).
⁹ Ogilvie (2005).
Furthermore, the Venetian chancery (cancelleria), as it will be shown below, played an important role in identification by registering individuals in its records and by offering legal and economic services to different individuals claiming to be part of the Venetian community. More important, the frequent use of this institution created social reputation fostering social and business relations in Istanbul’s commercial circles. Overall, all the above-mentioned social practices hint to a strategical notion of membership to the Venetian community.

Below I will show different groups of members of the Venetian community on the basis of the records of the Venetian chancery. I will present the results of my micro-historical analysis of the years 1612-20, when the baili were Cristoforo Valier (office 1612-1615) Almorò Nani (1615-1620). This institution, located in the premises of the Venetian embassy, functioned as both a civil tribunal and as a notarial court. In the years under study, 1824 individuals belonging to different religious and political communities appeared (or were summoned there) at the to litigate a commercial lawsuit (958 cases) and register a legal deed or a business transactions (840). In analyzing the records, I employ the emic and etic categories of analysis. The emic approach recovers the actor’s own categories and language while the etic one develops the scholar’s categories. This distinction is important because the vocabulary used by scholars to refer to the protagonists of long-distance trade and cross-cultural exchanges in general differs considerably from the nomenclature used by the historical actors.

A) Merchants

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10 Cerutti (2008)
11 The records analyzed here are ASV, Bailo a Costantinopolli.
12 Cerutti (1994). They corresponded to what the sociologist Rogers Brubaker and the historian Frederick Cooper call “categories of practice” and “categories of analysis,” Cooper and Brubaker, “Beyond identity” (2000).
In Venetian trading systems, two factors affected most the conduct of trade. Firstly, since the fifteenth century Venetian law of citizenship barred non-citizens (the vast majority of individuals both in Venice and its territories in the Levant) from engaging in trade between the city of Venice and the Levant. Secondly, merchant guilds did not exist and therefore merchants did not constitute a legal status but only a professional category in the metropolitan and elsewhere.

In the 10 years under study, the chancery records registered in the historical records as “Venetian merchants” (mercante venetiano) only 60 out of the 1824 individuals who appealed to this court or were summoned there. Such taxonomy appears only in two typologies of records: bailo’s commandments (mandato) to merchants about major trade-related issues (such as boycotts, prohibition of loading specific goods, and instructions about navigation), and documents the decisions of the Council of Twelve (Consilio dei XII), the government body of the Venetian nation, to which merchants, ship captains and ship scribes took part. This assembly dealt with pressing issues involving the Venetian community, such as new taxes imposed by the Ottomans, shipwrecks of Venetian ships, the election of officials of the community and vice-consuls in Ottoman cities. Each member had to vote on these issues. Between 1612 and 1620, it convened twenty-two times. Apart from the merchants, Venetian ship captains and scribes of ships stopping in Istanbul also often attended the council (21 individuals in total).

I focus on the aforementioned merchants because, together ship captains and scribes, conducted most of the trade between the Ottoman capital and Venetian territories (at least as far as the Venetian courts records show) and took part to the community’s most important decisions. Despite their small number, these 60 merchants were involved in many of the legal

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13 Pedani (1996), 189, Christ (2012), 70/71. In Venetian colonies in the Middle Ages, the Council of Twelve was constituted exclusively by Venetian noble merchants
and economic transactions taking place at the bailo’s consular court: the 62% of all lawsuits involved at least a Venetian merchant, while those involving none of them are only the 26%. If we sum all the lawsuits involving merchants, captains, and scribes who also took part in the Council of Twelve, we notice that they constitute the 74% of all the lawsuits heard by the bailo. However, if we analyze the numbers of legal deeds carried out by all these categories of individuals we find an opposite situation. Almost 70% of all the notarial transactions took place between individuals not belonging to the aforementioned professions. These results show the preeminence of those individual merchants in the economic and social life of the Venetian community.  

An analysis of place of provenience and the social and economic profile of those registered as merchants shows diversity. We know the place of origin only of 45 of them. Most of the later hailed from either Venice or the Terraferma (mostly from the Lombard town of Bergamo) while few other from Istanbul. None of them were noble and only 5 of them were Venetian citizens (either cittadino originario or de intus et extra) while the rest did not hold nay title of citizenship. Most of them were commercial agents (fattori), either as commission agents who resided in Istanbul for long periods and conducted business in the name of resident merchant in Venice (either nobles or other Venetian citizens) receiving a percentage of the profits (commissione), or as travelling agent coming to the Ottoman capital for a single commercial venture.

Those originating from Istanbul deserve particularly attention. Nadalin Sanguinazzo, Edoardo di Gagliano, and the several members of the Pironi family were all born and raised in Galata and were members of the local Latin Catholic community of Genoese descent, the Perots.

