



The Ragusa Road: Mobility and Encounter in the Ottoman Balkans (1430-1700)

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The Ragusa Road:
Mobility and Encounter in the Ottoman Balkans (1430-1700)

A dissertation presented by
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to

The Committee of Middle Eastern Studies

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of human mobility in the western provinces of the Ottoman empire in the early modern era. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans had absorbed nearly the entire Balkan Peninsula. Dubrovnik (also known as Ragusa), a small mercantile republic on the Adriatic Sea, found itself surrounded by Ottoman territory. Dubrovnik managed to maintain its autonomy and preserve its coastal territories by accepting the position of tribute-paying vassal to the Ottoman state. In this context, the Ragusa Road, which stretched across Ottoman Rumelia (the Balkan Peninsula) to Istanbul, developed into a major axis of trade, diplomacy, and exchange. Unlike other pathways in the region, such as the *Via Egnatia* to the south, the Ragusa Road did not play a prominent role in earlier Roman transportation networks. Furthermore, the route was longer and more mountainous than alternatives. Yet, by the early sixteenth century, the Ragusa Road had become established as the most important East-West highway across the Balkan Peninsula, a corridor of communications linking the Ottoman capital to western Europe.

I explore the forces that conditioned and propelled overland travel on the Ragusa Road. Ottoman and Ragusan actors used complementary policies and practices to reduce obstacles and encourage overland travel. The results were mutually beneficial, and led to the route's increasing prominence in long-distance patterns of movement. Merchants, diplomats, pilgrims and spies

increasingly elected to travel in Ragusan caravans, avoiding the vicissitudes of the maritime route. The cultural ramifications of the Ragusa Road's development are thus significant, as caravan travel brought together members of multiple religious, ethnic and linguistic communities, all of whom traveled together across a topographically challenging and culturally complex region. The records of these travelers reveal the unique cultural space of the road – and that of Ottoman Rumelia – in the early modern Mediterranean.

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Introduction

Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage¹

The verdant mountains at the intersection of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia do not, at first glance, appear to be a place to seek nodes of connection in international networks of exchange. Southeastern Europe in general does not figure highly in the study of connectivity. As the early modern scholarship of the Mediterranean has turned from the national to the global, the Ottoman capitals to the east (Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa) and the Italian centers of trade and culture to the west have perhaps never been closer. Yet the landmass between these cosmopolitan places remains obscure, a vague in-between territory in an otherwise increasingly unified Mediterranean. The "human unit" of the Mediterranean described by Fernand Braudel was defined by movement. Mobility was "the lifeblood" of an interconnected region, a force that transcended political and religious divisions.² The experience of movement by sea – the countless sailors from Venetian, Genoese, Ottoman, and myriad other ports going *around* the Balkan landmass – has been well studied. But flows of movement overland *across* the complex topography of the Balkan Peninsula remain vague and poorly understood.

¹ Joachim du Bellay, *Les Regrets*, sonnet XXXI, 1558.

² “The whole Mediterranean consists of movement in space. Anything entering it – wars, shadows of war, fashions, techniques, epidemics, merchandise light or heavy, precious or commonplace – may be caught up in the flow of its life blood, ferried over great distances, washed ashore to be taken up again and passed on endlessly, maybe even carried beyond its shores.” Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). Vol. I, 277.

In the early 1660s, the prodigious Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi made a number of trips across Rumelia, the western realms of the empire he served. Not far from the heights of the Dinaric Alps, in the sub-province (*sancak*) of Herzegovina, he passed through the town of Čajniče (BiH). Evliya paints a vivid picture of this town's precarious location, a place where horses, mules, and even children could slip and fall into the abyss-like valleys surrounding it. Yet, in this Ottoman traveler's telling, Čajniče was not the forlorn and isolated village one might expect. Rather, it was a prosperous commercial town (*kasaba-i âbâdan*) with five Muslim and three Christian districts (*mahalle*).³ Beside the town's Ottoman bridge (which Evliya singles out for its utility and vertigo-inducing height) were three *hans* (inns), each of which contained "the merchandise of Luristan and Multan and Venice and the Land of the Franks."⁴ Čajniče, in short, was an internationally connected place, just like the more prominent neighboring cities of Foča (BiH) and Pljevlje (Montenegro), each a day's journey in opposite directions. The golden finials adorning the Hasan Pasha Mosque in Pljevlje, for example, were sourced in Alexandria, Egypt, and the markets in this settlement featured goods from as far away as China.⁵ Meanwhile, the "thriving, ancient commercial city" of Foča, on the Drina River, featured Serbian, Bulgarian, Catholic and Jewish districts.⁶

³ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, 10 vols. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996-2007). Here vol. 6 (eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı), 253.

⁴ "Her birinde Laristân ve Moltan ve Venedik ve Firengistân metâ‘ları bulunur". Luristan/Loristan is a region in western Iran. Multan is a city known for Sufi devotion in Pakistan. Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6,

⁵ Evliya, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 251.

⁶ "belde-i bender-âbâd-ı kadîm şehr i Foča" Evliya, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 254.

What were the goods of China, Iran, Egypt and Western Europe doing in these three remote places? Even if we accept that Evliya may have been speaking figuratively about the geographic origins of the goods he encountered, the presence of commercially prosperous towns and cities deep in the Balkan hinterland is puzzling. What was driving their global reach? One answer is a road. Čajniče, Foča, and Pljevlje were all stopping places on the Ragusa Road, which extended from Dubrovnik (Croatia) on the Adriatic Sea across the Balkan Peninsula to Istanbul.⁷ The road was a channel for humans and animals, goods and ideas. It was an axis between the Bosphorus (center point of the Black Sea and northeastern Mediterranean regions), and the Adriatic Sea (between the Italian Peninsula and the Ottoman Balkans). The hinterland of Rumelia was more than a place in between coasts. It was crisscrossed with roads large and small where settlements became places of increasing international contact in the early modern period, reaching a peak in the sixteenth century.

Despite considerable geographical obstacles, caravan trade inland from Dubrovnik is attested from the late medieval era.⁸ With the arrival of the Ottomans in southeastern Europe in the fourteenth century, and the definitive Ottoman conquests of the fifteenth century, all phases of life in the Balkan Peninsula were impacted. In place of Byzantium and the medieval Slav states, the entire landmass was absorbed into the Ottoman empire, with the exception of

⁷ Ragusa and Dubrovnik are synonymous. Ragusa, the term still used by Italian speakers, appears more commonly in the city's early modern archival sources. Dubrovnik, the Slavic name for this multi-lingual state, is more frequently used in Ottoman writings. I will use the terms interchangeably, as they often were in contemporary documents.

⁸ Francis W. Carter: *Dubrovnik (Ragusa) A Classic City-State*. (New York, London: Seminar Press, 1972), 138.

the Venetian Stato da Mar and the Dubrovnik Republic, both clinging to a narrow strip of islands and coastline along the eastern Adriatic.

Dubrovnik's leaders first resisted, later reluctantly embraced, and finally thrived in the new Ottoman order. In 1442, the republic delivered 1000 Venetian (gold) ducats to the Ottoman Sultan Murad II, an act of submission that placed Ragusa under Ottoman protection. In exchange, the sultan signed a charter (*'ahid-nāme*, often translated as capitulations) that enumerated the most favorable terms enjoyed by any political entity in the Ottoman orbit. The exchange of tribute for charter remained the basic unit of Ottoman-Ragusan diplomacy for centuries. With protection from its (Venetian) enemies, political autonomy in its home territories, legal rights for its subjects in Ottoman territory, and a tax rate on goods sold in Ottoman lands that was even lower than that paid by the empire's Muslim subjects, Dubrovnik had all that it needed to thrive in the new political order. The City of St. Blaise (as Dubrovnik was sometimes known) possessed a merchant network that extended across the Mediterranean and, thanks to the charter, unmatched access to the huge market of Ottoman Rumelia. As a center point between land and sea networks, Ragusa reached new heights of prosperity, beginning in the late fifteenth century and continuing across the sixteenth. One of the consequences of the mutually beneficial Ottoman-Ragusan relationship was an increase in long-distance overland traffic from Dubrovnik. Obscure in classical times and moderately successful in the medieval era, the Ragusa Road in the Ottoman era became "undoubtedly the

most important route from the Adriatic to the Bosphorus," in continuous use by merchants, diplomats, pilgrims, and soldiers of many Mediterranean states.⁹

Chronology

The history of the Ragusa Road in the Ottoman era can be understood as a series of stages. The first (1430-1592), begins with the onset of direct relations between Dubrovnik and the Ottoman Sultan Murad II, and ends with the development of the Venetian port of Split, and the Split-Sarajevo road. In the second stage (1592-1645), Dubrovnik's road lost its primacy as Venice's economic gravity pulled overland traffic to the Split road to the north. This trend was temporarily reversed during the third stage, which corresponds to the Ottoman-Venetian War in Crete (1645-1669). The long war allowed Ragusa to regain the upper hand in the carrying business as the Ottomans embargoed Venetian trade and threatened Split and its hinterland. Dubrovnik's wartime ascendance came to an end with a devastating earthquake in 1667. A city-state with Dubrovnik's energy and resourcefulness might have recovered from a mere natural catastrophe. A gradual shift in the deep currents of global commerce was an even more consequential disaster. The influx of the Atlantic powers into the Levant trade, a slow-building process that began in the previous century, was reshaping long-established patterns of trade and communications, eroding the centrality of the Adriatic Sea. The damage from the

⁹ "Le chemin qui part de Dubrovnik (Raguse) pour se diriger vers Niš, Sofia ou Plovdiv est sans doute la route la plus importante parmi celles qui mènent de l'Adriatique au Bosphore" Stefanos Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs dans l'empire Ottoman* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 38.

earthquake on top of this inexorable development was a combination of forces from which Dubrovnik could not recover. During the road's fourth and final stage (1667-1808), delimited by the republic's fall to Napoleonic troops in 1808, overland travel from Dubrovnik continued as an increasingly minor operation.

This study concentrates on the development of the Ragusa Road in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the first stage), examining the strategies employed by Ragusan and Ottoman actors to enhance and control the movement of humans, animals and goods along a mutually beneficial overland route. These complementary efforts, I argue, were the basis of the success of the Ragusa Road and the cause of its longevity, despite the existence of shorter, less physically challenging alternatives. The history of the Ragusa Road in the Ottoman era makes it clear that routes were neither static nor neutral. Their shape and usage were profoundly influenced by political, economic, and even social forces, and the ability of road towns, traders, and travelers to harness those forces for their own benefit. Ultimately, this is neither a Ragusan nor an Ottoman story. It is a connected history of movement in the Mediterranean as the outcome of myriad interlocking visions, practices, and negotiations.¹⁰ To tell this story, I draw from international travel accounts, and Ottoman, Ragusan, and Venetian documents from archives in Turkey, Croatia, and Italy.

¹⁰ The concept of connected history is borrowed from Sanjay Subrahmanyam. In his work, e.g., *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), the author applies Braudelian approaches to study of the early modern Indian Ocean. I have interpreted the author's description of the Adriatic and Balkans as "geographical areas that have a tendency to remain distressingly murky" as a suggestion, rather than a warning.

Historiography

The generosity of the terms granted to its Christian vassal state, coupled with Dubrovnik's prominence in the caravan trade might seem to suggest Ottoman disregard for the conjoined issues of trade and mobility. The nineteenth-century historian Wilhelm Heyd's influential thesis of haughty Turkish disdain for commercial matters would support such a reading.¹¹ An early scholar of international trade routes expressed a similar view on the issue of the issue of "oriental traffic," noting "the notorious indifference" of the Ottomans to such matters.¹² Such assumptions were widespread and enduring. Nearly a century after Heyd, a prominent Ottoman historian invoked "tasks considered distasteful from the point of view of the Ottoman state ideology" as a plausible explanation for the Ottoman decision to grant Dubrovnik such generous privileges.¹³ This present dissertation argues that the Ottoman empire was neither indifferent, not uninvolved in the Ragusa Road, for the following reasons:

1. In privileging Dubrovnik, the Ottoman empire gained access to all markets and courts of Western Europe, at a time when the movements of Ottoman Muslim traders and envoys in the West were circumscribed.
2. The road (and trade) was not simply relegated to a non-Muslim subject population, but was created through the interconnected efforts by Ottoman and Ragusan actors.

¹¹ "Avec les Turcs, c'était tout le contraire; non-seulement ils n'avaient aucun gout pour le commerce, aucune idée d'en faire leur occupation, mais leur insatiable passion de conquêtes était précisément une perpétuelle cause de conflits entre eux et les principales nations commerçantes de l'Occident." Wilhelm Heyd, *L'Histoire du Commerce du Levant au moyen-âge* (Harrassowitz, 1885), 349.

¹² A.H. Lybyer, "The Ottoman Turks and the Routes of Oriental Trade" *The English Historical Review* 120 (October 1915): 588

¹³ Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-30" in *The Ottoman World and the World-Economy*, Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 313.

3. Ragusa's road and port gave the Ottomans an alternative diplomatic and economic channel to the West during times of conflict with Venice (i.e. 1463-79, 1499-1503, 1537-40, 1570-73, 1645-69)
4. Dubrovnik's tribute and customs payments were a significant and consistent source of hard currency.
5. When the Ottomans saw the opportunity to create a network with greater economic potential, they did not hesitate to do so, as with the development of Venetian Split and the Split-Sarajevo road from the 1590s.¹⁴

The sixteenth-century heyday of the Ragusa Road coincided with a marked increase in Mediterranean piracy. Could the success of overland travel simply have been a spontaneous reaction to insecurity on the seas? Is it possible that Ragusan and Ottoman efforts to control patterns of travel had only a minimal effect? This thesis is not supported by chronology. In Tenenti's view, the arrival of new forces that led to the decline of Venice's marine trade occurred only in the 1570s and 80s.¹⁵ Bostan, confining his view to the Adriatic Sea, likewise sees the increase in piracy and subsequent loss in maritime trade as a late sixteenth and early

¹⁴ The "Spalato Venture" as it was named by Braudel, is often credited to the vision of the Jewish merchant Daniel Rodriguez (referred to as 'Michael' by Braudel) with the support of the Venetian Republic. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), vol. 1, p. 286. See also Renzo Paci, *La "Scala" di Spalato e il commercio veneziano nei balcani fra cinque e seicento* (Venice: Deputazione di storia patria per le venezie [Miscellanea di studi e memorie vol. XIV], 1971), Sergio Anselmi, "Venezia e i Balcani: La 'Scala' di Spalato tra Cinque e Seicento" *Studi Storici* 13.2 (1972): 408-412. Paci (p. 48) and Cemal Kafadar points out the revealing fact that an Ottoman official proposed the original concept of developing a road from Split as an alternative to the Ragusa Road. The *sancakbeyi* of Klis (a few miles inland from Split) outlined the proposal in a letter to the Venetian Senate in 1573. Cemal Kafadar, "A Death in Venice: Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986), 204.

¹⁵ Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice 1580-1615*, trans. Janet and Brian Pullan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), xvi

seventeenth-century phenomenon.¹⁶ Prior to these developments, Bracewell finds the beginnings of the notorious Uskoks (Dalmatian pirates) in 1530s, but even this is not early enough to explain the rise of the Ragusa Road, which was well established by this point.¹⁷ Piracy certainly contributed to the choice made by many merchants and travelers to select land routes across the Balkans, but it was not the primary cause of increased overland mobility in the sixteenth century. Caravan travel from Dubrovnik could never match the speed of a fast ship in good weather conditions, but once Ottoman security measures and infrastructural improvements were in place, the overall uncertainty and risk of a trans-Balkan voyage was much lower than the sea route. Not the shortest way to or from Istanbul, the Ragusa Road was nevertheless efficient, reliable, and an increasingly popular option over the course of the sixteenth century. The Venetian *bailo* Vettore Bragadin, making his way home from Istanbul in June 1566, preferred to follow the "stradda di Ragusi," as it was "more comfortable, and more abundant in the things needed to live and lodge"¹⁸

The study of overland mobility in southeastern Europe remains heavily reliant on the nineteenth-century works of Konstantin Jireček, who traced the trade routes and highways of the Balkan Peninsula.¹⁹ In the Yugoslav era, the political economy of the caravan trade became

¹⁶ Idris Bostan, *Adriyatik'te Korsanlık* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2009), 56.

¹⁷ Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 4.

¹⁸ "Io mi partirò da qui piacendo a Dio damattina, et mi metterò alla stradda di Ragusi, come piu commoda, et piu abbondante delle cose necessarie al viver et alli alogiar" Vettore Bragadin, Pera, 15 June 1566. ASV, *Senato III (Secreta) Dispacci ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, Busta 1, #32.

¹⁹ Konstantin Jireček, *Die Handelsstrassen und Bergwerke von Serbien und Bosnien während des Mittelalters* (Prague, 1879); idem, *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe* (Amsterdam: Verlag Hamer, 1967).

a subject of interest for multiple studies, based on documents from Dubrovnik's rich archives. Research by Mikhailo Dinić, Sergije Dimitrijević, and Bogumil Hrabak reveals insight into the structure and organization of the Ragusan caravan trade, including information on the volume and composition of commodities imported and exported.²⁰ Research on Dubrovnik and its encounter with the Ottomans overall is found in the work of Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Bariša Krekić, Ivan Božić, Toma Popović, Nicolas Biegman, Francis Carter, Boško Bojović, Halil İnalçık, Idris Bostan, and Robin Harris.²¹ Vesna Miović's study of Ottoman-Ragusan diplomacy has illuminated, among other things, the critical role of Dubrovnik's *poklisari* (tribute ambassadors) whose diplomatic assignment required them to travel the Ragusa Road to Istanbul and back every year.²² An essential recent addition to the field is Zdenko Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*

²⁰ Mikhailo Dinić, *Dubrovačka srednjevekovna karavanska trgovina* (1937); Sergije Dimitrijević, *Dubrovački Karavani u južnoj Srbiji u XVII veku/Les Caravanes de Dubrovnik dans la Serbie du Sud au XVIIe siècle* (Belgrade, 1958); Bogumil Hrabak, "Kramari u karavanskom saobraćaju preko Sandžaka" in (1470-1720), *Simpozijum: Seoski dani Sretena Vukosavljevića* Vol. X (1983),

²¹ Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1943-), vols. 2, 3, 4. Of the many works of Bariša Krekić, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Mouton, 1961) is the most relevant and accessible. Ivan Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska u xiv i xv Veku* (Belgrade, 1952); Toma Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI Veku* (Belgrade, 1973); Nicolaas Biegman, *The Turco-Ragusan relationship. According to the firmāns of Murād III (1575-1595) extant in the state archives of Dubrovnik* (Paris: Mouton, 1967); Francis Carter, *Dubrovnik (Ragusa): a classic city-state*, (London, New York: Seminar Press, 1972); Boško Bojović, *Raguse (Dubrovnik) et l'Empire ottoman, 1430-1520: les actes impériaux ottomans en vieux-serbe de Murad II à Sélim Ier* (Paris: Association Pierre Belon, 1998), Halil İnalçık, "Dubrovnik and the Balkans," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, eds. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Idris Bostan, "Ahidnâmelere ve Uygulamalara Göre Osmanlı Dubrovnik Ticarî Münasebetleri (XV-XVI Yüzyıllar)," *Prof. Dr. Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu'na Armağan*, ed. Zeynep Tarım Ertuğ (Istanbul, 2006); Robin Harris, *Dubrovnik: A History* (London: Saqi Books, 2006).

²² Unfortunately, no English translation of the author's *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu* (Zagreb, 2003) has yet been published. Many key points can, however, be found in Vesna Miović, "Diplomatic Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik" in Karman and Kuncevic, eds. *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire* (Brill, 2013): 187-208. See also Vesna Miović "Beylerbey of Bosnia and Sancakbey of Herzegovina in the Diplomacy of the Dubrovnik Republic" *Dubrovnik Annals* 9 (2005): 37-69, and "Dragomans of the Dubrovnik Republic: Their Training and Career," in *Dubrovnik Annals* 5 (2001): 81-94.

and Capital in the Ottoman Empire, which contains an astonishing amount of information, not limited to the issue of Ragusan trade.²³

Halil İnalçık's article "Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant," (1960) began a comprehensive repudiation of Heyd's picture of the supercilious Ottoman Turk, disdainful of trade and exchange.²⁴ Studies by Traian Stoianovich, Peter Earle, Cemal Kafadar, Kate Fleet, and Benjamin Braude followed.²⁵ As a result, the "myth of Turkish commercial incompetence," as Braude so felicitously termed it, no longer holds sway in early modern studies. Ottoman Muslims have finally rejoined the ranks of "trading nations" of the Mediterranean.²⁶

Gradually, many historians have come to see western Rumelia as a culturally complex region, rather than the site of ongoing hostilities between members of fixed ethnic and religious identities.²⁷ The Ottoman-Venetian borderlands have proven to be a particularly rich area for the study of the shapeshifters and go-betweens who fluently crossed imperial

²³ Zdenko Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants and Capital in the Ottoman Empire (1520-1620): A Quantitative Study* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011).

²⁴ Halil İnalçık, "Bursa and Commerce of the Levant," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3/2 (1960): 131-147

²⁵ Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant," *Journal of Economic History* 20 (1960): 243-313; Peter Earle, "The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479-1555," *The Economic History Review* 22 (1969): 28-44; Cemal Kafadar, "A Death in Venice: Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986); Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Benjamin Braude "Christians, Jews, and the Myth of Turkish Commercial Incompetence," in *Relazioni Economiche Tra Europa E Mondo Eslamico Secc. XIII-XVIII / Europe's Economic Relations with the Islamic World 13th-18th Centuries*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (2006): 219-240.

²⁶ The reference is to Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations* (Leiden: Brill, 1995)

²⁷ For a revealing look at Catholic attempts to regulate religious practice in the western Balkans, see Antal Molnár, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie ottomane: 1572-1647* (Rome: Accademia d'Ungheria, 2007)

boundaries, as works by Natalie Rothman and Eric Dursteler have shown.²⁸ Microbes, which likewise showed little regard for boundaries, are the subject of another notable study of movement and transformation in the region.²⁹

Mobility in the Ottoman empire, a critical element in the histories of trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange listed above, has yet to be addressed in a systematic way. Works by Cengiz Orhonlu, Yusuf Halaçoğlu and Colin Heywood provide important understanding of the structures – such as the *derbend* and *menzilhâne* systems – that established security and enabled communications across the empire.³⁰ Suraiya Faroqhi's prolific scholarship has examined the Hajj and also the movements of Ottoman traders, travelers, and pilgrims in specific contexts.³¹ Reşat Kasaba's elegant recent work shows the importance of mobile groups and their changing relationship with centers of power.³²

²⁸ Natalie Rothman, *Brokering empire: trans-imperial subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: nation, identity, and coexistence in the early modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) idem "Fatima Hatun née Beatrice Michiel," *The Medieval History Journal* 12 (2) (2009): 355-382.

²⁹ Zlata Blažina Tomić and Vesna Blažina, *Expelling the plague: The Health Office and the implementation of quarantine in Dubrovnik, 1377-1533* (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 2015)

³⁰ Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Derbend Teşkilâtı* (Istanbul: Eren, 1990); Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Menzil Teşkilâtı Hakkında Bazı Mülâhazalar" *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* II (1981) 123-132; Colin Heywood, "The Ottoman Menzilhane and Ulak System in Rumeli in the Eighteenth Century," in Osman Okyar and Halil Inalcik, eds., *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi* (Ankara, 1980): 179-186.

³¹ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims & sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014) and *Travel and Artisans in the Ottoman Empire; Employment and Mobility in the Early Modern Era* (London: Tauris, 2014)

³² Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009)

Adding to these largely administrative accounts, architectural historians have taken the lead in addressing the built environment, including road architecture and infrastructure. For Rumelia, this field begins with the monumental surveys of Ottoman architecture undertaken by Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi and the prolific research of Machiel Kiel.³³ The sixteenth-century boom in road architecture and infrastructure seen across the empire in the sixteenth-century has been explored by Gülru Necipoğlu. In *The Age of Sinan*, Necipoğlu shows the defining role played by Ottoman Pashas (military-administrative elites) in creating intercontinental systems of overland transportation. An article by the same author published in the collected volume *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean* illustrates a similar dynamic at work in the specific context of Dalmatia and its Ottoman hinterland.³⁴

What is lacking is a systematic understanding of how routes of travel and communication developed and evolved. How did a combination of physical structures, economic, social, and political forces, and accumulated expertise condition specific modes of movement?³⁵ And what were the human consequences of shifting patterns in a culturally complex and dynamic region? A model for such an approach can be seen in the collected volume *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule* (1996), edited by Elisavet Zachariadou. The essays

³³ Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimârî Eserleri*, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977). Machiel Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), idem, "The Vakfname of Rakkas Sinan Beg in Karnobat and the Ottoman Colonization of Bulgarian Thrace," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 1 (1980): 15-32. Multiple studies by Yugoslav authors of Ottoman architecture in the Balkans are addressed in chapter two.

³⁴ Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); idem "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean*, ed. Alina Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

³⁵ I am drawing from Michael McCormick's definition of infrastructure as an inclusive category of inter-related forces: "Infrastructure means physical structures: roads, as well as bridges, ports and the like. But

collected here offer a prismatic, multi-layered approach to the reconstruction one of the region's most important road networks. Beginning with a summary of the *Via Egnatia* in the Roman era, this volume extends temporally to the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries (Rhoads Murphey's essay on patterns of trade and Colin Heywood on the *menzilhane* system). The collected papers examine the inter-related issues of patronage, trade, communications and military utility. Aspects of religious practice, language, industrial production – perhaps not so obviously connected to the study of a road – are also addressed. I have used Zachariadou's collected volume as a model for the present study. The multi-perspectival approach I use in exploring the case of the of the Ragusa Road is indebted to this previous work. I am hopeful that other studies will follow Zachariadou's example to develop of the study of mobility in the early modern era.

It is somewhat paradoxical that the mobilities perspective— defined by an emphasis on political and economic factors regulating flows of circulation – has not flourished in the early modern Mediterranean, despite the obvious connection to the work of Fernand Braudel and the Annales School. The history of roads, infrastructure, and overland travel is dominated by studies of the classical and the modern periods (including the nineteenth century), with an especially prolific historiography on the British Isles. The "genius for organization" that resulted in the Roman road system has been explored comprehensively.³⁶ Leaping ahead in time, roads

³⁶ Horst Barow, *Roads and Bridges of the Roman Empire*, (Stuttgart, London: Axel Menges, 2013), 7. See also Ivan Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (London: Baker, 1967); Raymond Chevallier, *Les Voies Romaines* (Paris: Picard, 1997); Colin Adams and Ray Laurence, *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1999); Adams, 2001; C. R. Van Tilburg, *Traffic and Congestion in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2007). The Istituto di Studi Romani published fifteen volumes on the "Grandi Strade del Mondo Romano," each centered on a specific region, in the late 1930s.

– like the railroad and telegraph – have been conceptualized as key instruments of the speed, technology, and dislocation associated with modernity. The title of Jo Guldi's recent monograph, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State*, encapsulates the argument of this approach.³⁷

More recently, the "politics and poetics" of infrastructure have become a productive subject in Anthropology, again closely tied to conceptions of modernity.³⁸ The term itself has been claimed by modernists, who argue that "Infrastructure has its conceptual roots in the Enlightenment idea of a world in movement and open to change where the free circulation of goods, ideas, and people created the possibility of progress."³⁹ I disagree with such a narrow understanding. The category of infrastructure (as noted above) is valuable as a concept that brings together the built environment, structural forces, and human expertise. Narratives of post-Enlightenment progress are not significant in a project such as Janet Rizvi's *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh* (1999). Structured around questions of mobility and infrastructure, Rizvi's work produces insightful findings on a

³⁷ Roads as expressions of state power in the modern era are explored in two case studies at the edges of the Ottoman world. Dimitris Dalakoglou, "The Road: An Ethnography of the Albania-Greek cross-border motorway," *American Ethnologist* V 37 No1 (2010): 132-149 and Fulya Özkan, "The Road in Rebellion, a History on the Move: The Social History of the Trabzon-Bayezid Road and the Formation of the Modern State in the Late Ottoman World," (Phd. Diss., SUNY Binghamton, 2012.)

³⁸ "Infrastructures like roads and railways are in many ways an archetypal technology of post-enlightenment emancipatory modernity. Whilst roads have existed in different forms for millennia, the coming together of engineering expertise, political will and economic ambition to produce standardized structures for the purposes of integrating the nation state is a particularly modern ambition, which has morphed and mutated into its current form which we might argue is now deeply influenced by processes of neo-liberalization." Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox, "The Enchantments of Infrastructure," *Mobilities* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2012): 523. See also Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2013: 327-43.

³⁹ Larkin, "The Politics," 328.

modest trading center surrounded by mountains. A distant, Himalayan reflection of Dubrovnik, the city of Leh used "commercial necessity and human ingenuity" to operate successful caravan routes across inhospitable territory.⁴⁰

A study of a road network that connected multiple sub-regions of the Mediterranean would seem to fit snugly within the parameters of Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea*, which gives human agency a more central role than Braudel's *Mediterranean*. Connectivity, the watchword of this erudite study, was also the *raison d'être* of the Ragusa Road.

Furthermore, Dubrovnik was precisely the kind of "gateway settlement" (a coastal enclave that interacts with hinterland) singled out by the authors as a potent form of connected place.⁴¹ Yet the emphasis on redistribution between microclimatic zones in Horden and Purcell's argument – itself an adaptation of the thesis of J.R. McNeill's *The Mountains of the Mediterranean* (1992) – is a poor explanatory model for the success of this overland route. There are two reasons for this. First, Dubrovnik was not unique. Its port and its products were not inherently better than multiple alternatives found up and down the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.⁴² Second, the deficiencies that the Ottoman empire was seeking to remedy through connections with the west had little to do with microclimates. Possessed of a vast and variegated empire, the

⁴⁰ Janet Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh* (Oxford U Press, 1999), 22

⁴¹ Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 133.

⁴² "The site in itself would not have mattered as it did, were it not for the wisdom of its citizens in understanding their peculiar position in the world and making the best out of their circumstances through foresight and skill." Cemal Kafadar, "Evliya Çelebi in Dalmatia: An Ottoman Traveler's Encounters with the Arts of the Franks," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean*, ed. Alina Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 70.

Ottomans had little to gain from Ragusa's coastal territories and islands. Of more value to the empire was Dubrovnik's ability to provide access and expertise in the following ways:

1. merchants to trade and conduct business throughout the Balkans – and Ragusans were well-known as skillful merchants, businessmen, and bankers;
2. a neutral port through which they could trade with Venice, Spain, the Papal State, and so on, even if they happened to be at war with them;
3. neutral territory for the exchange of prisoners of war;
4. a mediator between the Ottomans and the Christian states of the West; and
5. a 'window' to the Mediterranean through which information about the Christian states in this basis would be gathered."⁴³

Merchant networks, a neutral port and territory, mediation with Christian powers: the climate that mattered here was political and economic, not ecological. The connectivity that enlivened the Ragusa Road was not specific to its microregion, but could have been provided by other land-sea locations in the Adriatic. The previously mentioned rise of the Split Road in the late sixteenth century illustrates just how easily patterns of travel could shift, and how tenuous the Ragusan position actually was.

The mobilities perspective, with its emphasis on political and economic factors regulating flows of circulation, differs from the model of connectivity between microregions at the heart of *The Corrupting Sea*.⁴⁴ The difference is not inconsequential. In considering the

⁴³ List quoted from Vesna Miović, "Diplomatic Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik" in Karman Kuncevic, eds. *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire* (Brill, 2013): 189

⁴⁴ "Rather than taking the movement of people, ideas, objects for granted, a mobilities perspective questions how such movements are symbolically, materially, economically and politically produced. Of special concern is the institutional and material infrastructure of movement and the economic and political conditions that encourage or inhibit circulation. Circulation is as much about flows as it is about the infrastructure channeling these flows." Javier Caletrío Garcerá and Ramón Ribera Fumaz, "Mediterranean Studies, Braudel and the 'Mobility Turn' in the Social Sciences," (2007).

Ragusa Road as an entity that was created, rather than a spontaneous reaction to asymmetries between regions, we find the space to include the Ottoman empire and the Dubrovnik Republic in the story in a meaningful way. This pathway was long and difficult. Its usefulness was not the outcome of implicit advantages, but the result of continuous conjoined actions by Ottoman and Ragusan actors. The Ottomans granted Dubrovnik extraordinary political and economic advantages that enhanced the port's position between land and sea. The Ottomans improved security in the hinterland, and officials invested heavily in road architecture and infrastructure, including along the route preferred by Dubrovnik's merchants and diplomats. Ragusa developed an effective caravan trade, bringing manufactured goods and salt to the Balkan interior and exporting its commodities. The transportation network that grew out of this basic scheme attracted increasing numbers of international travelers, including merchants, pilgrims, and ambassadorial parties heading to Istanbul. As overland travel increased, so did opportunities for cultural exchange.

Caravan groups were Mediterranean societies in miniature, often including of Catholic and Orthodox Christian traders, Vlach drovers, and Ottoman Muslim guards. Thrown together, these people interacted with one another for weeks or months, communicating and negotiating with resourceful go-betweens and inhabiting sharing spaces like caravanserais. Pierre Lescalopier, who traveled the Ragusa Road in 1574 on his way to Istanbul, was struck by the inter-communal mixture of these ubiquitous Ottoman institutions. "It is a marvel that in the same caravanserai are found all sorts of people and nations: Arabs, Turks, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Franks, and others...All lodge together so peacefully that no one complains about

the other."⁴⁵ I do not wish to suggest that the Ragusa Road was a multi-cultural utopia.

Lescalopier's comments do not reflect the experiences of all travelers, but his observation of the shared spaces of the road should be noted by scholars of cross-cultural communication and exchange.

Trans-imperial routes like the Ragusa Road can be seen as a necessary counterpoint to the model of cross-cultural communication exemplified by the exhibition *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*.⁴⁶ The lavish exhibition was described by one reviewer as: "the spectacle of two different cultures meeting in one fantastic city, where commerce and love of beauty, those great levelers, unite them in a fruitful bond."⁴⁷ Stefano Carboni, lead curator of the exhibition used the phrase "moments of vision" to describe his approach:

The recurrence of occasions on which the Venetian oligarchy made an effort to come to terms with the Islamic world, circumventing the religious, philosophical, and idealistic disputes that were so predominant in other European cities and focusing on diplomatic, political, and practical issues, prompted me to include in the original title of the exhibition the phrase "Moments of Vision."⁴⁸

While well intended, such an approach is of limited utility for a deeper understanding of cross-cultural exchange in the early modern era. The agents of exchange in this case are certain

⁴⁵ "C'est merveille qu'en mesme caravacerat arrivent toutes sortes de gens et nations, Arabes, Turcs, Grecs, Juifz, Armeniens, Frans et autres...Touts logent si paisiblement que l'un ne se plaint de l'autre." Quoted in Edmond Cleray, "Le Voyage de Pierre Lescalopier, Parisien: de Venise à Constantinople, l'an 1574," *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 35 (1921): 21-55. Kraus Reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1968, 28.

⁴⁶ Exhibition: Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2006-2007), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007), Palazzo Ducale, Venice (2007). Catalogue: Stefano Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Holland Carter, "The Republic of Beauty, Melding West and East," *New York Times*, March 30, 2007.

⁴⁸ Carboni, *Venice*, 17

Venetian oligarchs who, on certain occasions, express interest and even expertise in the products of the Islamic world in a way that their more parochial peers in Christian Europe do not. The issue is not that these figures are uniquely Venetian. Other studies have praised elite Ottoman Muslim figures for overcoming the biases prevalent in their societies. What is problematic is Carboni's understanding of culture as an expression of the taste of elite consumers. Lauding these exceptional individuals for their "vision" valorizes them for an appreciation of cultural production that is admirable to contemporary mores. The everyday interactions between the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian figures who actually moved across boundaries are obscured.

The conceptual framework of a road that physically linked an Islamic empire to a Catholic republic reveals a different form of cross-cultural exchange, a continuous, ground level process. Encounters here were not about taste, but about logistics and practical negotiation. Investigating cultural history from the ground up, this exploration of culture on the road fits with the creative approaches seen in such recent works as *Cultural Exchange in early modern Europe* (a series of four volumes.), and the collected essays published as *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean*.⁴⁹ The former is structured around useful categories and sites of exchange, including religion, cities, and correspondence. In the latter, a subject as humble as the stones of Dalmatia's quarries and ruins reveals surprising insights about east-west dialogue in an interconnected region

⁴⁹ Robert Muchembled, gen.ed., *Cultural Exchange in early modern Europe*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006-2007); *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, Alina Payne, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

The road was not simply a blank line between cities, but a distinct and complex space where nomads, farmers, ambassadors, merchants, soldiers, humanist scholars, pilgrims, drovers, translators, bandits and fixers all crossed paths. Outside forces tried to control the itineraries they followed, but the nature of their interactions – in the caravanserais and markets of crossroads settlements – was their own.

Structure

This dissertation is composed of two halves, each consisting of two chapters. The opening half looks down from above, tracing the political decisions and economic and social forces that led to the rise of the Ragusa Road. The second half views the road as it was experienced from the ground up. It is concerned with the daily, lived experience of overland travel in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Chapter one, "Poveri Ragusei," illustrates Dubrovnik's early encounter with the expanding Ottoman state and the development of a *modus vivendi* that included advantageous legal protections for Ragusan citizens trading and traveling in Ottoman domains. It describes the mechanics of the caravan trade along the Ragusa Road and provides an analysis of the distinct but mutually-reinforcing forms of currency used by Dubrovnik to amplify and defend its overland communications network in the Ottoman Balkans.

The second chapter, "Patronage and Mobility," explores the active measures taken by the Ottomans in support of the Ragusa Road. Ottoman architecture and infrastructure were essential to the development of an intercontinental road system centered on Istanbul that

reached across the core provinces of Rumelia and Anatolia. This transportation network did not seek to emulate the paved, arrow-straight roads of the Roman empire. Rather, the Ottomans concentrated their efforts on creating secure stopping places and reducing the friction of physical obstacles. This chapter shows the effectiveness of the empire's decentralized practice of infrastructure creation in the provinces. The caravanserais and bridges relied on by travelers were not typically built on orders from the sultan, but were more often the product of individual Ottoman administrators. The institution of *vakıf* (pious or public endowment) was instrumental in the development of what became an effective trans-regional road system.

In the third chapter, "Florentines on the Ragusa Road," the perspective shifts to the increasingly international practice of trans-Balkan travel via Dubrovnik in the fifteenth century. It concentrates on the Florentine travelers who selected the newly viable overland route to Istanbul as an alternative to the marine route controlled by their rival, Venice. The records of these pilgrims, diplomats, and merchants sketch the conditions of caravan travel across the Balkans at a relatively early stage in the route's development, showing the importance of shifting routes in early modern geopolitics.

Chapter four, "Venetians Overland," depicts the road from Ragusa during its apogee in the sixteenth century. Detailed reports composed by Venetian envoys show an increasing interest on the part the Most Serene Republic in the Ottoman lands located inland from Venice's coastal possessions in the Adriatic. These *relazioni* were primarily intelligence reports tallying the resources and weaknesses of Venice's rival, but their authors were not limited to such utilitarian concerns. Venetian travel accounts of this period show a mastery of the form of informative travel writing, blending together quotidian details and first-person experiences

with a surprisingly nuanced understanding of the Ottoman subjects they encountered in the mountains and plains of Rumelia.

List of Abbreviations

HAD: Croatian State Archives, Dubrovnik

DA: Diplomata et Acta (Dubrovnik)

LL: Lettere di Levante (Dubrovnik)

DAZ: Croatian State Archives, Zadar

BOA: Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives, Istanbul

ASV: Italian State Archives, Venice

BNCF: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

EI2: Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009)

EI3: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2007-)

Transcription System

Ottoman Turkish, written in arabic characters, is not easily transcribed into the Latin alphabet. For legibility, I have elected not to fully transcribe proper names or terms found in standard English dictionaries (e.g. caravanserai). Other Ottoman words are transliterated with the following system:

ا - ā, ب - b, پ - p, ت - t, ث - s, ج - c, چ - h, ح - h, خ - h, د - d, ذ - z, ر - r, ز - z, س - s, ش - ş, ص - ş, ض - z, ط - t, ظ - z, ع - ' , غ - g, ف - f, ق - k, ك - k, گ - g, ل - l, م - m, ن - n, و - v, ه - h, ی - y

Short vowels are given with the Modern Turkish alphabet: a, e, ı, i, o, ö, u, ü

Chapter One: Poveri Ragusei

Loyalty not being their trait, geography is to blame.¹

Clinging like a mollusk to limestone cliffs at the edge of the sea, Dubrovnik's sobriquet 'Pearl of the Adriatic' is apt in many senses. The old city is an oyster lying open; the glistening stone surface of the Stradun – its central axis – is a hinge connecting two unequal halves. Like the abundant shellfish harvested in the long tidal inlet defined by the Pelješac Peninsula to its north, the Republic of Ragusa feasted on the rich currents that it filtered from its tenuous perch at the confluence of land and sea.

Dubrovnik (known to Italian speakers as Ragusa) is located at the southern tip of the Dalmatian coast in what is today Croatia, bordered by Montenegro to the south and Herzegovina only a few miles inland. The surrounding landscape is semi-arid and defined by the waves of stony mountains – culminating in the heights of the Dinaric Alps – that run parallel to the coastline. Beginning its ascent just inland from the city's medieval walls, Srđ Mountain rises 412 meters above Ragusa, providing a towering vantage point. It was used to tragic purposes during the wars of the breakup of Yugoslavia when it was turned into an artillery position for the bombardment of the city by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from 1991-92.

Historical descriptions of Dubrovnik describe the ubiquity of mountains and the scarcity of arable terrain as existential threats to the city's existence. With the sea on one side and inhospitable mountains on the other, the Republic of Ragusa simply did not have the

¹ Lojo Vojnović, quoted in Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija u Istanbulu* (Zagreb, Dubrovnik: HAZU, 2003), 298.

agricultural capacity to feed its inhabitants.² This, then, was the impetus that drove the city's fame as a mercantile, seafaring city par excellence. As the Dominican author Serafino Razzi wrote in the first published history of Ragusa (1595): "if anything was lacking, the convenience of the sea, and their many ships, provided it in abundance."³

Writing of the Balkan Peninsula in general, Jovan Cvijić cautioned against the involuntary desire to combine and conflate natural geographical facts with human character and history, an instinct that is rife in the region's historiography from Razzi to the present day.⁴ The foremost scholar of medieval Dubrovnik, for example, articulates a directly causal relationship between environment and modes of human endeavor. "By the very nature of its location," Krekić writes, "Ragusa was obliged to orient itself to the sea and to maritime commerce as a primary means

² "The whole basis of Dubrovnik's prosperity was trade. The republic's territory was too small, and in part too barren, to provide sufficient foodstuffs for the population, and consequently it was upon trade and industry that the citizens had to depend for their means of livelihood." Francis W. Carter: *Dubrovnik (Ragusa) A Classic City-State* (New York, London: Seminar Press, 1972), 135.

The following description of an adjacent region summarizes the conditions of Dubrovnik's territory as well: "The geography of Bileća Rudina favored a pastoral economy. It is part of the Karst, a broad belt of rocky mountains stretching along the Adriatic coast from Istria to Greece. It abounds in caves and subterranean streams. A few of the higher peaks are covered with forests of beech and pine. The region's climate is harsh, with cold winters and hot summers. During rainless summers, the blazing sun scorches the fields and nearly all the springs dry up. . . A few plains, known as *polja* (sing. *polje*), created by deposits from streams and winter rains, provided almost the only cultivable land, most of it consisting of a thin layer of starved soil. These small plains were divided into parcels, owned by individual families. From his fragmented and widely scattered plots of land, the peasant barely produced enough grain to survive." Wayne Vucinich, *A Study in Social Survival: the Katun in Bileća Rudine* (University of Denver, 1975), 8.

³ "se pure alcuna cosa le mancasse, la commodità del mare, e delle sue tante Navi, abundantemente la provvede." Serafino Razzi, *La Storia di Ragusa*, 10

⁴ "Par une association d'idées toute naturelle, nous passons de ces caractères géographiques au rôle historique des contrées en question, à leurs civilisations successives et à leur état actuel. L'esprit cherche involontairement la connexion entre ces deux ordres de faits." Jovan Cvijić, *La Péninsule Balkanique: Géographie Humaine* (1918), 11.

of existence."⁵ Indeed, the scale and reach of the Ragusan fleet is astounding, especially considering the size of the republic.⁶ Dubrovnik's merchants were known in all the ports and commercial centers of the Mediterranean, and were not limited to the shores of the inland sea. "Ragusan ships may have rounded the Cape of Good Hope not long after Vasco da Gama; they certainly reached the new world."⁷ In Goa, India, the Church of Sao Braz (St. Vlaho/Blaise), built in 1563 to serve the needs of the Ragusan merchant community, still stands. Dubrovnik's merchants also maintained a presence in the Kingdom of Kano, in today's Nigeria (an important West African commercial power) in the 1560s and 1570s.⁸ Yet despite the allure of the sea and the forbidding geographic obstacles of its hinterland, Ragusan prosperity also relied on robust networks of overland trade with the Slavic population of southeastern Europe. If maritime commerce was the primary means of Dubrovnik's existence, inland trade was a vital – and complementary – second.

⁵ "Par la nature même de son emplacement, Raguse était obligée de s'orienter vers la mer et de recourir au commerce maritime comme moyen principal d'existence." Bariša Krekić, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1961), 21.

⁶ In the mid-sixteenth century: "Ragusan ships were allowed to dominate the waters off Apulia. This was the beginning of a phase of expansion which would see the Ragusan fleet emerge as one of the largest merchant navies in the Mediterranean; Dubrovnik, not the Argonauts of Jason, provided the English language with the word *argosy*, a corruption of Ragusa." David Abulafia, *The Great Sea* (Oxford, 2011), 390.

⁷ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 106. "Until the earthquake of 1667, which destroyed the city almost entirely and set an end to its shipping, Ragusan ships were covering the waters between England and Flanders in the north, Alexandria, Tripolis, Ormuz and Goa in the east, and Brazil and the Caribbean in the west." Nicolas Mirkovich, "Ragusa and the Portuguese Spice Trade" *Slavonic and East European Review* 2/1 (March, 1943): 175.

⁸ *A Guide to the Gidan Makama Museum, Kano* (Kano, Nigeria: National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 1985): 18. I thank Andrés Riedlmayer for this source.

Before the arrival of the Ottoman Gazis in Rumelia in the second half of the fourteenth century, Dubrovnik had established its lucrative intermediary position between land and sea in the metals trade between the mines of medieval Serbia and Bosnia and the ports of the Mediterranean.⁹ The republic was also an outlet for the humbler products of the Balkan forests and a point of entry for Italian manufactured goods, purchased largely at Venice and Ancona:

...a caravan route started from Dubrovnik and crossed the Balkans already at the turn of the fourteenth century. Ragusan merchant colonies also settled in the major Balkan cities exporting leather, fats, wool, cheese, fish, honey, beeswax, furs, and slaves and importing from Italy woolen cloth and other textiles.¹⁰

The merchants of Dubrovnik were certainly not confined to ship and shore. Beginning in the Byzantine era and ramping up substantially from the 13th century, they established legally-protected communities in all the inland trading centers of southeastern Europe.¹¹ The Ragusan colonist/merchant/diplomats of these cities and towns encountered the expanding Ottoman

⁹ "There is no direct confirmation as to when Dubrovnik's caravan trade began, but it appears to have been well-developed by the time the first documentary evidence was recorded in the last quarter of the twelfth century." Francis Carter, *Dubrovnik (Ragusa) A Classic City-State* (London, New York: Seminar Press, 1972), 138. "Les traités avec la Serbie et la Bosnie lui en fournirent le moyen: en liant son commerce maritime aux contacts qu'elle avait établis dans l'intérieur des terres balkaniques, Raguse s'assura le transit des marchandises entre l'Occident et les Balkans, et c'est là qu'il faut voir la source principale de la prospérité dont elle devait jouir pendant une longue période." Krekić, *Dubrovnik*, 21.

¹⁰ Halil İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, eds. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 256.

¹¹ "From that time [beginning of 13th century] onwards, Dubrovnik was not content with that part it had formerly played in the Balkan trade – which was hardly more than that of a transit port – but started to equip its own caravans. This grew into a thriving business, and Ragusan colonies were founded all over the peninsula, extending north-eastwards to the Sava region and Bulgaria; and in the Fourteenth Century as far as Walachia." Nicolaas Biegan, *The Turco-Ragusan Relationship. According to the Firmâns extant in the State Archives of Dubrovnik* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1967), 25. See also Radovan Samardžić, "L'Organisation Intérieure des Colonies Ragusaines en Turquie aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles" *Structure Sociale et Développement Culturel des Villes Sud-Est Européennes et Adriatiques aux XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles*. (1975): 195.

state at a very early stage. With the Ottoman takeover of Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Herzegovinian territories in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the empire's practice of *istimālet*, a pragmatic policy of reconciliation with the population of newly conquered lands – favored the continuation of Ragusan colonies in what became the province of Rumelia.¹² Dubrovnik's central role in the metals trade, however, would be sharply curtailed from the middle of the fifteenth century Ottomans elected to forbid the export of silver from the Balkan mines to Italy.¹³ As the Ottomans took control of the Balkans and brought Ragusa into its orbit as a tribute-paying vassal, the resourceful merchants of the city of St. Blaise adapted to circumstances and thrived under the new order.

The great power of the Adriatic was, of course, the Most Serene Republic of Venice. Ragusa, which won its independence from Venice in 1358 (becoming a tribute-payer to the distant kings of Hungary), was tiny in comparison. Venetian leaders believed that all goods entering or exiting the "Gulf of Venice," as the Adriatic was frequently known, should do so under Venetian control.¹⁴ Having established an overseas empire (Stato da Mar) along the

¹² Halil İnalcık describes how the Ottomans "shrewdly" employed this practice in competition with Venice for the support of Orthodox communities in the Balkans. See "An Outline of Ottoman-Venetian Relations" in *Venezia Centro di Mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente*, eds. Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, Agostino Pertusi (Florence: Olschki, 1977): 83-90. For more detail on *istimālet* in the Balkan context see the subsection 'Conditions at the Ottoman conquest' in Halil İnalcık's entry "Rümeli" in *EI2*. A document sent from Sultan Mehmed II to the monasteries of Bosnia gives a good example of this policy, promising protection for the Bosnian monks and their churches, and encouraging those who fled at the time of the Ottoman conquest to return in safety. BOA A.DVN.DVE.d [Venedik Dubrovnik Defteri] 014/2, p. 1

¹³ İnalcık, *An Economic*, 257

¹⁴ "Ogni merce che entra nell'Adriatico o esce dall'Adriatico deve toccar Venezia" Quotation articulating Venice's "golden mission" by the Cinque Savii, quoted in Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 128.

eastern Adriatic coast, the Serenissima had the resources to back its claim of dominance. Ragusa resisted Venetian hegemony by creating strong trade partnerships with Italian ports on the opposite shore. Treaties were signed in abundance, including Molfetta (1148), Pisa (1169), Ancona (1188), Monopoli and Bari (1201), Termoli (1203), and Bisceglie (Puglia) (1211).¹⁵ These enduring alliances were an asset to larger Italian powers as well. In the fifteenth century, Florence channeled its commercial, financial, and diplomatic business with the east through towns like Ancona and Ragusa, keeping its merchandise and its official correspondence out of the grasp of Venetian rivals. When Dubrovnik established direct diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire in the mid-fifteenth century, it did so on mutually beneficial terms. Beginning in 1441, an annual tribute payment would be brought (always overland) to the sovereign in the company of two noble ambassadors (*poklisari harača*), exchanged for autonomy at home and a privileged treatment in the Ottoman world. Following receipt of payment, legal agreements were codified in *'ahid-nāmes*, or capitulations treaties, bearing the imperial *tuğrā*, or sultanic seal.¹⁶ *'Ahid-nāmes* were renewed at the accession of each sultan and zealously guarded by Dubrovnik's officials. Rather than threatening or simply absorbing the small, wealthy Catholic republic on its western border, the most powerful state in the eastern Mediterranean instead became Ragusa's backer.

To fully capitalize on its position as broker and intermediary between the Ottomans and the markets of the Italian Peninsula, the Republic of Ragusa needed to do more than rely on the

¹⁵ Krekić, *Dubrovnik*, 21.

¹⁶ See Halil İnalcık, "İmtiyāzāt" *EI2*.

strength of its fleet and its alliances. Dubrovnik needed a secure, efficient connection the Dalmatian coast to the markets of the Balkans (Belgrade, Sofia, Skopje) and the centers of Ottoman power (Bursa, Edirne and Istanbul). In short, to challenge the Venetian-dominated maritime route around the Peloponnese, Dubrovnik needed to deny the destiny of its geographical position. Having mastered the sea, it was necessary to tame the mountains. Horden and Purcell have pointed out the counter-intuitive truth that Mediterranean mountains were not always barriers to exchange: "...even routes that cross difficult terrain, and that might be expected to prove ineffective as lines of communications, often turn out to admit of surprisingly fluent and varied interchanges between regions."¹⁷ But how to convince the merchants, diplomats, spies, and pilgrims moving between the Italian Peninsula and the Ottoman lands to turn inland from Ragusa rather than continuing by sea or taking other, seemingly better-located overland alternatives? The Albanian port of Durrës (Dıraç, Durazzo, Dyrrachium), for example, was just one of many port towns that would appear to have considerable advantages over Dubrovnik as a gateway to overland travel in the Balkans. Durrës stands at the Strait of Otranto, the narrowest point of the Adriatic Sea, across from the projecting heel of the Italian Peninsula. The city was the primary western terminus of the ancient *Via Egnatia* leading directly to the *Porta Aurea*, the Golden Gate of the city of Constantine. The overland journey from Durrës to Istanbul was several hundred kilometers shorter than the Ragusa Road. It crossed fewer mountains (at lower elevations), and passed through the major regional trading center of Salonica (Thessaloniki) along the way. Yet Durrës,

¹⁷ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 130-131.

and indeed the western Via Egnatia in general, was never highly developed in the Ottoman period.¹⁸

This chapter illustrates the means used by the Ragusa Republic to develop and control a road network which, by the end of the fifteenth century, had become "without doubt the most important" overland route between the Adriatic Sea and the commercial centers of the Ottoman world.¹⁹ Dubrovnik overcame the obstacles of distance, topography, and insecurity by making itself invaluable to the Ottomans who, over the course of the fifteenth century, came to control the entire territory of the Ragusa Road. Dubrovnik's currency neutralized the friction of the mountainous Balkan hinterland, transforming a pathway that had been a liability for trade and travel into a burgeoning destination.

Ragusan currency came in multiple forms, all of which were complementary. The hard currency of gold and silver maintained Dubrovnik's special political and economic privileges, which in turn motivated its merchants to set out in caravans and settle in Ottoman towns. The bureaucratic currency of law and diplomacy preserved Ragusa's status, an unmatched combination of autonomy within its territory and access to Ottoman markets without. The currency of gifts – continuously offered in a kaleidoscopic array of forms – built relationships with powerful officials in the provinces and at the imperial divan. The sensitive, secret, highly

¹⁸ See Elizabeth Zachariadou, ed., *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)* (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1996). Yerasimos views the Ottoman Sol Kol (Via Egnatia) in the sixteenth century as being composed of two unequal parts. The section from Salonica to Istanbul was well developed, while the section west of Salonica was "...incommode, mal équipée et peut être aussi peu fréquentée." Stéphane Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs dans L'empire Ottoman* (Ankara: Société turque d'histoire, 1991), 36.

¹⁹ Yerasimos, *Voyageurs*, 38.

sought-after information that Dubrovnik provided to the Ottomans was another effective medium of exchange, one that required Ottoman support of Ragusan mobility. Finally, the currency of artisanal and technological expertise built yet more goodwill, and in some cases directly contributed to the creation of the infrastructure of the road itself. These categories (tribute, law, gifts, information, and expertise) will all be explored in further detail at the end of this chapter.

Caravan Travel on the Ragusa Road

Like the Silk Roads, the Ragusa Road was less a discrete, permanent stretch of paving stones and mile markers, and more of an ongoing process of movement between rough poles.²⁰ Merchants, diplomats, pilgrims, soldiers and spies traveled the Ragusa Road by horse caravan between Dubrovnik and Istanbul, and to the cities and towns of Ottoman Rumelia. For some, this was only a section of a larger journey, perhaps to the Holy Land or beyond. The caravans they formed were complex mobile societies. They frequently included Catholic and Orthodox Christian merchants, Ottoman Janissary guards, and the Vlachs (semi-nomadic pastoralists, mainly from Herzegovina) who provided horses and served as guides. In remote locations, local villagers called *derbends* guarded mountain passes, offering additional security and guidance.²¹

²⁰ "...the Silk Roads consisted of a constantly shifting network of pathways for many different types of exchanges." David Christian, "Silk Roads or Steppe Roads? The Silk Roads in World History," *Journal of World History* 11, no. 1 (Spring, 2000): 2-3. I will not rehash the vast literature on the Silk Roads here, except to point out the debt that my project owes to Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

²¹ For an example of the tax exemptions given to *derbend* villages in the 15th century, see "Derbend beliyen hıristiyan reâyaya verilmiş bir muâfiyet hükmü," Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi N. 10737 (17 May,

Catering to the transportation needs of their fellow-citizens as well as outsiders from across the Adriatic, Ragusan brokers who specialized in overland transportation could put together sizeable caravans in a very short time. In short, these caravans were trans-national (or trans-imperial) groups that functioned due to effective job specialization and continuous cooperation between Christians and Muslims. In doing so they enabled movement overland by Ragusans and Western Europeans alike.

Overland travel from Dubrovnik to Istanbul was flexible practice. Itineraries could vary with the season, with trading opportunities en route, or with the requirements of diplomacy (such as tracking down provincial officials for official visits). Although there were standard itineraries, this was not a fixed route. It is best understood as a series of stopping places at intervals defined by the limits of topography. The swiftest caravans could complete the journey from Adriatic to Bosphorus in 30 days, although longer times were more common, allowing for rest days and trading opportunities.²² The distance between *menzils* (daily stages), varied dramatically, especially when comparing mountainous to flat terrain. From the gates of Dubrovnik, it took caravans only a few hours before crossing into Ottoman territory. Trebinje, the first Ottoman town on the itinerary, was a mere five hours away on horseback. The most common progression for travelers along the western section included the following stops:

1456), Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), doc. 10 in Appendix.

²² Multiple sources quote this figure, which seem to originate in Konstantin Jireček, *Die Handelstrassen und Bergwerke von Serbien und Bosnien während des Mittelalters* (Prague: Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, 1879): 74. Frequently cited intermediary distances include the following: 5 hours to Trebinje, 5 days to Foča, 10 days to Novi Pazar, 15 days to Niš. Detailed itineraries left by Italian and Ragusan travelers suggest a slower pace of travel was common. See Chapters 3 and 4.

Trebinje, Černica, Gacko, Foča, Pljevlja, Prijepolje, Mileševo, and Novi Pazar.²³ From Novi Pazar there were multiple variants: either across the mountains to Prokuplje and Niš, or across a different set of mountains to Priština and Sofia. Knowing the importance and relative proximity of Ottoman cities like Mostar, Sarajevo, and Skopje (Üsküp), it comes a surprise to find that Ragusan caravans typically avoided all these settlements, following a more obscure pathway that is today hardly used for long distance travel.



Fig. 1: Map of the Ragusa Road, (undated). Dubrovnik Maritime Museum. The upper right section is the eastern continuation of the road. Note the junction at 'Nissa'

The Ragusa or Dubrovnik Road, as it was known to outsiders, was in fact called the Via di Novo Pasaro (Novi Pazar, in southern Serbia) by the Ragusans themselves. Formerly known as Trgovište, Novi Pazar gained importance as a hub for caravan travel during the Ottoman era.²⁴ Dubrovnik's caravan route was not, of course, the only important road in the Balkans, but part

²⁴ Zdenko Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants and Capital in the Ottoman Empire (1520-1620)* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011), 173. Prior to the Ottoman era, Prijepolje, not Novi Pazar, was the leading caravan station of the Ragusa Road. See also Bogumil Hrabak "Kramari u karavanskom saobraćaju preko Sanđaka (1470-1720) (Kramars in the Caravan Crossings through Sanžak)" *Simpozijum X* (1983): 194.

of a web of major and minor axes. To visualize the Ottoman transportation network, picture Istanbul as the thorax of a six-armed insect, its appendages radiating outward from the imperial center. Three arms reach westward across Rumelia, balanced by three heading eastward across Anatolia. In the Balkans were the *Sol Kol* (left arm or *Via Egnatia*), mentioned above, across Thrace, Northern Greece, and Albania; the *Sağ Kol* (right arm) leading north towards the provinces of Wallachia and Moldova; and the middle arm (*Orta Kol*, formerly the Roman *Via Militaris*). A northwesterly diagonal, the *Orta Kol* connected Istanbul to the second capital of Edirne, and continued to Belgrade, Budapest, and Vienna. A linking between the *Kayser-i Rūm* (Caesar of Rome, as the Ottomans styled themselves) and the Holy Roman Emperor, the *Via Militaris* functioned as a conduit between the Sublime Porte and Central Europe.²⁵

The Ragusa Road can be thought of as a spur route to the *Orta Kol*. Caravans coming from Dubrovnik intersected the middle arm at either Niš (Serbia) or Sofia (Bulgaria). From this juncture to the Ottoman capital, the Ragusa Road and *Orta Kol* were identical. Their point of convergence coincided with a significant shift in topography. Between Niš to Istanbul there are few natural obstacles. Here, unlike the mountainous western half of the road, the use of wheeled carts was possible, especially on the long stretch that followed the gentle course of the Maritsa (Meriç) River. Beginning with Sofia, there were numerous large settlements on the eastern section where a traveler could rest in comfort and safety. By the end of the Ottoman

²⁵ An anonymous, illustrated record of the major towns along 16th-century *Via Militaris* has been published. See Lud'a Klusakova, *The Road to Constantinople: Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Towns through Christian Eyes* (Prague: ISV Publishers, 2002). The first impressions of "the Turks" noted by the Habsburg ambassador Busbecq take place during his journey on the *Orta Kol* from Vienna in December 1554. *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554-1562*. Trans. Edward Seymour Forster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).

building boom of the sixteenth century, the easternmost stages of the road had been further embellished with a chain of magnificent new caravanserai complexes, marking a grandiose approach to the imperial cities of Edirne and Istanbul.²⁶

The organization of caravans in Dubrovnik was handled by brokers called *kramar* (pl. *kramari* lt. *cramaro*,) who generally did not make the journeys themselves. They supervised the hiring of animals, drivers, and guards from their bases in Dubrovnik and other towns on the road network.²⁷ Presumably they also facilitated the issuing of *tezkere*, documents used by merchants to identify their goods to Ottoman authorities. *Kramari* were personally and materially responsible for the safety of caravan travelers and their merchandise.²⁸ Ragusan caravans were not only in competition with those organized by brokers in other locations (such as Bosnia), but also by networks defined by religious and ethnic affiliation. This competition was particularly acute in in the later seventeenth century, after the conclusion of the long Ottoman-Venetian war in Crete (1645-1669).²⁹

²⁶ "The Istanbul-Edirne highway, which had previously caused major difficulties to travellers, thus became an impressive grand entry for European ambassadors and tourists on their way to the capital." Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton N.J., Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 72.

²⁷ The number of *kramari* active in Dubrovnik is not known. Hrabak counts 17 in Novi Pazar, 13 in Sofia, and 9 in Prokuplje, without providing a date. Hrabak "Kramars," 203.

²⁸ Sergije Dimitrijević, *Dubrovački Karavani u južnoj Srbiji u XVII veku (Les Caravanes de Dubrovnik dans la Serbie du Sud au XVIIe siècle)*. (Belgrade, 1958), 185-186. On horses in the Ottoman world, see Suraiya Faroqhi, "Horses owned by Ottoman officials and notables: means of transportation but also sources of pride and joy" in *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire*, Suraiya Faroqhi, ed. (Istanbul: Eren, 2010): 293-311

²⁹ "...after the long Cretan War (1669) the traffic of Dubrovnik traders decreased as they were beginning to be pushed back by local traders (Jewish, Armenian, Greek, Bosnian and other) which had their own caravans and *kramars*." Hrabak "Kramars," 200.

Once out on the road, caravans were under the authority of the *kervān-başı* (from the Pr. root *كروان*, *caravanbassi* in It.), known also as *kiridžije*. These 'conductors' provided and looked after the "small and hardy horses...called 'roncini,'" that were bred for riding and for the carrying trade in the rolling country of Herzegovina and Montenegro.³⁰ From these pastures, large numbers of animals could be brought swiftly to the outskirts of Dubrovnik, appropriate to the needs of caravan group and the volume of its cargo, as determined by the *kramar*. Most caravans were relatively small, with only 10-50 animals, while groups with over 100 horses very rare.³¹

Camels, able to carry greater loads than horses, and, consequently, in constant use in other parts of empire (including other areas in the Balkans) were not used in the Ragusan caravans.³² Pack horses did not typically travel more than a few weeks under load. They were exchanged at intervals, most often at one of the road towns in the Lim River basin (between Prijepolje and Novi Pazar).³³ While *kramars* were paid in cash (normally half in advance, half at the end of the trip) the *kiridžije* would often receive part of their payment in the form of salt,

³⁰ Hrabak, "Kramars," 206.

³¹ Mikhailo Dinić "Dubrovačka Srednjevekovna Karavanska Trgovina" (Dubrovnik Medieval Caravan Trade) *Jugoslovenski istoriski časopis* V. 3 (1937): 145.

³² The mountains of the west-central Balkans resisted both the camel and the wheel. Along the Via Egnatia from Salonica to Istanbul, by contrast, camel caravans appear to have been in continual use, bringing woolen goods manufactured by Jewish weavers to the capital. See Suraiya Faroqhi, "Camels, Wagons and the Ottoman State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov. 1982): 532. See also Halil İnalcık, "Arab' Camel Drivers in Western Anatolia in the Fifteenth Century" *Revue d'Histoire Maghrebine* 10 (1983): 256-70.

³³ Dinić, "Dubrovačka," 145.

which Ragusans possessed in abundance.³⁴ Muslim *kervānbaşlar* (*kiridžije*) are also attested in Ragusan sources, adding to the demographic complexity of these mobile, ad hoc groups.³⁵

The nimble and durable horses able to carry loads and passengers across the mountains of the western Balkans were bred and led by people known as Vlachs. Who were they? Vlach remains an elusive category, as it could refer either to an ethnic group or a mode of living. Vlachs (called *eflāk* by Ottomans and *morlacchi* by Venetians) can be understood as the descendants of a "Romanised pre-slavic population," akin to the Illyrian and Thracian groups found in the Balkan Peninsula.³⁶ According to this definition, Vlachs are the autochthonous inhabitants of the region, whose presence predates the arrival of both Turks and Slavs. But the term was also used to describe any semi-nomadic community of pastoralists in the area, regardless of their ethnic origins. As with the term *Yürük* (another category of pastoral nomads in the Ottoman lands, originating in Anatolia), the criteria used by Ottoman officials to designate membership in this community were hazy, but the administrative and tax responsibilities they involved were more concrete.³⁷ As skilled horsemen and animal breeders,

³⁴ Dinić, "Dubrovačka," 145.

³⁵ Dimitrijević, "Dubrovački Karavani," 186.

³⁶ Vjeran Kursar "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th-18th Centuries)" *OTAM*, 34 (2013): 117. See also Nicoară Beldiceanu, "Les Valaques de Bosnie à la fin du XVe siècle et leurs institutions" *Turcica* VII (1975): 122-134. More concerned with the use and understanding of Vlachs in the Venetian Enlightenment is Larry Wolff's *Venice and the Slavs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). This monograph is highly indebted to the observations of Abbé Alberto Fortis, whose *Viaggio in Dalmazia* was published in 1774. Focusing on the ferocity of the 'morlacchi,' Fortis' account was quite popular and translated into German, French and English.

³⁷ Special laws limiting taxation of Vlachs were known as *Kânûn-i Iflakiyye* or '*Âdet-i Iflakiyye*. See Snjezana Buzov, "Vlach Villages, Pastures and Chiftliks: The Landscape of the Ottoman Borderlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century," in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern*

Vlachs were of obvious utility to the Ottoman military, into which they were recruited "as holders of small *timars*, and they enlisted into the garrisons stationed in the border fortresses."³⁸ Regardless of their taxonomic ambiguity, the Vlach population was a tremendous asset to Ragusa's expansion into the overland carrying trade. Without the cooperation of a neighboring population capable of providing both animal power and secure guiding ability, long-distance caravan travel on the Ragusa Road could not have existed on a large scale.

With Ragusan organizational skill and Vlach logistical support reducing the friction of overland travel, the Dubrovnik caravan trade flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Caravan travel was a steady and secure alternative to the potentially faster, but certainly riskier sea route. The difficulties of distance and topography, however, were never fully overcome. The Ragusa Road only maintained its competitive advantage when actively supported by Ottoman policies favorable to its Dalmatian vassal state. This reliance created a state of constant anxiety for Ragusan merchants and officials. They were aware that Ottoman trade embargoes (*yasak*, tr., *jassacco*, it.) could be imposed at any time by order of the imperial council. Considering the extent of the republic's overland trade in Ottoman territory (along with much of the republic's maritime trade), such orders were devastating for Dubrovnik. A series of letters from the Senate to the Ragusan tribute ambassadors in 1646, during the Ottoman-

Mediterranean, eds. Evelyn Birge Vitz and Arzu Ozturkmen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 11. I thank Dr. Buzov for sharing this article with me prior to publication.

³⁸ Buzov, "Vlach Villages," 14.

Venetian war in Crete desperately presses the envoys to work diligently to have the *jassacco* revoked as soon as possible.³⁹

Currency Makes Mobility

I Ragusei sono molto modesti, e quando vengono incolpati d'essere furbi come gli Ebrei, e rapaci come i Turchi rispondono umilmente: non siamo Turchi, nè Ebrei, ma poveri Ragusei.⁴⁰

Non siamo Christiani, non siamo Ebrei, ma poveri Ragusei.⁴¹

Large-scale overland transportation on the Ragusa Road was an anomaly that flew in the face of environmental realities and *longue durée* practices in the Balkans. Today, the routes of both the *Via Egnatia* and *Via Militaris* see incessant traffic on the modern highways that run alongside the remnants of their ancient predecessors. The small, meandering roads of the western half of the Ragusa Road, by contrast, are lightly traveled to the point of desolation. How did such a marginal, unfavorable route become one of the most important corridors of travel and exchange between the Ottoman capital and the Adriatic Sea? If the Romans mastered nature by building arrow-straight highways and the Ottomans created spider web necklaces of infrastructure in the form of interconnected caravanserais and bridges, what did the Dubrovnik Republic do to tame the mountains and conquer distance?

³⁹ HAD, *Diplomata et Acta* (17th Century) box 33, folder 1759a, docs. 4, 7, 10 (1646). Letters to Secondo di Bucchia and Paolo di Gozze, tribute ambassadors to Istanbul.

⁴⁰ "The Ragusans are very modest, and when they are accused of being clever like the Jews and rapacious like the Turks, they respond humbly: we are neither Turks nor Jews but poor Ragusans." F.C.H. Pouqueville, *Viaggio in Morea a Costantinopoli ed in Albania* (Milan, 1816).

⁴¹ "We are neither Christian, nor Jews, but poor Ragusans." "Levantine adage, quoted by Hammer in GOR VIII" Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 29.

The dissatisfying answer is that no single factor was responsible for the rise of the Ragusa Road. Mobility along this route expanded and contracted with the fluctuating importance of the city of Dubrovnik in the context of regional geopolitics and flows of trade. That said, Ragusa's leaders, merchants, and diplomats were far from powerless. They continuously and effectively contributed to the city's privileged position in the Ottoman world. Currency was the tool that kept the roads open and the saddlebags of caravan horses filled with goods. Humble in land and population and geographically isolated, poor Ragusa made itself rich and central by recognizing the kinds of currencies that were most sought after by their Ottoman neighbors and providing them in abundance. The city was well equipped for this task. Ragusa had been finding ways to make itself indispensable to its more powerful neighbors – Byzantium, the Kingdom of Bosnia, the Serbian Despotate, etc. – for centuries prior the arrival of the Ottomans. The forms of currency used were not unique to Ragusa; many other polities attempted to use similar methods. But Dubrovnik was singularly successful in negotiating with the Ottomans, despite its seemingly weak position. Each of the major forms of currency was enabled by overland networks of travel, and each led to direct, positive impacts on the status of the Ragusa Road.

In 1430, decades before the eventual Ottoman conquest of neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sultan Murad II sought to establish formal diplomatic ties between the Ottoman Empire and the Dubrovnik Republic. Once established, these ties would endure for centuries. Shaken but unbroken by the development of the port of Split in the late sixteenth century, the Ottoman-Ragusan political and economic order remained essentially intact until the devastating earthquake of 1667, from which Dubrovnik never fully recovered.

Although their motivation was never articulated in Ottoman sources, Murad II and later sultans and viziers treated Ragusa as a uniquely valuable asset to the empire. Indeed, the charters issued by the Porte from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century suggest Ottoman awareness of the fact that Ragusa's autonomy and privileged trade position were directly linked to its prosperity, which was in turn beneficial to the empire. The alternative would likely have been dire for both the city and the empire that depended on its revenue: "Had Dubrovnik been annexed to the Empire proper, it would inevitably have slumped into the position of one of the many not very important Turkish harbors on the Mediterranean."⁴²

Ragusa's leaders, perpetually crying poverty and proclaiming their loyalty to the House of Osman (*Āl-i 'Osmān*) a little too loudly, did not take their position in the Ottoman order for granted. Aware of their republic's inherent vulnerability, Dubrovnik's officials devoted tremendous energy and resources to preserving and, whenever possible, enhancing its privileges. The republic used its prosperity, its geopolitical reach, and its pragmatic nose for negotiation to make its value abundantly clear to the makers of Ottoman policy. Not only the grand viziers but all significant Ottoman elites were potential allies to be courted, from the *sancakbeyis* of Herzegovina to the aides-de-camp of members of the Imperial Council to prominent wives and royal women.

The Ragusan nobles who served as the city's diplomats and envoys were primarily merchants, and they conducted their negotiations with a keen understanding of investment and return. Lacking military or political power, Dubrovnik's diplomacy was built on the precisely

⁴² Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 45.

calibrated expenditure of capital, favors, and expertise toward selected targets. Hard and soft forms of currency maintained the Republic's position in the Ottoman order, resolved crises, and maintained channels of communication. The flows of currency from Ragusa to Istanbul were designed to render the republic indispensable, and in this they were largely successful. The wealth and power that accrued to Dubrovnik boosted trade and necessitated continuous communications with Ottoman centers, further driving overland traffic on the Ragusa Road. Currency took many forms, and can be classified in many ways. I find it useful to divide the term into five, mutually-reinforcing categories that were consistently deployed by Ragusans with the explicit goal of preserving their republic's privileges and mobility in the Ottoman world.

Tribute

Every year, from the middle of the fifteenth century to 1667, Ragusan tribute ambassadors brought thousands of shining reasons for their Ottoman sovereigns to preserve the city's autonomy and trading privileges.⁴³

Of greatest importance is the fact that Dubrovnik paid a considerable amount of money into the Ottoman Treasury in relation to its small size. This consisted of a yearly tribute of 12,500 hard ducats, and a yearly sum of 100,000 akçe (worth more than 1,600 ducats at the beginning of Murad's reign, and less than half of this towards the end) as customs duty for goods imported into the empire and sold in places other than Istanbul, Adrianople and Bursa; to which may be added the customs duties not comprised in that sum, one third of salt revenues, and several hundreds – and sometimes thousands – of ducats spent as presents to acquire and keep up the friendship of various Turkish authorities.⁴⁴

⁴³ The earthquake of 1667 killed thousands and devastated the city. In the aftermath, Dubrovnik was able to renegotiate its tribute obligation, paying 12,500 ducats once every three years rather than annually.

⁴⁴ Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 27. On Dubrovnik's mint and coins, see Carter, *Dubrovnik*, Appendix 1, 556-568. While significant, these sums pale in comparison to the 30,000 ducats plus clocks and automata

The status of tribute-paying vassal to the Ottoman empire was not sought by Dubrovnik.⁴⁵ The republic's merchants encountered the empire during the early stages of Ottoman expansion, but no formal agreements were signed until well after the interregnum caused by Timur's (Tamerlane) defeat of Sultan Bayezid I at the Battle of Ankara in 1402.⁴⁶ To Sultan Murad II, who understood the value of Ragusan trade networks, the moment for direct diplomacy was long overdue, as attested in a letter sent to Dubrovnik, dated July 10, 1430.

...since no man has ever come on your behalf to recognize My Lordship and see me, in order to meet and establish good friendship among ourselves, while [you,] having all the facilities you need in my country, you travel through all my lands by trading; yes, I am quite astonished!⁴⁷

delivered annually to the Ottomans by the Habsburgs from 1548-1606. See Julian Raby, "The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy 1453-1600," in Stefano Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World* (New Haven, New York: Yale University Press, 2007), 95.

⁴⁵ For comparisons with the other tribute-paying states under Ottoman suzerainty, see Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, eds., *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013). In particular, Viorel Panaite, "The Legal and Political Status of Wallachia and Moldavia in Relation to the Ottoman State," 9-42 and, on Transylvania, Teréz Oborni "Between Vienna and Constantinople," 67-90. Dubrovnik's status is explored in the same volume by Kunčević, "Janus-faced Sovereignty: The International Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period," 91-121 and Miović, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik," 187-208.

⁴⁶ 19th century historians placed the date of formal relations much earlier, based on faulty evidence. See Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*, 65. Ragusan subjects had been living in Ottoman-controlled lands for some time before direct ties were established, as this document from 1436 indicates. "Dans une instruction pour leurs ambassadeurs en Turquie, les Ragusains déclarent que 'tous les biens de la ville de Raguse sont en Bosnie, en Serbie et en grande partie en Turquie, en Albanie et en Romanie.' HAD LL XII, f. 2 (May 5, 1436). Published as doc. 865 in Krekić, *Dubrovnik*.

⁴⁷ "...attendu que jamais [aucun] homme n'est venu de votre part pour saluer Ma Seigneurie et me voir, afin que nous fassions connaissance et instaurions bonne amitié entre nous, alors que, disposant de toutes les commodités qui vous sont nécessaires dans mon pays, vous voyagez à travers tous mes pays en pratiquant le commerce; oui, je m'étonne beaucoup!" Translation from the document written in Old Serbian by Bojovic, *Raguse et l'Empire*, Document 1, 184. 15th century *'ahid-nāmes* were written in Turkish, Slavic, and Greek. The Ottoman Turkish originals have been lost. Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 49.

Not for the first or last time, the sultan's letter placed Dubrovnik's officials in a difficult position. They were tribute-paying subjects of the Hungarian crown, an arrangement that had kept Ragusa free from Venetian domination since 1358, and Hungary and the Ottoman empire were at war.⁴⁸ As Byzantium disintegrated, Hungary had inherited the position of 'bulwark of Christendom' against Ottoman expansion. Yet, as the Ottomans gained control of more and more of Dubrovnik's trading territory (including territories formerly under Hungarian control), the republic was forced to choose between honoring its political protector and Catholic ally, or formalizing its position within (and 'bonne amitié' with) the expanding Ottoman state. Prior to 1430, Ragusa temporized and managed to avoid official contact with the sultans out of fear that tribute, economic limitations, and military obligations would be demanded.⁴⁹ Upon receipt of the Sultan's chiding letter, and with its future economic survival at stake, the republic sent its nobles to the court of Murad II.

In line with later practice, these envoys were given precise directions on what to say to the Ottoman sovereign. The crux of their message was simple: Ragusans were everywhere, and they needed to continue to travel and trade to survive.⁵⁰ The sultan was evidently pleased with

⁴⁸ "The Ragusei had been happy to acknowledge the suzerainty of Louis of Hungary, whose kingdom was not a naval power, and with whom they could have little conflict of interest. Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, VII, The Fifteenth Century (American Philosophical Society, 1978), 75.

⁴⁹ Carter, *Dubrovnik*, 199.

⁵⁰ "nous avons besoin de circuler et de faire du commerce comme nous le faisons, les uns au Levant, à Alexandrie, à Damas et dans d'autres pays du sultan de Babylone, les autres en Romanie et en Anatolie appartenant à Votre grande et excellente Seigneurie, d'autres encore en Occident, dans les terres des Francs." HAD *Lett. Lev.*, X, f. 198 (Sept. 10, 1430). Published as doc. 779 in Krekić, *Dubrovnik*.

Dubrovnik's reaction. An Ottoman document dated Dec 6, 1430 (only six months after the sultan's previous correspondence) names the Ragusan envoys (Pierre Lukarević and Corci de Goci) and reiterates their requests. No tribute is mentioned at this stage, but the sultan's response indicates that an official letter of agreement had been requested by the envoys, as a means of confirming the privileges of Ragusan citizens in Ottoman lands:

Then they solicited [a charter] for the merchants, given that all those who travel through my dominions desire to have them. I accede to this request, so that they may conduct legal trade, just as the merchants of my dominions do in other countries, so that none of the neighbors who are under the charter of My Lordship damage them or create conflict in their country.⁵¹

Despite the absence of tribute, the terms of agreement anticipate the many *'ahid-nāmes* to come.⁵² Informal and lacking detail at this stage, the language of Murad's letter is legalistic and reciprocal, with an emphasis on unrestricted mobility. The security and freedom of movement of both Ragusan and Ottoman merchants is to be honored. This was to be valid not only in

⁵¹ Ensuite ils ont sollicité [une charte] pour les marchands, étant donné que tous ceux qui voyagent à travers les pays de Ma Seigneurie désirent en avoir. J'accède à cette requête, pour qu'ils pratiquent un commerce légal, de même que les marchands de Ma Seigneurie [le font] dans les autres pays, afin que personne parmi les voisins, qui sont dans la charte de Ma Seigneurie, ne leur fasse tort ou crée quelque conflit dans leur pays." Bojovic, *Raguse*, doc. 2, 187.