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15 Unfortunately, we know the result of such lawsuits only for about 15% of all the lawsuits involving a merchant and we cannot make evaluate the frequency of their victories against non-merchants.
They were Ottoman subjects as they paid the poll tax on non-Muslim and other Ottoman taxes. At the same time, they were much engaged in the activities of the Venetian community by providing dragomans, wool appraisers (cernidori), and other officials to the nation and by engaging themselves in international trade with Venice. Dursteler shows the manifold commercial activities of the Gagliano and Pironi families between 1590s and 1610s. Their members held a preeminent position within their Perot community but at the same time traded with Venetian and other Ottoman merchants, partook in the patronage networks of Ottoman officials, owned Venetian ships, used legal and economic services of the Venetian chancery, paid the cottimi to the Venetian consulate, and intermarried with Venetian dragomans. Clearly, they moved across multiple communal and legal regimes-the Perot community, the Ottoman imperial system, and the Venetian community- showing how permeable were the boundaries between members and non-members of the latter. Thanks to their extensive social and economic relations with the Venetian merchants and the embassy and their trade activities they considered themselves as members of the Venetian community and were considered as such by the latter’s representatives. However, as we will see, the Ottoman legal authorities did not agree with such identification. Furthermore, contrarily to other Venetian subjects, they also enjoyed rights usually restricted to Ottoman subjects, such as the right to own real estates in the empire.

A rare survived petition (supplica) of a member of the Pironi family, Stefano di Antonio, in 1615 sheds lights on the negotiated and performative ritual of claiming membership to the Venetian community. Stefano petitioned the bailo to ask for protection against “Turkish oppression” (avanie turchesche) who Ottoman subjects are usually subjected to. He claimed that himself, his father, and his ancestors had been “loyal” (devoti) towards and “humble servants”

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16 Durstelers (2005), 130-150.
17 ASV, BAC, 317, 81v/82r (09/04/1615). Dursteler cites this document in Dursteler, Venetians, 235, note 93.
(humilissimi servitori) of Venice which, according to him, is demonstrated by his long-term commercial ventures with Venice, his regular payments of the cottimo, and by the fact that he never brought a Venetian subject to an Ottoman court. He pleaded to obtain the privilege (gratia) to enjoy Venetian protection like Venetian subjects and other “servants” of Venice through the issuance, at the bailo’s request, of an Ottoman imperial document stating his status as Venetian subject. He also adds that should he enjoy such privilege, he would continue to trade benefitting the Venetian treasury and the embassy through the payment of consular duties. This important document shows how an Ottoman subject self-refashioned himself claiming membership to the Venetian community through the rhetorical device of a long-established loyalty to Venice by himself and his ancestors and by showing that he had already enjoyed the trade rights (that, the he behaved as a Venetian) enjoyed by Venetian citizens and fulfilled his obligations as member of such community, through the payment of the cottimo and the respect of community’s rules, such as the prohibition to sue a Venetian subject in an Ottoman court. These social actions produced public reputation and through them Stefano “proved” to be behave like Venetian subjects and the baili effectively recognized him as member of the community by supporting his trade ventures with Venice and allowing him, as well as his close relatives, to participate to the community’s most important decisions in the Council of the Twelve.

A last aspect of those registered as Venetian merchants deserves our attention, that is, how the identification of these individuals actually took place. In no registers of the chancery we find instances of registration of “Venetian merchants” when they arrived to Istanbul for the first time. Registration in the Venetian chancery was not obligatory and it took place, as we will see below, only when individuals sought to be recognized as members of the community. This was not the

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18 We encounter a similar rhetoric of devotion and service to the Venice cause in the petitions submitted to Venetian authorities by those Ottoman subjects in provincial centers who applied to become Venetian consuls. Signori (2018).
case with the aforementioned Venetian merchants. Unfortunately, our sources tell us nothing about which they identified themselves once in Istanbul. However, based on existing literature on the early modern Mediterranean, we can put forth some hypotheses. First, in the seventeenth century, letters of recommendation were spread means of identification used by merchants and single travelers. These documents were usually written by influential individuals: in our case, the latter might have been Venetian officials in Venice and its dominions, nobles and other categories of Venetian citizens, likely the principal partners of our merchants. The bailo too issued these documents to both Venetian and Ottoman subjects of any religious faith, sex, and occupation. Another device of identification was the fede, a legal certificate, which, in the early modern period, registered different legal and economic deeds as well as individual identity. Individuals obtained it by appealing to notary court where written document or, more likely, the testimony of their acquaintances (fidefacente) confirmed their identity. Overall, all such documents could provide the bailo and his secretary with a proof of the reputation of the individuals.

B) Colonial subjects

The largest section of the Venetian community in Istanbul was constituted by colonial subjects coming mostly from Crete, Venice’s last major possession in the Levant, and the Aegean island of Tinos. In his final report (relazione) of his ambassadorship before the Venetian Senate in 1612, the bailo Simone Contarini put to more than 3,000 the number of individuals hailing from

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19 Signori (2018).
20 Venetian records show several examples of letters of recommendation produced by the bailo. For instance, BAC.
these two islands who resided in Istanbul. However, the aforementioned census of the European of Galata in 1616 registered only 71 individuals from these islands.