⁵² *Ahitname* in modern Turkish, these were diplomatic treaties comprised of political and commercial elements, generally and misleadingly referred to as capitulations treaties. *'Ahid-nāmes* established a coherent status for an entire nation or group (*taife*), an in-between kind of legal category for long-term residents in Ottoman lands. See Daniel Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance state: the Ottoman Empire and the new Diplomacy" in *The Early Modern Ottomans*, eds. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 61-74; Edhem Eldem, "Foreigners at the Threshold of Felicity: the reception of foreigners in Ottoman Istanbul," in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* Vol. 2, eds. Donatella Calabi & Stephen Turk Christensen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Hans Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats: the 'Ahd-Names. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political-Commercial Instruments together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents, *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 1 (1998): 1-698.

directly-controlled Ottoman lands, but also those areas that were technically autonomous, but had signed treaty agreements with the Ottoman state.

The tribute paid by Ragusa increased gradually under Murad II and more quickly under his son and successor Mehmed II (r. 1444-46, 1451-81). A document from 1442 confirms the delivery of 1000 Venetian gold ducats and contains a somewhat detailed agreement, which will be analyzed in the following section.⁵³ Ottoman documents preserved in the Dubrovnik State Archives testify that by 1458 the tribute had increased to 1500 gold coins, rising to 5,000 in 1470 and doubling to 10,000 in 1475.⁵⁴ By 1479 the payment had increased to 12,500 and then swelled to a peak of 15,000 ducats in 1480. The amount would likely have increased further but for the death of Mehmed II and accession of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), who reduced the tribute to 12,500 ducats.⁵⁵ This may have been due to the "great affection" that Serafino Razzi claims Bayezid II felt for Ragusa. In any case, the figure of 12,500 ducats did not waver during his long reign and it would remain at the same level until the late 1660s.⁵⁶

According to Zlatar, total revenue from all of Rumelia in the year 1527/28 was 198,206,192 *akçe*, or approximately 38% of total empire-wide revenues, which were nearly 538 million *akçe*.⁵⁷ That same year, Dubrovnik's tribute of 12,500 ducats would have been valued at

⁵³ Bojovic, *Raguse*, doc. 4, 194.

⁵⁴ Francis Carter, *Dubrovnik*, 213. Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka Republika u Spisima Osmanskih Sultana* (Dubrovnik: State Archives of Dubrovnik, 2005), 137-138.

⁵⁵ On the adversarial relationship between Mehmed II and Dubrovnik, see Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*, 66-69 and Miović, *Dubrovačka*, 139.

⁵⁶ Sultan Bayezid "portò molta affezione à i Raugai, e fue huomo pacifico." Razzi, *Storia di Raugia*, 105.

⁵⁷ Figures originally calculated by Barkan and Inalcik. See Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*, 15.

just over 650,000 *akçe*, not including the Ragusan payment of 100,000 *akçe* for customs.⁵⁸

Ragusa's tribute payment was thus one of the more significant individual sources of income from all of the Ottoman Balkans. Due to Dubrovnik's mastery of commerce, these figures are slightly misleading. Tribute ambassadors were expected to engage in currency speculation between the multiple forms of coinage in use in the empire. During their journey to the Ottoman capital, trading in currency meant a tidy discount on Dubrovnik's expenditure of the actual coins delivered.⁵⁹

As the tribute ambassadors made their annual voyages across the mountains, delivering the ever-increasing tribute to Istanbul and bringing back invaluable signed *'ahid-nāmes*, Ragusa continued to play a double game. For over a half-century, the city continued to send not one but two tributes: one to their nominal suzerains in Hungary and the other to the Ottomans. Not until the definitive Ottoman victory over the Kingdom of Hungary at Mohács in 1526 was the Hungarian tribute discontinued. But Dubrovnik's habit of playing both sides went beyond simply continuing to honor a treaty commitment to a state that became an Ottoman enemy. In the 1460s the city sent thousands of ducats to Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, designated for anti-Ottoman military use.⁶⁰ The City of St. Blaise supported others as well. In the 1440s, as Ragusan tribute ambassadors were working out symbiotic treaty agreements in Istanbul,

⁵⁸ Ducat to *akçe* conversion rate for 1527 was 52.5. Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*, Appendix 5, 483.

⁵⁹ In the 17th century, these transactions typically generated a profit of 10%. In the 18th, when the tribute switched to silver, profits could reach 35%. Miović, *Diplomacija*, 298. On the money-changing habits of other (earlier) European traders in the Ottoman world, See Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17.

⁶⁰ Bojovic, *Raguse*, 33.

Dubrovnik's citizens were supporting Serbian attempts to limit Ottoman expansion. At the same time, Ragusa supported the anti-Turkish crusade of 1444, which ended in Varna with a comprehensive Ottoman victory.⁶¹ The republic even harbored fleeing Serbian Despot Đurađ (George) Branković, refusing to hand him over despite the threat of severe Ottoman reprisals.⁶²

In spite of these and many other examples of active support for enemies of the Porte, Dubrovnik's tribute ambassadors were instructed to express undying obedience, devotion, and even love for the Ottoman state.⁶³ A letter from the Ragusan council to the tribute ambassadors in May 1493 instructs the *poklisari* to remind the Gran Signore of the ancient benevolence and friendship between their city and his predecessors. What is more, they are to insist that Ragusa honors the empire not out of obligation but purely from "bona amicizia."⁶⁴ It helped that Ragusans actively supported Ottomans as well, and not only in their required tribute payments.⁶⁵ Still, the rhetoric of friendship stretched both credulity and even temporal

⁶¹ Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants*, 66

⁶² Carter, *Dubrovnik*, 200.

⁶³ "Almost not a single document can be traced without the Ragusan envoys saying that the Dubrovnik Republic was the oldest and most loyal Ottoman tributary state, upon which they claimed privileges and protection." Miović, *Dubrovačka*, 442.

⁶⁴ "...la anticha bevevolentia et amicizia la qual da molti et molti anni è stat tra la citta nostra et la Suoi predecessori." HAD, *LL* Box 17, fol. 6v (May 1493).

⁶⁵ "Sources relating to the liquidation of a Ragusan trading company, established in 1573 by Scipione Bona and Marino Bucchia and active in Ottoman Budin until its bankruptcy in 1591, shed light on such activities. From one document, we learn that Ottoman officials and garrison soldiers possessed substantial sums from which they made loans to Bucchia, the Ragusan merchant who managed the company's business in Budin. Among Bucchia's creditors we find the *mufti* of Budin, Janissaries, *sipahis*, *çavuşes* and a *voyvoda*." Gabor Agoston "Defending and Administering the Ottoman Frontier: The Case of Ottoman Hungary," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Routledge, 2012), 234.

bounds. Eager to demonstrate their longstanding status as tribute payers, Ragusan officials pushed the date of their agreement back to the earliest days of the "felicissima Casa Othomana." It was during the reign of Sultan Orhan (r.1323/4-1362), they claimed, just as the Ottomans were beginning to venture into "Romania," that Ragusa first offered tribute.⁶⁶

Such claims appear absurd, and one is tempted to dismiss them as diplomatic hyperbole. Yet the account of "Dobra-Venedik" (as he punningly rendered the name Dubrovnik) written by the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi in the seventeenth century readily accepts the revisionist Ragusan claim of early fealty to the Ottomans, placing it even further back in time.⁶⁷ According to Evliya, Ragusan leaders were so keen-eyed and well informed that they had been able to recognize the incipient greatness of the Ottomans even from the time of the dynasty's founder, Sultan Osman I. Evliya claims that it was during the Ottoman siege of Bursa (in the 1320s) that the first tribute ambassadors came with lavish gifts, including luxury textiles and

⁶⁶ In the context of a dispute over the territory the small but essential Ragusan territory of Konavle (Canale), a report writes of "Soltan Orcà" to whom tribute was offered: "...gli offeressero tributo innanzi che detta felicissima Casa passasse in Romania. From that time, the document continues, Ragusa continued to enjoy its territories under the most felicitous and most glorious wings of the House of Osman: "Et sempre da quel tempo sotto le felicissime et gloriosissime ali della Casa Othomana pacificamente habbiamo goduto et godiamo dellat Contrada di Canale, et tutto l'altro territorio nostro." HAD, LL Vol. 5, f. 157v (June 11, 1568). See also Lovro Kunčević, "Janus-faced Sovereignty: The International Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Kármán and Kunčević (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 106.

⁶⁷ In a play on words, *dobra*, meaning "good" in the Slavic languages widely spoken in Rumelia and at the Ottoman court, turns Dubrovnik into Dobra-Venedik, the good Venice. Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, 10 vols. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 1996-2007), here vol. 6 (eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı), 263. This orthography has also been attested in the *ecnebi* records of the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. See Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-30" in *The Ottoman World and the World-Economy*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 313.

150 sacks of coins. By the time the Ragusans arrived to pay homage, however, Osman Gazi had died and the Byzantine city had fallen into Ottoman hands. Thus, in Evliya's version it was just after an auspicious military victory at the very beginning of the reign of Sultan Orhan (Osman's successor) that the first peace agreement was established and honored with what became the annual tribute.⁶⁸

Tribute payments were the foundation of a complex system that bound the Ragusa Republic to the Ottoman empire. The *harāç*, or tribute, ensured a consistent influx of gold coinage to an empire struggling with the scarcity of precious metals.⁶⁹ In addition, the republic's customs tariff (*gümrük*), provided an infusion of silver, being calculated in *ağçe* rather than gold coins. In exchange, as *harāçgüzār*, or tribute-payer to the House of 'Osman, the republic received formally-articulated rights, including protection from rivals and unmatched access to Ottoman Rumelia, an enormous import market and producer of commodities for

⁶⁸ "...sene (---) târîhinde 'Osmân Gâzî Bursa kal'asına sarılıp muhâsara ederken hemân bu Dobra-Venedik kâfirleri "Hay işte sâhib-i zuhûr hurûc etdi" deyü elçileriyle (---) altun ve bu kadar dîbâ ve şîb ü zerbâf ve kemhâ vü hârâlar ile elçilerin Bursa'da Osmân Gâzî'ye gönderdiklerinde Osmân Gâzî de vefât etmiş bulunup oğlu Orhân Gâzî Bursa'yı feth etdikde Dobra-Venedikli cümle hedâyâları Orhân Gâzî'ye verüp yüz elli mâdde üzre 'akd-i sulh edüp her sene meblağ-ı mezbûr hazîneyi elçileriyle göndermeği der-'uhde edüp ellerine yüz elli mâdde için yüz elli kit'a yarlığ-ı belîğ-i şâhîler alup bu yüzden ilâ hâze 'l-ân sulh kabûl etmiş bir alay âkıbet-endîş ve dûrbîn-fikr keferi vü fecerelerdir kim aslâ ve kat 'â cemî 'i zamânda sulha muğâyir bir 'ahid-şikenlik etmeyüp her sene başında cümlenden mudakkem elçileri gelir." ["...in the year (---) when Osman Gazi was besieging the fortress of Bursa, the infidels of Dobra-Venedik, saying "Hey! Now an expected king of time has finally emerged," sent their ambassadors to Osman Gazi in Bursa with (---) gold, and this many brocade, gauze, cloth-of gold, velvet, and watermarked silk. But when they arrived they found that Osman Gazi had passed away and Orhân Gazi had conquered the city, so the ambassadors gave all the gifts to Orhan Gazi, and with 150 sacks of coins they concluded a peace agreement. Afterwards they undertook to send the ambassadors with the above-mentioned sum of money to the imperial treasury every year."] Evliya, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 263. English translation mine.

⁶⁹ See Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Cemal Kafadar, "When Coins Turned into Drops of Dew and Bankers Became Robbers of Shadows" (PhD. Diss, McGill University, 1987).

export. Tribute was rewarded with treaties; treaties provided access to markets and protections for merchants. These in turn set the stage for the expansion of Ragusan economic activity in the Balkans, which drove increased traffic on all the roads that led to Ragusa.

The delivery of tribute was done with great solemnity and care, using special caravans that followed the Ragusa Road. The tribute was never sent by sea, an indication of the greater security of the land route. The noblemen entrusted with the annual mission (always two in case one died en route) had a unique opportunity to engage in negotiation, dialogue, and the exchange of sensitive information at the highest levels of empire. Upon reaching the Ottoman court, they were to deliver the tribute to the sultan or grand vizier in person, and, in exchange, acquire the appropriate documents (generally *hüküms* or *fermāns*, but also *'ahid-nāmes* on the accession of each new sultan). The *poklisari* were given detailed instructions on high-level diplomatic negotiations and interventions needed for individual Ragusans in Ottoman lands. During times of conflict between the two powers, the Ragusan envoys did not hesitate to point to the consistently-delivered tribute as evidence of their enduring loyalty and value as a tributary state.

Law

Treaties, imperial commands, and the decisions of Ottoman legal officials gave Ragusa another potent form of currency. With enough incentive, a long and arduous road could become a flourishing trade route. Without meaningful legal protection for the travelers and merchants who populated such a road, however, it would quickly fall into mediocrity. It was not enough to acquire generous terms in Istanbul. The empire was vast and distance from the

imperial center often meant a diminution of the power of official commands. Regional officials were continuously tempted to prey on the wealthy Ragusan travelers by imposing additional duties or higher-than-agreed customs rates.⁷⁰ Conflicts periodically emerged in Istanbul as well, cases where the empire would abruptly reverse its generous policies, bringing Dubrovnik's commercial traffic to a standstill. In instances like these, Dubrovnik relied on its legal expertise to protect its interests, protecting the rights of travelers and citizens living in Ottoman territory. If the exchange of tribute for rights was a straightforward transaction, the maintenance of Ragusa's legal position was a constant process built on two elements: the official treaties and commands written by Ottoman authority, and the ability of Dubrovnik's representatives to interpret and deploy those documents effectively.

The Ottomans may have been newcomers to southeastern Europe, but their agreements with Ragusa followed well-established diplomatic practices. Negotiating legal, political, and commercial agreements with powerful neighbors was very familiar to Dubrovnik's officials. The city's many medieval treaties and trade agreements with Adriatic powers and its longstanding agreement with the Kingdom of Hungary have already been mentioned. To these should be added Ragusa's treaties with Byzantium. As late as 1451, the following terms were confirmed by Emperor Constantine XII:

- Right to a 'loge' (*fondaco*)
- Right to a consul
- Right to have Ragusan-Byzantine disputes judged by said consul
- Right to build a church in Constantinople

⁷⁰ "The Sultan agreed to protect the well-being of the Republic and its citizens, but they proved impotent against bands of brigands and piratical raiders in the shimmer zone on the Empire's periphery." Miović, *Dubrovačka*, 442.

- 2% import and export duty
- Ragusans who wish may reside in the city
- If a Ragusan merchant departs Constantinople with unpaid debts, other Ragusan merchants will not be liable.⁷¹

Dubrovnik signed similar agreements with the medieval states that emerged as Byzantine power disintegrated in the Balkans. In fact, the commercial elements of the Ottoman-Ragusan charter have been described as "the replacement" for the city's previous agreements with the Despotate of Serbia.⁷² These were not simply *pro forma* agreements, but rather diplomatic efforts indented to provide incentives for mobility and expanded trade. A document written in 1431 by a representative of the Despot of Morea states explicitly that the granting of privileges to Dubrovnik was motivated by a desire to expand Ragusan trade in the despot's territory. "If confirmed," the author writes, the agreed-upon privileges will "persuade the Ragusan merchants to come and engage in commerce." In exchange, the merchants of the Morea will be welcomed in Ragusa "with the greatest favor."⁷³

Even the papacy granted official privileges to the city of St. Blaise, including exemption from forced participation in Holy Leagues (despite Venetian objections). The Roman church understood that Dubrovnik's ability to trade with the infidel was necessary for the survival of the Catholic city-state perched at the edge of the Muslim and Orthodox world. The Council of

⁷¹ HAD, *Acta S. Mariae*, fasc. XVe siècle. Published as doc.1222 in Krekić, *Dubrovnik*.

⁷² Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 54

⁷³ The agreement, which includes specific tariff privileges relating to wheat, silver, gold and pearls, is described in HAD LL XI f. 16-17: February 16, 1431. Published as doc. 787 in Krekić, *Dubrovnik*.

Basel in 1433 confirmed Dubrovnik's right to travel and trade in Muslim lands.⁷⁴ It did not hurt that these commercial ventures had other values for Rome: "...the curia depended upon Ragusan services to spy on the Ottomans and protect Catholics inhabiting the territory of Ottoman Herzegovina."⁷⁵ Having negotiated with Italian city-states, Balkan and continental monarchies, the Byzantine emperor, and the papacy, the Ragusan Republic had centuries of diplomatic and legal experience on which to draw when, beginning in the 1430s, its envoys were called to the court of the region's rising power.

The Ottoman document granted by Sultan Murad II to the Ragusan *poklisari* Nikola de Goci and Pierre de Premo in 1442 established the template for all *'ahid-nāmes* to come.⁷⁶ The generosity of the terms of agreement are striking, including guarantees of two factors of the utmost importance: freedom of movement for Dubrovnik's citizens abroad and political autonomy for the republic at home. More than this, the treaty granted Ragusan merchants a customs rate of 2% for goods sold in Ottoman lands (even lower than the 3% paid by Ottoman Muslim traders).⁷⁷ The "circulation" sought by the envoys of 1430 was central to the more detailed and legalistic document of 1442.

⁷⁴ "Ils [the Ragusans] sont autorisés à envoyer des navires avec des pèlerins et des marchandises dans les terres des Infidèles. En outre ils peuvent y bâtir des églises et des chapelles et y avoir leurs cimetières. Finalement, ils pourront y établir leur consuls et d'autres fonctionnaires. Ils ne doivent cependant apporter aux Infidèles ni fer, ni bois, ni victuailles, ni armes, etc." 22 December 1433. HAD Acta S. Mariae, fasc. 15th century. *Div. not.*, XVIII f 215-217. Published as doc. 812 in Krekić, *Dubrovnik*.

⁷⁵ Vesna Miović, "Diplomatic Relations," 190.

⁷⁶ Relations between Dubrovnik and the Porte broke down from 1444-1451 and the republic avoided tribute payments. Despite this, the *'ahid-nāme* of 1458 is nearly identical to the document of 1442, which can be seen as the prototype for Dubrovnik's extraordinary privileges. Zlatar, *Dubrovnik Merchants*, 66.

⁷⁷ Bojovič, *Raguse*, 190-194.

... may the merchants and men [of Dubrovnik] with their merchandise and the goods belonging to them may travel unhindered, by land or by sea, across the lands of Anatolia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Valachia; across the Serbian and Albanian lands, and across all the other places, lands and cities under my dominion...⁷⁸

This foundational document devotes surprising detail to specific scenarios of concern to non-Muslim merchants doing business in Ottoman lands. Legal conflicts between a Christian and a Muslim, for example, were to be resolved by a kadi. The estate of a merchant who died while in Ottoman lands was not to be confiscated but eventually returned to his heirs intact.⁷⁹

Sultan Murad II created a comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreement that guaranteed Dubrovnik's autonomy. The 1442 *'ahid-nāme* provided major incentives and protections for Ragusans trading in the lands of the Ottomans and their clients. Showing discipline and foresight, the document contained another element that would become a pillar of Ottoman-Ragusan agreements to come. Dubrovnik would be considered a free port, with the right to trade even with enemies of the Ottoman state. "In the case that I am at war with another ruler," the sultan writes, Dubrovnik's notables and merchants would not lose their rights, including the right to travel freely across Ottoman territory.⁸⁰ This would have been an

⁷⁸ "Ma Seigneurie leur accorde encore la faveur: que leurs marchands et leurs hommes avec les marchandises et les biens leur appartenant puissent circuler sans entraves, par voie maritime ou continentale, à travers les pays de l'Anatolie, Roumanie, Bulgarie, et Valachie, à travers les pays serbes, albanais, la Bosnie et à travers tous les autres lieux, pays et villes de Ma Seigneurie..." Bojovič, *Raguse*, 191-192.

⁷⁹ "...si un Ragusain meurt dans le pays de Mon Empire, que son bien ne soit pas pris ni par moi le grand empereur (tsar) ni par aucun de mes seigneurs (*vlastelin*), mais que les Ragusains puissent repartir ce bien à Dubrovnik." Bojovič, *Raguse*, 193. Whether Muslim or non-Muslim, a deceased person's belongings were initially confiscated and held by the *beytül'-māl emīni* (charge d'affaires of imperial property) until the legal heirs arrived to claim their inheritance. I thank Himmet Taskomur for this clarification.

⁸⁰ "Mon Empire leur promet encore: au cas où j'aurais une querelle avec quelque seigneur en Orient ou en Occident, ou avec quelque autre pays ou nation, sur mer ou sur terre, que le *knez* et les *vlastela* de

anomaly for other tribute-paying states, but it was a consistent policy for Ragusa, articulated with even greater clarity in later charters. "The territory of Dubrovnik is open to all whether arriving by land or sea, whether a friend or enemy of the sultan."⁸¹

In sum, the terms of agreement offered by the flourishing Ottomans show great similarity to the terms agreed to with the Byzantines, at approximately same time. The 1442

`ahid-nāme and included the following stipulations:

- Territorial integrity of Dubrovnik's lands
- Freedom of movement for Dubrovnik's merchants by land and sea
- 2% tax on sold merchandise
- Ragusan - Ottoman Christian disputes to be resolved by Ragusan priest
- Ragusan - Ottoman Muslim disputes to be resolved by kadi
- Dubrovnik's community at large not responsible for debts of individual merchant
- In event of death in Ottoman territory, estate of Ragusan merchant not to be (permanently) confiscated
- Free trade internationally, including with enemies of the Ottoman empire
- Apart from the *emin* (tax or customs official), no Ottoman officials to enter Ragusan territory uninvited.⁸²

Naturally, these elements would evolve over time. But the essential structure put in place in 1442 would remain intact through the seventeenth century. Sultan Murad had given Dubrovnik a legally-binding combination of security, commercial advantages, and the right to open exchange. Cumulatively, these factors made Dubrovnik the most privileged nation on the Dalmatian coast, if not the entire Adriatic. But a capitulations treaty was only valuable if it was

Dubrovnik ainsi que leurs hommes conservent leurs libertés, et que leurs marchands puissent voyager librement à travers les pays de Ma Seigneurie." Bojović, *Raguse*, 193.

⁸¹ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations," 189.

⁸² On the powers and limitations of the *emin*, see Vesna Miović, "Emin (Customs Officer) as Representative of the Ottoman Empire in the Republic of Dubrovnik," *Dubrovnik Annals* 7 (2003): 81-88.

obeyed and enforced across the huge territory of Ottoman Rumelia. Mobility was contingent on the consistent application of the terms of the *'ahid-nāme*, which was not always the case. If the travelers of the Ragusa Road were targeted for additional fees or, even worse, if the Porte imposed a blockade on the passage of Dubrovnik's goods, the arteries of circulation would constrict to devastating effect.⁸³ Ragusan fluency with Ottoman political and commercial agreements was essential to maintaining the flow of humans and commodities.

Dubrovnik did not hesitate to remind even the highest Ottoman officials of their agreements and obligations. A letter sent to Ragusan representatives in Istanbul in 1568, directs them to explain to Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha that it is unfair to raise Dubrovnik's tribute without raising that of all other Christian tribute-paying subjects.⁸⁴ The letter goes on to explain the republic's special status, using Ottoman terminology translated into the unruly Italian of Ragusan diplomatic correspondence. "We," the letter reminds its readers, "are a tributary of the Gran Signore under the term known in Turkish as *chesim*, which means something cut and completed."⁸⁵ This line of argument may have helped ensure that Dubrovnik's tribute did not rise beyond the figure established in the late fifteenth century.

⁸³ In 1653, during the Ottoman-Venetian war in Crete, a *yasaḳ* or trade embargo was imposed on Dubrovnik. Some 15,000 to 20,000 horse loads of goods were impounded in Novi Pazar as Ragusan officials scrambled to convince the Porte to rescind the embargo. Hrabak, "Kramars," 206

⁸⁴ HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5., f. 170v (September 10, 1568).

⁸⁵ "Havete a sapere come noi siamo tributarij del Gran Signore sotto il nome chiamati in turchesco *chesim*, che vuol dire una cosa tagliata et terminata, alla quale terminatione si debbe stare et mantenere secondo la prima della *achehiama* [*'ahid-nāme*] nostra." HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5., f. 170v (September 10, 1568). *Kesim*, which has the standard meaning of cutting, reaping, or slaughtering, can also be defined as something fixed or agreed. Redhouse *Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük* (Istanbul, 1968), 643.

One of many examples of Dubrovnik's effective use of its treaty rights stems from a conflict with Castelnuovo, the Ottoman port directly to the south of Dubrovnik (in present day Montenegro). Castelnuovo, adjacent to the Ragusan territory of Konavle, was a constant thorn in Dubrovnik's side. In 1568, the kadi of Castelnuovo managed to obtain a favorable judgement from the imperial divan, granting him the right to send his *nā'ib* (a kind of substitute judge) to Dubrovnik to "adjudicate all legal conflicts" between the two cities.⁸⁶ Ragusa's response was immediate, and took many forms. The city's representative in Istanbul was instructed to petition the grand vizier (Sokollu Mehmed Pasha), seeking his assistance in getting the kadi's "cocchiumo" (*ḥüküm*) revoked. The envoy was to bring gifts, of course, and was also provided with a number of arguments with which to sway the vizier. Among them was the assertion that the *ḥüküm* was "contrary to the form of the *'ahdnāme*."⁸⁷ There can be no doubt that Ragusa's vigorous defense of its treaty rights was executed with an eye on overland mobility and trade. Two months later, a letter from Ragusan officials indicates that the conflict had been resolved in the republic's favor. The envoy in Istanbul was instructed not to fail to obtain a *ḥüküm* that would confirm Dubrovnik's rights, "so that the roads may be free – for all types of merchandise"⁸⁸ The envoy's instructions confirm that the preservation of free movement was at the heart of Dubrovnik's legal and diplomatic efforts, even in cases such as this that would seem only marginally connected.

⁸⁶ HAD LL, Ser 27.1 Vol. 5, f. 144v (June 26, 1568).

⁸⁷ HAD LL, Ser. 27.1 Vol. 5. f. 155r (Undated).

⁸⁸ "Non mancarete procurare ad ottenere cocchiumo in buona forma, che le strade siano libere – tanto per tutte le sorti della mercantie." HAD LL, Ser. 27.1 Vol. 5. f. 162r. (August 23, 1568).

Ragusan merchants often carried official copies of treaty documents (endorsed by a kadi), to prevent misunderstandings and depredations by provincial officials and customs officers.⁸⁹ The precaution, however, was not always effective. The republic used official legal channels to acquire special documents when needed, even for the benefit of a single overland traveler. A messenger named Yorgi dispatched from Constantinople in 1579 was given a special *fermān* to ensure his security and free movement. Addressed to "the sancakbeys on the road between the Gate of Felicity [Istanbul] and Dubrovnik and the cadis in those sancaks," the document affirms that Yorgi and his horse and his things were not to be interfered with "on the roads and tracks and in the inns and halting-places."⁹⁰

Dubrovnik's extraordinarily low rate of taxation was not always honored by provincial officials, who sometimes attempted to impose the 5% tax expected of European merchants. A *fermān* was sent in 1463 to Sjenica, a small town on the Ragusa Road west of Novi Pazar, ordering the local authorities permit Ragusan merchants to travel without constraint or transit tax, and to be charged only the agreed-upon amount of "two aspers on 100 aspers" for goods sold.⁹¹ The singular status of Dubrovnik's citizens in Ottoman realms led inevitably to this kind of confusion – willful or otherwise. A directive sent in 1580 to the judges of Rumelia reflects this

⁸⁹ Biegman *Turco-Ragusan*, 69.

⁹⁰ DAZ (Zadar State Archives) *Carte Turche* IV, 89. Published as doc.100 in Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 186.

⁹¹ "Et qu'on leur impose aucune contrainte en aucun lieu, ou le versement de la douane de transit, mais qu'ils payent sur les lieux de vente: 2 aspres sur 100 aspres en emportant où bon leur semble la marchandise invendue." Bojovic, *Raguse*, 204

ambiguity, reaffirming the privileged status of Ragusans and the continuing importance of the capitulations agreements.

The envoys of the Beys of Dubrovnik have sent a man, and made known that the men, *voyvodas*, *subaşı*s and workers (*iş erleri*) of the sancakbey[s], being in lust of grain, cause trouble to the trader Frano Rado, bearer of [this] firman, and to his servants, because he rides a horse, wears spurs, puts on his waistcoat and carries arms on mountain passes and other dangerous sites within the Ottoman territories, for fear of highway robbers. Well, the Ragusans are like the rest of the Sultan's tribute-paying subjects (*haraç-güzār ra'iyetler*), and it is not allowed to do them wrong against the Charter.⁹²

Dubrovnik's merchants and officials knew that their ability to travel and trade effectively in Ottoman lands depended on consistent application of treaty agreements and imperial commands. The republic was extraordinarily skilled at acquiring favorable agreements, and understood how to negotiate through official channels for additional support when agreements were not being honored. Tribute (used to obtain agreements) and law (used to ensure that agreements were honored) were two very effective and intertwined forms of currency. Supporting and amplifying these was a third form, which complemented Ragusa's strengths in politics and commerce with an acute understanding of Ottoman desires.

Gifts and Relationships

Whatever privileges the Ottoman central authorities might have been willing to grant in their negotiations with European diplomatic representatives, application of the *ahidnames* took place only to the extent to which these privileges could be fitted into what the Ottoman bureaucracy regarded as 'proper procedure.' Ottoman officialdom may not have obeyed all the orders it received from above, but it followed intelligible principles in what it accepted and what it rejected. In this sense, one might even claim

⁹² HAD *Acta Turcarum* 15/30 (September 21-30, 1580). Published as doc. 13 in Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 88.

that the very limitations upon the applicability of the *ahidnames* document the cohesion, and not the decline, of a flexible and long-lasting state mechanism⁹³

If tribute and law represent the prescriptive norms that governed the Ottoman-Ragusan relationship, reality was more complex. As examples in the previous section indicate, the privileges of an imperial charter were often selectively applied on the Ottoman frontiers. Dubrovnik position depended on masterful cultivation of formal and informal ties to 'Ottoman officialdom.' Officially defined obligations such as tribute and customs payments were not the only valuable commodities flowing from Ragusan to Ottoman hands. "Gifts," as they were known, were delivered continuously; their amount and their form tailored to the position, status, and even the individual personality of each recipient. As a standard element of early modern diplomacy and negotiation, diplomatic gifts were carefully noted in Ragusan documents as the necessary (and effective) state expenses they were. In some cases – particularly in moments of tension between Dubrovnik and the Porte – these gifts could be astoundingly valuable and varied.

The annual tribute itself was spoken of as a gift for the Gran Signore, and lesser gifts of precious metals were distributed down the political hierarchy, beginning with the grand vizier. Everything was governed by proportion, rank, and precedent. The written commission given to tribute ambassadors Andrea di Resti and Vladislavo di Bona in 1593 included budget items for gifts of 100 ducats and two silver trays for each member of the Imperial Divan, and the same

⁹³ Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-30" in *The Ottoman World and the World-Economy*, Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 344

for the "Bassa di Romania" (Rumeli *beylerbeyi*). In addition, the following officials were not neglected:

- Grand Admiral ("Capitano del Mare") 100 ducats, 2 silver trays
- *Defterdars* (3) 10 ducats and 1 silver tray each
- Dragoman of the Porte 10 ducats and 1 silver tray
- Imperial *kapıcıbaşı* (Head Gatekeeper) 1 silver tray
- *Kethüda* (Steward) of the Sultan 6 ducats
- *Sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina 100 ducats
- *Çavuş* of the *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina (who accompanied the *poklisari* on their journey) 16 ducats plus 4 for travel expenses
- *Kapıcıbaşı* of the *sancakbeyi* 1 silver tray
- Additional funds for travel (3 ducats) and for time spent in Istanbul (70 ducats)⁹⁴

The attention to detail is impressive, if typical of Ragusan diplomacy. Yet the amounts themselves are not outlandish. Ragusa's perpetual pleas of poverty were effective in keeping gift inflation from getting out of hand.⁹⁵

Dubrovnik's leaders were, however, always willing to spend major sums on gifts at moments of crisis. In 1568, the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha rejected a gift of 1500 ducats, and then rejected the increased offer of 3000. Desperate to resume good relations, Ragusa eventually offered a sum of 5000 ducats, which Sokollu accepted.⁹⁶ These types of extraordinary payments were decried as '*innovazione*' and it required extreme diplomatic dexterity to prevent them from becoming established precedent. But then again, Dubrovnik's

⁹⁴ HAD, *DA* Box 441, Doc. 1. (April 19, 1593).

⁹⁵ Compare Dubrovnik's gifts to Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha in the mid sixteenth century to those of the Habsburgs: "If Ferdinand's ambassadors regularly brought payments of 2,000 Hungarian ducats for each vizier, Dubrovnik's *poklisari* gave each *vezir* 200 Venetian ducats..." James Tracy "The Grand Vezir and the Small Republic: Dubrovnik and Rüstem Paşa, 1544-1561" *Turkish Historical Review* I (2010), 209.

⁹⁶ HAD *LL* 27.1, Vol 5, fol. 167r (September 10, 1568) and fol. 182r (undated).

gifts were not limited to cash and silver plate. Sumptuous fabrics were part and parcel of Ottoman-Ragusan diplomacy, as one scholar has noted in the case of an earlier grand vizier: "...virtually every encounter between Rüstem and the *poklisari* included references to sample-cuts of silk presented to him..."⁹⁷

Luxury textiles were highly valued in Ottoman, Ragusan, and western European societies. Italian silks and velvets were particularly admired. Ottoman sultans wrapped themselves in costly kaftans to project their wealth, power, and sophistication. "As items of dress, those kaftans [made from Italian textiles] ranked high among the most conspicuous items of foreign manufacture at the Ottoman court."⁹⁸ Italian silks could also be used as throne covers or re-gifted as *hil'at*, robes of honor granted in courtly ritual. Ottoman miniature paintings and foreign travel accounts attest to the magnificence of textiles in Ottoman political life. Voluminous turbans and ostentatious fur trim set off the silk and velvet kaftans that signaled high status in Ottoman officialdom.⁹⁹

Ragusa used its position as a bridge between Italy and Istanbul to deliver much-admired Italian luxury textiles to the imperial court, building favor with influential officials in the process. Diplomatic gift-giving involved great numbers of carefully selected textiles. To resolve the crisis of 1568 (in addition to the gift of 5000 ducats mentioned above), Ragusan

⁹⁷ Tracy, "Grand Vezir," 209.

⁹⁸ Louise W. Mackie, "Ottoman Kaftans with an Italian Identity," in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Cristoph K. Neumann (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 219.

⁹⁹ A study of the inventories of two Ottoman viziers in the 18th century shows the elaborate care given to kaftans, fur and silk garments, and their centrality in projecting the authority of a vizier. Cristoph K. Neumann, "How did a Vizier dress in the eighteenth century?" in *Ottoman Costumes*, 181-217.

ambassadors were instructed to deliver to the following silks and velvets to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.

- 2 *Cavezzi* (sample cut) of crimson velvet
- 4 *Cavezzi* of crimson damask
- 2 *Cavezzi* of purple damask
- 1 *Cavezzo* of gold satin
- 1 *Cavezzo* of 'alto basso' velvet
- 1 *Cavezzo* of tawny damask ('lionato')
- 1 *Cavezzo* of sky blue damask ('turchino')
- 1 *Cavezzo* of 'colombino' damask¹⁰⁰
- 1 *Cavezzo* of white damask
- 1 *Cavezzo* of green silk¹⁰¹
- 1 *Cavezzo* of purple silk
- 5 hands of scarlet
- 5 hands of purple
- 6 hands of soft dark green wool ('peluzzo')
- 6 hands of soft yellow-green wool¹⁰²

Adding to this impressive polychrome delivery are the names of ten other Ottoman recipients who also received designated textiles. Included on the list are the wives and daughters of prominent officials. Specific fabric and color combinations were designated every name on the gift list, all the way down to the *nişāncı* ("nisangibeh" or court chancellor), who was to receive a single cavezzo of crimson silk. In total, the Ragusan document enumerates 37 textile samples to be delivered in this single diplomatic mission, including the abovementioned 15 items for Sokollu Mehmed. Ragusa's access to European

¹⁰⁰ Colombino was a color developed in the sixteenth century, apparently iridescent deep blue with a little red, "similar to the neck of a pigeon." Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003)

¹⁰¹ Festechino: a green color "similar to the fields under crop in April" Molà, *Silk Industry*.

¹⁰² HAD LL 27.1 Vol. 5, fol. 184r (December 13, 1568).

markets allowed the republic's merchants to acquire the finest, most sought-after textiles and deploy them as instruments of diplomacy.¹⁰³ With no permanent representative in Istanbul, this supple currency helped the ever-changing representatives of Dubrovnik demonstrate their regard and affection for influential Ottoman figures.¹⁰⁴

Gifts were not delivered only in Istanbul. Everywhere that Ragusan traders went, the republic followed, building relationships with diplomacy and gifts. The *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia and *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina were of paramount importance due to their proximity and the fact that the major caravan routes from Dubrovnik crossed their territories. The *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia held an elevated position in the Ottoman hierarchy, and his judgement could determine important outcomes for the Ragusan Republic in Istanbul. The city of St. Blaise was acutely aware of the need to stay in his good graces. In 1703, with Dubrovnik's prominence long undercut by the success of the Venetian-controlled Split-Sarajevo road and with the city not fully recovered from the devastating earthquake of 1667, the imperial council agreed to officially reduce Ragusa's annual tribute by two-thirds (the full amount of 12,500 gold coins was to be delivered, but only every 3 years). This was a major coup for Ragusan diplomacy. Yet the agreement made in Istanbul officially hinged on a report by the Bosnian *beylerbeyi*, who was

¹⁰³ Dubrovnik developed its own textile manufacturing capacity, including silk production, in the second half of the fifteenth century. See Joško Belamarić, "Cloth and Geography: Town Planning and Architectural Aspects of the First Industry in Dubrovnik in the 15th Century," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean*, ed. Alina Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Hard and soft currencies could be interchangeable. A letter to the tribute ambassadors in the 1560s gives them the choice of an appropriate bonus gift to the pashas, defterdars, and other ministers of the court: "...you will give out an additional 450 ducats either in coins or in silk fabric, as you see fit...to be good expenses with which to obtain our intent." HAD LL 27.1 Vol. 5, fol. 142 (Undated, 1560s).

required to submit a report on Ragusa's financial situation.¹⁰⁵ The *poklisar* Vladislav Buća was dispatched to Sarajevo for a charm offensive which was to last a year and a half. During this time, Bosnian officials were inundated with gifts, of which a precise account was kept by the fastidious Ragusans:

[The] Beylerbey, his son, *kethüda*, *defterdar*, *mula* of Sarajevo and *muselim* were most generously rewarded with 14 pieces of atlas, 3 of cloth, 2 barrels of marinated [sic] fish, 3 barrels of olives, 8 barrels of lemons, 650 oranges, 2 demijohns of orange juice, 1 smaller demijohn of lime juice, 4 demijohns of cinnamon herbal drink, 6 bowls of candied lime, 3 bowls of candied rose petals, 1 box of candied peaches (It. *persicata*), 2 boxes of *mostacioni* biscuits, 8 boxes of quinces, 20 loaves of sugar, 5 pairs of spectacles in cases, 6 pairs of spectacles, 2 coral *tespihs*, geographical charts, 2 silver jugs with artificial flowers, 8 sprouts of unnamed flowers, malvasia, plus the ordinary gift offered to [the] beylerbey, newly appointed amidst Buća's mission. Lastly, [the] *kapıcıbaşı*, who carried the firman on the diminution of haraç from the Porte to Sarajevo, was rewarded with the promised 400 ungars and 700 Ragusan ducats, a mug and a washing basin. Beylerbey received the promised 3,000 reals (about 5,030 Ragusan ducats), *kethüda* received 500 reals, while *divan-efendi* and a certain Mehmed-efendi 20 ducats each.¹⁰⁶

By delivering everything up to and including a sink (along with an unspecified amount of malvasia, Dalmatia's local red wine), Dubrovnik gave the *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia every incentive to send a favorable report to Istanbul, and he fulfilled their hopes.¹⁰⁷ The governor's report helped confirm the new tribute arrangement, saving the republic over 8000 gold coins per year.

¹⁰⁵ Vesna Miović "Beylerbey of Bosnia and Sancakbey of Herzegovina in the Diplomacy of the Dubrovnik Republic" *Dubrovnik Annals* 9 (2005), 63.

¹⁰⁶ Miović, "Beylerbey," 64

¹⁰⁷ Ragusan officials provided ingenious gifts that were not always costly. Sweets, fresh vegetables and flowers were also common. On occasion officials asked for and received specific items, including writing paper, windowpanes, lanterns, tobacco, animals for hunting (dogs and birds), and corals. Strings of prayer beads (*tespih*) made of coral were an extremely popular gift. Miović, "Beylerbey," 57.

This case beautifully illustrates the way Ragusa's diplomatic expertise was enhanced by its detailed knowledge of the markets, commodities, and routes of the Mediterranean. Dubrovnik's experience in the caravan trade was also instrumental. The *poklisar* delivered not only cash and desirable textiles, but also fresh citrus and other perishable items to mountainous Sarajevo – hundreds of kilometers from the coast – thanks to the Republic's skill in organizing overland transport. The ability of Dubrovnik's mobile diplomats was supported by their widely-ranging merchants, giving them access to commodities both luxurious and mundane, as well as the resources to transport them efficiently. These overlapping mobile factors worked in unison to give the Ragusan state a powerful tool to use in all-important negotiations with its powerful Ottoman neighbor.

Information

“We pay two tributes, and not only one, because of our great and continuous expenses keeping people in every part of the world in order that we know what happens (there) and what is going on, then to report it to the Blessed Porte...”¹⁰⁸

By the year 1550, Dubrovnik had established 44 consulates in the western Mediterranean, complementing six it held in the east. From 1750-1808, the numbers were 57 in the west, and 27 in the east.¹⁰⁹ These diplomatic posts fulfilled many functions, including acting as listening posts for the information-hungry republic. Local informants traded useful information like merchandise, and ambassadors had a special budget for intelligence

¹⁰⁸ HAD LL (August 8,1590). Quoted in Biegman, *Turco-Ragusan*, 129.

¹⁰⁹ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations," 198.

gathering.¹¹⁰ The formal apparatus was impressive, but paled in comparison to Dubrovnik's commercial networks, which were far more extensive. For mercantile states like Ragusa and Venice, every bit of information was potentially valuable, and every subject was a potential informant.¹¹¹

"Horatio Lauretano" is the pseudonym used by a merchant who was also diligent provider of information. He sent detailed letters to the Ragusan government from his position in "Harente," a river port also known as Gabela, near the mouth of the Neretva River (now Metković, Croatia). Of great importance in the Bosnian salt trade, the Neretva was located to the north of Dubrovnik at the intersection of Ragusan, Ottoman, and Venetian spheres. From this modest yet internationally-connected location, Horatio had access to a great deal of intelligence, which he forwarded to multiple interested parties. In a letter of February 1, 1566, he describes the preparations being made by the Ottomans for a great overland campaign ("per terra ferma") toward Vienna, to be led by the Sultan himself.¹¹² 1566 indeed witnessed an overland campaign led by Süleyman the Lawgiver, just as the report suggests. (The Ragusan informant could not have predicted that it would be Süleyman's final campaign, as he would die during the siege of Szigetvár, Hungary). The same letter of 1566 also reveals the danger of faulty information coming in from Ragusa's far-flung network of informants. Horatio writes of

¹¹⁰ Miović, "Diplomatic Relations," 199.

¹¹¹ "Il che vuol dire che per lo Stato mercantile ogni informazione è interessante e che, di conseguenza, non soltanto gli esperti professionisti dei vari settori dei servizi d'informazioni (servizi segreti), ma tutti i sudditi dello Stato sono in grado di fornire materiale informativo utilizzabile." Hans Kissling, "Venezia come centro di informazioni sui Turchi" in *Venezia Centro di Mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente*, eds. Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, Agostino Pertusi (Florence: Olschki, 1977).

¹¹² HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f.133v (February 1, 1566).

an Ottoman armada "to be even larger than that of the previous year" being built to resume the attack on Malta (which never restarted after the Ottoman failure of 1565).¹¹³

Over the course of the spring of 1566 Horatio continued to write letters filled with impressive detail. In March, he named "Piali Bassà" (Piyale Pasha) as grand admiral of the Ottoman fleet, which, he says, included 2000 janissaries and 2000 horses but whose destination was as yet unknown. This merchant-spy seems to have had his own network of anonymous informants, presumably other merchants and/or couriers. Drawing from their collective observations, "Horatio" was attuned to movements of all kinds: armies, navies, supplies, traders, and more. He even notes important advances in Ottoman infrastructure, such as the bridges over the Sava and Danube Rivers in Belgrade, which he notes were "finished and in order," in March 1566.¹¹⁴

The informant from Neretva signed off on his letters with his pseudonym and then wrote brief postscripts which explained that he was sending another copy of each letter to Ragusa by alternative means, to ensure the delivery of at least one of his reports. This was standard practice for merchants and diplomats in the early modern Mediterranean. What *is* unusual, is that he also states explicitly that he is sending the same information to the viceroy of Naples and Sicily. These letters, he explains to his Ragusan readers, are signed with still another name: "Lucio Pisone."¹¹⁵ A servant of at least two masters, the actual identity of this

¹¹³ HAD *LL* Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f133v (February 1, 1566)

¹¹⁴ HAD *LL* Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f136v and 135 (March 26, 1566)

¹¹⁵ "Et due altre simil furono scritti alli illmi [illustrissimi] S.re Vicc Re di Napoli et di Sicilia sotto il nome di Lucio Pisone. Adi primo di Febraio 1566 di Harente [Neretva]." HAD *LL* Ser 27.1, Vol. 5, f133v (February 1, 1566).

individual remains unknown.¹¹⁶ This was not doubt by design, due to the dangerous nature of his work. Indeed, at the end of the letter of March 26 he begs the Ragusan government for protection, claiming to be afraid for his life.¹¹⁷ Who is threatening him is not made clear, but the flow of letters from "Horatio" in Neretva preserved in the archives stops at that point.

Ottoman officials were not unaware of the problem of strategic information leaking out from Dubrovnik to their antagonists in the Mediterranean. In 1591, a *fermān* was issued to the *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia ordering that reliable *çavuşes* (imperial messengers) accompany all Ragusan envoys traveling in Ottoman territory, to protect against "the many spies of the Frankish misbelievers."¹¹⁸ Little seems to have come out of this directive, and, in general, there were few serious attempts to regulate the multidirectional flow of information. One reason for this is that all the Ragusan merchants who had been living in Ottoman lands since the late fourteenth century were potential spies ("c'étaient des informateurs excellents").¹¹⁹ Yet no

¹¹⁶ Vesna Miović has identified the pseudonym Lucio Pisone in use a half-century later, in a very different context. This following quotation hints at the serendipity with which the archives occasionally reward a virtuosic researcher like Dr. Miović. "Throughout the seventeenth century, particularly during the Cretan War, letters to the Papal Curia were sent from Dubrovnik and signed by 'Lucio Pisone,' 'Martino de Turra,' 'Fabritio de Tersis,' The sender would always address the recipient with Beatissimo Padre, and continue that 'a friend from Istanbul' had notified him of certain news through a letter with a certain date. Had it not been for the secretary of the Vatican Chancellery who marked them with 'The Republic of Dubrovnik,' the letters themselves could not in any way have been revealed who the actual sender was." Miović "Diplomatic Relations," 201.

¹¹⁷ HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f138r (March 26, 1566).

¹¹⁸ Biegman, "Ragusan Spying," 239.

¹¹⁹ Krekić, *Dubrovnik*, 154.

major reprisals were ever take against them, due, most likely, to their relatively small numbers and robust economic output.

As with tribute and gifts, the Ragusan government instructed its tribute ambassadors to share specific units of information with targeted Ottoman officials. The *poklisari* of 1566, for example, were told to inform the grand vizier about the movements of the Spanish fleet in Naples and Messina; about the status of Florentine galleys in Livorno; and the new ships being built in various Italian cities.¹²⁰ Sokollu Mehmed no doubt appreciated being informed that the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II planned to arrive in Augsburg on March 19, 1566 for a meeting with "tutti i Principi" of Germany, and that Don Carlos, heir-apparent to King Phillip II of Spain, had died in 1568 ("not a violent death, but a natural one").¹²¹ The streams of information flowing into Dubrovnik from its networks of information were sifted, edited, and selectively forwarded to Istanbul. The most sensitive information could not risk being written down, but was transmitted orally by special couriers.¹²² Containing updates on Austria, Spain, France (mentioning the 'Hugonoti'), the Italian states and the Low Countries, these documents encapsulate the military, political and economic movements of the Mediterranean and northern Europe, a combination of spying and news-gathering that was commodified by Ragusan officials for the consumption of Ottoman leaders.¹²³

¹²⁰ HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f135r (March 1, 1566).

¹²¹ HAD LL Ser 27.1, Vol 5, f135v (March 1, 1566) and f169v (September 10, 1568). On the 1566 Diet of Augsburg, see also f139r-139v.

¹²² Miović, "Diplomatic Relations," 201.

¹²³ For a comparable phenomenon in the practice of Dubrovnik's major rival, see the section on "The Commercialization of Information" in Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and

Dubrovnik's value as a center of information was obvious to the Ottomans from an early stage. Moreover, the republic's position made it an ideal transition point for sensitive missions into Christian lands.¹²⁴ In June 1431, just after the first direct communications with Murad II and the "Beys of Dubrovnik," the sultan sent a certain Ali Bey to Dubrovnik. Using the Republic as a base, Ali was to take possession of a fort and three "cantons" in the territory of Duke of Herzegovina.¹²⁵ Half a century later, in 1481, the Ottoman dynasty was shaken by a succession crisis with the death of Mehmed II. Bayezid II took power, his forces having defeated (but not killed) his brother and rival, Prince Cem, who took flight, first to Mamluk Egypt, later to Rhodes, before eventually landing in southern France, and then, finally, Rome.¹²⁶ Even in exile, Cem represented a significant threat to the Ottoman order, and it was necessary to keep track of his movements. Yet at a certain point, Bayezid seems to have lost track of his brother completely. In 1482, a *fermān* was sent to Dubrovnik, seeking the republic's aid in tracking down the fugitive prince, about whose location they had no news. The document survives in an Italian

Communication," in *Venice Reconsidered*, eds. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000): 389-419.

¹²⁴ Missions in the opposite direction from Europe into Ottoman territory also transited through Dubrovnik: "la base per l'invio di spie in terra ottomana è Ragusa, perennemente in bilico tra sudditanza al sultano e solidarietà religiosa e politica con il papa e la Spagna." Paolo Preto, *I Servizi Segreti di Venezia* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994), 29. The Habsburgs too used Dubrovnik to collect information and send agents to the Levant. See Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean" (Phd diss., Georgetown University, 2012). Most relevant are pages 206-213.

¹²⁵ "Le Sultan envoie Ali Beg qui à pour mission de prendre possession du fort du Klobuk et des cantons de Trebinje, Vrm et Lug." Bojovic, *Raguse*, 188.

¹²⁶ See Nicholas Vatin, *Sultan Djem* (Ankara, 1997) and, by the same author, "Itinéraires d'agents de la Porte en Italie (1433-1495)" *Turcica* XIX (1987) 29-49. Related documents are explored here: İ Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Cem Sultan'a dair beş orijinal Vesika" *Bellesten* 24 (1960): 457-475. Ragusa's role in the Cem affair is explored in more detail in chapter 3 of this dissertation

translation, complete with an approximation of the sultan's *tuğra*, or imperial seal. "I confide in you," the sultan writes to his Ragusan vassals, "that diligently you may discover where he might be."¹²⁷

¹²⁷ "Non habiamo havuto ancora nova nisuna dove sia andato...io confide in voi che diligente[mente] lo saperete dove sarà." HAD, *Acta Turcarum* P.P. 50 (1482). Dubrovnik was not the only Christian ally enlisted by Bayezid to keep track of his brother. Gülru Necipoğlu has discovered diplomatic gifts presented by Francesco II of Mantua to the Ottoman ambassador Kasım Beg in 1493. One is a representation of Prince Cem, presumably intended to help keep the sultan "...informed about the hostage prince's condition." Gülru Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism," *Muqarnas* 29 (2022): 48.



In vicissimū sultanus Barasit maxmus dno
 & maxmus Imperator Magnificē dñationi Ragusij
 salutem d. p. Quisq̄ue come mio fratello diem, cum
 cara manogli chassimbei se cōiucorono insieme e ueniron
 per prender il mio paese, e coloro ueniron gente chiamati
 durglidi e cara malidi e de multe altre generationi
 liquali uenirono tēptando il paese de la mia signoria.
 Vedendo io tal cosa tmediatē comada i miei doroisimiliti
 & armoxone tutti p̄fettamente & andorono cōtra loro.
 Giunti ch̄ fumo i angui corsemo die nocte uerso di lor, et como
 sentirono il mio nome nō restorū fupendo per fina ad uno
 loco chiamato saxo. e noi li corsemo dietro per fina ad
 un castello chiamato mara, loco se sparsero hinc & inde
 uoti e stracasati, alhora mio fratello cū pochissima gente
 corse ad mare & uinirono una barca e cō quella se ne
 fugite. dopo il sopra detto Caranandi uimane solo al
 saxo, et i miei multi similiti lo circondorū & la scodiaron
 dogni parte. Vedendo lui nō se poter airtar alora
 mēte. mando multe lre humiliandose a la mia siḡ
 giocando di esser me fidelissimo e prometendo di nō far
 più quebugi e como mio schiano se indino e prese lombra
 de li uestimeti mei per suo copocimēto. Vedendo io tātū
 la milita motus pietate ipsi, li ho dato per el uiuē
 de la sua testa il sopra detto saxo se la tōra in sua
 o castello ch̄ stia lici tuto il tempo de la uita sua.
 e cōfittandem ogni facenda ch̄ ho hauuto di qua cū la
 grā de dio la ho fatta p̄fettamente secundo il de-
 sidorio del cor mio. & ali 6 d'augusto mi son partito
 con la mia felice militia e uenimono a la mia

Fig. 2: Letter (in Italian) from Sultan Bayezid II to Dubrovnik (1482). HAD Acta Turcarum p. 50.

A prosperous, independent Republic of Ragusa thus provided the Ottomans with a bespoke intelligence service, one that could penetrate every port, court, market and fair of western Europe. Dubrovnik's merchants and spies levelled the informational advantage that otherwise would have been held by the empire's powerful European rivals, above all Venice and the Habsburgs. This resource came at practically no cost to the Sublime Porte. One of most effective information-gathering systems of the Mediterranean world kept the Ottomans informed of (most of) its discoveries in exchange for the empire simply honoring its obligations to protect Dubrovnik's merchants and diplomats and maintain secure, open channels of mobility between the republic and Istanbul.

Technology & Expertise

The transfer of technology, skills, and expertise represents yet another category of currency with which Dubrovnik maintained its privileged status in the Ottoman world. Despite official prohibitions by the papacy on sharing militarily significant technologies with the Ottomans, firearm making and shipbuilding techniques were often introduced to Ottoman realms through Ragusa, along with valuable commercial concepts: "...all the novel business practices then found in Italy, such as the collegantia type of company, bills of exchange and the various banking procedures, were adopted by Ragusan merchants."¹²⁸ Specialized labor was another valuable service that Ragusa provided.

¹²⁸ Inalcik, *An Economic*, 264

In making the most of their neighbourly relationship, the Ragusans attended to various kinds of construction and engineering projects by providing skilled craftsmen from Dubrovnik (builders, stonemasons, limeburners, miners) for the reconstruction of the harbour in Gabela, construction of fortification walls, towers and forts, building bridges, wells, public buildings in Nadin, Skadar, Herceg-Novi, Foča, Pljevlja, Mostar, Klobuk, Onogošt, Trebinje, Ljubinje, and Slano in Popovo polje.¹²⁹

The following chapter will describe the role of Dubrovnik's stone masons in the construction of numerous important Ottoman buildings, including the Mostar bridge. Far less well known are the 14 mosques with distinctive square 'campanile-minarets,' discovered in Herzegovina by Machiel Kiel. In at least one case these Dalmatian-Ottoman hybrid mosques were built alongside transportation-enhancing structures like caravanserais and cisterns.¹³⁰

The forms of currency employed by Dubrovnik were flexible and interconnected. In the 1568 dispute with the kadi of Castelnuovo mentioned above, law, gifts and expertise were all brought into play in the resolution of a single issue. Dubrovnik brandished its treaties, delivered exorbitant gifts, and even brought in allies (including the bailo of Venice and the *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina) to reverse the earlier ruling favoring the Ottoman judge who "never allowed us to live in peace."¹³¹ After all this, there was still another card for the republic to play. A letter from the Ragusan government tells the tribute ambassadors to highlight the services rendered by the

¹²⁹ Miovic, "Beylerbey," 58.

¹³⁰ It is extremely likely that Dubrovnik's craftsmen worked on these unique hybrid structures. See Machiel Kiel "The campanile-minarets of the southern Herzegovina: a blend of Islamic and Christian elements in the architecture of an outlying border area of the Balkans, its spread in the past and survival until our time," in *Centres and peripheries in Ottoman architecture: rediscovering a Balkan heritage*, ed. Maximilian Hartmuth (Sarajevo, 2011), 75. The work of Dubrovnik's artisans – stone masons in particular – on Ottoman architectural projects is explored in the following chapter.

¹³¹ HAD LL 27.1 V. 5 f174r (September 19, 1568).

republic for a project completed by the influential Ottoman official who was a cousin of the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha:

[Explain to Sokollu Mehmed] that we had to send carpenters, stone masons, blacksmiths and many other necessary supplies to Signor Mustafa Pasha of Buda, because his Lordship wished to build a bridge in Goražde as a pious action, and we did this willingly.¹³²

Ragusa's specialized labor, too, could be deployed an instrument of diplomacy. Human capital was another of Dubrovnik's gifts; an investment used to foster good relations with Ottoman officials, who could be relied on in difficult moments. According to the document, Musfata Pasha (whose patronage will be discussed in the following chapter) showed his gratitude by sending a letter of recommendation to his relative (the grand vizier) on behalf of the Ragusans who had provided him with such faithful service.

Goražde (BiH), where the bridge built by Mustafa Pasha with Ragusan support, spanned the Drina River. It was located at the junction of the road from Sarajevo the road from Ragusa. A nineteenth-century observer described the bridge, located approximately 200 km from the Adriatic coast, as "Ragusan," made of "five arches of woodwork, resting on piers of deftly-hewn stone blocks, oblong in shape."¹³³ No longer extant, its arched stone piers were created in part by Dalmatian craftsmen, while its wooden walls and arched covering took advantage of Bosnia's plentiful timber. In helping construct Mustafa Pasha's bridge, Ragusa was enhancing mobility by building goodwill. At the same time, the republic was quite literally building a significant step of its pathway to Istanbul. It is impossible to calculate how many subsequent Ragusan merchants,

¹³² HAD LL 27.1 V. 5 f174v (September 19, 1568).

¹³³ Arthur Evans, *Ancient Illyria: An Archaeological Exploration* (Tauris: London, 2006), 126.

ambassadors, and messengers might have crossed the bridge their countrymen helped construct in Gorazde.

As these examples show, mobility was not a gift of fortune, but it could be the result of initiative, resourcefulness, and opportunism. The overland communications network that complemented Dubrovnik's maritime endeavors was created in symbiotic partnership with the territorial states of the Balkan Peninsula: Byzantium, the medieval Slavic states, and, ultimately, the Ottoman empire. The basis of these partnerships was never an inherent geographical advantage, but an array of Ragusan initiatives that reached a peak in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries under the *pax Ottomana* that did away with internal borders and political instability in southeastern Europe. Ottoman receptivity and amplification of Dubrovnik's initiatives created incentives for Ottoman, Ragusan, and international traders, envoys and travelers to cross the mountains.

The road was a line running between east and west. But the forces that maintained its viability were circular and interconnected. The *poklisari* who delivered tribute, gifts, and information to the Sublime Porte made their voyage on the Ragusa Road. As did the traders whose who inhabited and enriched the cities and towns of Rumelia. As did the artisans and craftsmen who contribute to masterful works of Ottoman architecture and infrastructure. The road itself was a vehicle for the movement of the currency that sustained it. The pack saddles of Bosnian horses were loaded with goods that constituted a compelling argument for the maintenance of one particular pathway within a multitude of opportunities. Distance, difficulty, and insecurity were never conquered, but only kept at bay. Maintaining the flow of overland

traffic and trade required a constant flow of attention and expenditure. Currency, in myriad forms, was the helium that kept the fragile balloon of caravan travel on the Ragusa Road aloft.



Fig. 3. "Muletiers Turcs Traversant l'Herzégovine," Valerio, 1875.

Chapter Two: Patronage and Mobility

I enlarged the footpaths, straightened the highways of the land
I made secure travel, built there 'big houses',
Planted gardens alongside of them, established resting-places,
Settled there friendly folk,
(So that) who comes from below, who come from above,
Might refresh themselves in its cool,
The wayfarer who travels the highway at night,
Might find refuge there like in a well-built city.

-Hymn of Shulgi, King of Ur¹

As with the ancient empires of Rome, China, Persia, and Assyria, the overland transportation system of the Ottoman state was extensive, effective, and greatly admired by outsiders.² Unlike King Shulgi, however, the seemingly all-powerful Ottoman sultans could not and did not take credit for its creation. Sultanic patronage was concentrated in the capitals of Bursa, Edirne, and, above all, Istanbul. Sultans and grand viziers greatly enhanced a few central channels of overland exchange, but left the infrastructural needs of a much of the empire's vast territory to be met by other means. In the absence of a consistent central authority in charge of road building in the provinces, the creation of travel infrastructure fell into the hands of an

¹ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 35. Shulgi was the second ruler of the Third Dynasty of Ur, son of illustrious Ur-Nammu, founder of the dynasty. See also Samuel Noah Kramer, "Shulgi of Ur: A Royal Hymn and a Divine Blessing," *Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 75 (1967), 371.

² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 284.

array of Ottoman officials, proceeding down the ranks of a hierarchical system.³ Individual actors stepped forward to supply the majority of the bridges, caravanserais and multi-functional complexes that provided security, settled vulnerable and under-populated areas, and reduced the friction of overland travel. Concentrating on the sixteenth century, this chapter addresses the double, or rather triple role played by these officials, and how their individual actions collectively shaped patterns of mobility across the western provinces of Rumeli/Rumelia. Ottoman patronage definitively shaped patterns of overland travel in the Balkans, helping to amplify and control the traffic of the Ragusa Road.

By the second half of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans had established control over Anatolia and the Balkan Peninsula. By the early sixteenth century, the empire had expanded to rule over a territorial colossus located on three continents, straddling vital routes of communication between the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Indian Ocean. This was not simply conquest for conquest's sake, perpetuated by an Islamic "war machine" obsessed with expanding the horizons over which it ruled. Ottoman expansion frequently targeted areas that were of vital strategic and economic importance in a globalizing world, as works by Palmira Brummet and Giancarlo Casale have shown.⁴

³ The term infrastructure carries different connotations in different fields. I use the term as an inclusive category that can refer to works of architecture and engineering as well human and social structures. McCormick articulates this well, if for an earlier historical era: "Infrastructure means physical structures: roads, as well as bridges, ports and the like. But it should also include groups and institutions that fostered travel: the constellation of men, beasts, obligations and resources that constituted the imperial post, for example, or the human expertise it took to build and maintain ships." Michael McCormick, "Byzantium on the Move: Imagining a Communications History," in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Hants, England and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2002): 4-5.

⁴ Palmira Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany, NY: State University of NY Press, 1994) and Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

The Ottoman unification of Rumelia, which had been a politically fragmented land mass in the later Byzantine period, reduced the obstacles of long-distance overland travel (insecure roads, multiple internal borders, and unpredictable customs regimes). Imposing geographic obstacles, however, remained significant. The mountainous terrain of the western Balkan Peninsula made wheeled vehicles unfeasible and limited the state's ability to provide security in remote areas. The disincentives for overland travel were also substantial, as the well-established (Venetian-dominated) maritime route around the Peloponnese was readily available. As shown the previous chapter, a robust overland connection to Dubrovnik was a valuable asset to the Ottoman empire. But how to bring it about? The solution was not a to be a geography-defying, neo-Roman feat of road construction that disregarded environmental challenges ("Clearly the geometric simplicity of the concept and the power displayed in ignoring physical obstacles, were both part of the Roman engineer's point."),⁵ but a more flexible network built around caravanserais and bridges. These utilitarian structures became the nuclei of chains of *menzils*, or stopping places. Located, in theory, one day's journey apart, Ottoman infrastructural developments contributed to a resurgence of long distance overland travel in the sixteenth century.⁶ In the mountainous Western Balkans, where caravans based on teams of horses were the norm and wheeled vehicles impractical and rare, a consistent system of purpose-built, multifunctional halting places enabled overland traffic to thrive.

⁵ Peregrine Horden and James Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 127.

⁶ "Menzil (منزل) 1. halting place; station; goal, place of destination. 2. *Irnd.* stage, day's journey. 3. *Irnd.* inn, caravanserai; house, mansion; hotel" *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük* (Istanbul, 1968), 792.

How could a sprawling, cash-strapped empire bear the cost of building such an enormous system? This chapter will show that the road architecture of western Rumelia was rarely executed directly by Ottoman sovereigns and was not coordinated by a consistent central agency.

We know that the Ottomans did not provide a special administrative office to look after the repair of roads and bridges, accommodation for travelers and all those matters that facilitate a journey...Bridges were erected and the revenues of many villages were devoted to their maintenance by these persons, functioning not as state officials but as individuals.⁷

Demetriades' final comment is helpful but misleading. Operating through *vakıf*, a system of pious endowment that was open to all Ottomans (from the sultan to local administrators) the officials who built and maintained Balkan roads and bridges were acting not only as individuals but also explicitly supporting imperial aims in the creation of a coherent system that fostered transportation, communication, and settlement.⁸ These two outcomes – individual pious act and contribution to a larger system – were complementary, not contradictory. The resulting road network served the needs of both local and international travelers while simultaneously supporting the geopolitical goals of the state by encouraging flows of traffic along certain favored axes, to the benefit of certain favored partners like the Republic of Ragusa.

From its origins to its apogee, the Ottoman Empire excelled at accomplishing imperial goals without draining the *beytül-māl*, or Imperial Treasury. The early Gazi Lords, for example,

⁷ Vassilis Demetriades "Vakıfs along the Via Egnatia" in *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymnon, Greece: Crete University Press, 1996), 85.

⁸ "Wakf," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

were primarily remunerated through the spoils of their raids. The timar system maintained the Ottoman cavalry corps through the distribution of agricultural surplus for which – critically – it was the responsibility of the *sipāhis* (timar-holders) to collect and convert into hard currency. Closer to the world of overland travel, the *derbend* system, which provided security in remote areas, was funded entirely on tax exemptions – requiring no direct outlay from the center.⁹

Coming from the word for mountain pass, the *derbend* system was a typically pragmatic Ottoman solution to the continual problem of insecurity in remote mountain areas. Attested from the 1430s, the system reduced the need for military garrisons and patrols by giving responsibility for the security of travelers to the inhabitants of local villages near strategic locations. In exchange for their service, the village’s taxes would be reduced or cancelled entirely.¹⁰ As with the timar system, *derbend* allowed the empire to mobilize a broadly-distributed security force without sacrificing agricultural production, as the villages could carry on with their normal pastoral and agricultural activities in addition to their duties as guards.¹¹

⁹ On the *Derbend* system, see Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Derbend Teşkilâtı* (Istanbul: Eren, 1990). Orhonlu points out equivalent systems used by the Mongols and Mamluks (6-7) and the *Tutkavulluk* system used by the Ilkhanids (15). For an example of tax privileges given to *Derbend* villagers (Christian, in this case) see the “*Muâfiyet hükmü*” (Imperial statute of tax exemption) issued in 1456 by Sultan Mehmed II, published by Halil İnalcik in *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), appendix 10. In the document, Fatih Mehmed releases 20 “infidels” (*kâfirler*) from their normal tax obligations to the state, specifying exemptions from *harac* and *ispence* taxes as well as *corvée* labor duties. In return, the villagers are to guard their area from banditry “night and day” (“*gecelerde ve gündüzlerde*”).

¹⁰ Orhonlu, *Derbend Teşkilâtı*, 19.

¹¹ Ömer Lütfi Barkan has pointed to the existence of *derbentçi* dervishes, showing that *derbends* could be new settlements as well as existing villages. “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I: İstilâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve zâviyeler” *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 279-386. Barkan gives specific examples (in Anatolia) pp. 295-296.

Co-opting populations on the margins of Ottoman society, the *derbend* system also reduced the likelihood of villagers pursuing banditry, doubling the effectiveness of the security measure with no additional cost.¹² Though potential income was lost through tax reductions, no hard currency was deducted from central accounts. Reflecting the scale of empire, the *derbend* system was enormous: “In the mid-sixteenth century, the state appointed 2,288 village families in Anatolia and 1,906 in the eastern Balkans, as *derbendcis*.”¹³ The resurgence of international overland travel in the mountains of western Rumelia in the fifteenth and sixteenth century is partly due to security provided by the *derbend* system.

In addition to combatting banditry, *derbend* villagers were expected to contribute to the construction and maintenance of essential infrastructure such as bridges (presumably relatively simple wooden constructions).¹⁴ There were practical limitations, however, to what these small villages could be expected to produce. Their small-scale interventions were adequate for the needs of local travels, but not equal to the needs of trans-regional or trans-imperial travelers. A far more effective and widespread means for building infrastructure came into being that would supersede such humble initiatives. It would not be a centrally ordered and locally

¹² It has been noted that the Adriatic pirates known as *uskoks* were a similarly self-sustaining frontier order that served Habsburg imperial goals at minimal cost to the Austrian imperial treasury. The comparison between *uskoks* and *derbend* is made explicitly here: Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 43.

¹³ Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 149. Note that the number is measured in families, not individuals. Debates persist on the proper multiplier, ranging from 3-5 individuals per family.

¹⁴ “Geçid vermiyen nehirler üzerinde inşa edilen köprülere, yolcuları muhafaza etmek şartıyla, civarında bulunan köy halkı *derbendci* tâyin ediliyordu.” Orhonlu, *Derbend Teşkilâtı*, 14.

executed network like the *derbend* system, but an administrative and social practice that is difficult to characterize as a system at all. The continuous endowment of property, monuments, and infrastructure by individuals acting through the institution of *vakıf* emerged as the basic template for the architectural patronage that supported large-scale overland travel, and indeed much of the social structure of empire. Described as “...the ubiquitous formal vehicle for Muslim men and women who owned property outright, whether in large or small holdings,” *vakıf* endowments generated a constellation of utilitarian and multi-functional structures throughout Ottoman territory, a development that was essential to the expansion of overland travel along the Ragusa Road.¹⁵

From the early stages of Ottoman expansion, modest *vakıf* endowments contributed to mobility. “At Ipsala there was a *vakıf* created by a certain Resul, who dedicated a *çiftlik* for the maintenance of a boat (*gemi*), by which people were transported from one bank of the river to the other.”¹⁶ Such humble initiatives were the seeds of what accumulated into an intercontinental system of mobility. Over time, the impact of *vakıf*-based infrastructure-building was transformational. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the course of the sixteenth century, “232 inns, eighteen caravanserais, thirty-two hostels, ten bedestans and forty-two bridges were built.”¹⁷ From the family complexes of the frontier lords along the *Via Egnatia* (across Northern

¹⁵ Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 4. Singer illustrates the legal basis of *waqf* in *hadith* (16) and shows pre-Islamic beneficent traditions in Judaism (22) and in earlier Byzantine and Roman practices (23).

¹⁶ M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *XV-XVI asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı* (Istanbul: Üçler Basımevi, 1952), 296.

¹⁷ İnalçık, *Classical Age*, 148. For a comprehensive look at Ottoman hans and caravanserais in Bosnia, see Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Hanovi i Karavansaraji u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo, 1957).

Greece and Albania) in the mid-fifteenth century to the monumental caravanserai complexes (essentially ready-built settlements in themselves) built from the second half of the sixteenth century along the *Via Militaris* from Istanbul to Belgrade, Ottoman officials used *vakıf* to dedicate enormous sums and deploy vast labor forces in the creation of new, multi-functional structures that settled strategic areas, served the needs of travelers, and celebrated the power and generosity of the Ottoman Dynasty.¹⁸ In the sparsely-populated areas away from the primary arteries of state power, lesser officials populated the mountains and plains with their own endowments, leading to increasing caravan travel across formerly forbidding areas, including the western half of the Ragusa Road.¹⁹

The glory of the Ottoman dynasty was typically extolled in inscriptions ornamenting *vakıf* structures, but the central state was only given secondary credit for what were clearly understood as the beneficent acts of individual patrons. As İnalcık clarifies, despite the older Sasanian tradition of "...the establishment of towns, villages, roads and bridges as the fundamental duty of the sovereign," things had changed markedly by the Ottoman era. "In the Islamic period the idea of public works as a pious or charitable act supplanted this tradition and

¹⁸ "The Ottoman instrument for urban development was the *vakıf* (pious foundation, endowment), and by endowing mosques, caravanserais, schools, libraries, baths, or bridges, patrons could contribute to the development of their towns or villages or origins." Maximilian Hartmuth, "De/constructing a 'Legacy in Stone': Of Interpretative and Historiographical Problems Concerning the Ottoman Cultural Heritage in the Balkans," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44/5 (2008): 706. On the patronage of the March Lords (Uç Beyleri) see: Machiel Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353-1454" in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol 1; Vassilis Demetriades, "Vakıfs along the Via Egnatia" in *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule* ed. Elisavet Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1996); Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans* (Yale University Press, 2010); Heath Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, 2008).

¹⁹ "According to an official survey of 1546, there were 2,517 vakıfs which non-royal persons had founded and to which 1,600 new vakıfs were added in the following half-century." İnalcık, *Classical Age*, 144.

thus, even when undertaken by a sovereign, they came to be regarded as independent institutions outside the realm of state activities.”²⁰ In building these independent institutions, patrons were simultaneously furthering the aims of the state, performing a beneficent act for the betterment of their souls, and making a secure investment for the benefit of their descendants. Anyone who has seen the Istanbul skyline can attest to the magnificence of the Süleymaniye and the Sultan Ahmed (Blue) Mosque complexes, both of which were created as pious endowments. Yet the practice was by no means limited to such elites:

Many public leaders—sultans but also local governors and bureaucrats as well as all types of notables at all hierarchical levels—marked their political power, often transforming and modifying the character and topography of cities and towns in the process, thanks to proceeds coming from *wakf* assets, by establishing and subsidizing religio-educational structures²¹

The Qur’an is filled with admonishments to generosity.²² The institution of *wakf* (the Turkish equivalent of the Arabic *waqf*), however, is not mentioned in the Qur’an but is attested in numerous *hadiths*, or sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.²³ Coming from an Arabic root meaning “stopping,” the term can be translated as either pious or public

²⁰ İnalçik, *Classical Age*, 140.

²¹ “Waqf,” *EI2*, subsection “In the Ottoman Empire” by Randi Deguilhem.

²² For example: “Those who spend their wealth [in Allah’s way] by night and by day, secretly and publicly - they will have their reward with their lord.” Qur’an Verse 2-274 (Surah al-Barqah) ‘Sahih International’.

²³ “According to Islamic tradition, the first *waqf* was made by the Prophet from the wealth left to him by one of his followers. Alternatively, the first *waqf* is ascribed to ‘Umar b. Al-Khaṭṭab, who asked the Prophet whether he should give away as charity (*ṣadaqa*) valuable lands he had received. The Prophet told him: “*in shi’ta ḥabbasta aṣlahā wa-taṣaddaḡta bihā*” (“if you want, retain the thing itself and devote its fruits to pious purposes.”) This ‘Umar did, specifying that the land should never be transferred by sale or inheritance.” Singer, *Constructing*, 4.

endowment. Things endowed could be enormous, such as the Süleymaniye complex (where “Large-scale urban utilities, such as the water system, storehouses for provisions, slaughterhouses, etc., were all built by the Sultân as part of the pious foundation of the mosque”).²⁴ They could also be modest and humble: wells, fountains, places of prayer, small guest houses, etc.²⁵ In fact, not only architecture but all kinds of things could be endowed as *vakıf*, including villages, gardens, tracts of land, and moveable property such as books and Qur’an holders. Animals could be endowed as well, especially those used for purposes like pilgrimage.²⁶ Even cash could be preserved as *vakıf*, through the counter-intuitive yet legitimized practice of “usurious piety.”²⁷ Machiel Kiel captures the multifaceted, seemingly contradictory motivations for a patron of *vakıf* in the case of Rakkas Sinan Beg, an Ottoman official active in Bulgaria in the second half of the fifteenth century:

It becomes clear that the intentions of Sinan Beg were twofold, a combination of magnanimity and concern to promote Islamic culture in this part of the empire, and a healthy down to earth concern for the wellbeing of his descendants. It is a combination of altruism and self-interest which can be observed in many Ottoman *vakıfs*, and which is perhaps the very reason why the system worked so long and well.²⁸

²⁴ Halil İnalçık “Istanbul: An Islamic City” *Journal of Islamic Studies* I (1990): 11.

²⁵ İnalçık, *Classical Age*, 148.

²⁶ “Waqf,” subsection “In the Ottoman Empire” by Randi Deguilhem, *EI2*.

²⁷ Jon E. Mandaville, “Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979): 289-308.

²⁸ Machiel Kiel, “The Vakfnâme of Raqqas Sinân Beg in Karnobat (Karîn-âbâd) and the Ottoman Colonization of Bulgarian Thrace (14th-15th century).” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* I (1980): 24.

This chapter describes the multiple modes of infrastructure-creation practiced by the Ottomans, offering case studies of each. Despite overlap and ambiguity, I argue the following to be distinct categories for the endowment of public works. These divisions were not regulated through explicitly articulated decrees, but grew out of practice and were enforced largely by social pressures. Generally speaking, large-scale patronage was carried out in the following ways:

1. Sultanic *vakıfs*
2. Centrally planned and executed projects (non-*vakıf*)
3. Grand Vizieral *vakıfs*
4. *Vakıfs* by provincial officials (Pashas, Beys, & lower status administrators)
5. Public works by non-state actors (e.g. *derbend* villages, dervish orders)

Categories one through three blur the distinction between individual and state. Sultans, grand viziers, and royal family members had access to enormous state resources, including the services of the chief architect (*baş mi'mār*), as seen in the case of the Büyükçekmece Bridge to the west of Istanbul. Commissioned by Sultan Süleyman, the bridge was constructed in 1563-1567 by head architect Sinan (1489/90-1588), whose calligraphic signature as Yusuf bin Abdullah is located alongside inscriptions in Arabic praising Sultan Süleyman and his successor Selim II.²⁹ This edifice is clearly meant to be read as both a personal act of patronage by the sultan and a state investment in overland mobility.³⁰ Grand viziers, too, worked on a monumental scale by leveraging the resources of empire to magnify the impact of their substantial personal assets. While the patronage of Ottoman sultans was concentrated in the

²⁹ Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 72, 132.

³⁰ Cevdet Çulpan, *Türk Tas Köprüleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1975), 6-8, 142-147.

imperial capitals, grand viziers operated across a vast geographical space, commissioning projects from Hungary to the Arabian Peninsula.³¹ These statesmen supporting their political visions by facilitating communication and commerce across the empire's domains.

In the case of the Ragusa Road, the more modest patrons belonging to category four (provincial officials and local actors) were the ubiquitous builders of infrastructure; works by the uppermost elite are conspicuously rare. In the 650 km stretch of caravan road from Dubrovnik to Niš (Serbia) – where the Ragusa Road met the *Via Militaris* – I know of only two important structures built by a sultan or grand vizier: the stone bridge and now lost caravanserai at Trebinje (Herzegovina, located just inside the Ottoman border with the Dubrovnik Republic), and the mosque of Mehmed II in Pristina (Kosovo, located on a relatively minor variant of the road).³² It is true that the Ragusa Road avoids such nearby locations as Skopje, Sarajevo, and Mostar where examples of such elite patronage can be found. The towns of Foča and Pljevlje, however, which alternated as the administrative seat of the *sancak* (district) of Herzegovina, were substantial provincial towns located directly on the standard route from Dubrovnik. Despite their status, the public monuments and infrastructure of these towns (and the overwhelming majority of those found along entire western half of the Ragusa Road) were entirely the work of provincial officials and local actors using *vakıf*.

³¹ On architecture and the global visions of grand viziers, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 314-341, 345-368, 578-579; idem, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean "Portable Archaeology": Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean*, ed. Alina Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 318-325, 328-332.

³² The Arslanagić Bridge in Trebinje (BiH) is likewise the work of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, built in the name of his son Kasim Pasha and subsequently renamed for an unknown Arslan Ağa. See Necipoğlu, "Connectivity," 333 and footnote 33.

Uzunköprü

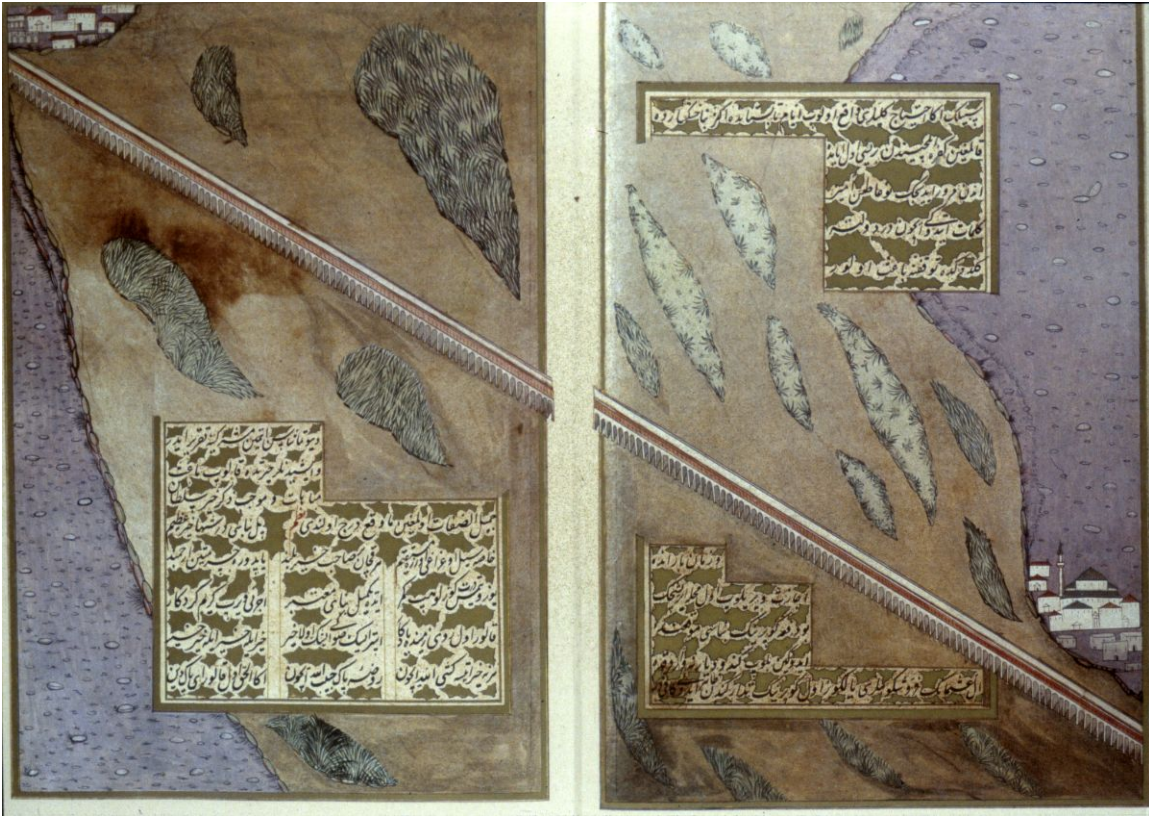


Fig. 1: Bridge and Complex of Murad II at the Ergene River. Lokman, *Hünernâme* (1584-85).