In scholarly literatures, they are usually uncritically described as “Greeks” but the meaning of the term “Greek” in the early modern period did not refer to a precise ethnic, political, and geographical community. “Greek” could refer to a religious group (Orthodox Christians), a linguistic group, and profession (such as sailors in the Mediterranean ports and merchants in the Balkans). In the records of the Venetian consular court the term Greek is extremely rare and we trace colonial subjects only when Venetian scribes register their place of origin (232 individuals between 1612 and 1620). The baili themselves in their reports described these colonial subjects exclusively according to their places of origin, for instance, they call Cretans as “Candiotti” while those from Tinos are “Tiniotti.” The lack of any reference to a religious identity or to political status of these colonial subjects makes impossible to distinguish between Orthodox and Catholics, who constituted an important religious minority in Greek islands under Venetian sovereignty, and between Venetian and Ottoman Christian subjects.

Furthermore, we lack also any information about the civil status of these individuals in their hometowns which points also to a lack of a normative framework to deal with colonial subjects in Venetian chancery.

Colonial subjects came to Istanbul mostly to find occupation in the city’s numerous industries or in low profile professions. The Ottoman census of 1616 register them as 15 worked as weavers (yapağıcı), 16 as grocers (bostancı), 15 as coopers (varilci), 11 as sailors (mellah), 7 as daily laborers (ırgat), 2 as bakers (hayyat), one as an assistant of a merchant (hizmetkar), and

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21 Relazione di Simone Contarini (1612)
22 Grenet (2017)
23 Arbel (2014)
24 Apellaniz (2013) 165
only one as merchant (*tacir*). A document from the chancery, dated 1627, described forty one of them as working in the woolen industry which, together with shipbuilding in the Ottoman arsenal, constituted the most important occupation for Venetian colonial subjects. The Venetian government was much concerned about emigration to Istanbul of this skilled workforce as it feared Venetian shipbuilding industry in the Levantine colonies would suffer in a period of constant Ottoman military threats against these territories and of heightened piracy in the Aegean Sea. Consequently, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, it instructed the *baili* to encourage subjects to return to their native places with promises of new occupations, financial aid, and by granting safe-conducts to those who had been banned from the colonies. At the same time, it urged the Venetian authorities in Tinos and Crete to help the local shipping industry through different measures such providing higher wages and limiting the number of ships coming to Istanbul.

Another important group of colonial subjects in Istanbul was involved in the trade between Istanbul and the islands of Tinos and Crete. The scribes of the Venetian chancery never record them as “merchants” even though the records of this institution contain several examples of their commercial activities. Cretan merchants brought to Istanbul a vast array of agricultural products from olive oil, raisins, lemon juices, but more important, the famed Cretan wines. Some of them ventured into the Black Sea, which the Ottomans had closed to European shipping since the fifteenth century, to trade with the Ottoman tributary Principality of Moldovia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. All these Cretan merchants played a minor role in the life of the Venetian community since they never took part to the Council of the Twelve and they show a

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25 VGMA 1772, Folio 12/13
26 Dursteler, 81.
27 For instance, see ASV, Senato Deliberazioni, Constantinopoli (SDel), Reg. 10 (6-02-1607) 128r/129v. See also, Dursteler (2006), 84/85.
lower social and economic profile in comparison with those registered as “Venetian merchants.”

However, there are a few notable exceptions.

An example is the family partnership of Giovanni Battista Veveli and his sons Costantino and Luca from the Cretan town of Rethymnon. Between 1580s and 1630s, they engaged in the lucrative wine trade between Crete and the Moldavian town of Kilia (today in Ukraine), from where they dispatched their goods to Polish towns, and they imported to Istanbul and Venetian territories local products such as sturgeon and caviar. They owned ships, sailed in the Black Sea, and entered agency and credit relations with numerous Venetian and Ottoman subjects and officials in Istanbul and Moldova. Costantino married the daughters of Moldovan princes (hospodar), played a role in the principality’s political life, and held administrative offices in that principality, such as that of chief customs official. In their trade activities, they used both Venetian and Ottoman legal institutions and appealed to the bailo when they faced problems with Ottoman authorities in Black Sea ports or when they suffered losses due to pirate attacks.29

These merchants clearly were major economic actors connecting the Venetian, Ottoman, and Eastern European markets and entertained relations with Ottoman officials as well. Yet, can we call them “Venetian merchants”? They did not trade with Venice, did not take part to any session of the council of the Twelve, and appealed used the legal and notarial services of the Venetian chancery only seldom (only 12 cases out of 1798 notarial transactions) and there they are never recorded as “Venetian merchants.” However, they sought bailo’s support whenever need arose. Overall, that they did not take parts the main Venetian mercantile networks connecting Venice and the Levant and cratered new extensive ones with Ottoman subjects and authorities. However,

29 For a sketch of the business careers of Battista, Costantino, and Luca Veveli see Christian Luca (2008). For instances of bailo’s support to them vis-à-vis Ottoman authorities see Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives), Ecnebi Defterleri.
in case of need they claimed membership to Venetian community in Istanbul by appealing to its institutions.

There was not a common migration trajectory of Venice’s colonial subjects in Istanbul. Some migrating to Istanbul went back to their native towns after a certain period of occupation, others moved together with their families or they joined kin already migrated there, while others married local Ottoman Christian women and started families and never returned to their native lands. Some merged with the large Christian community of the Ottoman capital (mostly Greek Orthodox), and accepted Ottoman sovereignty while others claimed membership to the Venetian community. In order to be recognized as Venetians they appealed to the Venetian chancery for a certificate, called either a *fede* (see above) or a *bollettino del carazo*, registering that they were Venetian subjects. They obtained these documents through either the testimony of other people or presenting written documentation. Unfortunately, we do not have information about this written records but we can hypothesize they were *fedi* issued by Venetian officials or preeminent individuals, such as clergymen, in their home countries. In the early seventeenth century, *fedi/bollettini* were relatively cheap as they costed 4 aspers and this might explain why several individuals applied to them.

In the period before the War of Crete (1645-1669), these documents survived in specific registers of the chancery only for a few years between 1597 and 1606. Between 1601 and 1606, 333 individuals obtained to these documents, coming mostly from Crete (183) and Tinos (127). Theoretically, Ottoman authorities recognized these documents even though research so far does

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31 Relazione di Ottaviano Bon (1609). This bailo reports that he often did not grant these documents in order to encourage colonial subjects to return to their home countries.
32 In 1616, 4 aspers corresponded to 0,032 Venetian ducats (1 ducat=125 aspers).
33 BAC 297
not demonstrate, with a degree of certainly, if this was the case and how such recognition took place. However, the fact that hundreds of individuals sought and obtained these documents suggests that they provided a security against Ottoman attempts to register them as Ottoman subjects. Furthermore, theoretically they lasted one year after which they had to be renewed by the holders. Yet, public reputation and social practices might have made such renewal unnecessary.\textsuperscript{34}

As we have seen, consular registration was not obligatory and it was not a central concern for Venetian officials, rather, it was voluntary act by individuals seeking to enjoy the status of protected foreigners in the Ottoman Empire. Apart from a very few individuals from Venice and the Terraferma (3), those obtaining these documents were colonial subjects from the Levant. None of the afore-described Venetian merchants sought such certification. A low social and economic profile of these colonial subjects, a reason \textit{per se} for their immigration to Istanbul, and their blurred relationship with the Venetian community may explain their recourse to consular registration. Apart from paying chancery fees for economic and legal deeds they did not seem to have contribute much to the life of community. Artisans and other subjects not involved in trade did not pay consular duties and they did not take part in the community’s main decisions. On their contrary, those registered as Venetian merchants had a higher social and economic profile, played an active role in the affairs of the community, and paid consular taxes. Their public reputation made written registration of membership to the community unnecessary.

C) Other members of the community

The second largest group of members of the Venetian nation were the bandits. From the last two decades of the sixteenth century onwards hundreds of individuals, mostly men but also a few

\textsuperscript{34} Signori (2018).
women, who had been banned by Venetian authorities in the Levant moved to Istanbul to seek occupations in city’s industries. Some of them resided in the Ottoman capitals for several years, finding occupation, blending with the city’s populations and accepting Ottoman suzerainty. Others after a certain period re-claimed membership to the Venetian community by applying to the bailo for safe-conducts or to have their sentence repelled. In 1581, the Council of Ten (Concilio dei Dieci) authorized the baili to annul/modify sentences issued by Venetian tribunals in the Levant and authorities (salvo di assultione) and issue safe-conducts for convicted individuals to return to their home places to settle their controversies without being arrested or to temporarily settle in specific areas. In other cases, the latter’s freedom depended on a certain period of service, especially in the Venetian fleet. Only between 1612 and 1620, 943 bandits appeared before the bailo. Almost all hailed from the islands of Crete, Tinos, Cephalonia, and Zakynthos. A few of them (16) were Cretan Jews while other 6 were Christian women. Bandits, together with manumitted slaves, are the only groups of individuals being registered in the chancery through a physical description. Such registration procedure produced many more information than any other one about an individual because it aimed to provide more detailed identification of their carrier once in Venetian territory in order to avoid detention. However, it was also more prone to falsification. One of the reason why the baili easily granted safe-conduct or reverse sentences was to control Venetian subjects residing in the Ottoman capital in order to avoid potential controversies with Ottoman authorities due to their actions and also their conversion to Islam. Safe-conducts and annulment of sentences were instruments through which the bailo tried to encourage these individuals to return to their native countries, just as it was the case with free colonial subjects.