In his account of the construction of the 1,329-meter-long stone bridge at Uzunköprü – the crowning architectural achievement of Sultan Murad II and still in use today – the Ottoman chronicler Āşıkpaşazāde does not dwell on the stupendous scale of the monument itself.³³ Rather, he emphasizes two less overtly notable elements of the story. First, Āşıkpaşazāde

³³ The Uzunköprü Bridge across the Ergene is the longest stone bridge in Ottoman lands, 1,329 meters long, composed of 174 arches, some round and some pointed. Restored in 1963, the bridge remains in use. “Previous attempts to maintain a wooden bridge in this location had failed repeatedly, hence the sultan’s decision to build this stone bridge.” Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 612.

describes the transformation of what had been a dangerous and unpopulated obstacle into a flourishing settlement. Next, the author foregrounds the humility and accessibility of the sultan, downplaying the grandiosity of his architectural achievement. The chapter describes in detail the personal role played by Murad II in the extensive ceremonies that accompanied the bridge's completion in 1443. Exemplifying the linkage between pious act and utilitarian achievement, the model of Uzunköprü was widely emulated by viziers and local officials across Rumelia.

Āşıkpaşazāde begins the account of the bridge's construction by describing the area around the Ergene River (in Turkish Thrace near the Greek Border) as wild, depopulated, dangerous, and muddy, surrounded by a forest that harbored ruthless brigands.³⁴ Sultan Murad II, he writes, ordered the forest cut down and had the long bridge constructed, accompanied by several related structures at both of the bridge's two ends. An *'imāret* (hospice), a masjid (small mosque), a *hamām* (public bath) and a covered market rounded out the project. Soon afterward, the chronicle tells us, the town of Uzunköprü was flourishing, in large part due to the economic opportunities provided by the new bridge and associated structures, and in part due to the farmland that was distributed in the vicinity and the tax exemptions that were handed out to the settlers who populated the town.

³⁴ Bu Ergene Köprüsü'nün yeri evvel ormanlığıdı. Çamur ve çökekidi. Ve harâmiler durağıydı. Hiç vakit olmayaydı kim anda harâmi adam öldürmeyeydi. Sultan Murad Han Gâzi hazîne ve meblağlar harc etdi. Ol ormanları kırdurdi. Pâk etdürdi. Ol arada bir âlf binâyile köprü yapdurdi. Köprünün iki başını ma'mur etdi. Şehir etdi. İmâret, cum'a mescidi yapdı. Hamam ve bazarlar yapdı. Gelen giden müsâfirlere ziyâfetler ederler, ni'metler bişürürler. Ve ol vaktin kim imâret yürüdü. Sultan Murad kendüsi Edrene'den ulemâyı ve fukarâyı aldı. Ol imârete vardı. Bir nice gün ziyâfetler etdi. Akçalar ve fliloriler üleşdürdi. Evvel ta'am bişdüğü gün kendüsi mübârek eliyilen fukarâya verdi. Ve çırağın dahi kendü uyardı. Ve yapan mi'mara hil'at geyürdi. Çiftlik yerler verdi. Ol şehrün halkını cemî' avârizdan mu'af ve müsellem etdi. Āşıkpaşazāde *Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2013): 102 Bâb, p. 152.

Âşıkpaşazâde's admiring description of Murad II's personal involvement in the banquets and the distribution of largesse to the "*ulemā ve fuḡarā*" at the time of the bridge's completion certainly fits the critiques made by Halil İnalçık and Cemal Kafadar of the author's idealistic political agenda.³⁵ The sultan's actions as described here serve the needs of a writer who was a partisan of the less ostentatiously vertical mode of rule practiced by earlier Ottoman sultans like Murad II, which was abandoned during the writer's lifetime for the calculated quasi-divine remoteness inaugurated by Mehmed II.³⁶ Given the author's known bias, we can question the veracity of the description of Murad II giving out food to the poor "with his own blessed hands." Leaving this point aside, the bridge and building complexes certainly did come from the sultan directly, through *vaḡıf*. Here is a sovereign who fits the model of Shulgi of Assyria and the Roman emperors in whose names monumental projects were conceived and built. Unlike the Mostar Bridge, the funds for Uzunköprü didn't come from an *'avārız* tax on the households of the surrounding areas or from a one-time appropriation of customs revenues.³⁷ Rather, it was financed from the Sultan's personal revenue stream. As a product of *vaḡıf*, the bridge remains

³⁵ *'ulemā ve fuḡarā* is a compact formula that refers to religious authorities, the poor, and members of dervish orders; all of whom were worthy recipients of *vaḡıf* patronage.

³⁶ "There was obviously much resentment, from various corners, toward Mehmed II's systematic pursuit of an 'imperial project,' starting with the establishment of Constantinople as the new capital. Much of the resentment found expression in the earlier centralization-cum-imperialization drive attributed to Bâyezid I. But the most sweeping transformation and the broadest-based uproar came toward the end of Mehmed's reign when he confiscated more than a thousand villages that were held, as freehold or endowment, by descendants of early colonizers, mostly dervishes." Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 97.

³⁷ See the following section of this chapter for the funding of the Mostar bridge project.

closely associated with the memory of Sultan Murad II, unlike structures built from public funds.

Like the Mostar Bridge, Uzunköprü is a textbook case of investment in public works as a means to encourage settlement, to ensure the ease and safety of travelers, and to promote traffic along selected trajectories. In Āşıkpaşazāde's clipped prose, Sultan Murad II "...had an exalted bridge built in that place. Both ends of the bridge flourished. It became a city."³⁸ Inalcık describes the same process in greater detail:

At the head of the bridge he built a hostel to shelter and feed travelers, a mosque and a medrese, and met the expenses of the hostel and the cost of maintaining the bridge out of the income of a boza shop, bath-house and shops. He supplemented this income with the revenues from a caravanserai, bath-house and shops which he had built in Edirne. He settled people, mainly Turcoman nomads, nearby, to guard and maintain the bridge, in return for which they were exempted from taxation. On the other bank of the river he settled *yayas* – farmer-soldiers. In time the population around this nucleus increased and the town of Uzunköprü came into being.³⁹

Besides reinforcing a message of imperial beneficence and piety, the Uzunköprü bridge and its new settlement increased the speed and reduced the danger of overland travel through the creation of a new node of transportation that drew settlers and travelers alike to what had been a dangerous, muddy obstacle. The problem of populating a deserted area and the problem of settling a disruptive nomadic group were resolved in one move with the

³⁸ Āşıkpaşazāde, *Tarihi*, 102 Bâb, 152.

³⁹ Inalcık, *Classical Age*, 147. It is striking that no *zâviye* or *tekke* is listed here. A similar project built only a few decades earlier on the Tunca River outside Edirne by Mihaloğlu Bey in 1422 was built around a dervish community. Located "...opposite the city, on the main road to Sofia and Belgrade. It is a good representative of the early Ottoman *zaviye*, designed to give accommodation and food to the traveller according to the ethics of *ahi* brotherhood." Machiel Kiel, "The Incorporation". For more on the role of the *zâviye* in the urban history of Edirne and other Ottoman towns, see Grigor Boykov, "The T-shaped *Zaviye/İmaret*s of Edirne: A Key Mechanism for Ottoman Urban Morphological Transformation," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3:1 (May 2016): 29-48.

sedenterization of Turcomans.⁴⁰ The resulting town of Uzunköprü is located in a strategic location at the center of the short vertical leg of right triangle formed with the *Via Militaris* to the north and the *Via Egnatia* in the south. Although such pragmatic concerns are not mentioned by the chronicler, the location of Uzunköprü on the road that connects the empire's second capital of Edirne to the major port and naval base of Gelibolu/Gallipoli could hardly have been accidental.⁴¹

The process by which sites of major infrastructural works like Uzunköprü were selected remains little understood. Who made the decisions of where to invest such an enormous expenditure of capital and labor, and on what basis? How were the locations and the specific types of structures determined? A systematic look at Ottoman investment in mobility infrastructure shows that the node, in tandem with the road, was a key unit in the larger system of mobility and communications. The nodes created by Ottoman patrons were ready-made urban settlements created either *ex nihil* or in pre-existing settlements at a multitude of locations, including crossroads, river crossings, and mountainous areas. The Uzunköprü bridge shows how an area that had been a dangerous obstacle to mobility could develop quickly into a key node through the benevolent action of a single patron or by state investment. Especially successful road towns developed into regional administrative and economic centers, further supporting both settlement and overland mobility. Spreading across newly conquered territories and increasing dramatically over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, stopping

⁴⁰ On Ottoman policies towards its nomadic populations, see Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

⁴¹ Demetriades "Vakıfs," 85.

places with *hans* and caravanserais eventually reached a density which ensured that travelers were never more than a day's march from a secure halting place, even when moving across the mountainous and thinly populated western Balkans.⁴²

Mostar

In the summer of 1565, orders were sent from Istanbul to the officials of Herzegovina, requesting the allocation of funds for the construction of a new bridge to be built across the Neretva River in Mostar. The adjacent districts (*kazās*) of Mostar and Nevesinje, the tax office of Kilis, and the tax collector of Nova (Hercegnovi) were all instructed to collect several hundred thousand *akçe* to contribute to the construction effort.⁴³ Karagöz Mehmed Beg, patron of Mostar's domed Friday mosque in Mostar (built by Mimar Sinan), was placed in charge of

⁴² A major section of the system of stopping places can be seen in Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Hanovi i Karavansaraji u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: Djela, 1957). The author reveals a network of *hans* and caravanserais in Bosnia which, in the sixteenth century, were located one day's distance apart (p.157). Continuous development of travel infrastructure meant that by the seventeenth century, the density of stopping places doubled with a han or caravanseraï at every half day of travel. Existing in parallel and frequently overlapping with the overland travel system was the *menzil* system of swift overland communication. On the *mezil* system, see two works by Colin Heywood: "The Ottoman Menzilhanes and Ulak System in Rumeli in the Eighteenth Century," in Osman Okyar and Halil Inalcik eds., *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi* (Ankara, 1980): 179-186, and "The Menzilhanes of the Sol Kol in the late 17th/early 18th Century," in Zachariadou, *Via Egnatia*, 129-144.

⁴³ "Hersek sancakbeyine ve Nevesin Kadısına hüküm," BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 81. Cited in Idris Bostan, *Stari Most u Osmanskim Dokumentima / The Old Bridge in Ottoman Documents* (Mostar: Museum of Herzegovina, 2010), 26. On the Mostar Bridge, see Andrej Andrejević, "Neimar Hajreddin i Njegov Rad u Hercegovini," *Hercegovina* 7-8 (1900), 39-51; Çulpan, *Türk Taş Köprüleri*; Džemal Čelić, *Stari mostovi u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: Sarajevo-Publishing, 1998), Amir Pašić, *The Old Bridge (Stari Most) in Mostar* (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1995); Hivzija Hasandedić, *Mostarski Vakifi i Njihovi Vakufi* (Mostar: Medžlis Islamske Zajednice, 2000) András J. Riedlmayer, "From the Ashes: The Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage," in *Islam and Bosnia*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002), 98-135; Gülru Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 155, 441, 565; idem "Connectivity," 346-49.

overseeing the construction of what would become the Mostar bridge, built by the royal architect Mimar Hayrüddin.⁴⁴ Karagöz Mehmed (also known as 'al-Hajj Mehmed Beg al-Za'im) was *muḳaṭa'a nâzırı* (fiscal superintendent) of the *sancak* of Herzegovina. He emerges from a series of *ḥüküms* as the dominant organizational figure on the ground in Mostar; this was the man with whom Ottoman officials in Istanbul communicated regarding costs, modifications, and funding sources.⁴⁵ A *ḥüküm* sent on the 16th of December, 1565 gives a figure of 40,000 akçe required at once to begin the procurement of necessary building materials: stone, wood, lead and iron.⁴⁶

The elegant single-arched span, along with the towers that mark its opposite sides, was completed swiftly (in 974/1566), and adorned with the following chronogram, which praises the reigning Sultan Süleyman and his great-grandfather Mehmed II, whose earlier bridge was replaced by the new structure:

*Rûhu Sultan Mehemmed'in ola şâd
Kıldı bunun gibi hayr eseri*

*Hem Süleymân-ı zamân sağ olsun
Devleti buldu binâya zaferi*

⁴⁴ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 441. On Mimar Hayrüddin in the Ottoman corps of royal architects, see *Age of Sinan*, 153-57, 565. See also Semavi Eyice, "Hayreddin, Mimar" in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* vol. 17, p. 56.

⁴⁵ "Hersek Sancağı Mukataa Nâzırı Zaim Mehmed'e hüküm," BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 433, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 29-30. Sixteenth-century Ottoman building practices included standardized prices for materials and labor—both skilled and unskilled. On this subject see Cengiz Orhonlu, "Köprücülük," *VII Tarih Kongresi*, Vol. 2, Ankara 1973; Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Şehircilik ve Ulaşım* (Izmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1984), Şerafettin Turan, "Osmanlı Teşkilâtında Hassa Mimarları," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1 (1963): 157-202; and Sevgi Aktüre, "Mimarbaşı Sinan and the Building Practices of the Ottoman State," *Environmental Design* 5/6: 98-105.

⁴⁶ "[Mostar] Kadısına ve Hersek Mukataa Zazırı Zaim Mehmed'e hüküm," BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 641, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 30-31.

*Sa'y-i Nâzır ile oldu bu tamâm
Yazdı târîhini "kudret kemeri"
974 (1566)⁴⁷*

*May the soul of Sultan Mehmed rejoice,
For leaving behind such a noble deed*

*And (sultan) Süleyman—may he be well
For in his reign victoriously was the work completed*

*With the efforts of the monitor the bridge was finished
And the chronogram written: "The Arch Almighty"⁴⁸*

The inscription shows proper deference to the two great Ottoman rulers while also slyly managing to attribute final credit the project overseer—presumably Karagöz (Zaim) Mehmed)—whose efforts ensured that the structure came together flawlessly.⁴⁹ The chronogram's completion date shows the phenomenal pace of construction. The bridge was finished less than one year after financial arrangements and calls for labor were being sent out from Istanbul (these continued until at least December 1565 [finance] and March 1566 [labor]). The speed of construction and the extraordinary quality and durability of the bridge itself are indications of a well-organized, highly motivated effort carried out by a skilled labor force.

⁴⁷ Mehmed Mujezinović, *Islamska epigrafika BiH*, knjiga 3 (Sarajevo, 1982), 149.

⁴⁸ Transliteration and English translation from Bostan, *Stari Most*, 14.

⁴⁹ The speed of construction is even more impressive when considering the bridge's bold design. The Mostar Bridge's central span (28.7 meters) is greater than the span of the dome of Süleymaniye Camii (26.5 meters) and only slightly smaller than that of Selimiye Camii (31.28 meters). "The arch span of over 28 meters was an impressive engineering achievement for its time." Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 785.

A centrally-planned project, the Stari Most was built by the royal architect Hayrüddin in the Sultan's name but not with his personal funds: it was not a *vakıf* endowment.⁵⁰ Rather, it was paid for with funds levied across a broad region to create a structure that boosted the economic capacity of a key region near a contested border.⁵¹ In addition to funds, documents sent to the *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina, the kadi of Nova, and to the *beys* of Dubrovnik in March, 1566 also contained requests for workers for bridge construction, revealing how the Sublime Porte was able to choreograph labor solutions to projects distant from the metropolis.⁵² The letter to Dubrovnik specifically requests *usta* and *kaľfa* (masters and overseers), an indication that the city's famed stone masons were required in Mostar.⁵³ From Herzegovina and the Dalmatian city of Hercegnovi, *hiřār erleri* (castle workers/guards) including guards from the

⁵⁰ Note that the inscription specifies only that it was built in the time of Sultan Süleyman, rather than explicitly crediting him as its patron.

⁵¹ It has been pointed out that a number of strategic infrastructural improvements were made in Dalmatia (near the Ottoman border with the Venetian Stato da Mar) in the years leading up to the Ottoman-Venetian War of 1570-73, which saw the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus and the Holy League's victory at the Battle of Lepanto (1568-71). See Necipođlu, "Portable Archaeology," 346.

⁵² "Masons from Dubrovnik were employed in other Ottoman building projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the aforementioned caravansaray and bridge that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha commissioned in Trebinje for the soul of his late son. In these cross-cultural exchanges, architectural knowledge must have flowed in both directions." Necipođlu, "Connectivity," 347.

⁵³ "Dubrovnik beylerine hüküm," BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 1061, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 34-35. The Dubrovnik archives reveal the frequency with which Ragusan artisans and skilled workers were sent to work on Ottoman projects. This was one way of fostering good relations with the leaders of adjoining provinces. "In making the most of their neighborly relationship, the Ragusans attended to various kinds of construction and engineering projects by providing skilled craftsmen from Dubrovnik (builders, stonemasons, limeburners, miners) for the reconstruction of the harbour in Gabela, construction of fortification walls, towers and forts, building bridges, wells, public buildings in Nadin, Skadar, Hercegnovi, Foća, Pljevlja, Mostar, Klobuk, Onogošt, Trebinje, Ljubinje, and Slano in Popovo polje. Ragusan ship builders and constructors built boats in Gabela." Vesna Miović, "Beylerbey of Bosnia and Sancakbey of Herzegovina in the Diplomacy of the Dubrovnik Republic" *Dubrovnik Annals* 9 (2005): 58.

fortresses of Blagaj and Mostar were instructed to be transferred to the bridge's labor pool. In addition, *ustalar* (masters) from Popova in the *kazā* of Hercegnovi were requested.⁵⁴

Ottoman documents show more than a unidirectional model in which the capital's commands were carried out in the provinces by a talented administrator. They also record significant input (and resistance, in some cases) from local actors, and a willingness on the part of the center to accommodate reasonable requests. The Vlach population of Nevesinje Kaza, for example, successfully contested the 30 *akçe 'avāriž* (exceptional) tax levied upon each of their households for bridge construction, pointing out that their region was already poor in arable land and furthermore suffering from drought.⁵⁵ The population of Mostar made it known to project overseer Karagöz Mehmed that one side of the Neretva was chronically short of water. They requested that the bridge design be amended to include a water pipe bringing water from the opposite side, and the superintendent duly reported the request to the central authorities. The response from Istanbul was positive with the caveat that the new water distribution system should not damage the bridge in any way. The requesters would be liable for any unforeseen damages.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "Hersek sancakbeyine ve Nova kadısına hüküm," BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 1061, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 34. The participation of Dubrovnik's stonemasons has been attested in many Ottoman projects in the western Balkans. See Machiel Kiel, "The campanile-minarets of the southern Herzegovina: a blend of Islamic and Christian elements in the architecture of an outlying border area of the Balkans, its spread in the past and survival until our time." Proceedings from *Centres and peripheries in Ottoman architecture: rediscovering a Balkan heritage*, Maximilian Hartmuth, ed. (Sarajevo, 2011) and Cvito Fiskovic, "Dubrovaci i primorski graditelji XIII-XVI stoljea" (Constructeurs de Dubrovnik ed du Littoral) *Peristil* 5 (1962): 36-44.

⁵⁵ BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 81, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 26.

⁵⁶ BOA, MAD, 2775, s. 1023, cited in Bostan, *Stari Most*, 32.

The construction of the Mostar Bridge demonstrates the Ottoman state's seemingly effortless ability to undertake public works projects in a centralized mode. The royal architect Hayrüddin, working with a local overseer, deployed resources to overcome an obstacle – the Neretva – on its distant western borders. The “infrastructure state” in which a centralized hegemonic power is able to “penetrate civil society and implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm” has been broadly understood as an essential attribute of contemporary, industrialized polities.⁵⁷ Yet the planning and execution of the Stari Most project shows an efficient and powerful Ottoman bureaucratic apparatus able to coordinate complex projects with precision and flexibility across great distances. I do not wish to use this example to rehash an argument about periodization or definitions of modernity. Rather, the most striking element of the Mostar Bridge project is how rarely these kinds of centrally planned and controlled construction projects were executed in the western Balkans.⁵⁸

The construction of Mostar's bridge confirms the empire's impressive planning and logistical capabilities. The general disinclination on the part of the Ottoman state to build in this mode in the western borderlands had nothing to do with institutional capacity. Rather, it shows how two parallel modes – centralized and peripheral – both effective, took place

⁵⁷ Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State” *Archives européennes de sociologie* 25/2 1984: 189. For a compelling case study of road construction and state formation in 18th and 19th-century Britain, see Jo Guldi, *Roads to Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). A late Ottoman example is Fulya Özkan's doctoral dissertation, “A Road in Rebellion, a History on the Move: the Social History of the Trabzon-Bayezid Road and the Formation of the Modern State in the Late Ottoman World” (Binghamton University, New York, 2012).

⁵⁸ Another centrally-planned project in the region was the fortress constructed by Mimar Hayrüddin (also with the support of paid Ragusan masons) in 1568 at the Ottoman port of Makarska, between Split and Dubrovnik. Necipoğlu, “Connectivity,” 346.

simultaneously. The large-scale patronage of central authorities like Rüstem Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha concentrated on the central axes of Ottoman circulation, from extending from Central Europe to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.⁵⁹ In western Rumelia, despite occasional projects like the bridge in Mostar and Trebinje, most road architecture was built through the decentralized, individual pious actions of regional governors and local officials. The sixteenth-century boom in architectural and infrastructural construction that transformed the Ottoman lands surpassed the logistical limits of the centralized system by harnessing the tremendous productivity of officials in the provinces acting on their own initiative through the instrument of *vaqıf*. Rather than an “infrastructural state,” what emerges is an infrastructural class: a broad stratum of officials holding a range of administrative positions for whom the building of bridges and caravanserais, plus innumerable mosques, medreses, *hamāms*, markets, and water systems and was both a continuous practice, a pragmatic investment, and, it would appear, an unspoken obligation to the Ottoman dynasty.

Ottoman Officials, *Vaқıf*, and Infrastructure

The institution of *vaқıf* was well-suited for building a flexible overland transport network. Compared to the monumental challenge of building axial paved highways in the Roman style, the caravans, bridges, markets, mosques and *hamāms* that defined Ottoman stopping places were self-supporting and comparatively simple to build. Evliya Çelebi’s travelogue (*Seyahatnâme*) illustrates the alacrity with which an official could produce an

⁵⁹ Necipođlu, *Age of Sinan* 578-579, "Connectivity," 331-332.

endowed monument, showing a sense of duty to the dynastic order conjoined with an almost spontaneous gesture of pious magnanimity. Traveling across Kosovo Polje – the Plain of Kosovo – in 1660 (the location of a transformative battle in 1389 and a highly-contested space today) Evliya Çelebi and his patron Melek Ahmed Pasha were shocked by the dilapidation of the monument to Sultan Murad I (r. 1362-89) who was killed on the battlefield:

A strange thing occurred as we entered this mausoleum of Kosovo Polje. Even the skirt of our master Melek Ahmed Pasha was besmirched with filth. It seems that all the rayah infidels from the surrounding villages used to stop at this mausoleum on their way to Prishtina and Vushtrria and, as an insult, use it as a privy. Melek Ahmed Pasha became enraged when he saw the stench and the filth.⁶⁰

In Evliya's telling, he took it upon himself to inflame his patron's righteous indignation into pious action, contrasting the degraded *türbe* (mausoleum) with a luxuriously appointed Orthodox Christian Monastery located nearby. Evliya closes his case by pointing to the ease with which a new and appropriately resplendent memorial structure could be built and maintained: "With one load of *akçe* drawn from the *has* of Zveçan, strong walls could be built around it and a keeper could be appointed to live here with his family."⁶¹ Melek Ahmed, being a righteous and wealthy man, accepts the proposal and the site is swiftly transformed through his magnanimity, restoring the honor of the House of Osman, as Evliya explains:

Therefore, the Pasha gave the populace of the *vilayet* two purses [500 *kuruş* each] of *kuruş* and summoned the rayah from the surrounding area to clean up the mausoleum. In one week they built a high wall with a lofty gate around the mausoleum so that people on horseback could not get in. They also planted 500 fruit trees and dug a well. A keeper was appointed to live there with his family, receiving a regular salary from the

⁶⁰ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 5, 167a-169a; Robert Dankoff and Robert Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and adjacent regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid): the relevant sections of the Seyahatname edited with translation, commentary, and introduction* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 19.

⁶¹ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 5, 21.

voyvoda of Zveçan. His duty was to care for the silk carpets, candlesticks, censers, rose-water containers and lamps in the radiant mausoleum. At the same time, the notables of the *vilayet* appointed an official to oversee this charitable institution. Thus, a great act of charity was accomplished, and now it has become a pilgrimage site — God’s mercy be upon him!⁶²

Evliya’s telling of the story naturally compresses the narrative (it is doubtful that the perimeter wall and gate was built in one week), but his account points to a larger truth. Melek Ahmed’s transformation of the mausoleum of Murad I shows how one official’s relatively minimal intervention can transform a monument and impact broader patterns of mobility around it. Evliya’s celebration of the monument’s new function as a pilgrimage site illustrates the tightly bound relationship between personal piety, dynastic reverence, and patterns of movement, functioning in much the same way as Murad II’s bridge and settlement at Uzunköprü, albeit on a smaller scale. With an entire class of Ottoman officials given the motivation and the means to build similarly productive structures, the built landscape of the Ottoman provinces was transformed and the barriers to overland travel were continuously lowered. The following sections investigate this process, dividing the category of non-royal patrons into two subcategories: grand viziers, whose aims were often parallel with those of the empire; and lower ranking officials, who were instrumental in constructing the road architecture of their local regions.

⁶² Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 5, 21.

Grand Viziers

After extolling the virtue of Sultan Murad for his beneficent generosity at Uzunköprü, Āşıkpaşazāde goes on to provide a survey of endowments built by members of the Ottoman elite. The author takes it as a given that the sultan's actions are a paradigm to be emulated by his leading officials.⁶³ One chapter of his chronicle is devoted to the description of pious works of 32 named officials, comprising 54 individual *'imarets*, mosques, medreses, *zāviyes* and other public works built across the empire.⁶⁴ Following this impressive list of *vaqıf* constructions, Āşıkpaşazāde anticipates the reader's confusion regarding the motive for all this construction. The text segues into a discussion of the essential function of *vaqıf*-based monuments, shifting to a discursive rhetorical mode to make his argument as transparent as possible:

Question: O Dervish, these great medreses and great *'imârets* built by the Ottoman Dynasty, was their intention to create flourishing provinces or to create a flourishing afterlife?

Answer: To create a flourishing afterlife. And all the viziers' *'imârets* may be understood thus, that their pious intentions were linked to the pious intentions of the Padişah. With *'imârets*, the traces of intention are sometimes visible and sometimes invisible.⁶⁵

The chronicle's unambiguous explanation of the intention of vizieral foundations belies the inherent lack of clarity about the purpose of *vaqıf* endowments, which is evident in the question itself. Why would Āşıkpaşazāde feel compelled to include such a rhetorical device if

⁶³ "...several of Murad's dignitaries followed his example and improved the route by founding various institutions and endowing them with *vakıfs*." Demetriades, "Vakıfs," 89.

⁶⁴ Āşıkpaşazāde *Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2013), 293-299,

⁶⁵ Āşıkpaşazāde *Tevarih-i Âl-i 'Osman*, ed. Ali Bey (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Âmire, 1914), 194. English translation mine.

there had not been divergent understandings of the system's essential value? This conventional, prescriptive dialogue emphasizes the pious aspects of patronage, but in so doing reveals a pragmatic understanding of the ways *'imārets* and other monuments were being used to create "flourishing provinces." In a classical 'mirrors-for-princes' convention, the possibility of worldly motives in the building of pious endowments is deflected downward on the social hierarchy. Later in the section the author attributes these baser motives to the stewards of viziers (*kethüdas*) due to their susceptibility to the words of "common people" and "uneducated classes."⁶⁶

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the grand viziers Rüstem Pasha (grand vizier 1544-1553, 1555-1561) and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (grand vizier 1565-1579) in creating the flourishing provinces of the sixteenth-century Ottoman empire. Their exceptional careers as patrons included tremendous outlays spent on dozens of architectural projects.⁶⁷ Great builders, the position of these men at the summit of Ottoman power causes the distinction between individual pious action and state-led building program to collapse. Sokollu Mehmed, in particular, has been described as the "virtual emperor" of the Ottoman dominions.⁶⁸ He used all the mechanisms of state available to him to complete his far-flung projects in an astonishingly short period of time. During the construction of the Havsa caravanserai complex (on the road to Edirne, it was built in the name of his son, Kasım Pasha), the vizier did not

⁶⁶ Āşikpaşazāde, *Tevarih-i Āl-i 'Osman*, 194.

⁶⁷ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 314-341, 345-368, 578-579; idem, "Connectivity," 318-325, 328-332. See also James D. Tracy, "The Grand Vezir and the small republic: Dubrovnik and Rüstem Paşa, 1544-1561," *Turkish Historical Review* 1 (2010): 196-214.

⁶⁸ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 347.

hesitate to involve subordinate officials in the construction of his endowment. Gülru Necipoğlu has located decrees sent by Sokollu Mehmed to “the kadis of Bulgaria,” in 1573 and 1575 ordering them to provide carts needed to transport lead from Sofia for the roofs of Sokollu's Havsa complex.⁶⁹

The distance between these great 16th century viziers and the sovereigns they served narrows even further when considering that these men were not only the functional heads of empire, but, as husbands of Ottoman princesses, they were in-laws of the royal line.⁷⁰ The power and prestige of these two *devşirme* products is reflected in the fact that of the Ottoman elite, only they were able to build foundations in the central areas of Constantinople, while other viziers of their time were confined to the areas around the city gates and in the provinces.⁷¹

A map of the monuments endowed by Rüstem and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha corresponds closely with the major arteries of imperial power from Central Europe to the Arabian Peninsula. Military, commercial and pilgrimage routes; these were the primary channels of mobility in the Ottoman world.⁷² *Vakıf* endowments dot a line of patronage across Ottoman territory, linking

⁶⁹ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 444-445.

⁷⁰ Rüstem Pasha was married to Mihrimah Sultan, daughter of Kanuni Süleyman and Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana), herself a prominent patron with commissions completed by Mimar Sinan. Sokollu Mehmed married Esmahan Sultan, daughter of Selim II and granddaughter of Kanuni Süleyman. Gilles Veinstein, “*Sokollu Mehmed Paşa*,” E12.

⁷¹ Some examples of patronage away from the city center: Kara Ahmed Pasha (Topkapı Gate), Hadim Ibrahim Pasha (Silivrikapı), Kazasker Ivaz Evendi (Eğrikapı), Zal Mahmud Pasha (Eyüp). See Stephane Yerasimos, “Sinan and his Patrons: Programme and Location” Mimar Sinan the Urban Vision, published in *Environmental Design, Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre*, ed. Attilo Petruccioli. 5/6: 129.

⁷² Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 578-579; idem, “Connectivity,” 331-332.

Belgrade to Aleppo through the fulcrum point of Istanbul. In the case of the commercially minded Rüstem Pasha, endowments are concentrated between the Marmara Sea region and the trading cities of eastern Anatolia and western Iran.⁷³

Rüstem Pasha, of Dalmatian origins, built his celebrated tile-covered mosque in the heart of Istanbul's commercial center among the shops around the Egyptian Market (Mısır Çarşısı). His large-scale patronage can also be seen as an indication of his mercantile concerns. The *bedestān* (a secure covered market) he built in the developing city of Sarajevo was called the "Bedestān of Bursa," due of the abundance of Bursa silks to be found there.⁷⁴ One the perimeter of the Ottoman world, Rüstem built *bedestāns* in the cities of Afyon, Van, Erzurum, and Erzincan, all near the border of Safavid Iran, which also played a major role in the global silk trade. Rüstem's brother Sinan Pasha, who served as *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina, built a mosque with an elementary school near Foča – an important town on the Ragusa Road – and another

⁷³ Cumulatively, it has been observed that the endowments made by these two statesmen strongly favor the eastern provinces: "We find foundations in the capital, Mecca and/or Medina, and in the newly conquered territories north of the Danube – Sava line – all of which, one could argue, would be expected of Ottoman dignitaries of their rank – but most in fact are in the Asian parts of the empire. Of the 72 Ottoman towns they bestowed with endowments only five were in Bosnia..." Hartmuth, "Legacy in Stone," 707.

⁷⁴ Rüstem Pasha also commissioned "five stone bridges in the sanjak of Bosnia that were accompanied by paved roads, a caravansaray, a thermal bath, a public fountain, and a bedesten. Built in Sarajevo in 1551, the latter is an extant covered bazaar with six hemispherical domes, which was known as the Bedesten of Bursa because it specialized in the sale of Ottoman silk brocades made in that Anatolian city." Necipoğlu, "Portable Archaeology," 330. See also Aydın Yüksel, "Sadrazam Rüstem Paşanın Vakıfları," in *Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi Hatıra Kitabı* (Istanbul, 1995): 219-281.

elementary school in Sarajevo.⁷⁵ Sinan Bey also pursued the development of Herceg Novi, a port under direct Ottoman control located immediately to the south of Ragusan territory.⁷⁶

If Rüstem Pasha set a new standard for the patronage of infrastructure, his accomplishments were soon eclipsed by those of the Bosnian-born statesman Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The caravanserai complexes built by Sokollu Mehmed were lavish *vakıf* endowments representing the apogee of Ottoman settlement-building through individual patronage. Unlike Rüstem, Sokollu was comfortable projecting imperial power far beyond the already distant borders.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, like many boys who were brought to the Ottoman capital as *devşirme* recruits, Sokollu Mehmed maintained close ties to his homeland, where he built several large-scale projects.⁷⁸ The bridge at Višegrad that still bears his name and dedicatory inscription remains the dominant architectural feature of eastern Bosnia, and a potent reminder of Ottoman imperial power and vision.⁷⁹ Another, lesser-known stone bridge was built by the vizier in memory of his son, Kurd Kasım Pasha, who died in 1572. Crossing the Trebnišnjica River

⁷⁵ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 418-419.

⁷⁶ Despite this seemingly hostile action by his brother (from the Ragusan perspective, at least), Rüstem Pasha maintained extensive and lucrative contacts with Dubrovnik's merchant-diplomats. He seems to have used the vassal state as a vehicle to procure large numbers of high quality luxury textiles from the Italian Peninsula, especially from Venice. Rüstem and the Ragusan *poklisari* (tribute ambassadors) could speak together in the Grand Vezir's native Slavic language, which may partly explain his reliance on Dubrovnik, rather than approaching the Bailo in Constantinople. See Tracy, "The Grand Vezir," 214.

⁷⁷ See Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, esp. chapters 4 and 5.

⁷⁸ Metin Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974).

⁷⁹ "He was especially concerned with such utilitarian structures as caravanserais and bridges which would facilitate traffic and communications in Rümeli, such as the bridge at Višegrad on the Drina and other lesser known ones, e.g. at Trebnišnjica in Herzegovina." Veinstein, "Sokollu," *EI2*.

in Trebinje (BiH), approximately 30 km inland from Dubrovnik on the Ragusa Road, it is popularly known today as the Arslanagić Bridge.⁸⁰ The bridge was completed sometime between 1572 and 1574 (as with the Mostar Bridge, Ragusan stonemasons contributed skilled labor).⁸¹ The French traveler Pierre Lescalopier crossed the Trebinje bridge on the 11th of March, 1574, shortly after its completion. This outsider, describing his very first day of travel in Ottoman territory, was able to correctly ascertain the bridge's patron ("Mechmet Bassa de Soliman II") and even his intention to honor the memory of and "de prier Dieu pour son filz."⁸² Lescalopier's account shows the clarity with which Ottoman works of infrastructure communicated their rhetorical as well as practical function. The ideal expressed by Āşikpaşazāde of *vaqıf* structures "creating a flourishing afterlife" is cogently paraphrased by the admiring French traveler.

Sokollu Mehmed's elegant bridges reveal the statesman's attachment to his homeland and familial roots. The pasha's pragmatic commitment to fostering overland commerce and

⁸⁰ The bridge and complex at Trebinje is a clear instance of 16th century Ottoman patronage favorable to communications with the Ragusa Republic. Ayverdi describes its intentional location on the "trade road from Dubrovnik" Ekrem Hakki Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimârî Eserleri: Yugoslavya*, II Cild, 3 Kitab (Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1981), 470. Necipoğlu agrees, writing: "Those roadside complexes [of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha] aimed to cultivate commercial relations with the port of Ragusa (Dubrovnik)." . . . Only 31 kilometers east of Ragusa, along that inland route, was the town of Trebinje in Herzegovina, where Sokollu Mehmed Pasha improved travel conditions by commissioning a bridge and caravansaray complex commemorating his late son, so that travelers would 'pray for his soul.' These structures were built between 1572 and 1574 by local stonemasons imported from Dubrovnik." Necipoğlu, "Connectivity," 333. The *vakfiye* of Kasım Pasha mentions two structures built by his father, Sokollu Mehmed: the caravansaray complex at Havsa, Turkey, and the "long bridge" in Herzegovina, which was accompanied by a caravansaray, masjid, source of running water, and paved road sections." See Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 444.

⁸¹ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 444.

⁸² Cited in Edmond Cleray, "Le Voyage de Pierre Lescalopier, Parisien: de Venise à Constantinople, l'an 1574," *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 35 (1921): 27.

mobility is reflected in the array of extraordinary caravanserai complexes across Ottoman territory, which were naturally commissioned as pious endowments. The Venetian *bailo* Paolo Contarini, who crossed Rumelia via the Ragusa Road in the summer of 1580, wrote admiringly of Mehmed Pasha's bridge and caravanserai in Trebinje as well as his edifices in Havsa and Lüleburgaz. These settlements (along with the Babaeski complex built by Sinan for Semiz Ali Pasha) contributed to a magnificent imperial corridor between Edirne and Istanbul, "an impressive grand entry for European ambassadors and tourists on their way to the capital."⁸³ At Lüleburgaz the Venetian noted the mosque, the "bellissimo bagno" (*hamām*), and the double caravanserai, all of which was built for Sokollu by Mimar Sinan as one of the empire's most elaborate stopping places. Beyond shelter, Contarini noted the generous sustenance that Sokollu Mehmed's endowment provided for wayfarers: "They serve three meals a day to those who lodge in the 48 rooms. In the morning and evening they give rice, bread, and meat, and apples and bread at midday."⁸⁴ Sokollu Mehmed's complex imitated the example of Murad II's pragmatic piety in many ways. It fostered connectivity, created a settlement in a strategic area, and advertised the wealth and power of the Ottoman state. As Contarini's comments indicate, the complex also performed the beneficent action of nourishing travelers, a category singled out in a *hadith* for particular attention.⁸⁵

⁸³ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 72.

⁸⁴ Paolo Contarini, *Diario del Viaggio da Venezia a Costantinopoli* (Venice: Teresa Gattri, 1856), 36.