35 Mentioned in Senato Deliberazioni Costantinopoli (....) and Dursteler (2006),
Another important group in the Venetian community were the dragomans (dragomanni, tercüman), diplomatic interpreters, translators, and commercial brokers. They received stipends from the Venetian government and played an important role in the social and economic life of the Venetian community because they conducted most of the diplomacy between the baili and Ottoman authorities, the commercial negotiations between Venetian merchants and Ottoman merchants and customs officials, and represented Venetians in Ottoman courts. Different dragomans served different tasks: the chief dragoman (dragomanno grande) was the bailo’s main negotiator with Ottoman officials, travelling dragomans (dragomanni di strada) accompanied the bailo during his and travelled across the Ottoman Empire to conduct diplomacy on the behalf of the bailo, while others (dragomanni ordinari) served Venetian merchants in the marketplaces and customs offices in Galata and in the chancery. During the 1610s, they were 16 and they all originated from a few preeminent Catholic families of Galata. The Venetian Senate elected them, and they received a regular stipend from the Venetian government. Thanks to the important services they provided to the Venetian embassy and the Venetian community in Istanbul, from the early seventeenth century onwards, they started to become Venetian protégés enjoying the same legal status of protected foreigners, a status which, as we will see, at times the Ottoman authorities contested. Another group of dragomans, usually employed for less important functions, were Venetian subjects trained in the language school of the embassy, “giovani di lingua” (language apprentices), which was founded in 1551 in order to free the baili from dependence of non-Venetian dragomans.

The chancery registered the appointment of all dragomans. After electing them the Venetian Senate issued appointment deeds (called patenti) which were later recorded in the records of

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38 Dursteler (2006)
chancery. The public nature of their office, as it was the case with all the officials of the Venetian embassy, and the still uncertain legal status in the early seventeenth century made such registration mandatory. Apart from the registration deeds, dragomans do not appear often in the chancery records. They appear in few lawsuits (15) and notarial transactions (34), but they played the important role of procedural witnesses in several legal and notarial deeds (28%, 235 cases).

D) Membership for what?

After reviewing major groups of individuals who negotiated their membership to the Venetian community, we should ask which actual advantages did such membership entail. Which specific communal resources did individuals seeking recognition as members of the community want to obtain? Merchants, colonial subjects, and others sought foremost the legal and economic privileges enshrined in the Venetian capitulations and protection by Venice’s embassy. Among the privileges, fiscal exemption, inheritance and juridical advantages played a central role. Fiscal exemption included the abovementioned poll tax on non-Muslims and other increasingly burdensome taxes introduced by the Ottoman authorities from the last sixteenth onwards. However, Venetian subjects were still liable to the payment of customs duties whose amount was a constant source of negotiations between Ottoman and Venetian officials. Inheritance privileges entailed the immunity from the authority of the beytülmalci, an official of the Ottoman Treasury, charged with managing the heirless estates of deceased individuals.\(^{39}\) As a standard procedure, when an individual died without apparent heirs in the empire, this official prepared inventories of estates, and waited for certain amount of time for heirs and creditors to lay claims to such properties. In the cases of Venetian subjects, the baili collected the properties of deceased, drew

\(^{39}\) Boogert (2005), Tamdogan (2015)
inventories, and arranged for their dispatch to Venetian territories. Among the above described certificates of Venetian subjecthoods (fedi or bollettini del carazo) sought by colonial subjects, a few (8 out of 333) are registered to deceased individuals hinting that the protection of a line of succession was an important reason for claiming membership to the Venetian community.

Lastly, but likely the most important reason, individuals sought the baili’s diplomatic protections in case of controversies with Ottoman authorities and subjects. Venetian ambassadorial reports are replete with cases of Venetian subjects of any social and economic background seeking the baili’s support when suffering physical violence, illegal tax imposition, and economic losses at the hands of Ottoman authorities, like customs officials, and subjects belonging to any religious group in the marketplace. Despite enjoying some noticeable privileges in Ottoman courts, such as the presence of Venetian dragomans and obligation for Ottoman culprits to present written proof in order to sue a Venetian, Venetian subjects always try to avoid appearing at court and appealed to the baili in case of lawsuits brought against them by Ottoman subjects. As a matter of fact, the baili strove to defend any Ottoman subjects from Ottoman threats regardless of socioeconomic background.

2) Ottoman identification practices: contesting and restricting membership to the Venetian community

After the historical actors, the Venetian chancery, Ottoman administrative and legal authorities were the third actor in processes of identification of Venetians in Istanbul. Such processes were contingent on both Ottoman identification practices and constant diplomacy with Venetian officials.

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40 Boogert (2005).
During the early modern period, in the Ottoman Empire registration of individuals reflected the fiscal needs of the state rather than major concerns on controlling the mobility of individuals.\textsuperscript{41} Taxation constituted the main line of demarcation in the Ottoman society: regardless of religious and ethnic affiliation, the subjects of the Ottoman sultans were divided between tributary tax-payers (\textit{reaya}), mostly peasants, merchants, and artisans, and non-tax payers (\textit{askerî}), army and administrative officials, and jurists/scholars (\textit{ulema}). Fiscal obligations affected also the other key marker of social division in the empire, religion. Following the precepts of Islamic law (Sharia), Ottoman officials conferred on Christians and Jews, called \textit{zimmi}, a discriminatory fiscal and legal standing: they had to pay a poll-tax (called either \textit{cizye} or \textit{haraç} in the Ottoman context), faced several restrictions on worship, attire, and at court, and they had to pay higher rates of customs duties. Specific Ottoman tax collectors (called \textit{haracci}) registered those non-Muslims liable to the payment of the \textit{haraç}, usually the head of a household, in particular registers (\textit{cizye defterleri}).\textsuperscript{42} The close association between non-Muslims and the payment of the \textit{haraç} is evident in the term \textit{haraçguzar} (\textit{haraç}-payer) which in Ottoman administrative and diplomatic documents denoted non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. Venetian officials in the metropolitan and in the Ottoman Empire too adopted this term (\textit{carazaro} in the Venetian sources) to refer Ottoman Christians and Jews.

Also in the case of Venetian subjects residing and conducting business in the Ottoman Empire fiscal status was a key marker of their legal and economic standing. The capitulations, the bilateral diplomatic and commercial agreements between the Venetian and the Ottoman governments, define the condition of Venetians residing in the empire foremost according to

\textsuperscript{41} Under distressful political, economic, and social circumstances, such as during conflicts and rebellions, the Ottoman authorities could enforce checks on urban immigration and registrations of individuals. Başaran (2012).
\textsuperscript{42} Darling (1996).
exemption from the *haraç*, which was the key marker of subjecthood to the Ottoman sultans. For instance, the capitulations of 1604 states the following:

“There coming from Venice and its territories to my Well-Protected Domains to conduct business, be married or bachelor, on a temporary basis should not pay the *haraç.*”

This clause, more than any other articles of the capitulations, determines the status of the Venetian “protected foreigner,” called in Islamic legal terminology *müstemim*. It was repeated in numerous imperial rescripts (*firman* or *hüküm*) issued whenever controversies arose about the status of Venetian subjects. As we have seen above, the status of privileged foreigners entailed several privileges which distinguished Venetians from Ottoman subjects. Among them, as we have seen, fiscal exemption from not only the *haraç* but also other state taxes introduced from the late sixteenth century onwards, immunity from the authority Ottoman treasury when a Venetian died in the empire, consular protection, and specific procedural advantages in Ottoman courts.

The aforementioned article of the capitulations links the enjoyment of the status of the protected foreigner to the limited duration of the permanence in the empire and the conduction of business. According to Hanafi legal doctrine (the official school of law of the Ottoman Empire) a *müstemim* was the recipient of an *aman*, a safe-conduct. Theoretically, the validity of such safe-conduct was limited to one solar year after which the beneficiary would either have to leave the country or he would automatically become a non-Muslim Ottoman subject (*zimmi*). However, in the Ottoman case, such limitation was not usually observed and Venetians, as well as the

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44 Schacht (1086).
subjects of other European states beneficiaries of the capitulations, resided in the empire for extended periods. For instance, the Cypriot Nicolò Soruro di Piero, one of the most active Venetian merchants of the early seventeenth century, married an Ottoman Christian woman and stayed in Istanbul consecutively at least twenty-three years, from 1601 up to his death in 1624.\textsuperscript{45} Records of the Venetian and other European communities are replete of instances of merchants and other individuals residing in Ottoman cities for several years.

Nevertheless, the duration of residence at times became a matter of controversy between the Venetian and the Ottoman authorities. Especially from the early seventeenth century onwards, the growing number and size of European communities in the empire led to periodic attempts by Ottoman officials in to regulate the duration of their residence of Europeans and to define membership to the legal category of privileged foreigner with its rights and duties. Such initiatives often brought about diplomatic controversies and negotiations between Ottoman and European officials over the status of protected foreigners. At stakes was access to economic resources, like local markets and occupation in Ottoman industries, and state sovereignty over an increasingly large numbers group of individuals. Ottoman and Venetian authorities differed over the requirements, such as the length of residence, marital status, and occupation, to be identified as member of the Venetian community in the empire. Controversies and negotiations to solve them represent an excellent context for understanding the often-shifting points of contentions in determining membership to the Venetians and divergent practices of identification employed by Ottoman and Venetian authorities. Furthermore, they are another proof of the fundamentally negotiated nature of membership to European communities. I will now present one of this episode, the dispute introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the Carazo Affair.

\textsuperscript{45} BAC, .... For a brief sketch of his business career see Dursteler (2006).
The Carazo Affair 1613-1617

Between Fall of 1613 and the spring of 1617, the international community in the district of Galata was engaged in fending off repeated attempts by the Qadi of Galata, Ali Efendi (office 1613-1616), to impose the haraç and other Ottoman taxes on the subjects of Republic Venice, France, England, and the Dutch Republic and on the dragomans attached to the embassies of these countries. Such episode, known in historiography as the “Carazo Affair” (haraç affair) involved joint diplomatic efforts from European ambassadors and the participation of high-ranking political and legal Ottoman authorities, two Grand Viziers (the sultan’s deputy) and two of the empire’s chief jurisprudents (şeyhülislam). It generated substantial paper trail that enables to reconstruct the main point of contentions, especially from the lesser known Ottoman standpoint, and how the settlement was reached by Ottoman and Venetian authorities. It was not an isolated episode as Ottoman attempts to levy the haraç from foreign Europeans took place occasionally in Istanbul and in the empire’s commercial hub till the early nineteenth century. I will focus here on the Ottoman side.