⁸⁵ "Umar had acquired land in *Ḳhaybar* and came to the Prophet to consult him in this matter saying: 'O Messenger of God, I have acquired land in *Ḳhaybar* which is more precious to me than any property I have ever acquired.' He [Muḥammad] said: 'If you want, make the land itself unalienable and give [the yield] away as alms (in *ṣhi'ta ḥabbasta aṣlahā wa-taṣaddaḳta bihā*).' He (Ibn 'Umar) said: 'Thereupon 'Umar gave it away as alms [in the sense] that the land itself was not to be sold, inherited or donated. He gave it away as alms for the poor, the relatives, the slaves, the *ḍjihād*, the travellers and the guests. And it

With vast wealth and access the service of royal architects like Mimar Sinan, Rüstem and Sokollu Mehmed set the standard for individual endowment of Ottoman infrastructure in the sixteenth century. But their work represents only a fraction of the *vakıf* endowments that fostered the flourishing caravan trade in the Ottoman provinces. Hamdija Kreševljaković, in an exhaustive study of *hans* and caravanserais in Bosnia and Herzegovina, enumerates a few of the known patrons of Ottoman travel infrastructure in the region. The story of Ottoman travel infrastructure-building here on the western periphery of empire begins with Gazi Isa Bey (Ishaković), whose *han* built in 1462 (one year before the definitive conquest of the Bosnian kingdom) was a key element in the founding of Saray Bosna, or Sarajevo. Isa Bey was followed by an enormous number of individual patrons whose pious endowments served the needs of travelers in the province:

The first decades of Turkish rule in these countries generated great hans and caravanserais. They were primarily built by great dignitaries and other wealthy people with their endowments. Of these dignitaries hans were built by Sancakbeys: Isa Bey Ishakovic, Skender Pasha, Husrev Bey, Kara Mustafa Beg Sokolović, Sofi Mehmed Pasha, Turali Bey, Sinan Bey, Selim Pasha, by Beylerbeys: Ferhad Pasha Sokolovic, Sijavuš Pasha, Ibrahim Han and Musa Pasha; by the Grand Vizier Rustem Pasha and Mehmed Pasha Sokolović, by the Darüssaasde Ağas: Mustafa of Varcar and another Mustafa native of Varcar and another Mustafa of Ljubinje. Almost all of them were born in our region, and they lived and worked until the second half of the seventeenth century. And, finally, several of the Bosnian viziers of the eighteenth century built several hans.⁸⁶

Note that, with the exception of Rüstem and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, the dignitaries listed are all local authorities—heads of the *sancak* of Herzegovina, the *eyalet* of Bosnia and lower status

will not be held against him who administers it if he consumes some of it(s yield) in an appropriate manner or feeds a friend who does not enrich himself by means of it' (Ibn Ḥaḍjar al-ʿAsḳalānī, *Bulūgh al-marām*, Cairo n.d., no. 784)." "Waḳf," *EI2*.

⁸⁶ Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Hanovi*, 27.

officials. The prevalence of native-born officials on the list is also striking. Ottoman officials with strong local ties, these men possessed both personal funds (or more specifically for *vakıf* endowments, access to revenue sources) and an awareness of the needs of local transportation networks – gaps where a newly endowed *han*, bridge, or caravanserai would serve a useful purpose. In large numbers, they put that knowledge to use. The following sections show the process by which two remote areas in eastern Bosnia were transformed into important stops on overland transportation networks through the investment of individual patrons, beginning with one of the officials listed by Kreševljaković above: Mustafa Bey (later Pasha) Sokolović.

Rudo

Regional officials naturally operated on a smaller scale than those at the summit of imperial power. Still, they could and did create settlements out of *vakıf* patronage, following principals similar to those seen in the cases of Uzunköprü and Lüleburgaz. Mustafa Bey Sokolović, *sancakbeyi* of Bosnia (cousin of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha), is a good example, as he was largely responsible for the creation of the town of Rudo (BiH) in the mid-sixteenth century.⁸⁷ Located, like many Bosnian towns, in a river valley between forbidding mountains, Mustafa Bey's *vakıf* created a multitude of structures comprising Rudo's urban core, all

⁸⁷ Mustafa Bey was later elevated to the position of governor-general of Buda (1566-88), before attaining the rank of vizier in 1574. Radovan Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolovitch* (Lausanne: Age d'Homme, 1994): 306. Ayverdi calls Mustafa "amcazade" or cousin of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha: *Avrupa'da* vol. 2, book 3, p. 305. For Mustafa Pasha and his *vakıfs*, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 40-41, 439-40. His biography and partial *vakfiye*, *Cevahirü'l-menakib*, is in Fatih, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri, no. 1031. It is partially summarized in Gyula Káldy-Nagy, "Macht und Immobilienvermögen eines türkischen Beglerbegs im 16. Jahrhundert," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25, 441-51.

centered around a new bridge across the Lim River, encouraging settlement and easing transportation in eastern Bosnia, not far from the Sokollu ancestral home. The *vakfiye* or endowment deed of 1555, the year of the Rudo's founding, expresses many of patron's aspirations for the new town. In one sweep, Mustafa's patronage created all the all the elements needed to support an Ottoman settlement, including religious, commercial, and social structures all built around "a firm stone bridge for people to cross the deep Lim river."⁸⁸

Just over a century later, Evliya Çelebi crossed the Lim River on a "magnificent bridge" (*cisr-i azîm*) of five arches at the center of the flourishing (*ma'mur*) town (*kaşaba*) of Rudo, which he compares to a mythical garden built in emulation of the garden of Paradise (*bâğ-ı İrem*).⁸⁹ Evliya's account omits the patron's name, but credits an anonymous benefactor – identified only as one of the pashas of Süleyman the Magnificent – as being instrumental in the creation of what had grown into a congenial town. The *Seyahatnâme* describes a verdant settlement comprising four districts, supporting four Muslim houses of worship, with 400 stone houses, and 50 shops, all adjacent to the bridge on the banks of the Lim.⁹⁰ Evliya's account clarifies that the bridge, while impressive, was a hybrid stone and wood structure, less costly

⁸⁸ Nedim Filipović, "Vakufnama Kara Mustafa-Paşa Sokolovica iz 1555. godine o osnivanje grado Rudo" in *Rudo Spomenica provodom 30-godišnjice Prve proletarske brigade* (Rudo Memorial on the 30th anniversary of the First Proletarian Brigade) (Pljevlja, 1971): 174. On Sokollu Mustafa's legacy: "His architectural patronage sheds light on the shared concerns of pre-eminent provincial administrators whose building projects were aimed to foster urban development, improve travel conditions, and promote Sunni Islam." Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 439-40

⁸⁹ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 247. *İrem*: "The mythical gardens said to have been devised by Shaddad bin Ad in emulation of the garden of Paradise." *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük*, 8th ed., 1986: 576.

⁹⁰ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 248.

than Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's nearby edifice in Višegrad or the Mostar bridge, both of which were constructed in the following decade. The five piers reaching up from the Lim River and the arches connected them were stone, while the upper level and the covering roof ("suspended from stout poles like ships' masts") were wooden, taking advantage of abundant timber resources nearby.⁹¹

Besides the Rudo Bridge, Mustafa Bey's endowment deed specifies the construction of a mosque, a school, a public bath, and *han*.⁹² Evliya notes one medrese and three primary schools (*mekteb-i sıbyan*), along with two dervish lodges (*tekye-i dervîşân*), suggesting continuing local acts of patronage supporting the Pasha's original endowment. In addition, the Kara Mustafa *vakfiye* commissions commercial enterprises including a mill (powered by the river) and market with spaces for craftsmen. Establishing an array of mutually supporting institutions, Kara Mustafa provided the previously isolated settlement with all the elements necessary to develop into the flourishing town visited a century later by the Ottoman gentleman traveler. Beyond the cost of building the structures themselves, Mustafa's *vakıf* would also provide permanent funds for positions at the mosque and school. Evliya confirms that repairs and maintenance costs for the bridge were paid out of rents coming from the town's shops, *hamām* and *han*.⁹³ The mill represents another capital improvement—an explicitly commercial enterprise paid for by the

⁹¹ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 248. Ayverdi succinctly paraphrases Evliya's description of the bridge: "kârgir ayaklı, beş gözlu pek sağlam ahşap köprü." Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da*, 305.

⁹² Filipovic, "Vakufnama Kara Mustafa-Paşa," 174. Sokollu Mustafa's works in Bosnia are only a fraction of his *vakıf* construction. As *beylerbeyi* in Buda from 1566 he created mosques, masjids, schools, caravanserais, hamams, mills and houses across Ottoman Hungary. Káldy-Nagy, "Macht," 446-49.

⁹³ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 248.

same pious endowment that created the mosque and school. In addition to providing permanent employment and revenue for the town, the mill would strengthen the link between Rudo and its rural hinterland: villagers would come to the new town to grind their grain. The *han*, in addition to providing a meritorious service to travelers and thus accruing spiritual credit to the patron, also pairs with the bridge to increase efficiency and security for long-distance travelers on the caravan road. The endowment deed and Evliya's first-hand observations agree: Mustafa Bey put the town of Rudo on the map for both local and international populations.

Rudo, in the *kadılık* or judicial district of Foča, was adjacent to but not directly on the Ragusa Road. It is located approximately 40 km from Višegrad (the site of Mustafa's cousin Sokollu Mehmed's celebrated bridge on the Drina). The proximity of these two large-scale endowments to the brothers' native village of Sokolovići is obviously not accidental. In fact, it is mentioned explicitly in the *vakfiye*.⁹⁴ Members of the Sokollu family would likely have been given positions in the newly built institutions, creating a secure legacy that would endure whatever misfortunes Mehmed and Mustafa might encounter in their imperial careers.⁹⁵

Having seen and listed innumerable structures over the course of his travels, Evliya assumes the Ottoman monuments he encounters to be the result of individual pious endowment, even when he is unable to identify the patron. Rudo's bridge over the Lim river, the center point of the town's development, is simply described as "*hayrât*" or beneficent

⁹⁴ Filipovic, "Vakufnama Kara Mustafa-Paša", 173.

⁹⁵ See Kunt, "(Cins) Solidarity." Sokollu Mehmed Paša's connection to Višegrad is described on page 235. On Sokollu Mehmed's efforts to support his home region, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 40-41.

action, with a space left blank for the name of its benefactor, to be filled in later.⁹⁶ The traveler further notes the direct impact that this single infrastructural work could have on larger patterns of mobility. Once Mustafa Bey's bridge was constructed, he writes, "those coming from the city of Öziçe would certainly cross (the Lim River) at this bridge, passing the town of Rudo."⁹⁷ In addition to the economically sustaining works mentioned in previous chapters, Evliya shows how the creation of a bridge in a well-thought out location brought long distance travelers to the growing settlement, bringing further prosperity to Rudo by giving it a small but important role in the larger Ottoman transportation system.

Rudo's growth was dramatic, but not exceptional for the sixteenth century. Many small settlements in the region (now eastern Bosnia and southwestern Serbia) saw similar development, a trend that is directly linked to increasing overland traffic in the region:

A very favorable influence on the development of new lines of communication and the intensity of traffic on the existing and the new roads in this period was exerted by the growth of a number of economic points in the area, such as Višegrad, Priboj, Užice, Pljevlje, Čajniče, and Goražde, which had developed into important economic centers already in the 16th century. There was, however, a converse influence also – the large network of lines of communication contributed to the development of these places as well. The most characteristic example in this latter respect is the urban settlement of Rudo itself, not only as regards the road network of this region but also of the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 4, 248.

⁹⁷ Öziçe is Užice, Serbia—a significant provincial center approximately 80 km northeast of Rudo. "El-hâsıl hemân bu kasaba bu cisir hâtırıyçün amâr olmuşdur ve şehr-i Öziçe'den gelen elbette bu cisirden ubûr edüp kasaba-i Roda'ya girir." Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 248.

⁹⁸ Alija Bejtović, "Stari trgovački putevi u Donjem Polimlju (Old Trade Roads in Lower Lim Valley)," *Prilozi* 22-23 (1972): 189.

Transportation infrastructure led to economic growth as an expansive road system built around imperial and local patronage linked even remote mountain areas in the Balkans. Building activity reached a zenith in the sixteenth century, but architectural patronage continued to enhance mobility in the region long afterwards. Even as late as the eighteenth century, a single ambitious Bosnian governor built no fewer than four mosques, five bridges and three caravanserais, many of which were near or on the Ragusa Road.⁹⁹

Vakıf endowments were meant to endure in perpetuity. In reality, changing political circumstances as well as environmental factors have led to a radical erasure of the Ottoman architectural legacy, particularly in contested areas like eastern Bosnia (much of which is today is within the confederated territory of Republika Srpska, one of the political entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina). The volume of Ekrem Hakkı Ayveri's monumental survey of Ottoman architecture dealing with "Yugoslavya" was published in 1981, based on decades of research and first-hand observation. In the section on Rudo, the author lists 12 attested Ottoman edifices in Rudo, of which five were no longer extant. Mustafa Bey's bridge was ultimately destroyed by a flood, and his other endowed properties in Rudo were destroyed by the burning of the town and surrounding areas by Serbian rebels in 1807.¹⁰⁰ At the time of Ayverdi's visit, the bridge, school, *han* and *hamām* recorded in the 1555 *vakfiye* and seen a century later by Evliya Çelebi had all vanished, save a single minaret from the mosque of Mustafa Sokolović.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Alija Bejtić, "Bosnian Governor Mehmed Pasha Kukavica and his foundation in Bosnia (1752-1756 and 1757-1760)." *Prilozi* 6-7 (1956): 113.

¹⁰⁰ Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da*, 305.

¹⁰¹ Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da*, 305-306. Image 446 from the same volume is a photograph of the decapitated minaret from the Sokollu Mustafa Paşa Camii in Rudo.

Čajniče

Between the well-charted Adriatic Sea to the west and the gentle Maritsa river valley to the east, travelers in the western Balkans faced prodigious topographical challenges. Mountainous terrain stacks against the course of the Ragusa Road like a series of increasingly forbidding stationary waves. One set of natural obstacles is found in the area between the towns of Foča in the Drina Valley (southeastern BiH) and Pljevlje (known to the Ottomans as Taşlica, located in today's northern Montenegro). Here, the Ragusa Road makes a 90 degree turn to the southeast after its initial northwesterly direction out of Dubrovnik. Caravan travelers were forced to contend with mountainous and densely forested terrain cut with intimidatingly steep and narrow valleys. Perhaps even more daunting than the area's geography, however, was the lack of settled and properly equipped stopping places. The town of Čajniče (BiH, only a few minutes by car from the rudimentary border crossing into Montenegro) is roughly equidistant from the towns of Foča and Pljevlje, both of which served at times as the administrative center of the *sancak* of Herzegovina (Pljevlje after 1572). The French traveler du Fresne-Canaye, writing in 1573, describes the "very narrow trails" his party followed out of Foča and his subsequent crossing of a high mountain summit, where they made their way across an area that was "isolated and dangerous for the caravans" before reaching the safe haven of Čajniče, which describes as "full of beautiful mosques and good caravanserais covered with lead roofs."¹⁰² The development of this settlement, which was apparently thriving in the 1570s, in

¹⁰² Philippe du Fresne-Canaye, *Le Voyage du Levant* (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1898), 26.

such an inhospitable location was in impressive feat. The development of Čajniče was the outcome of consistent investment by local patrons of differing social strata in the creation of an important – if highly remote – location within the larger overland transportation system.

Evliya Çelebi spent three days in Čajniče after a stop in Pljevlje as he zigzagged his way across Herzegovina in 1661. His account compares the *'imārets* clinging one above another to the town's steep slopes to the vertiginous houses of a neighborhood in his hometown ("Islâmbol Cihângîr Yokuşu" – Istanbul's Cihangir district).¹⁰³ The mountain town, he claims, regularly lost mules, horses, and even children to falls into the abyss-like canyon of the Janjina River below.¹⁰⁴ An entire sub-section of the *Seyahatnâme* is dedicated to the juxtaposition of a prosperous town (*kaşaba-i ābādān*) of Čajniče and its tenuous location. Evliya's description contains an outpouring of synonyms for comical and terrifying; the world traveler claims never to have seen such a place.¹⁰⁵

According to the *Seyahatnâme*, the town's creation was the result of a nearly miraculous act of patronage: the construction by one Hacı Bâlî of a great bridge across the Janjina Gorge. Evliya warns that travelers who dare to look down when crossing this span, which "reaches from one boulder to another," will experience the breaking of their gall bladders while their bodies "tremble like autumn lightning."¹⁰⁶ Adjacent to the Hacı Bâlî bridge

¹⁰³ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 252.

¹⁰⁴ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 252.

¹⁰⁵ "Bu rabtanın zemîni gibi bir turfa mudhik ve maskara ve mahûf u muhâtaralı dereli ve depeli bir garîb ü acîb zemînli şehir görmedim." Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 252.

¹⁰⁶ "Hattâ Hacı Balı nâm bir sâhibü'l-hayrât bu gayyâ deresi üzere bir sirât cîsr-i azîmin bir kayadan bir kayaya binâ etdirmiş kim hakkâ ki anı yapmak makdûr-ı beşer değildir. Bundan dahi aşağı bakanın zehresi siyup vücûdu berk-i hazân gibi ditrer." Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 253.

he notes three *hans*, one of which was the work of the bridge's patron. As with Rudo, the bridge in Čajniče drew travel, commerce and settlement to what had been a remote village. In Evliya's telling, all the town's *hans* are filled with material from across the world, from Iran to the Land of the Franks.¹⁰⁷ The many blacksmiths he notes in the area adjacent to the *han* of Hacı Bâlî are a further indication of Čajniče's role as a functional road town. Blacksmiths provide horseshoes; an essential service for the caravan trade.¹⁰⁸

As with other case studies noted in this chapter, the single infrastructural project – the bridge – served as anchor for the development of a settlement whose prosperity was assured by a multitude of complementary *vakıf* endowments, which performed religious, educational, and social functions. The bridge and *han* of Hacı Bâlî belong to the first phase of the town's development into an Ottoman *kaşaba*. Building on such initial improvements, the town of Čajniče admired by Evliya was enhanced in the second half of the sixteenth century through the works of the *sancakbeyi* Sinan Bey Boljanić, whose brother, Bodur Hüseyin Pasha, was the leading patron of the nearby town of Pljevlja.¹⁰⁹ Given that Sinan Bey was married to a sister of

¹⁰⁷ “Her birinde Laristân ve Moltan ve Venedik ve Firengistân metâ’ları bulunur.” Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 253. This observation of the richness of merchandise found in Rudo mirrors Evliya's description of Pljevlje/Taşlica, the next stopping point to the east. This town also features 3 *hans*, this time featuring the products of territories even farther east: “Cümle üç aded vekâle-i tüccârân-ı sevdâgerânları var. Cümle Çîn ü Hitâ vü Hoten metâ’ları bulunur hânlardır.” Ibid, 251.

¹⁰⁸ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatâmesi*, vol. 6, 253.

¹⁰⁹ Sinan Beg Boljanić was *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina (1552–57, 1563, 1564–67, 1569, 1574–80) and of Bosnia (1562–64). See Salih Trako, "Značajniji vakufi na području jugoistočne Bosne" [The most noteworthy waqfs in the region of south-eastern Bosnia] *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 9-10 (1983), 75-85. The Hüseyin Pasha Mosque in Pljevlje is remarkably intact and features a minaret (reconstructed in the early 20th century) said to be the tallest in the Balkans. The Boljanić brothers – who both served terms as *sancakbeyi* of Herzegovina – are named as “Bulehnikli” in the *Seyahatnâmesi* (c.f. vol. 6, p. 251). Bodur Hüseyin Pasha held many of the most important governorships in the empire. Their namesake village of Boljanići lies between Čajniče and Pljevlje.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, it is not difficult to see in the utilitarian structures endowed by he and brother Hüseyin – an echo of the patronage of Mustafa and Mehmed Sokolović in Rudo and Višegrad.

The 1582 *vakfiye* of Sinan Bey Boljanić lists a significant number of the public buildings in Čajniče, including a mosque, medrese, *‘imāret*, *konak* (mansion) and *türbe* (mausoleum).¹¹⁰ The preeminence of Sinan Bey’s building program was obvious to Evliya, who noted that these were the town’s only structures with lead roofs.¹¹¹ The Sinan Bey Camii, a centrally domed mosque fronted by an entrance porch of three semi hemispherical domes, is praised by Ayverdi, who notes its graceful proportions and overall harmony.¹¹² It was Sinan Bey who imprinted a definitively Ottoman form onto the mountain town. As with many Ottoman monuments in the area, the works of Sinan Bey in Čajniče were comprehensively destroyed in the Bosnian war of the 1990s. Even the rubble from the dynamited Sinan Bey Mosque was removed from the site. Photographs that appear to be from the early 2000s show the vacant location of the former mosque in use as a parking lot. The mosque has since been listed as a national monument and plans for reconstruction appear to exist at the time of this writing.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ayverdi, *Avrupa’da*, 98-99.

¹¹¹ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatâmesi*, vol. 6, 253.

¹¹² Ayverdi, *Avrupa’da*, 98. See plan p. 99, section p. 100, exterior photographs p. 91.

¹¹³ The Bosnia and Herzegovina Commission to Preserve National Monuments listed the Sinan Bey Mosque and the adjacent Türbe as a National Monument in 2004. Description of decision can be found here, with summary of damage and known repairs prior to destruction in 1992. Undated photographs of the vacant site can be seen at the end of the web page:
http://kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=50&lang=4&action=view&id=2487

The patronage of the town of Čajniče shows flexibility and changing modes of infrastructure creation in Ottoman Rumelia. Hacı Bâlî's identity remains obscure. His title Hacı suggests a merchant, but the name Bâlî may indicate a connection to a dervish order.¹¹⁴ If the latter theory is correct, Hacı Bâlî's bridge in Čajniče would be one of many examples of the value of antinomian orders in the creation of settlements in remote areas. Ömer Lütfi Barkan's seminal article "Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri" articulates the important role played by antinomian groups as settlers and guardians of sparsely populated frontier areas during an earlier period of Ottoman history. Barkan describes the multiple functions performed by *zāviyes* or dervish lodges outside of their primary spiritual concerns, including founding villages, guarding passes, building bridges and mills, and sharing food stores with travelers.¹¹⁵ In exchange for land and tax exemptions (i.e. the same incentives given to *derbend* villages), *zāviyes* performed a similar role for the state in settling and protecting vulnerable areas. Noting their value to travelers in insecure areas, the author compares the function of *zāviyes* to "jandarma karakolları," frontier outposts of the military police.¹¹⁶ Beyond such utilitarian roles, *zāviye* settlements were also associated with agriculture and orchards. Bakan's description of the cultivation of rose and

¹¹⁴ There are a number of Balis active in the region but none can be confidently identified as the patron of the Čajniče bridge. On Shaykh Bali Efendi, Kadı of Sofya, see Nikolay Antov, "Imperial Expansion, Colonization, and Conversion to Islam in the Islamic World's 'Wild West'" (PhD diss, University of Chicago, 2011). On Hızır Balı, also known as Balım Sultan, şeyh of the tekke of Seyyid Ali Sultan at Dimetoka, see "Bektaşiyye," *EİB*.

¹¹⁵ Barkan, "Kolonizatör," 279-386. See especially the description of the "Kurdi" community near Erzerum and work of Yakub Halife's family near Trabzon, p. 296. See also Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁶ Barkan, "Kolonizatör," 297.

lemon gardens, pear orchards, olive groves, chestnuts and other fruit trees by dervish settlers is congruent with Evliya's description of Čajniče, where the fear-inducing mountainous landscape is tamed by the town's many paradise-like gardens and orchards, including groves of sour cherry trees.¹¹⁷

The *Seyahatnâme* confirms the continuing activity of spiritual orders in the western Balkans in the seventeenth century, but the account also shows a clear shift in patterns of patronage. Evliya lists four functioning convents (*tekkes*) in Čajniče (of which those of the Halveti and Kadiri orders are the largest), while the Gazi Murad Baba Tekke of the Bektaşî order, located just a few miles up the road, merits its own separate description as a site of interest. Despite the continuing prominence of Sufi orders in social life, by the mid-sixteenth century, however, public patronage had clearly shifted away the *zāviye/tekke* model and towards the building of structures that prioritized orthodox Sunni practices, including mosques, medreses and schools. Ottoman officials with local roots and strong connections to central authorities such as Sinan Bey and his brother Bodur Hüseyin Pasha and Mustafa Pasha and his cousin Sokollu Mehmed were the new drivers of public infrastructure that was more explicitly orthodox and Sunni, overlaying and existing in parallel with an earlier wave of humbler works performed via auxiliaries like *derbend* villagers and dervish settlements.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ "Hattâ bu kasaba-i âbâdânın üç tarafı evc-i semâya urüc etmiş mehîb dağlar üzre âsumâne kad-keşân olmuş dirah-ı müntehâları ve kiraz şecereleri ile zeyn olmuş dağlar ve niçe yerleri sâfi hadîka-i ravza-i rıdvân misilli bâğlardır." Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatâmesi*, vol.6, 252. See also Barkan, "Kolonizatör," 298. T-type zaviye/imarets were not limited to such bucolic settings. These structures were also instrumental in the creation and "Ottomanization" of urban spaces. See Grigor Boykov, "T-shaped Zaviye/İmarets"

¹¹⁸ Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh's work on Ottoman Aleppo shows a resurgence of patronage by dervish orders in Syria in the seventeenth century following the chaos of the Celali Revolts. See Chapter Four of *Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

The works of Sinan Bey in Čajniče and Hüseyin Pasha in Pljevlje contributed to an increasingly prosperous string of road towns along the Ragusa Road, across what had previously been remote and under-developed territory. Moving from west to east, the following is a selective list of the most prominent complexes built along the road's western half in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries:

- Arslanagić bridge and caravanserai, Trebinje (Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, 1572-74)
- Aladža Mosque, Foča (Hasan Baliija Nazir, 1550-51)
- Sinan Bey complex, Čajniče (Sinan Beg Boljanić, 1570s-1580s)
- Hüseyin Pasha mosque and *'imāret*, Pljevlja (Bodur Hüseyin Pasha [Boljanić], last quarter of 16th century)
- Ibrahim Pasha Mosque, Prijepolje
- Altun-Alem Mosque, Novi Pazar (Muslihudin Abdul Gani, ca. 1540s)
- Fatih Mosque, Priština (Fatih Sultan Mehmed, 1461)¹¹⁹
- Bali Reis Mosque, Niš (1516-1523)

Kervan Yolda Düzülür¹²⁰

Although the primary builders of road infrastructure were state officials, the development of mobility in the western provinces remained an individual and idiosyncratic process, even as builders consistently repeated recognizably Ottoman forms. Patrons building *vaqıf* endowments continued to do so on their own volition, not as agents under the control of a dedicated central authority (with the exceptions of Rüstem and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who

¹¹⁹ Priština is located on one of several possible routes for Ragusa Road travelers between Novi Pazar and Sofia).

¹²⁰ Literally: 'the caravan sorts itself out on the road.' Roughly: to improvise or make it up as you go along.

effectively *were* the empire's central authority). Sinan Bey's buildings in Čajniče, his brother Hüseyin's endowments in Pljevlje, and Mustafa Bey's in Rudo, are immediately legible as works in the Ottoman imperial style, repeating forms perfected by Mimar Sinan.¹²¹ To be sure, all of these men were closely connected to the Grand Vizier Sokollu, yet they must have had great flexibility in their expenditures on public works. By the end of the sixteenth century, the accumulation of *vakıf* patronage had transformed much of the region, and the Ragusa Road had become an archipelago of settlements marked by Ottoman institutions. Whether new or simply transformed, these road towns were invariably centered around an institutional cluster of bridge, caravanserai, mosque, market, and school.¹²² That these investments enabled local, regional, and long-distance mobility is evident. What remains unclear, however, is any legible set or ordering mechanism. What were the limits and constraints of this system? To what degree could patrons determine the scale, form, and location of their works? How did local authorities conceive of their endowments within the larger system of communications across the Ottoman realms?

¹²¹ The "Leiden Sketchbook" of city views from the road from Vienna to Istanbul shows how the Ottoman skyline was distinct and legible to outside viewers. The sketches of city skylines bristle with minarets and semi-domes from Belgrade to the capital. Published by Lud'a Klusáková as *The Road to Constantinople: Sixteenth-century Ottoman Towns through Christian Eyes* (Prague: ISV Publishers, 2002). The visibly Ottoman character of these structures made them a target in post-imperial times. Referring to the single-domed mosque, Ćurčić writes: "Its simple design without exception provided a stamp of monumentality, while its forms invariably differed from those of the existing Christian churches, thereby giving the Muslim community a cherished sense of identity, visibility, and social superiority. Needless to say, it was this very factor that fueled the retaliatory destructive backlash in later times. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 76.

¹²² "These mosque-centered complexes articulated the transformation of the Ottoman state from a heterogeneous frontier principality into a relatively homogenous world empire with an officially cultivated Sunni identity." Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 76.

Gülru Necipoğlu's concept of decorum as an ordering mechanism for architectural patronage is useful in decoding the norms for individuals building public works. "Prestige mosques" commissioned by sultans were "densely concentrated in Istanbul," while grand viziers built massive complexes in strategic centers, above all along the imperial diagonal from Budapest to the Bosphorus.¹²³ It was left to lesser officials – governors and regional administrators in particular – to provide works of infrastructure in more peripheral areas; aligning their own pious and pragmatic intentions with the economic, social, and military needs of the state. Decorum was not limited to location. The scale, materials, and even the ornateness of endowed structures were likewise delimited to the patron's status.

The underlying pressure to conform to established hierarchies is revealed in a number of episodes where overly ambitious patrons ran into trouble with central authorities. Even a figure as powerful as Hürrem Sultan, wife of Süleyman the Lawgiver, was expected to conform to the dictates of propriety. Hürrem's patronage in the road town of Svilengrad (one stage west of Edirne, on the Maritsa River) was centered around a religious structure first conceived of as a mosque (with two minarets) and subsequently reduced to a humbler masjid (with a single minaret), possibly due to the intervention of the sultan himself.¹²⁴ An episode from a stopping place in on the Ragusa Road in the eighteenth century points to potentially severe consequences for overstepping the bounds of propriety:

When the ruler of Trebinje (Herzegovina), Resulbegović Osman Pasha, was patron to a mosque bearing his name that was judged to be more beautiful than the mosque of Sultan Ahmet III in the same town, he was executed by the sultan in 1729, as attested by

¹²³ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 21.

¹²⁴ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 279.

a *ferman*. Ottoman architecture was thus conditioned by the difference between the capital and the provinces and social ranks of its patrons.¹²⁵

Other Ottoman officials were simply overzealous in their building practices. “When the grand vizier, Mahmud Pasha, was dismissed in 1637, he was accused of having built inns that were unnecessary and a burden on the people.”¹²⁶ Overstepping architectural propriety could get an Ottoman official fired or even killed.

Other patrons found ways to build exceptional works without provoking censure. The once splendid Aladža Mosque in Foča (built in 1550-51, now destroyed) was described by Evliya as having no match in all the districts that surrounded it. He claims its sweetness was praised from the lands of Rum to the Arab and Persian lands.¹²⁷ All this despite the fact that its patron, Hasan Baliya Nazir, held the modest title of chief caretaker of the sultan’s properties in the *sancak* of Herzegovina.¹²⁸ In another example of ostentation within the bounds of protocol, the gleaming finials adorning the domes and minaret of the Hüseyin Pasha Mosque in Pljevlje were brought from Egypt, where the pasha had been posted prior to his return to Herzegovina. Evliya takes care to mention that the golden *alem* (finials) of Pljevlje were brought from the port of Alexandria, Egypt to Dubrovnik on Ragusan ships (“Dobra-Venedik gemiler”), and that the shining adornments had not dulled since the mosque’s completion in the time of Süleyman.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Hartmuth, “Legacy in Stone” 699-700.

¹²⁶ Inalcik, *Classical Age*, 148.

¹²⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 255.

¹²⁸ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 781.

¹²⁹ The traveler mis-identifies the patron as Hasan Pasha. Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 251.

Of the 10 mosques and masjids in the administrative capital of Pljevlje, Hüseyin Pasha's was the grandest of all, so magnificent that it pushed without breaking the limits of decorum. As Evliya saw it, "it's as if it were a sultanic mosque."¹³⁰

The Shepherd Pasha's Bridge

The ambiguous limits that defined what might appropriately be built where, and by whom, were constantly tested, not least by a somewhat obscure Ottoman official named Çoban (Shepherd) Mustafa Pasha (d. 935/1529). The Bosnian pasha – like others mentioned in this chapter – was a product of the *devşirme* system. Mustafa rose through the ranks to attain the governorship of Egypt and, ultimately, the position of second vizier.¹³¹ An enthusiastic patron of architecture, he endowed moveable and non-moveable properties in Anatolia and Rumelia, including two caravanserais in Edirne and a substantial complex in Eskişehir.¹³² Like Sokollu Mehmed and Rüstem Pasha, his *vakıf* investments were located on important routes. Çoban Mustafa is best known for his elegant mosque complex in Gebze (just east of Istanbul, completed in 1523), and the stone bridge and associated structures he built in Svilengrad, Bulgaria (completed in 1528-29, immediately after his term as Governor of Egypt). The town

¹³⁰ "gûyâ bir câmi'-i selâtîndir" Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 6, 251.

¹³¹ Semavi Eyice, "Svilengrad'da Mustafa Paşa Köprüsü (Cisr-i Mustafa Paşa)" *Bellekten* 28 (1964) 735; Semavi Eyice, "Cisr-i Mustafa Paşa," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*; Fatih Müderrisoğlu, "Bâni Çoban Mustafa Paşa ve Bir Osmanlı Şehri Gebze" *Vakıflar Dergisi* 25 (1995), 67.

¹³² Müderrisoğlu, "Bâni," 68.

that grew up around the Svilengrad bridge was known through the Ottoman era as 'Cisr-i Mustafa Paşa.'¹³³

Çoban Mustafa was a wealthy and well-connected official, but his status and resources cannot be compared to that of the abovementioned sultans, nor to royal women like Hürrem, nor to the grand viziers. Still the pasha followed the lead of elites from the highest levels of state in his zealous patronage of public architecture. Moreover, he placed his works in high profile locations along the empire's central axis: Gebze is one stage east of Istanbul's Asian shore; Svilengrad is one stage west of the second capital of Edirne. These locations ensured that almost every major approach to or departure from the centers of imperial power would pass within sight of structures endowed by Çoban Mustafa Pasha. Ottoman soldiers on the way to confront the Franks would cross the Maritsa River on his bridge. Campaigns to the eastern frontier with Safavid Iran would pass his Gebze complex on their first day's march from Üsküdar. European and Ottoman travelers of the Ragusa Road and other trans-Balkan routes would arrive at the royal city of Edirne after passing "il ponte di Mostaffa Bassa." It was the last stop before entering the imperial corridor between Edirne and Istanbul.¹³⁴

The 295-meter-long Çoban Mustafa Pasha Bridge at Svilengrad shares many characteristics with the sultanic bridge/settlements at Uzunköprü and Büyükçekmece. The monumental, multi-arched stone bridge eliminates a topographical obstacle, crossing the

¹³³ "Besides these it is known from various documents that Mustafa Paşa had schools built at Rumelihisar, Seyyitgazi and in Eskişehir, baths in Silistre and Pravadi, and tenement houses in Filibe, Ahıska, Selânîk, Pravadi, Gebze, Edirne, Yenişehir." Eyice, "Svilengrad'da," 754. For the pasha's complexes in Gebze and Svilengrad, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 53-54, 278ff.

¹³⁴ Benedetto Ramberti, *Delle cose dei Turchi, Libri Tre* (Venice, 1541), 8v.

Maritsa river at a strategic location 30 km east of Edirne. The pasha also endowed several adjacent buildings, including a caravanserai, bazaar and *hamām*.¹³⁵ As with Uzunköprü, this cluster served as a motor for settlement. The subsequent constructions of Hürrem Sultan (a.k.a. Roxelana) in the late 1550s and early 1560s added another layer of functional and prestigious architecture in the growing town. Hürrem's complex was constructed by Mimar Sinan, and consisted of a mosque/masjid, *'imâret* (hospice), and *mekteb* (elementary school). Now "disappeared without a trace," Hürrem's works were built alongside those of Çoban Pasha, an expression of the cyclical, multi-layered practice of Ottoman infrastructure creation. Building types also shifted. Hürrem's structures address the needs of the local population rather than transient travelers – her newly constructed elementary school suggests a growing, stable community.¹³⁶ Once again, the bridge/settlement endowment scheme seems to have worked as intended. A century later Evliya Çelebi visited the town and counted seven hundred houses.¹³⁷

The fame of Svilengrad's two patrons endured as their endowments flourished and their names were noted by many travelers. In 1534, only a few years after the completion of the bridge, the Venetian Benedetto Ramberti was highly impressed with the pasha's bridge. He describes it as having 20 arches, being very beautiful and large, and made entirely of marble. Ramberti notes the foundation inscription found near the center of the bridge, which he

¹³⁵ *Hans Dernschwam Tagebuch einer reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553-55)*, ed. Franz Babiner (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986), 23.

¹³⁶ Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 278.

¹³⁷ Evliya visited 'Kasaba-ı cısr-i azîm Mustafâ Paşa' or Svilengrad in 1063/1652-52. Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 3, fols. 147b-148a.

describes as a panel inset into a gilded stone in which carved Turkish letters of sky-blue color describes the date of the bridge's construction, its 'mastro' and 'autore' and the expenses that were spent on it.¹³⁸

In 1555, just prior to the initiation of Hürrem's complex, the Habsburg ambassador Busbecq also admired the "splendid bridge of Mustafa" on his approach to Edirne.¹³⁹ After Hürrem's additions, however, it became more difficult for travelers to sort out what buildings had been built by whom. Du Fresne Canaye, writing in 1573, describes the "pont de Mustafa-Pascha," but claims the large caravanserai adjacent to it as the work of Hürrem (known to him as "La Rossa"), just like the lead-covered mosque next door. The same chronicle comments on the generosity of the town's *'imāret*, where any number of Turks and Christians were fed for three days.¹⁴⁰

The Venetian *bailo* Paolo Contarini, writing in 1580 – a half century after the bridge's completion – gives an extraordinary interpretation of the bridge's origins. Like his predecessor Ramberti, Contarini claims the origin story was found in the carved inscription stone at the center of the bridge. This is the earliest version I have yet to discover of a strange and enduring

¹³⁸ "7th March [1533] Edirne: Passammo il ponte di Mostaffa Bassa che è sopra il fiume Maritza, & è di volti XX molto bello & largo, tutto di marmo, & con una pietra nel mezzo dorata: nella quale sono intagliate lettere di colore azzurro turchesche che dicono il tempo, il mastro, & l'auttore di esso ponte, e la spesa che vi fu fatta dentro." Ramberti, *Delle cose*, fol. 9r. I take 'mastro' and 'autore' to be references the master builder and the patron, respectively.

¹³⁹ *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554-1562* (Translated from Latin [1633 Elezvir ed.] by Edward Seymour Forster. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927) 23.

¹⁴⁰ du Fresne-Canaye, *Le Voyage*, 44-45.

anecdote about a dispute involving Sultan Süleyman, Çoban Mustafa Pasha, and the Svilengrad bridge:

...we arrived at the bridge of Mustafa Pasha, with 21 arches, all in stone, with an inscription in the middle of the bridge on a great stone in Turkish letters. They say that Sultan Süleyman had been sought by his sister, who was the wife of Mustafa. She hoped to borrow money from her brother to complete the work, as they had spent all their money on the two heads of the bridge. The Sultan responded that he wanted to do it, but then the Sultana [apparently changing her mind] persuaded her husband to sell all of their furniture and finish it. And this annoyed the Sultan so much that he swore never to pass that way again, and during the war of Zighet he didn't cross it, either alive or dead, but took the Maritsa road. Roxelana then built the caravanserai at the edge of the bridge, and the mosque with many shops that sell necessities, and there we bought some cherries.¹⁴¹

Contarini's account is a fascinatingly rich tale of rivalry and tension over the expensive bridge between the Sultan, his sister, and his brother-in-law, Çoban Mustafa Pasha. Mustafa was indeed a royal son-in-law of Selim I, making him brother-in-law to Süleyman the Magnificent.¹⁴² How did a Venetian diplomat acquire this information, and learn about the strange story? Not from the physical inscription, which, besides being written in complex Arabic calligraphy, contains nothing resembling these details. The actual dedication is quite terse and formulaic, praising both the Sultan and his vizier:

This bridge, from the time of Süleyman Han, son of Sultan Selim Han, successor to the great Sultans – may security and mercy endure under his auspices. Mustafa Paşa – may God's wishes upon him be successful – had it built and made strong. A most enduring

¹⁴¹ “...arrivammo al Ponte di Mustafà Bassà, di archi 21, tutto di pietra, con una iscrizione al mezzo del ponte sopra una gran pietra in lettere turche. Dicesi che Sultan Suliman fu ricercato dalla sorella, ch'era moglie di Mustafà, che gl'imprestasse denari per fornir detta opera, avendo speso quanto aveva nelle due teste del ponte; il gransignore rispose che lo voleva far lui, ma la sultana persuase il marito a vendere tutto il suo mobile e finirlo, e se l'ebbe Sultan Suliman tanto a male, che giurò non passarvi mai, e nella guerra di Zighet non lo passò, nè vivo nè morto, ma fece la strada di là dalla Marizza. La Rossa (Rossolana) poi fece il caravanserà ch'è passato il ponte, e la moschea con tante botteghe da vendere roba da vivere, e là comprammo delle ciliegie.” Contarini, 32-33.

¹⁴² Eyice, “Cisr-i Mustafa Paşa,” 32.

structure being a high beneficence, it was completed in the year “ḥasanat abadīatan” [eternal good (work)]¹⁴³

Surely a member of Contarini’s caravan group or a local informant must have furnished the tale, which was then relayed to Contarini via one of his dragomans or interpreters. But why? Had the story become a stock element of local lore by 1580? If so, where did it come from?