The Ottoman reasons for imposing the haraç are all clear in a fatwa (fetva in Ottoman Turkish, a non-binding legal opinion) issued by the şeyhülislam Sadeddinzade Esad Efendi (office 1615-22; 1623-25) on request of the Qadi Ali Efendi sometimes in 1616.

Question: “Some infidels from the Above of War (harbi taifesinden) come to the Above of Islam (Dar al-Islam) with a safe-conduct individually or by groups of two, they reside for five, ten, twenty, and thirty years and even more, they purchase lands and vineyards, and they marry with non-Muslim Ottoman women (zimmiye) and have children….Are they liable, according to the Sharia, to pay the haraç?

46 Krstic (2012).
Answer: “…residing for more than one year make them non-Muslim Ottoman subjects (ahl-i zimmet). They must pay the haraç and they must be prevented from returning to the Abode of War.”

As this fatwa shows, for the Ottoman authorities they key points of contention were the Europeans’ long duration of residence in the empire, the possession of real estate, and marriage. According to the aforementioned şeyhülislam, the Qadi Ali Efendi, and other Ottoman authorities who advocated for a stricter implementation of Hanafi law in the capitulations, Europeans who sojourned more than one year, purchase houses and lands, and married local Christian women lost the status of privileged foreigners and became “naturalized” Ottoman non-Muslims. In other three words, these three actions demonstrate, for the Ottoman authorities, their “willingness” to definitely settle in the empire accepting Ottoman sovereignty and becoming members of the Ottoman society. By becoming Ottoman subjects, the were liable to Ottoman taxes but they also acquired the rights to own real estate, marry local women, and start a family. The exclusion of protected foreigners for these last two rights was periodically repeated in several imperial orders issued to European powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (last 1791)

After the issuance of this fatwa, in September 1616, the Qadi conducted the census of all the Europeans (called collectively “Franks” in the administrative and legal documents) residing in the commercial district of Galata and in its surroundings in order verify their possession of real estate and marital status. It also included all the dragomans serving the embassies as also they had begun enjoying the status of privileged foreigners. This census was not a common

47 Suleymaniye Kutuphanesi, Esad Efendi
Ottoman practice of identification but, rather, the product of an international controversy.\textsuperscript{48}

Ottoman authorities did not usually register the Europeans coming to the Ottoman Empire since, apart from merchants, they were exempted from state taxes. Those practicing trade paid customs duties on the goods they both brought to and exported from Istanbul and they received from customs officials (emin) a receipt (tezkere) of this payment. However, as research so far shows, customs officials did not register such receipts, which contained the name of the payer, in specific customs registers.

As we have seen, the census registered 108 individuals as belonging to the Venetian community plus 11 dragomans. Furthermore, it lists the colonial subjects (71) coming from the islands of Tinos and Crete separately from the Venetian community. It indicates physical description, marital status, occupation, and place of residence for each of them. Merchants were a minority (37) while the rest of individuals are registered as coopers, weavers, jewelers, sailors, ship scribes, tailors, grocers, and servants of merchants and a few other professions. Only two Venetians owned real estate (mülk) were they rest are recorded as sojourning (sakin) in rented houses belonging to local Christians and Muslims or to Islamic foundations (vakif). Among all, there were 32 were married men, included two merchants. On the contrary of the Venetian subjects, the eight Venetian dragomans are registered as “long-time inhabitants of Galata” (kadimden Galatalı olup) and as having avoided, with excuse of working as interpreters, paying the haraç and other state taxes. They resided either in their own houses (4) or in the Venetian embassy (7). Lastly, the census excluded from the Venetian community all those Catholics of Galata, who, in the records of the Venetian chancery, we have seen registered as “Venetian merchants” in the sessions of the Council of Twelve and as petitioning the bailo to be made into

\textsuperscript{48} Ottoman authorities conducted a census of the French community in 1757. Boogert (2005).
Venetian subjects. Despite their intense trade activities with Venice, their payment of consular dues, the participation to the community’s main decisions, for the Ottoman officials they remained Ottoman subjects and they were listed in a separate section for the tax-paying Franks of Galata.\footnote{VGM 1722.}

The baili and the other European ambassadors opposed this classification and the ensuing imposition of the haraç. In his negotiations with Ottoman authorities, the baili stressed that this tax was the violation of the capitulations, the sultan’s pledge. Their reports to Venice about the crisis shed light on the main concerns for Venetian officials: ruin of trade, loss of jurisdiction, and inheritance rights. Firstly, they opposed the one-year limit on the residence of the merchants as they consider it greatly destructive for the conduct of trade. Secondly, as the bailo Almoro Nani puts it, the payment of the haraç was not burden itself since in 1616 it equaled only to two sequins yearly.\footnote{The census registers the haraç levied on each European subject to 545 aspers, that is, about 4 ducats.} However, it symbolized the acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty: imposing it on the Venetians meant to turn them into Carazari (non-Muslim Ottoman subjects) and baili would lose jurisdiction over them.\footnote{Senato Costantinopoli Deliberazioni} Furthermore, as he repeated during any round of negotiations with Ottoman officials, by paying the haraç Venetian subjects would lose their estates, and consequently those of their business partners (principalì) in Venice, when they die in the empire since officials of the Ottoman treasury, the aforementioned beytülmalci, would confiscate them. The protection of a line of succession, especially when that it threatened the investments of Venetian citizens back in Venice, was an utmost concern for the baili.

The baili rejected the exclusion of married and property-owning individuals and the dragomans from the privileges of the capitulations. The Venetian Senate repeatedly instructed
them to defend all Venetian subjects from the harac, even those who had married with local women, owned properties in the Ottoman capital, and live in the empire for several years. Furthermore, both in its letters to the baili and those directed to Ottoman authorities, it defended dragomans’ membership to the Venetian community on the grounds, despite they were born in the Empire, that they served the Venetian embassy receiving a stipend and they “depended on Venice for everything.”

After protracted negotiations between the European ambassadors and different Ottoman authorities, a settlement was finally reached in spring 1617. A general imperial order (nisan) ended the crisis by clarifying the status of “privileged foreigners.” The order defines the latter as those “those merchants (tüccar taifesinden) who comes to Istanbul to conduct business (ticaret ve kar ü kesb içün) without settling indefinitely (mütemekkin olmayup) and returning to the home countries and who are unmarried (mücerred).” It continues stating that “those {registered in the census} once in Istanbul got married and purchase real estate and refuse to pay the harac with the excuse that they trade and are not permanent residents must pay the harac…and, if they die without an heir, they estates (goods and real estates) must be confiscated.” Furthermore, the imperial order exempted from the capitation tax three married and unmarried dragomans of Venice and the other European states.

This imperial order provided a more specific definition of the privileged Venetian than those of the capitulations. It restricted membership to this privileged group only to those unmarried long-distance merchants who had come to the empire and went back to their home countries after conducting business. However, it did not clarify the crucial issue of the duration.

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52 The full lengthy definition of the privileged foreigner in the nisan is the following “...meşarüileh vilayetlerinden ticaret ve kar ü kesb içün gelüp mütemekkin olmayup ticaret ile vilayetlerine giden tüccar taifesinden Galata ve nevahisindende ve mukir-i hilaletim olan İstanbul ve navahisinde gelüp tavattun etmeyup mücerred tüccar taifesinden varid olan ferman-ı şerifim mücibince harac talep olunmayup min baad rencide itmeye...”
limit of residence apart from the generic expression “without settling permanently” and it did not establish any procedures in this regard. Overall, this order’s ruling, if enforced, would have excluded from such category all but 35 of all 108 (plus the 71 colonial subjects) individuals recorded as Venetians in the Ottoman census and of the much larger number of individuals whom the bailo considered and treated as members of the Venetian community. However, from Venetian reports following the crisis we do not know if or how far Ottoman authorities enforced this ruling since we do not find any complaints about the forced payment of the harac. It surely did not establish a lasting practice because during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries periodical imperial orders reinstated the prohibitions against foreign merchants marry local women and owning real estate.53 Furthermore, Venetian records contain instances of Venetian subjects marrying Ottoman women in the years after the issuance of 1616 prohibition.

Overall, the unfolding of the Carazo affair and the final order ending it shed light on those social categories whose membership to the Venetian community was more likely to be contested by Ottoman authorities. Firstly, the dragomans. As late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, their status as Venetian protégés enjoying the same legal and economic standing and other Venetians was still controversial and Ottoman authorities at times contested it as the issuance of several imperial orders to exempt them from the payment of the harac demonstrate.54 Only later in second half of seventeenth the century, and above all in the eighteenth century, their status became more secure as new procedures, such as the granting of an imperial patent (berat), regulated their privileges. Secondly, non-merchant individuals, who both Venetian and Ottoman sources show as constituting the majority of the Venetian community, constituted its weakest

53 For instance, an imperial decree of 1677 by the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha prohibited European merchants from marrying with local women while, more than century later in 1791, another imperial command forbade them from owning real estates. Boogert (2005), 171/172.
54 Boogert (2005)
social group. Artisans, daily labors, and all those practicing low profile occupations, were more likely to be registered as Ottoman subjects in Ottoman tax registers. Most of these individuals were immigrants from territories in the Levant or from the Terraferma, who stayed in the city for long-periods, some of them even settled them permanently, married local Christian women and started families. They did not pay customs duties, the major duty of the privileged foreigner in the capitulations, and apart, from seasonal workers, did not move as much as Venetian merchants or were less associated with mobility by Ottoman authorities. A low-profile occupation and little mobility, especially if coupled with marrying a local woman and starting a family, could lead to Ottoman “naturalization.”