If the bridge anecdote had been confined to Contarini’s account, it could easily be dismissed as an anomaly, the kind of half-understood observation that makes travel accounts such tricky sources. After Contarini, however, versions of the story of the dispute between the sultan and his pasha become a common feature of descriptions of the Svilengrad Bridge. Peter Mundy, who crossed the “Mustapha Pasha Cupreese” forty years later, in 1620, infuses the scene with even more drama. In his version, instead of simply re-routing the imperial army, the sultan now leads his horse down to the river bank, haughtily fording the waters of the Maritsa in view of the view of the contested bridge. The central dispute over the bridge’s ownership persists, but now it is told in an almost cinematic manner, and the tale is now given lethal consequences. Two of Süleyman’s pages drown in the entirely preventable river crossing:

Of this bridge it is thus reported for certain, That Sultan Soliman the Magnificent having warrs with Hungary, att his Comeinge this way, saw the bridge, and demaundinge whoe caused it to be built, the afore named M.P. presented himselfe, sayeing hee did it. The Kinge then prayed him to bestowe it on him, where unto hee replied that, in regard hee had built it for the good of his soule, it could not be given away. The Kinge, beinge discontented with this answeere, would not passe over the Bridge att all, but sought a foorde a little above the said Bridge with his horses and followers; wherein passinge over there was drowned two of his owne Pages among the rest. Soe that it is a Custome

¹⁴³ Bu köprüyü, büyük Sultanların halefi Sultan Selim Han’ın oğlu Sultan Süleyman Han (zamanında) – emniyet ve emân, sâyesinde devam etsin – Mustafa Paşa – Allah onu dilediğine muvaffak etsin – yaptırdı ve onu sağlamaştırdı. En devamlı yapı yüksek iyilikler olduğundan, tarihi “ebedi iyilik” oldu. Translation (Arabic to Turkish): Eyice, “Svilengrad’da,” 743. English translation mine.

to this day, when any Vizer or Basha hath occasion to passe this way on warfare, hee goeth not over the Bridge, but where the Kinge did passe.¹⁴⁴

Evliya Çelebi, who visited Svilengrad in 1652-53, is unusually evasive about what structures were built by whom. He simply says the flourishing town's mosque, elementary school, *han*, *hamām* and covered market were built by Mimar Sinan in the age of Süleyman.¹⁴⁵ He describes the bridge as a *hayrât* (pious or philanthropic work) of Mustafa Pasha, and gives it a place of honor among the great and praiseworthy stone bridges of the "Diyâr-ı Rûm" (Rumelia). Then Evliya, who relished a good anecdote, launches into his version of the sultan and pasha story.

Sultan Süleyman, the *Seyahatnâme* tells us, was on his way to the Buda campaign, when he and his army passed by the village called Cisr-i Mustafâ Paşa. After friendly greetings between the padişah and the aged pasha, there is an abrupt and dramatic shift in tone. Mustafa declines Süleyman's offer to accompany him on the gaza campaign, but merely wishes them success, using what appears to be a politely formulaic response. Is it the Pasha's refusal to join the mission, or something about his use of the term *şavâb* (divine reward for a pious act) in his response that then provokes the sultan's furious reaction? "My Padishah! Upon your return may the coming gaza's divine glory belong to you" seems to be both appropriate and

¹⁴⁴ *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667* (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society), 51-52.

¹⁴⁵ On Sinan's involvement in the structures built by Çoban Mustafa and Hürrem, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 278-279; and Eyice, "Svilengrad'da," 738-739. The Çoban Mustafa Bridge at Svilengrad appears in Sinan's (auto)biography. Howard Crane and Esra Akın, *Sinan's Autobiographies* ed. Gülru Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Sâî Mustafa Çelebi, *Book of Buildings: Tezkiretü'l-Bünyan and Tezkiretü'l-Ebniye Memoirs of Sinan the Architect*. (Istanbul: Koç Bank, 2002).

innocuous.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the sultan is enraged, and, following the structure of the earlier European versions of the story, he abruptly diverts from his original path, leading his horse across the river rather than crossing (and giving glory to) the pasha’s bridge. The sultan’s actions force the entire army to divert its course, resulting in the ridiculous spectacle of Mustafa Pasha standing on an empty stone bridge while numberless Ottoman gazis struggle with their horses across the Maritsa. Not content with describing these melodramatic actions, Evliya also provides Süleyman with a barbed couplet for the occasion:

Minnet ile kokma gülü al elinde suseni
Geçme nâmerd köprüsünden ko aparsın su seni¹⁴⁷

The verse speaks to the subtext of the conflict. The first line, roughly ‘Don’t smell someone else’s rose, but rather the [bad-smelling] lily in your own hand,’ suggests that the pasha was overstepping his position in his concealed attempt to attract for himself some of the heavenly glory (*şavāb*) being justly earned by his sovereign. The second line, ‘Don’t cross the bridge, coward; Let yourself be carried away by the water’ seems a more straightforward attack on Mustafa Pasha’s lack of honor and refusal to join the campaign. Evliya thus conditions his exorbitant praise of the bridge (which he calls one of the finest philanthropic works he has ever seen) with this detailed retelling of the story of the dispute between the sultan and the pasha.

¹⁴⁶ “Pâdişâhım! Allah gazânı müyesser ide! Avdetde geçen guzâtın savâbı pâdişâhımın olsun” Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 3, fól. 147b.

¹⁴⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 3, fól. 148a.

Variations of the story of the sultan and his vizier continue to circulate. An undated online article titled “Along Suleiman the Magnificent’s Bridge in Svilengrad” from the website balkantravellers.com includes an updated retelling of the bridge’s contested origins.

Story has it that Mustafa Pasha commissioned a master mason from Epirus to build a bridge for the good of the people. The construction proved so magnificent that the sultan himself demanded to buy it: not only for aesthetic reasons, but also in hopes of making a good profit from the toll.¹⁴⁸

New details have surfaced here (who is this master mason from Epirus?), but the conflict between Süleyman and Çoban Mustafa remains the crux of the matter. Rather than adding pathos to the tale with drowned soldiers or witty invective, this modern version involves a curse, a suicide, and a paternal sacrifice:

Pressed with an ultimatum and threatened with dismissal, the vizier decided that the only way not to lose face and at the same time keep the bridge for his subjects was to commit suicide. Which he did, leaving Suleiman furious but helpless.

In adding a final touch to his abominable image, the sultan put a curse on the first man who was to walk across the bridge. The superstitious Bulgarians grew scared and reached a tacit consensus not to set foot onto the construction. The situation was saved by the vizier's father, who decided to sacrifice himself so that his son's suicide would not be in vain. The legend ends with his spectacular stroll across the bridge.¹⁴⁹

The fact that tales posted on the internet have little historical value hardly needs mentioning. Yet, in addition to their kitschy staged confrontations and superstitious Bulgarians, the long-enduring tales of Cizr-i Mustafa Paşa also illuminate the peculiarity of the Ottoman infrastructure-building system. The fluidity of the Ottoman patronage system mentioned earlier in this chapter ensured that such monumental works could always be read on multiple levels.

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.balkantravellers.com/en/read/article/682>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.balkantravellers.com/en/read/article/682>

To whom did their divine glory properly belong? To the official who endowed the structure, or to the sovereign under whose auspices the work was completed? Does the spiritual and practical credit for the Svilengrad Bridge accrue to Çoban Mustafa Pasha or Kanuni Süleyman?

As thresholds, bridges are often the site of spooky folk memories (hence the many “Devil’s Bridges” to be found across the Balkans), but the tale of the Svilengrad bridge is unique. I believe the story persists because of the intuitive sense it made to locals and to the Ottoman and European travelers who heard and repeated it, adding new details over time. Had the bridge been more modest, or perhaps located further from the second capital of Edirne, it seems doubtful that the conflict over ownership would have resonated as well as it has. Çoban Mustafa, however, transgressed the expectations of propriety, creating a structure that could easily be read as “sultanic” by foreigners and Ottoman subjects alike. Had the structure been located in the remote provinces (like the Hüseyin Pasha Mosque in Pljevlje),¹⁵⁰ rather than sitting at the threshold of the imperial corridor linking the two Ottoman capitals, this antagonistic story is unlikely to have resonated so clearly with so many travelers. As it was, the nature of building public works always celebrated the glory of both patron and sovereign, but the rules of decorum necessitated the clear articulation of the correct ratio. The Svilengrad bridge, for all of its utility in the empire's transportation network, seems almost to challenge the supreme authority of the Ottoman Dynasty. It effectively steals an opportunity for Süleyman to provide for his subjects and mark his individual authority in a prime location. This was, of course, a drawback to the de-centralized practice of infrastructure-building. With

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 1.

pashas, beys, and countless lesser officials building a robust system through a multitude of individual acts, they placed a claim on the spaces of Ottoman mobility, even when explicitly honoring the dynasty in inscriptions.

The flourishing of the Ragusa Road in the Ottoman era was due in large part to the victory of infrastructure and settlement over distance, topography, and depopulation: it is a triumph of the *menzil* (stopping place) over the mountains. What is most striking is the effectiveness of this system in the absence of a consistent centralized regulating authority. There Ottomans never created a version of the Roman *cursus publicus*. Rather, the vast majority of the empire's public works in the provinces – the bridges, caravanserais, markets, water systems and baths relied on by long-distance travelers – were built as individual pious endowments by regional and lower-status officials, often with local ties.¹⁵¹ Although the reign of Mehmed II (during which Bosnia and Herzegovina were conquered and absorbed into the Ottoman empire, laying the groundwork for trans-Balkan caravan travel) is universally understood as a time of increasing centralization, the construction of public works continued to be done by local officials largely on their own initiative. Such a practice is a continuation of the work done by the colonizers and builders what is thought of as an earlier era – the Gazi marcher lords who built the first *hans*, bridges, and road towns in the frontier space of Rumelia.¹⁵² The building explosion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is largely the result

¹⁵¹ “These utilitarian buildings are an eloquent witness to the pragmatic spirit of the Ottomans, combining, as they did, beauty with usefulness” Machiel Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), x.

¹⁵² The first known purpose-built utilitarian buildings providing services for travelers in the Balkans were constructed by Evrenos Bey in what is now northern Greece, between 1375 and 1385. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 611. See also Lowry, *Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans*.

of the continuation of these earlier opportunistic habits of patronage. Even as specific routes like the one that terminated at Dubrovnik were favored for strategic purposes, the patterns of patronage essential to mobility on those routes were controlled largely through unwritten pressures and traditions, and were not curated by an appointed official or office in Istanbul.

This chapter has focused on works created by officials at the upper end of the imperial ladder. Their structures, elegant and eye-catching, are noted in contemporary travel accounts and have been the subject of Yugoslav and Turkish scholarly attention. They bear the most detailed traces of memory, even in the not infrequent cases when their stones have been demolished and scattered. Bear in mind, however, that there were 2,517 *vakıfs* documented across the empire by non-royal individuals in 1546, and 1,600 new *vakıfs* that were added in the following 50-year period.¹⁵³ Recall that 1500 Ottoman caravanserais and *hans* were found in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone in a survey of 1878. For the seventeenth century, 23 *hans* were mentioned by Evliya Çelebi in the city of Sarajevo.¹⁵⁴ The bulk of these were not built by pashas or beys but by modest officials or private individuals. The infrastructural needs of Ottoman territory were overwhelmingly addressed by these often anonymous patrons, responsible for thousands of interventions accumulating over centuries. A spectrum of Ottoman officials emulated their social superiors in the dedication of *vakıf* structures for public good. Filling in the blank spaces, their collective actions multiplied the effectiveness of large-scale constructions by Ottoman elites. In the case of the Ragusa Road, an increasingly accumulation of large and small endowments transformed what had been a remote region into a trans-

¹⁵³ İncelik, *Classical Age*, 144.

¹⁵⁴ Kreševljaković, *Hanovi*, 157.

Balkan highway. The road system of Rumelia eventually became so effective that even the Venetian masters of the sea began to explore overland options from the Adriatic to the Bosphorus.

Chapter Three: Florentines on the Ragusa Road

May 25. Thys nyght in a hen roost.

May 26. Thys nyght on benches in our draggaman's father's house.

May 27. Thys nyght in a cart by a peasant's house.

May 28. Thys nyght we gott good stor of hay and lay lyke kynges.

May 30. Thys nyght we lay in a peasant's house upon the ground.

May 31. And thys nyght over against Pyrott [Piro] on the ground.

June 1. Thys nyght in a peasant house.

June 2. Thys nyght at Sophya.¹

An array of mutually-reinforcing practices contributed to the efflorescence of overland travel across the Balkan Peninsula from the middle of the fifteenth century. Ragusa – favored politically, economically, and through the development of travel infrastructure – thrived in its position as a kind of “Hong Kong of the Adriatic,” part of and yet distinct from the Ottoman Empire.² Yet Ottoman and Ragusan documents tell us little about the actual conditions of life on the road. How did caravans function on a day-to-day basis? What were the concerns of travelers in unfamiliar territory? How did foreign travelers interact with the local population and how did they understand the customs and habits they witnessed? What types of conflicts broke out and how were they resolved? Terse Ottoman *fermāns* and *‘ahid-nāmes* are no help here, and *sicils*, the records of the kadi courts, only document those exceptional disputes that required official adjudication. Reports from the Ragusan merchants and ambassadors who

¹ From the notes of “Fox,” a laconic British traveler on the Ragusa Road in 1589. In Omer Hadžiselimović, *At the Gates of the East: British Travel Writers on Bosnia and Herzegovina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 4.

² The Hong Kong analogy is from F.W. Carter, “The Commerce of the Dubrovnik Republic, 1500-1700,” *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 24/3 (1971), 389.

would have been the most knowledgeable travelers on the road likewise tell surprisingly little about the experience of travel itself. The focus of their surviving documents – which fill the shelves of the *Diplomata et Acta* and *Lettere e Commissioni di Levante* collections in the State Archives of Dubrovnik– is not local in the slightest. Rather, they give tremendously detailed accounts of high level negotiations with Ottoman officials, a practice at which Ragusans excelled.³

By far the most detailed and abundant body of writing on the daily life of the Ragusa Road in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is found in the accounts written by travelers from the Italian Peninsula. For these merchants, pilgrims, diplomats and spies, the Dalmatian hinterland and the interior of Ottoman Rumelia was a profoundly foreign zone that needed to be measured, observed and interpreted – added, in short, to the known realms of a rapidly expanding world. These quattrocento travelers were experiencing unfamiliar territory at a time when world geographies and “writers on the exotic” were reaching an expanded audience through the newly developed printing press.⁴ Although Mediterranean coastlines had been charted in minute detail over centuries, the mountainous internal regions of the central Balkan Peninsula remained little known.⁵ Travel accounts – built around of “spinal column” of the

³ On Ragusan diplomacy, see Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka Diplomacija U Istambulu* (2003) and “Diplomatic Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik,” in Gabor Karman & Lovro Kunčević, eds., *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 187-208.

⁴ Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992), 40.

⁵ For an overview of portolans, see Tony Campbell, “Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500,” in J.B. Harley & David Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography Volume One* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 371-463; idem, “Census of Pre-Sixteenth-Century Portolan Charts,” *Imago Mundi* 38 (1986), 67-94. For Ottoman cartographical practices, including portolans, see Svatopluk Soucek, *Piri Reis & Turkish mapmaking after Columbus* (London: Nour Foundation/Azimuth Editions,

journey's stages, but flexible enough to include anecdotes of wonder and even fragmentary revelations of the psychological states – are our best sources for recovering the lived experience of overland travel.⁶ Previous chapters have explored how the Ottomans attempted to shape patterns of mobility in their western provinces. This chapter uses Italian travel writing to reveal how the new overland transportation networks actually functioned on a day-to-day basis.

The fifteenth-century Italian travelers who crossed the western realms of the rapidly expanding Ottoman state were confronting an alarming new political reality in the Mediterranean. In Italy, authors responded to Ottoman military successes and imperial ambitions with a welter of polemical texts, scalding treatises crafted to bring the reader's blood to a boil as a means of building support for a unified Christian response to what was characterized as the Turkish menace. "Crusade" resonates today as a medieval phenomenon, but the crusading spirit infused the Renaissance as well, especially after the shock of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. James Hankins has identified no less than 400 surviving texts calling for anti-Ottoman Crusade, written by more than 50 different humanists, all from the era of Sultan Mehmed II:⁷

1992); Ahmet Karamustafa, "Introduction to Ottoman Cartography" in J.B. Harley & David Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography Volume Two, Book One: Cartography in the traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For a discussion of portolans, mapmaking, and shared cultural production in the Mediterranean, see Jerry Brotton, *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997)

⁶ "L'itinéraire et ces étapes constituent ainsi la colonne vertébrale du récit de voyage." Stéphane Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs dans L'empire Ottoman* (Ankara: Société Turque d'Histoire, 1991), 5.

⁷ James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), 117.

The humanists wrote far more often and at far greater length about the Turkish menace and the need for crusade than they did about such better-known humanist themes as true nobility, liberal education, the dignity of man, or the immortality of the soul.⁸

With a few exceptions, these texts were full-throated condemnations of Ottoman Turkish savagery, composed with all the force and classical refinement that Renaissance humanism could provide.

Over the course of the fifteenth century, Hankins and Nancy Bisaha have argued, crusading texts replaced what had been a sacred mission for control of the Holy Land with a secular vision in which the superiority of Europe was expressed on civilizational grounds.⁹ In this argument, no Italian state could compete with the Ottomans militarily, but the backward, practically nomadic Turks were no match for the culturally sophisticated Italians and their potential allies in the West. This polemical shift was accompanied by a geographical pivot, as Istanbul replaced Jerusalem as the target of European military intervention. Humanist authors

⁸ Hankins, “Renaissance Crusaders,” 112.

⁹ The articulation of a contest between Western civilization and Eastern barbarism has been treated by a number of scholarly works. James Hankins shows 15th century Italian humanist production on the Ottomans to have been vital to the shift to a more secular identity in the development of a modern idea of Europe, as theorized by Denys Hay and many others (“Renaissance Crusaders,” 145-46). Nancy Bisaha agrees and goes further, viewing the wholesale disparagement of Islamic culture in the 15th century as precursor and foundation for the later practice of Orientalism as illuminated by Edward Said. Margaret Meserve is more circumspect, finding less exceptionalism and rupture in 15th century writings, and more continuity with (and reliance on) Medieval texts in the later writings of humanist authors. See Nancy Bisaha, “New Barbarian or Worthy Adversary” in David Blanks & Michael Frassetto, eds., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Kate Fleet, “Italian Perceptions of the Turks in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 5/2 (1995), 159-172; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

excavated the term ‘barbarian’ from its classical context (describing Germans) and re-deployed it against a newly imposing rival in the Mediterranean (describing Turks).

Despite the ubiquity of humanist writings on anti-Ottoman themes in the fifteenth century, the Ottoman and Italian worlds were deeply tied, through geography and by innumerable commercial and political connections. Merchants, spies, diplomats, and even humanists from Italian states were not strangers to the Ottoman court and the empire’s busy entrepôts. At a time when overland travel across the newly unified Balkan Peninsula was becoming a viable alternative to the sea route, the Republic of Florence was making an attempt to expand its presence in the Levantine turf long dominated by Genoa and Venice. In fact, “no sooner had the Ottoman Turks seized Constantinople than Florentines quickly sought to take advantage of the market opportunities that opened up in the capital of this new powerful and rich state.”¹⁰ Florentine efforts were encouraged by the policies of Mehmed II, the same emperor whose supposedly monstrous behavior was extensively detailed in fifteenth-century crusade literature. As Halil İnalcık explains, Mehmed was well aware of rivalries between Italian states, and actively sought to exploit them: “The Conqueror tried to free his empire from the economic dependence on the Venetians by encouraging Florence and Dubrovnik, rivals of Venice, in their commerce with the Ottoman dominations. In 1469 he granted new trade privileges to Florence...”¹¹ The favorable conditions of trade offered by the Ottomans to

¹⁰ Richard Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009), 183.

¹¹ Halil İnalcık, “An Outline of Ottoman-Venetian Relations,” in Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, Agostino Pertusi, eds., *Venezia Centro di Mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente* (Florence: Olschki, 1977). The year is not incidental. The Ottomans and Venetians were at war from 1463-79.

Florence were matched by the privileged terms given to Florentine merchants by Ancona, on the Italian side of the Adriatic, drawing merchants across the Apennines to the Adriatic coast, rather than utilizing the closer western ports of Pisa and Livorno.¹²

This chapter details the fifteenth-century travelers who give us the first glimpses into the functioning of the Ragusa Road for international travel in the Ottoman period. The first traces of this shift begin during the reign of Mehmed II and continue into the sixteenth century under his son and successor, Bayezid II. The prevalence of Florentines at this stage is striking, but not entirely surprising given the close political relationship between Mehmed II and Lorenzo de' Medici at the time. Beginning with a spy and concluding with a pair of bumbling humanist book-hunters, fifteenth-century Florentines were the early adaptors of the new, effective axis of mobility linking the Bosphorus to the Italian Peninsula. Ultimately, Florence's attempts to circumvent Venice's position were unsuccessful. The end of Ottoman-Venetian war of 1463-1479 and Florence's development of the port of Livorno on the Tyrrhenian Sea over the course of the sixteenth century reduced the urgency of Florentine-Ragusan-Ottoman communications. Counter-intuitively, Venice, the great Italian maritime power, would expand its overland travel operations in the Ottoman Balkans in the sixteenth century.

¹² Ancona “specifically targeted Florentine merchants by offering them lower customs charges and permitting them to invest directly in maritime trade” Goldthwaite, *The Economy*, 189. On the role of Ancona between Ragusa and the Italian Peninsula, see Peter Earle, “The Commercial Development of Ancona, 1479-1551,” *The Economic History Review, New Series* 22/1 (1969), 28-44.

Benedetto Dei, Florentine Spy

Around the time of the signing of Florence's first commercial agreement with the Porte in 1461, a remarkable shape-shifting character called Benedetto Dei arrived in the international merchant community of Pera, across the Golden Horn from Istanbul.¹³ "[U]npleasant as a man, very impassioned about the writing and enthusiastic about the events of his Florentine homeland,"¹⁴ Dei enthusiastically supported Florence's interests by collecting sensitive information while somehow maintaining his cover as a merchant working in the service of the Venetian alum merchant Girolamo Michiel. In Dei's chronicle, he displays a (somewhat-suspect) knowledge of politics and geography, as well as his familiarity with the leading men of his day.¹⁵ Dei's writing also reveals a passionate hatred of Venice, notwithstanding his ongoing employment to a Venetian merchant. Included in *La Cronica* is a taunting letter to the 'Viniziani' containing no less than three mentions of Venetians being fed to an elephant in front of the "Gran Turco."¹⁶ Likely more worrisome from the Venetian perspective was his claim to have

¹³ Benedetto Dei, *La Cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, ed. Roberto Barducci (Firenze: Papafava, 1985); Paolo Orvieto, "Un esperto orientalista del '400: Benedetto Dei," *Rinascimento* 9 (1969); "Benedetto Dei," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (accessible online via Treccani.it).

¹⁴ "antipatico come uomo, molto appassionato all scrivere e entusiasmato dalle vicende della sua patria Fiorentina" Franz Babinger, "Lorenzo de' Medici e la Corte Ottomana," *Archivio Storico Italiano* (1963), 310.

¹⁵ "Somma in tutto Benedetto Dei è stato e in Asia e in Africha e in Uropia, per tutte le città chonte e dette, e sso benissimo l'entrata di ciaschuna signoria, e sso chi ghovernna, e sso la traversia e la nimicizia di ciascheduno e a cche modo si può ofendere e in che modo si può sochorere, e sia qual vuole, e sso ogni merchantia sottile e di pregio e di valuta là ov'elle naschono e chi nn'è signiore." Dei, *Cronica*, 125.

¹⁶ Dei, *Cronica*, 129-137.

advised the sultan on a way to gain the advantage over the Serenissima in the accumulation of sensitive information. He reports that certain unnamed Florentines – presumably himself – had coached the Ottomans in a practice of sending spies to critical locations where sensitive Venetian correspondence headed for merchants in Alexandria, Beirut, and Constantinople could be intercepted and read. The only location he mentions by name for such intelligence gathering is “la via di Raugia.”¹⁷

Under the entry for 1461, as relations between Venice and the Ottomans deteriorated, Benedetto Dei revels in Florence’s strong position vis-a-vis Venice and Genoa, boasting that no other state enjoyed such benevolence and received such good credit from the sultan as did the “nazione fiorentina.”¹⁸ Contradicting descriptions of the bloodthirsty Gran Turco prevalent in crusade literature, the Florentine spy stresses the magnanimity of the sultan, as well as his interest in gathering information about the Italian Peninsula. At one stage he describes the sultan boarding a Florentine commercial vessel in port in Constantinople in order to learn the facts about “Italia” from the merchants aboard.¹⁹ Dei again mentions the “via di Raugia”

¹⁷ “The Ottomans had sent their spies to all the places that the Florentines has showed them...” (“avea mandato gli spioni in tutti que’ luoghi che ‘Fiorentini gl’aveano insegnato e detto, di modo ched egli venne alle mani per la via di Raugia lettere ch’andavano in Alesandria e a Baruti e in Ghostantinopoli, ischritte da Vinegia ai merchanti loro.”) Dei, *Cronica*, 160

¹⁸ “Laonde i gienovesi e i viniziani, li qual’erono in Pera e per la Romania, n’ebbono ischoppio e tremore, visto che’l turcho portava tanto amore e tanta benivolenza e tanto chredito a la nazione fiorentina.” Dei, *Cronica*, 161.

¹⁹ Dei, *Cronica*, 160.

explicitly as an essential link for the secure exchange of time-sensitive information, this time relating to events in 1464.²⁰

Unfortunately, no record of Benedetto Dei's personal travel routes has survived. His chronicle, however, is an important record of the value placed on Ragusa as a node of intelligence gathering, a reflection of its centrality in the Adriatic Sea and its opposition to Venice. Despite its flights of hyperbole, Dei's text confirms that an effective Ottoman-Florentine working relationship was firmly in place by the early 1460s, and that both parties were well aware of the uses of Ragusa, especially as a mediator of strategic information. Moreover, his depiction of Sultan Mehmed II as an astute observer of the factions and alliances of Italian states shows a sovereign who understood how to leverage his relationships with useful western partners by multiple means (diplomatic, economic, and the sharing of intelligence) to weaken a common enemy. Thus, when a bloody attempted coup nearly toppled the ruling establishment in Florence, the Istanbul-Ragusa-Florence axis was already well established and prepared to deal with the consequences.

On the 26th of April, 1478, Lorenzo de' Medici and his brother Giuliano were assaulted during high mass at Florence's Duomo. Giuliano de' Medici died, having been stabbed some 19 times, but Leonardo managed to escape with only minor injuries. The Pazzi Conspiracy, as it came to be called, was a crisis from which the Medici were able to survive with an enhanced – if

²⁰ The Sultan heard from his spies (who were sent from a Florentine by way of Ragusa) about Venetian plans to send 43 galleys to the port of Mytiline (on the island of Lesbos), which had been conquered by the Ottomans in 1462: “E senti [Sultan Mehmed II] anchora per via di Raugia, dai suoi ispioni mandati da uno fiorentino, chome la signoria di Vinegia avea meso a ordine 43 ghalee di già uscite fuori a chanpo, per andare all'asedio di Metelino chol chapitano Orsatto Giustiniani gentilomo.” Dei, *Cronica*: 162

still technically indirect – hold on Florentine politics.²¹ During the period of reprisals that followed, Bernardo Bandino dei Baroncelli, who was one of the leading conspirators, eluded the enraged populace and eventually made his way as far as Istanbul. Bernardo Bandino had powerful connections in the Florentine merchant community in Pera, including the Florentine consul Carlo Baroncelli. Nevertheless, Bandino's presence was eventually made known to Sultan Mehmed II, who was favorably inclined toward Lorenzo il Magnifico.²² In the middle of June, 1479, a resident of Pera notified the commune of Florence that Bandino had been arrested by the Ottomans, and that he should be collected and repatriated without delay. The Florentines responded with great speed. On the third of July Antonio di Bernardo de' Medici was recalled to Florence where, on 11th of the same month, he received detailed instructions: he was to proceed directly to Constantinople, where he was to take possession of the conspirator Bernardo Bandini and return him to Florence.²³

Antonio de' Medici left Florence on July 14th 1479, and his journey can be partially reconstructed from the *Protocolli*, a ledger of the correspondence sent by Lorenzo de' Medici and his secretaries. Although the letters themselves have not survived, their destinations and intended recipients are listed. Antonio traveled first northeast to Faenza, then on to the Adriatic port cities of Rimini and Pesaro. From here he crossed the Adriatic, making his way to

²¹ Angelo Poliziano, *Della Congiura dei Pazzi*, Alessandro Perosa, ed. (Padova: Antenore, 1958).

²² Babinger, "Lorenzo," 316.

²³ Marcello Del Piazzo, *Protocolli del carteggio di Lorenzo il Magnifico per gli anni 1473-74, 1477-92* (Florence: Olschki, 1956), 93.

Ragusa where he continued “per terra” to reach Istanbul.²⁴ Carrying out one of the more sensitive diplomatic missions of the fifteenth century, Antonio selected (or was instructed) to travel overland by the Ragusa Road, even though the region of Herzegovina through which the road passed was still nominally independent.²⁵ More than a channel of communication and information exchange, the mission of Antonio de’ Medici confirms the Ragusa Road had become a viable route for overland travel between Italy and the Ottoman capital.

It is not known how Antonio de’ Medici and the disgraced Bernardo Bandini dei Baroncelli returned to Florence. It is known that they arrived in Florence on Christmas Eve, 1479 after stopping in Venice on the seventh of December, suggesting a marine return voyage.²⁶ Antonio was able to complete his round-trip mission in five and a half months, despite traveling overland across the Balkans at an early stage in the Ragusa Road’s development, and despite returning to Florence in winter. From this point onward, the Ragusa Road would continue to expand its role an important channel for diplomatic missions of all types between the Arno and the Bosphorus.²⁷

²⁴ Del Piazzo, *Protocolli*, 93-94; Babinger, “Lorenzo,” 317.

²⁵ Bosnia, on the north side of the Ragusa Road, was conquered by the Ottomans in 1463. Vladislav, son of Hersek/Herzog Stefan (Stjepan Vukčić), and ruler of Herzegovina, was not defeated by the Ottomans until 1482. Vladislav’s younger brother was a convert to Islam who eventually become the five-time Grand Vizier Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha. See Heath Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: An Ottoman Statesman’s Career & Pious Endowments* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Press, 2011)

²⁶ Poliziano, *Della Congiura*, 53.

²⁷ Lorenzo de’ Medici was not present in Florence when Bernardo Bandini was hanged from a window of the Bargello (dressed “alla turchescha,” all in blue) on the 29th of December. But Leonardo da Vinci was, and his study of the executed conspirator survives at the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne, France.

Cem Sultan

The continuing importance of the Istanbul-Ragusa-Florence channel of diplomacy can be seen in another major political crisis, this time one afflicting the House of Osman. When Mehmed II died, on May 3, 1481, his two surviving sons were prepared to act quickly. Both raced towards Istanbul to stake their claim to the throne, Bayezid coming from Amasya and Cem from Konya, where they had served as provincial governors. Prince Bayezid, who enjoyed powerful support from the janissary corps and high officials, won the race, and was installed as Sultan Bayezid II, whose tenure would last some 31 years. His brother Cem began a peripatetic life of exile that would last until his death on the road between Rome and Naples in 1495.

Bayezid II's rule remained unsettled as long as his brother was alive. The sultan needed reliable information about his brother's location and physical state, both to ensure his own political security, and to make clear that the 45,000 ducats he paid yearly for his brother's upkeep was not being wasted.²⁸ The Cem affair brings to light an extensive network of spies and agents who crisscrossed the land and sea routes of the Mediterranean in order to keep tabs on the fugitive Prince.²⁹

²⁸ Halil İnalcık, "Djem," *EI2*

²⁹ There is a sizeable bibliography on the Cem affair. See Louis Thausne, *Djem-Sultan* (Paris: Leroux, 1892); I. H. Ertalyan, *Sultan Cem* (Istanbul, 1951); Nicolas Vatin, *Sultan Djem: un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XVe siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines* (Ankara, Société Turque d'Histoire, 1997); John Freely, *Jem Sultan: the adventures of a captive Turkish prince in Renaissance Europe* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).

At least five missions involving Ottoman agents sent to Western Europe to gather information on Prince Cem have been documented, and many more are hinted at from documents and letters in the Topkapı Palace Archives.³⁰ Florence – still under the control of Lorenzo il Magnifico – was one of many Italian states that actively assisted Ottoman agents in the west: sharing information, smoothing diplomatic pathways, and providing practical support with guides and translators. Venice’s ambivalent position between its Christian duty to support anti-Ottoman crusade and the commercial necessities of its commercial dependence on the eastern Mediterranean earned the Republic the title “Whore of the Turk.”³¹ Under the policies of il Magnifico, Florence inhabited a similarly murky area. “Thanks to Lorenzo's fame as a philoturk, Florence further enhanced its existing reputation for greed and impiety.”³² Florentine merchant/agents stationed in Pera as (such as Benedetto Dei) directly assisted the Ottomans. Other Florentines not only shared sensitive information but also accompanied Ottoman agents on their missions in Europe, bringing letters and reports back to Istanbul, often via Ragusa.

³⁰ I. H. Uzunçarşılı, "Cem Sultana dair beş orijinal vesika," *Belleten* 24 (1960): 457-475; V.L. Ménage, “The Mission of an Ottoman Secret Agent in France in 1486” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 3/4 (1965), 112-132; Nicolas Vatin, “Itinéraires d’agents de la Porte en Italie (1433-1495),” *Turcica* XIX (1987), 29-49.

³¹ Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: a maritime history of the Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 61.

³² James Hankins, “Renaissance Crusaders,” 126. As with contemporary Italian States, Florence’s direct assistance to the Ottomans was at variance to its nominal support for anti-Ottoman crusade. Lorenzo de’ Medici’s correspondence underlies this awkward posture: “June 14, 1477: “Al papa. Risposta, per la contributione contra il Turco.” *Protocolli*, 13. With the capture of Prince Cem, Christendom acquired a key element around which to potentially roll back the advances of a now divided Ottoman empire. Instead, intra-European rivalries prevented any coordinated action. Benedetto Dei’s description of Mehmed II’s understanding of a divided and ineffective Europe was not incorrect.

Go-Betweens

One figure who stands out in this web of activity related to Cem Sultan is the Florentine merchant Paolo (or Pagolo, or Pagholo) da Colle, recipient of multiple letters documented in the *Protocolli*, such as this notice from June 15, 1481 (shortly after the death of Mehmed II): “To Paolo da Colle, in the Levant; thanking him for the reports and encouraging him to continue to send notices related to the new lord [Sultan Bayezid II].”³³ During the period of Cem’s European captivity, da Colle (who was active in Pera for some fourteen years) was well-positioned to offer assistance to the new Ottoman sultan, as the Florentine Republic worked to continue the close relationship enjoyed with his father.³⁴ Da Colle was comfortable writing directly to Lorenzo de’ Medici with messages from the Ottoman sultan, as he did in a letter that survives from March 31, 1483. Accompanying an Ottoman agent (identified by Babinger and Vatin as Ismail) from Istanbul to Savoy (via Florence), da Colle took time at Pesaro to update Lorenzo of his movements, and to articulate the sultan’s high esteem for the Medici prince.³⁵ Da Colle then sent another Florentine, the “aportatore (messenger) Girolamo Spinegli” ahead to Florence to communicate his intention to arrive in the city soon with the “uomo del Gran

³³ June 15, 1481. “A Paolo da Colle, in Levante; ringratiando d’avisi, et confortandolo a seguire dando notitia particolare delle [cose] di là e del signore nuovo, etc.” *Protocolli*, 150.

³⁴ Strangely, Paolo da Colle is never mentioned in *La Cronica* of Benedetto Dei although both men lived and worked in similar functions in Pera.

³⁵ Babinger, “Lorenzo,” 329. Vatin “Itinéraires,” 30. The Turkish emissary Ismail was presented “avec honneur” at the Florentine Senate on April 4, 1483.

Turcho.³⁶ In to the letter, da Colle communicates his intention to lodge his Ottoman charge at the home of his (Paolo's) brother in Florence.

Agents, go-betweens, and translators were the invisible motors of effective cross-cultural communication. Men like Benedetto Dei, Paolo da Colle and Girolamo Spinelli are a visible fraction of the array of figures behind every successful journey between the Italian Peninsula and the Ottoman centers of power. "Cultural amphibians," they inhabited a fluid stratum of society where clear conceptions of identity are often difficult to maintain.³⁷ Natalie Rothman has explored the history of what she terms "trans-imperial subjects" in the early modern Mediterranean, particularly those of Venice and its overland empire. Commercial brokers are the subject of close analysis in her work, which notes their effectiveness in linking a broad spectrum of otherwise discrete elements: "...brokers operated at the interface between the government and foreigners, between the mercantile and artisanal sectors of Venetian society, between state institutions and the market, and between rich and poor."³⁸ Rothman's attention is largely confined to cosmopolitan brokers living in the city of Venice. Yet her

³⁶ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Archivio Mediceo avanti il principato, filza XXXII, n. 118. Facsimile and edited version of the letter published in Babinger, "Lorenzo," Table II and page 328. No information of their route is contained in the letter, except a mention of the "Dardanegli" and an unspecified number of days "in mare" suggesting the sea route from Istanbul).

³⁷ On go-betweens, see Peter Sahlin, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). See also Vesna Miović-Perić "Dragomans of the Dubrovnik Republic: Their Training and Career" *Dubrovnik Annals* 5 (2002): 81-94 and Eric Dursteler. "Identity and Coexistence in the Eastern Mediterranean, ca. 1600." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 18 (1998): 113-130. See also L. P. Hartley's excellent novel *The Go-Between* (1953) for the conflicted origins of this useful term.

³⁸ Natalie Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul: Trans-Imperial Subjects and Cultural Mediation in the Early Modern Mediterranean," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2006): 42 and her subsequent book *Brokering Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

formulation holds for the mobile agents who are encountered in Italian travelogues. They were vital intermediaries able to smooth the transitions of international voyagers in countless ways.

During the years of heightened diplomatic activity during Cem's captivity, Avlona (Vlorë, Albania), an Ottoman sancak since 1466 located to the south of Ragusa, was the key transfer point to the Adriatic for all the documented Ottoman missions to Western Europe.³⁹ Yet it comes as no surprise that Ragusa was also involved as an important communication and travel channel between Florence and Istanbul.⁴⁰ Following longstanding practice, critical messages were sent along multiple routes (both by land and by sea) to ensure delivery. The overland route from Ragusa is specified by name in multiple instances documented in the *Protocolli*. Dubrovnik, at a confluence of land and sea routes radiating in all directions, enjoyed frequent and relatively secure maritime communications with Italian cities on the opposite shore of the Adriatic, and was used even by those travelers who did not travel overland by the Ragusa Road. For example, Ismail – who reached the Adriatic at Avlona – booked passage to Italy for his party on a ship from Ragusa to Ancona on the basis of a letter from the sultan.⁴¹

Paolo da Colle's courier Girolamo Spinelli also seems to have had some experience on the Ragusa Road. A letter sent from Lorenzo to Ragusa on August 25, 1483 is recorded thus: "To

³⁹ "Avlona – to which they [Ottoman agents] travel overland, had long been in Ottoman hands and was at this period the base for all Ottoman enterprises – warlike, diplomatic and secret – in Italy." Ménage, "Report," 119; Vatin, "Itinéraires," -41.

⁴⁰ For example, the letter of June 28, 1483: "Alla signoria di Ragugia, che mandino le sopradecte lettere al Gran Turco" *Protocolli*, 249.

⁴¹ Vatin, "Itinéraires," 30.

the Signoria of Ragusa, for Girolamo Spinelli, who will go to Turkey.”⁴² The extent of Spinelli’s involvement with the Ottoman mission of 1483 remains unclear. Did he travel with da Colle and Ismail all the way from Istanbul, or did he simply join them in Pesaro, or elsewhere? It is tempting to assume that Spinelli was involved in the entirety of the Ottoman agent’s mission, and that his return to “Turchia” later in the year was motivated by a desire to communicate up-to-date information about Cem’s situation in France with a reliable, informed source. In any case, the evident wisdom of sending important correspondence by multiple routes is underscored by the fact that the Ottoman emissary Ismail (who had been assisted in Italy by da Colle) was captured by the Knights of St. John and ended up spending four years incarcerated on the island of Rhodes.⁴³ Thanks to Bayezid’s relationship with Lorenzo and the network of mobile Florentine merchant/spies, the Porte would still have learned the details of Ismail’s mission, courtesy of Girolamo Spinelli traveling overland. The fact that the Ragusan leadership was alerted to his mission by Lorenzo’s letter suggests that Girolamo’s (presumably successful) return to Istanbul involved the overland route from Dubrovnik. Even in these early days of long-distance travel in the Ottoman Balkans, the slower overland route was at times preferred to the unpredictable sea, even for urgent missions.⁴⁴

⁴² August 25, 1483: “Alla signoria di Raugia, per Girolamo Spinelli che va in Turchia.” *Protocolli*, 255. As Babinger has written, it can be deduced from the text that this letter and its bearer also took the “lunga strada di Ragusa”. Babinger, “Lorenzo,” 330.

⁴³ Babinger, “Lorenzo,” 194.

⁴⁴ “Per la spedizione si sceglieva la strada per terra dei Balcani, probabilmente molto più sicura di quella marittima...” Babinger, “Lorenzo,” 337-338. In order to avoid Venice’s dominance at sea, Ottoman travel to Italy tended to be “le moins maritime possible, tout en quittant le plus tard possible le territoire ottoman.” Vatin “Itinéraires,” 34-35.

The experiences of Florentines like Benedetto Dei, Antonio de' Medici, Paolo da Colle, and Girolamo Spinelli show the high level of cooperation between Florence and the Ottoman Empire in the intertwined worlds of commerce, politics, and espionage. Renaissance humanism, a topic more readily associated with quattrocento Florence than the empire of the gazis, also motivated international travel between Tuscany and the Ottoman lands, and here again Ragusa played an important intermediary role. As the Ottomans expanded across the lands of Byzantium, many Greek scholars had elected to relocate to the cities of the Italian Peninsula, where classical learning was in demand and erudite speakers of Greek were a prized commodity. Some, embracing Catholicism, simply remained in Italy after their participation at the councils at Ferrara and Florence (1438, 1439-1445). Others made their way to Italy after the Ottoman conquest of cultural centers like Constantinople (1453), Trebizond (1461), and Negroponte (1470).

Janus Lascaris

Janus Lascaris, born in Constantinople around 1445, was one of these peripatetic and influential Greeks.⁴⁵ He was still quite young when he arrived in Venice, where he was taken under the patronage of Cardinal Bessarion, himself an émigré from Byzantium. Lascaris studied at the University of Padua and, following Bessarion's death in 1472, made his way to Florence

⁴⁵ On Janus Lascaris see Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West: 1400-1520* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995); Börje Knös, *Un Ambassadeur de l'Hellénisme, Janus Lascaris* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1945).

where he gave lectures at Lorenzo's Academy. Italian courts in the fifteenth century were engaged in a heated rivalry for, among other things, classical manuscripts. Humanist scholars like Poggio Bracciolini had made explosive discoveries in monastic libraries, primarily those located in Germany, Switzerland, and France. Manuscripts, of course, were not confined to the north, but could also be found in the east, in private collections and in the libraries of Orthodox monasteries in Ottoman Rumelia. In the early 1490s, Janus Lascaris went on two extensive journeys in the eastern Mediterranean on behalf of his Florentine patron Lorenzo de' Medici. He was instructed to observe the Ottoman political and military situation, but above all, his mission was to collect as many rare manuscripts as possible. In a letter he later sent to Charles V, Lascaris describes his two voyages:

Sent to the Prince of the Turks with the title of Ambassador for an honest and not unprofitable undertaking, I went there twice with letters of accreditation and lived two years in Turkey, having gone and returned by various routes, some by sea, others by land.⁴⁶

Taking different routes, Lascaris covered a great deal of territory in the Ottoman and Venetian lands, including very productive stops in Istanbul, Salonika, the monasteries of Mt. Athos, and Crete. Unfortunately, no comprehensive itinerary of Lascaris' route survives, other than his mention of taking both land and sea routes. One certainty is that the Florentine merchant community in Pera and the Ottoman Sultan himself were both kept apprised of the

⁴⁶ “enuoyé vers le Prince des Turcs en tiltre d’Embassadeur pour couse honeste et icelle non peu prouffitable. . . y allé deux fois euec lettres de creance et ayant demeuré deus ans en Turquie, estant allé et reuenu par diuers chemins, telle fois par mer, autre par terre.” The letter from Lascaris to Charles V was published by Belle-Forest in *Harangue de seigneur Iean Lascaris Constantinopolitain, au nom du Pape Clement 7 à l’Empereur Charles le Quint pour la concorde de la Chrestienté et la guerre contre le Turc* (Paris, 1573). Quoted in Knös, *Janus Lascaris*, 33.

importance of his movements through letters sent from secretaries of Lorenzo de' Medici. A letter sent June 25, 1490 was sent in support of his acquisitional mission: "to the sultan, to the consul of Pera, to Master Nicolò da Siena."⁴⁷ In April of the following year, more messages were sent to the same recipients for the same purpose.⁴⁸ The Greek humanist himself carried three letters: one for Bayezid II, one for the aforementioned Nicolò da Siena, and one for the Florentine consul at Pera.⁴⁹ Although it is impossible to give a precise number, it has been estimated that Lascaris was able to bring back approximately 200 manuscripts from Ottoman lands to enhance Lorenzo's library in Florence.⁵⁰

Bernardo and Bonsignore

It is not known if Lascaris traveled the Ragusa road, but not long after his successful antiquarian missions, two well-connected Florentine ecclesiastics set off on a journey through the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean that combined book-hunting and pilgrimage. Bernardo Michelozzi, son of the famous sculptor and architect Michelozzo Michelozzi di Bartolomeo, and his companion Bonsignore Bonsignori were both well trained in the *studia humanitatis* and eager to make discoveries of their own in the Levant. In July of 1497 these two

⁴⁷ "Al turco, al consolo di Pera, a maestro Nicolò da Siena per lo spaccio di messer Lascari" *Protocolli*, 416.

⁴⁸ *Protocolli*, 444.

⁴⁹ Knös, *Un Ambassadeur*, 45.

⁵⁰ Knös, *Un Ambassadeur*, 51.

set off with a small party for a 16-month trip that would take them from Florence to Pesaro to Ragusa, from which they would cross the Balkan Peninsula to Constantinople. From the Ottoman capital they continued on to Bursa, then south along the eastern Aegean coast of Anatolia, crossing to Rhodes and Cyprus and, finally, Jerusalem. Thanks to numerous surviving letters (written primarily by Bonsignori) preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, we can piece together their journey, representing the first detailed and complete account of the Ragusa Road in the Ottoman era.⁵¹

Niccolò Michelozzi, brother to Bernardo and secretary to Lorenzo de' Medici, was the primary recipient of the travelers' letters. Based on internal evidence it seems that Niccolò had himself previously made the journey to Constantinople, about which no details seem to exist.⁵² The correspondence relates colorful and deeply personal first impressions of the journey, frequently filled with a palpable sense of wonder, especially in the bustling Ottoman cities. Incidental anecdotes about food, wine, lodging, and other practical preoccupations of life on the road enliven the chronological structure, breaking up the rhythm of the stage-to-stage reports. Obliquely, Bonsignori and Bernardo refer to the fears of disease and capture and even death that they carried – perhaps invisibly, but not weightlessly – along with their physical

⁵¹ Eve Borsook, "The Travels of Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori in the Levant," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973), 145-197. The letters are held at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze: MSS Ginori-Conti 29, 99 (Bonsignori) and MSS Ginori-Conti 29, 55 (Bernardo). Bonsignori's memoir "Viaggio in Gierusalenme per via di Constantinopoli" (1497) is also at the BNCF: MSS Magl. XIII, 93. I will use Bernardo's first name to avoid confusion with the other Michelozzis.

⁵² Borsook, "Travels," 145.

baggage. The letters and the memoir also reveal the extent of their reliance on go-betweens from the Florentine mercantile-cum-diplomatic network arrayed across Ottoman territory.

Unlike the Florentine figures described in this chapter, Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori were neither merchants nor diplomatic agents sent to deal with (or profit from) a political crisis. They were not sent on a mission by Lorenzo de' Medici or any other patron. Bernardo apparently conceived of the trip and largely paid the bills.⁵³ His rationale for including Bonsignori is unclear but, based on the latter's lively writing style, he seems to have been an inspired travel companion. Lascaris' recent and successful book-buying excursions may have been a strong impetus for the adventure, as would the memory of other Italian humanist travelers in the east, such as Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d'Ancona.⁵⁴ In his own words, Bonsignori clarifies that book-buying was to be the prime objective, while the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and visits to the sights of antiquity were to be attempted only if time allowed:

...potete hac causa iter nostrum ad infedales pretextere, che in Turchia andiamo per cercar libri Greci et maxime ecclesiastici. Nec mendacium sic dices, dipoi ubi tempus appetit Hierosolyma invisendi [causa crossed out] illuc nos conferemus loca ea visendi gratia quae Domini Nostris vestigio calcata sint...⁵⁵

⁵³ "...la spesa scrivete a mio conto et di tutto vi satisfarò" BNCF, MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 45. Borsook, "Travels," 148.

⁵⁴ On Buondelmonti, see Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, esp. 135-138 (For Ciriaco see pages 138-140). See also Roberto Weiss "Un umanista antiquario—Cristoforo Buondelmonti" *Lettere Italiane*, XVI (1964); Bernard Ashmole, "Cyriac of Ancona," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XLV (1959); and Ciriaco d'Ancona *Later Travels*, trans. and ed. Edward Bodnar & Clive Foss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁵⁵ BNCF, MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, cc. 6-7. Borsook "Travels," 148 and Appendix, doc. 5.

In the now familiar Florentine fashion, Bernardo and Bonsignori crossed the Apennines to the Adriatic coast, heading for Pesaro, where they were to take a ship across the Adriatic to Dalmatia. Bonsignori's letters to Niccolò Michelozzi give a detailed sense of the difficulties faced by the many travelers who made their way between the Arno and the Adriatic in this time period. The challenges of a remote alpine environment and a suspicious local population were not only found in the Dinaric Alps of the Balkan Peninsula, but in fact began only a few days outside their native city. The Apennines were remote and wild enough that the party had trouble finding adequate fodder for their horses. Bonsignori and a young attendant named "Ghazetto" managed to separate themselves from the main party, getting temporarily lost in the woods.⁵⁶ Perhaps worst of all, according to the epicurean Bonsignori, two "fiaschi di vino" being carried in their baggage were smashed when one of the packhorses tripped and fell. Bonsignori may be joking when he describes this loss as greater than the loss of blood itself, "tanto era prezioso." But then again, these men took their food and drink quite seriously.⁵⁷ One evening it was so difficult to find lodging that the group spent the night in a church, pack animals and all.⁵⁸ Bonsignori writes that he is confident that God would forgive their offence, which arose only out of necessity.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ BNCF MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 2. Borsook "Travels," appendix, doc 1.

⁵⁷ BNCF MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 2. Borsook "Travels," appendix, doc 1.

⁵⁸ Borsook, "Travels," 152.

⁵⁹ "Non ho dubbio Iddio alla necessità nostra harà perdonato." BNCF MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 2. Borsook, "Travels," appendix, doc 1.

As they cleared the Apennines and reached the cities of the northern marches, a new, more serious problem was encountered: plague. City walls were being kept tightly closed to strangers out of fear of contagion. Upon reaching the coast at Pesaro, their intended destination, their ample funds and elite connections in Florence were insufficient to gain them access to the city. In fact, they were not even permitted to stay directly *outside* the city walls. The party eventually retreated to Rimini where they spent a week trying to rectify the situation. The arrival, at this moment, of a certain Giovanni Maringhi from Pera must have seemed like a godsend. Maringhi, nephew of Bernardo and Niccolò Michelozzi, was based in the Ottoman capital, where he worked for several Florentine family firms including the Michelozzi and the Medici.⁶⁰ Like Paolo da Colle, Maringhi was a masterful go-between who possessed a set of linguistic and pragmatic tools that made him a valuable member of the party, which he eventually accompanied to Istanbul and beyond. Bonsignori's letters repeatedly mention Maringhi by name, highlighting his efforts and effectiveness, information that would have been appreciated by the recipient, Niccolò Michelozzi back in Florence.

Maringhi went ahead to Pesaro to smooth the way for the travelers, just as he would do later at Ragusa, Edirne, Pera and Bursa. "Before boarding their Ragusan caravelle at dusk on the first of September, Bernardo wrote cheerfully of the perfect state of wind, sea and stars; all was ready and he hoped to reach 'Silvanium' safely."⁶¹ Roughly a month after leaving Florence,

⁶⁰ On Giovanni Maringhi, see Astorri "Il 'Libro delle Senserie' di Girolamo di Agostino Maringhi," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 146/3 (1988), 389-408; Gertrude Richards, *Florentine Merchants in the Age of the Medici* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).

⁶¹ Borsook, "Travels," 154.

Bernardo and Bonsignori were finally ready to make their departure to the Levant. The sea, however, lived up to its well-founded reputation for unpredictability. Rather than the expected four-day crossing, their ship was grounded in the middle of the Adriatic by six days of dead calm, followed by a storm with howling winds that blew them off course.⁶² In the end, it took eleven days to reach Ragusa, where they were met by a grand entrance complete with cannon salute. The warm welcome was at least partly the result of Maringhi's efforts, helped by a contact from Bernardo and Bonsignori's circle of humanist ecclesiastics back home.⁶³

In Ragusa the Florentine travel party was able to prepare all the necessities for their overland journey. In a week they put together a team that included 114 pack animals. Meanwhile, thanks to Ragusa's excellent communications network, important documents arrived from Niccolò in Florence, having been sent via Rimini.⁶⁴ Thus prepared, the Florentines set off on another mountainous crossing, which Bonsignori describes in some detail in a letter sent to Niccolò from 'Dirimiglia' (Kosovska Mitrovica, in Kosovo, between Novi Pazar, Serbia and Pristina, Kosovo). Detailing six days spent in the mountains, the letter reports Bonsignori's

⁶² Bonsignori to Niccolò, 16 September 1497. MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99 c. 4. Borsook, "Travels," appendix, doc. 2.

⁶³ Maringhi, as usual, went ahead into the city. He was met there by Giorgio Benigno, a Bosnian cleric who had taught theology at the Florentine studio. Giorgio had retired to Ragusa not long before the arrival of Bonsignori and Bernardo who had sent him letters prior to their Adriatic crossing. Bonsignori describes the actions leading to their entrance thus: "Andò Giovanni [Maringhi] sopra una barcha a Raugia et con difficultà entrò, pure per la forza havea facta messer Giorgio Benigno che fu regente di Santa Croce, al quale messer Bernardo da Pesero havea scripto, et per vigore d'una fede levamo da Pesero del nostro essere stati là uno mese, gli fu concesso l'entrata per lui et per noi." Bonsignori to Niccolò, 16 September 1497. MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99 c. 4. Borsook, "Travels," appendix, doc. 2.

⁶⁴ Borsook, "Travels," 156.

delight with the availability of meat, concern about the inconsistent supply of wine, and contempt for the character of the local inhabitants whom he describes as “brutes without religion.”⁶⁵

The Florentines make few mentions of Ottoman travel architecture and infrastructure, perhaps understandably given this early stage in the route’s development. Only in the eastern half of the Balkan Peninsula, in the cities of Plovdiv (Ottoman Filibe), Edirne and, above all, Istanbul, would they encounter and describe marvelous lead-covered mosques and other monumental buildings, comparing them always to familiar landmarks back home. Travel in the mountainous western Balkans prior to the Ottoman building boom of the sixteenth century was rugged and infrastructure was rudimentary. In the letters from this section there are no mentions of great caravanserais, mosques or bridges. In fact, it appears the privileged members of the party relied primarily on a tent that they carried with their baggage for shelter. In a Chaplin-esque moment, Bonsignori and Bernardo took refuge from a storm in the “tenda,” while Maringhi and Ghazzeto were forced to sleep outside under the rain. The perks of the go-between only went so far. The author took care to assure Niccolò that his brother was well and not bothered by sleeping on the ground. In fact, he writes, Bernardo was “fatter than ever.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ “Nelle montagne siamo stati giorni sei, che dua habiamo beuto aqua per non havere trovato onde havere vino, et messer Bernardo dua sere se ne andò a llecto senza cena per non bere aqua. Carne assai habiamo trovata: uno castrone per cinque aspri, pippioni [pigeons] per 2 aspri, 15 uova per uno aspro, e manchatoci el pane che togliamo a Raugia, habiamo mangiato stiaciate non lièvite, cotto sotto la brace, che così usano questi huomini, se si possono chiamare huomini, chè a me pare più sia conveniente chiamargli bruti, senza religione alchuna nè sanno se si sono di Dio o del diavolo.” Bonsignori to Niccolò, 1 October, 1497. MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99 c.5. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix doc. 3.

⁶⁶ “Messer Bernardo stette bene et al presente sta benissimo et è piu grasso che mai” Bonsignori to Niccolò, 1 October, 1497. MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99 c.5. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix, doc. 3.

Having left Dalmatia and crossed into the Balkan hinterland, the travelers were entering new cultural territory and leaving a number of things behind, including the ubiquity of the Catholic Church. Bonsignori's letter from Kosovo reveals a certain discomfort with the lack of familiar ritual. They were not able to hear Mass because it was not said; they did not go to church because there were no church bells to call them.⁶⁷ Niccolò is asked to pray on their behalf, and Bonsignori requests that a religious calendar ("tavola de' sancti," a Roman calendar or synopsis of the gospels) to be sent to them. Apparently the canon or chaplain from their home church had been instructed to provide one, and Bonsignori was eager to get his hands on it, for fear of losing track of Sundays. The fact that they had thought it prudent to exchange their normal clerical garb for a local styles of dress might well have enhanced the sense of dislocation and unease that the Roman calendar was intended to remedy.⁶⁸

The following letter from Bonsignori to Niccolò, dated November 9, 1479, was sent from "Adrianopoli," the second Ottoman capital of Edirne. Bonsignori's descriptions of Plovdiv (Philipopoli) and Edirne delight in descriptions of both antique finds and grand Ottoman constructions. In Plovdiv, which he describes as "terra antichissima," he notes a wooden bridge approximately one third of a mile long, as well as several "beautiful mosques, covered in lead," many antique marbles, and even the vestiges of the antique city walls.⁶⁹ At last the humanist

⁶⁷ Borsook, "Travels," appendix, doc. 3.

⁶⁸ In other instances, Catholic travelers included portable folding altars in their baggage, bringing a tangible connection to the church with them as they moved across the predominantly Muslim and Orthodox terrain of the Balkan interior. One example is found in the collection of the Treasury of the Church of St. Blaise, Dubrovnik.

⁶⁹ BNCF MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, "Travels," appendix doc. 4.

travelers could examine and admire ruins from antiquity in an exotic eastern setting. But the largest part of the letter is dedicated to a description of the bustling contemporary city of Edirne.

Edirne, predictably, is contrasted with Florence. The cities are described as being about the same size but Edirne features two rivers, both of which are larger than the singular Arno. The markets bustle with a great many shops (“Moltissime botteghe”), many related to textile manufacturing and trade. Bonsignori estimates that the city contains 50 mosques (all with lead roofs, he notes), and he includes a detailed account of the two most prominent. The mosque described as having four “Campanili” of very ornate marble is no doubt the Üç Şerefeli Mosque, built by Sultan Murad II between 841-851/1438-1447, well known for its distinctive minarets with multiple encircling balconies. The Florentine is impressed with the orderliness of the lodgings for Muslim clerics, found in the second mosque, whose identity is less obvious.⁷⁰ He compares their living situation favorably to their own ecclesiastical residences back in Florence; the “talismani” of Edirne do not suffer from the fear of continuous ruin felt by the Florentines in own quarters in the canonry of the Duomo.⁷¹

While in Edirne – a city favored by those sultans who were hunting enthusiasts – the Florentines were given the opportunity to enter the gardens of the “chasa del signore” in order

⁷⁰ As Borsook points out, the Bayezid II complex (which includes a medrese) seems possible. But while the mosque was built in 1484-88/888-893 the larger complex may have been completed after the Bonsignori/Bernardo voyage.

⁷¹ Bonsignori and Bernardo held lodgings in the Canonry of Florence Cathedral. Apparently, they were not well-maintained. MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix doc. 4.

to indulge in a pastime beloved of Italian travelers: hunting birds. Remarking on the tameness of the animals, they bag over 100 in a single day.⁷² The travelers did not, however, neglect their primary quarry of rare books. The pair manage to locate a Greek inhabitant with a collection of “very many good and beautiful books,” which the owner was unfortunately not interested in selling.⁷³ In fact the Greek needed to be coerced to even show them his library. Unsuccessful in their first attempts at book-buying, and despite the rigors of travel, Bernardo’s gouty foot, and the recently abating threat of plague in Edirne and Constantinople, Bonsignori signs off his with a jovial flourish: “we are all well and in good spirits, and Bernardo is more committed than ever.”⁷⁴

Bonsignori’s subsequent letter was posted from Pera, where the pair was welcomed by the city’s Florentine merchants, their way having been smoothed in advance by the indispensable Maringhi. This document provides a wealth of detail of the city in the late fifteenth century, outside the scope of the present argument (as are their subsequent adventures in western Anatolia, Rhodes, Cyprus, and the Holy Land).

Bonsignori’s letters from the Balkan section of their journey illuminate many aspects that would concern travelers in the region for centuries to come. The Florentines were extremely reliant on an extended Florentine commercial and diplomatic network, especially the expertise of fixers and go-betweens like Giovanni Maringhi. As personal, unofficial documents,

⁷² MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix doc. 4.

⁷³ “...moltissimi libri buoni et begli” MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix doc. 4.

⁷⁴ “noi siamo tutti sani et alegri, et messer Bernardo è di miglio voglia di mai.” MSS *Ginori-Conti* 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, “Travels,” appendix doc. 4.

Bonsignori's letters are free to record observations that are fresh and immediate. He is evidently not sticking to a formula, but simply enlivens a spine of basic information with a range of anecdotes from personal experience, and some information gathered from local informants. The letters' lack of formal consistency can frustrate as entire sections of the journey are simply skipped over or described impressionistically. The details they do relate are often tinged with self-deprecating humor, and they reveal a broad range of responses to the multitude of foreign communities they encounter. In this travelogue, what the travelers ate and drank is often given more consistent attention than who they traveled with and how the local population lived. At times Bonsignori will list the religious communities of a given place (of Edirne, he writes, "the inhabitants are almost all Turks and some Greeks, and Marranos") but he gives no indication of interactions with them.⁷⁵

Despite the informal tone of his writing, it is clear that these updates from the road were not intended for Niccolò's ears alone. As Eve Borsook has written, "Often postscripts inform us that Michelozzi was urged to read them aloud to Ficino and other Florentine humanists."⁷⁶ Travel letters, with their blend of modes – both neutral and engaged – were only a short step away from *itinerari* that would arrive in Europe with increasing velocity in the following century. The modest correspondence of Bonsignori and Bernardo was part of a collective body of travel writings that were "among the first manuals for the appropriation of

⁷⁵ "Gli habitatori sono quasi tutti turchi et alchuni greci, et marrani." MSS Ginori-Conti 29, 99, c. 20. Borsook, "Travels," appendix doc. 4.

⁷⁶ Borsook, "Travels," 146.

the world,” even as Ottoman territorial dominance was unchallenged.⁷⁷ Overland travel offered well-educated and politically connected individuals like Bonsignori and Bernardo a chance to observe and report on the cultural, geographical, and political terrain of the Mediterranean’s most dynamic and expansive empire.

Even in its early stages, Bonsignori’s letters show the Ragusa Road to have been a safe and effective way to reach Istanbul from the Adriatic Sea. With the help of their intrepid transnational agent Giovanni Maringhi, an extensive network of Florentine merchants, and the unmentioned caravan leaders, companions and guards found in Ragusa, the Florentines (who managed to get lost in the Apennine mountains only a few days from their Tuscan home) crossed the Balkan landmass in about two months, including their three week layover in Edirne. One of the most striking features of their account is an absence: there are no mentions of confrontations, bandits, or hostile encounters with local inhabitants.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, a flood of increasingly detailed and elaborate travel literature would offer European readers a more comprehensive understanding of the still remote geography of the Ottoman Balkans. The letters sent from locations along the Ragusa Road to Florence by Bonsignore Bonsignori are an instructive starting place from which to locate the more elaborate and polished *itinerari* to come. The increasingly sophisticated travel accounts correspond with an increasingly developed overland travel infrastructure in Rumelia. The Italian travelers who followed the Florentines of 1497 would benefit greatly from the massive investment in road architecture made by Ottoman patrons across the sixteenth century. Florence’s strong entry into overland travel in the Ottoman Balkans would fizzle out

⁷⁷ Yerasimos, “Voyageurs,” 2.

and be replaced by a surprising new player. Ragusa, meanwhile, would continue to adapt to the shifting circumstances with shrewdness and profit.

Chapter Four: Venetians Overland

Thoughts of conquest may have been entertained, but for the future: the Venetians had no illusions as to the difficulty of embarking on a venture that required concerted action on the part of the Christian princes. In the meantime, one needed to know the enemy, to take stock of the situation, to find the stress points and fault lines where the Ottoman system might weaken of its own account or where Venice—with or without the other Christian powers—might intervene. No theory here, perhaps, but no illusions either: the Venetians knew how to count.¹

It comes as no surprise that most astute and prolific European observers of the Ottoman Empire were subjects of the Republic of Venice. Economically dependent on trade in the Eastern Mediterranean and in possession of a maritime empire located on the boundaries of the expanding Ottoman state, Venice's livelihood required vigilant and detailed information about its powerful neighbors to the east. The vast output of official reports (*relazioni*) and updates (*dispacci*) sent to the Serenissima has been well studied.²

These documents are primarily concerned with high-level negotiations with Ottoman officials in Istanbul and thus make outstanding sources for the study of diplomatic history in the power centers of the Mediterranean. The lands and people in between these imperial poles,

¹ Lucette Valensi, *Birth of the Despot* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 15.

² Eugenio Alberi, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, 15 volumes (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1839-63). Venice's information-gathering on the Ottoman Empire has its own historiography. See especially Paolo Preto, *I Servizi Segredi di Venezia* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994). Also W.H. McNeill, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) and Hans J. Kissling, "Venezia come centro di informazioni sui Turchi" in Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, Agostino Pertusi, eds., *Venezia Centro di Mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 79-110.

however, are largely elided. Over the course of the sixteenth century, however, Venetian diplomatic travelers began to explore overland across the Balkan Peninsula, exploring alternatives to the maritime route to Istanbul. By the end of the century Venice and the Ottomans would work together to create a new axis that would supersede the Ragusa Road as the primary overland route from eastern Adriatic Sea to Istanbul. In the decades leading to this development, Venice needed to “take stock of” the foreign lands just inland from the borders of its *Stato da Mar*.

The merchants and sailors of the Serenissima knew the coastline of the Adriatic, Ionian, and Aegean Seas by heart, but the mountainous interior of the Balkan Peninsula was largely *tabula rasa*. As Venetians make their first substantial forays into overland travel in the sixteenth century, Venetian statesmen (and the secretaries who recorded the voyages) took the opportunity to observe and report on a region that was equally strategic and exotic, despite its relative geographical proximity. Beginning in the 1530’s, increasingly sophisticated accounts were written by Venetian diplomatic travelers, which combined the first-person immediacy of the travel narrative with observant analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the Ottoman western provinces.

The content of Venetian *itinerari* was far from confined to the pure pragmatism articulated by Valensi above. Strategic elements like military and societal vulnerabilities were frequently mentioned (the absence of city walls in cities and towns was particularly striking), but the omnivorous genre made room for a great deal more than simply locating “stress points

and fault lines.”³ As with the letters of Bonsignore discussed in the previous chapter, mundane concerns about provisions for humans and their animals were not neglected. Authors also commented on the region’s physical geography, its monuments and markets, and the artisanal and agricultural production of cities, villages and rural areas. The dress and behavior of women did not escape notice. As Rubiés has written, travel writing is a mongrel form that “operated alongside related genres: chronicles and histories, geographical and cosmological treatises, and political reports.”⁴ To be sure, Venetian *itinerari* of the Ottoman Balkans draw from all of these forms. Travelogues can also reveal – sometimes inadvertently – the psychological states experienced by the traveler, ranging from fear to wonder to frustration to ecstatic expressions of relief upon safe arrival or return. These rich texts were densely packed with layers of observation and accumulated knowledge. Some elements were consistent and objective, such as travel times and distances, while others that were subjective and analytical, subject to the specific experiences, encounters, and attitudes of the given author.

The men who wrote travelogues were not without prejudices and tendencies toward dismissive generalizations.⁵ Like *relazioni*, travel accounts are filled with ambiguities and

³ Benedetto Ramberti, *Delle Cose de Turchi, Libri Tre*, (Venice: Aldine Press, 1541). Book 1: The city of Sofia: “È tutta in pianura, cinta da monti non aspri, ne sopra terra vi resta segno di muraglia alcuna.” Fol. 7v. Rather than weakness, however, such observations actually speak to the strength and gargantuan scale of the Ottoman state, whose realms were so broad and well-protected that settlements on the interior had no need for defensive ramparts.

⁴ Joan-Pau Rubiés, “Travel Writing as a Genre,” *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, 1/1 (2000), 10.

⁵ I have yet to find a travel account by a female author in this region during this era. The later writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu from the 18th century, and those of Rebecca West, Gertrude Bell and Freya Stark in the early 20th century would have a tremendous impact on Western perceptions of Turkey, the Balkans, and the Middle East.

contradictions. In general, however, the “Turks” have not yet been reduced into the orientalist tropes of cruelty, corruption and effeminate amorality that run rampant in later European writing and cultural production about the Orient. Italian *itinerari*, *relazioni*, and *dispacci* reflect the strange mixture of loathing and admiration for the Ottomans seen in other forms of contemporary European literary production. Depictions of individual Ottomans, who clearly play the role of “other,” are nevertheless far from a series of stock characterizations and negative stereotypes.

It has been pointed out that for some early modern historians like Jean Bodin and Machiavelli, the Ottoman Turks came closest to occupying the place of Rome as the ultimate monarchy and empire.⁶ Reports from envoys likewise emphasized positive aspects of the Ottoman political system and society, including the abundance of tax revenue, the surplus of income despite the vastness of expenses, the intelligence of the *timar* system and the abundance of material culture.⁷ It is also true that casually essentializing descriptions were common, including those about the avarice of Ragusans and the cruelty of “Turks.”⁸ Yet these negative generalizations were tempered by examples – often in the same text – of meaningful

⁶ Valensi, *Despot*, 61. It was not difficult for Italians to see in the Ottomans a high level of *virtù*, described by Valensi as a union of energy and talent. Machiavelli, in his *Discourses on Livy*, compares Mehmed II, who defeated his neighbors and established a secure kingdom, as King David. The current Sultan Selim I (Yavuz/the Grim) is “about to surpass the glory of his grandfather [Mehmed II]” Book 1 Section 19.

⁷ Valensi *Despot*, 26-7. Valensi even claims that the Venetian ideal of *unanimitas* or acting of a single will for the public good is seen and reported on in Venetian reports: p. 28.

⁸ “Gli Rhagusei universalmente sono ricchi e avari, come il piu delli mercatanti.” Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 4v.

interactions with individual members of local populations and a by palpable sense of awe, not only at the military prowess but also towards the administrative and architectural accomplishments of the Ottoman state. The functions of social institutions, too, were frequently appreciated. European observers nearly always commented on the striking generosity of the *imarets* attached to caravanserais where travelers of all faiths were fed for up to three days at no charge.⁹

This section focuses on the works of three Venetian travelers: two traveled the Ragusa Road, and one reached Istanbul by the classical but neglected *Via Egnatia*, which traversed Albania and northern Greece. All three men were connected to the highest levels of state, and all were sent to Constantinople (as they consistently referred to the city) on official diplomatic business. Benedetto Ramberti made his way to the Ottoman capital via Dubrovnik in the company of Venetian ambassador Daniele de' Ludovisi in 1534. Paolo Contarini took the Ragusa Road on his way to assume his term as *bailo* in 1580. Lorenzo Bernardo's unusual mission to Constantinople in 1591 provides a Venetian echo to the Florentine and Ottoman political crises of the late fifteenth century.¹⁰

⁹ “...danno due volte al giorno pane, risi e carne alli alloggiati” Description of the caravanserai/complex at “Cafsa” (Havsa, Turkey). M. Paolo Contarini, *Diario del Viaggio a Costantinopoli* (Venice: Teresa Gatti, 1856), 36. Known as the complex of Sokollu Kasım Bey or Kasım Paşa, it was built by Sokollu Mehmed Paşa who dedicated to his son. See chapter two of this dissertation.

¹⁰ On the office of bailo, Venetian resident consul in Constantinople, see Eric Dursteler, “The Bailo in Constantinople: Crisis and Career in Venice's Early Modern Diplomatic Corps,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16 (2001), 1-30; Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, *In Nome del Gran Signore* (Venice: Deputazione Editrice, 1994); Carla Coco and Flora Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani alla Sublime Porta* (Venice, Stamperia di Venezia, 1985).

By comparing the reports of two Venetians traveling the same Ragusa Road 46 years apart, we get a sense of the ways that the architectural boom of the sixteenth century impacted the experience of long-distance travel. In comparing the two Venetian accounts of the Ragusa Road with that of Lorenzo Bernardo on the less-developed *Via Egnatia*, we see the many elements that go un-remarked by the travelers who joined Dubrovnik's caravans. The details of Bernardo's negotiations give insight into the many activities taking place behind the scenes in other reports. His experiences also help explain why so many international travelers preferred to follow the Ragusa Road, despite its distance and physical difficulty.

All three accounts, written with a keen eye for detail, capitalized on centuries of accumulated Venetian experience in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet they also reveal a striking new reality. While fifteenth-century Florentine agents were attracted to the Ragusa Road in part due to its minimal exposure to Venetian-controlled territory, the sixteenth century witnessed the widespread adoption of the overland route by the Venetians themselves. This change happened in conjunction with the architectural-infrastructure development of the Ragusa Road as well as the expansion of Ottoman naval power, leading to control of the entire eastern Mediterranean basin by the middle of the sixteenth-century. It represents a tremendous shift in patterns of mobility. Venice had spent centuries building up its strategic holdings along the islands and coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean; no other power could rival its maritime transport system from the Adriatic to the Marmara. Even after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, it was still possible to sail from Venice as far as the Dardanelles

without stopping in an Ottoman port.¹¹ Yet important missions increasingly elected to travel overland via Ragusa. To be sure, travel by sea was not abandoned, but some combination of the Ragusa Road's efficiency, the ever-increasing threat of piracy in the sixteenth century, and the eternal unpredictability of the sea led even Venetian travelers to embrace a terrestrial route network that had originally been designed to subvert their own maritime dominance.¹²

Benedetto Ramberti

Following his return to Venice, Benedetto Ramberti edited his observations into a tripartite *itinerario*, history, and political overview of the Ottoman empire, published anonymously by the Aldine Press in 1539 as a three volume set with with the title *Delle cose dei Turchi*.¹³ Written at a moment of ascendant Ottoman power, Ramberti's book is simultaneously

¹¹ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs dans l'Empire Ottoman, XIVe-XVIe siècles* (Ankara, Société Turque d'Histoire, 1991), 25.

¹² On piracy in the 16th century, see Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj* (Ithaca: Cornell Univeristy Press, 1992); Idris Bostan, *Adriyatik'te Korsanlık* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2009). Yerasimos notes the correlation between Hayreddin Barbaros (Barbarossa) being appointed Ottoman Grand Admiral in 1534 and the first recorded Venetian ambassadorial mission sent overland—that of Daniele de' Ludovisi and Benedetto Ramberti in the same year. See *Les Voyageurs*, 31. It should be noted that Venetian parties traveling overland made the journey in all seasons. Road travel was not confined to the winter when storms made the sea particularly volatile.

¹³ *Delle cose dei Turchi* was attributed to Benedetto Ramberti by Giovanni degli Agostini in *Notizie storico-critiche intorno alla vita e le opere degli scrittori veneziani* (1752-1754) Vol. II: 556-573. Ramberti's work had a powerful historiographical afterlife, serving as the basis for many subsequent accounts of Ottoman lands and politics. It was translated by Albert Lybyer and included in the appendix of his *The Government of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1913).

a guidebook for travelers, a work of history, and a political reference manual for Italian statesmen who found themselves squeezed between two apparently ever-expanding global empires: the Ottomans under Süleyman the Magnificent and the Habsburgs under Charles V. The first of the three books is a detailed account of their voyage: first by sea down the Dalmatian Coast and then overland by the Ragusa Road. We are fortunate to have in *Delle cose dei Turchi* a precise record of what is one of the earliest official Venetian diplomatic missions to travel overland across the Balkans.¹⁴

Benedetto Ramberti and his patron, the Venetian ambassador Daniele de' Ludovisi, were sent to the Sublime Porte in January of 1534 (in the dead of winter) on an urgent mission to prevent the outbreak of a new war between the Ottomans and Venetians following a naval skirmish the previous November.¹⁵ Unlike the *baili*, who were permanently stationed in Constantinople for two to three year terms, Venetian ambassadors were only dispatched to the Sublime Porte for significant political and/or ceremonial occasions of limited duration. Despite the diplomatic importance of their endeavor and the rigors of overland travel, Ramberti took the time to produce an account that would set the standard for descriptions of the Ragusa Road and the provinces of Ottoman Rumelia for decades.

¹⁴ “Malgré ces lacunes importantes, il semble que jusqu’en 1534, date de la mission de Daniele de Ludovisi, l’itinéraire des ambassades est, sauf exceptions, maritime.” Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs*, 31.

¹⁵ Ludovisi was an experienced diplomat given “prestigious or difficult assignments” Vittorio Mandelli, “Daniello (Daniele) Ludovisi,” *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960-), here vol. 66 (2007).

Ramberti and his party sailed from Venice the fourth of January, 1534, starting with the familiar trajectory down the east coast of the 'Golf di Venetia' or Adriatic Sea. "Coasting" from port to port along the curve of Venetian-controlled coastal territories in Istria and Dalmatia was relatively straightforward.¹⁶ After provisioning at Ragusa, they set out overland on the ninth of February, crossing the Balkan Peninsula in 33 days to arrive at Constantinople on the fourteenth of March.

The first book of *Delle cose dei Turchi* contains a repository of information essential to the overland traveler. It consistently notes travel times, distances, and notable geographic and architectural features. Ramberti also touches on such varied topics as women, clothing, antique sites, cultural habits, food, morality, political systems, history, language, religion, commodities, trade, banditry, and industrial production (textiles). As befitting an account that was originally published anonymously, there is little personal information about the author, his party or their fellow travelers along the road. Unlike Bonsignore's letters, whose recipient apparently wanted details of all elements of the journey, Ramberti seems to be writing for a more pragmatic reader, one who is interested in precise distances but has no need of descriptions of the caravanserais, tents, or churches slept in. Only in a few sections does the physical immediacy of travel break into the narrative. Unsurprisingly, these moments tend to occur during traverses of snow-covered Balkan mountain ranges. Here the narrow tracks were abutted by sheer drop-

¹⁶ "Navigation in those days was a matter of following the shore line, moving crab-wise from rock to rock, 'from promontories to islands and from islands to promontories.' This was *costeggiare*, avoiding the open sea..." Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 103

offs and the author's courage and stamina – especially one from a city built on mud flats in a lagoon – was strenuously challenged.

For Benedetto Ramberti, as with all other travel authors from the period whose works I have studied, nationality or ethnicity was a flexible construct. The monks of St. Sava, near Novi Pazar, “live ‘alla Greca’ but speak the Slavic language.”¹⁷ Greek Orthodox practices would have been familiar to the author from the extensive Venetian holdings in Greek-speaking territories of the northeastern Mediterranean as well as from the Greek Orthodox community in the city itself. Terms like ‘Turk,’ identifiers that are now explicitly ethnic, were more malleable and polyvalent to early modern travelers. It was not a contradiction to be Greek and Slav simultaneously, but simply a reflection of the multifaceted cultural practices of the region. Such complexity was not confined to the descriptions of identities, but was also revealed in descriptions of habits and practices of daily life. At the Mileševa monastery (today in southwest Serbia) Ramberti notes that the primary givers of alms at the shrine of St Sava – the patron saint of Orthodox Slavs – were not Christians, but “Turks and Jews.”¹⁸

Ramberti, who would eventually succeed Pietro Bembo as the custodian of the Marciana Library in Venice, was highly educated in the humanist tradition. Unlike Bonsignore and Michelozzi, however, antique manuscripts did not attract his interest. But his erudition nevertheless informed his reading of landscape, such as his description of the mountains past Novi Pazar as being “known to the ancients as Hebrus,” or the Rhodope mountains he

¹⁷ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 6v.

¹⁸ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 6v.

associated with Ovid.¹⁹ The author's location of the Rhodopes is not very accurate, which can be forgiven as the Kapoanik Mountains he actually crossed are extremely rugged and high (with peaks over 2,000 meters) and were covered in deep snow when his party negotiated them on horseback in mid-winter. Later, in Plovdiv, which Ramberti describes as Philippopoli, he was delighted to see the traces of the ancient world in the city's centuries-old walls, "in part intact and beautiful."²⁰

The *itinerario* section of *Delle cose* was written for a particular type of reader. Not unlike the CIA World Factbook, which "provides information on the history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military and transnational issues for 267 world entities," Ramberti's account targets a well-educated statesman whose concern with other polities stems primarily from a commitment to defend his own homeland.²¹ This outlook may have been informed by Ramberti's service under Daniele de' Ludovisi, who had previously negotiated with the Ottomans over a dispute over the borders of Ottoman Bosnia (March 1531). Ludovisi had also negotiated appropriate restitution for an Ottoman merchant whose goods had been impounded by a Venetian ship (December 1531).²²

Ramberti's account tells us little about the human experience of life on the road. There is little to no information about stopping places, the composition of their caravan, the

¹⁹ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 7r.

²⁰ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 8r.

²¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> accessed Dec 9, 2013.

²² Vittorio Mandelli, "Daniello (Daniele) Ludovisi," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* Vol. 66 (2007)

availability and quality of food and wine, or encounters with local inhabitants. The author consistently includes such strategically significant things as demographics, the productivity of the land, military architecture and natural defensive features. In the narrow valley in Herzegovina which he calls "Vrataz" he notes that the party had to proceed single-file and he speculates that a well-positioned force of only 20 men could hold off an army.²³

In another section, *Delle cose dei Turchi* discusses the very real danger of banditry in the mountains. Ramberti reveals the fact that Venetian merchants had already been using the overland route well before official diplomatic missions were sanctioned to do so. Near 'Plevie' (Pljevlja, Montenegro) the party passes a site where, five years previously, a caravan of Venetian merchants had been robbed, with many injuries and deaths, including two Venetian nobles, identified as "il Nani e il Capello nobili Venetiani"²⁴ This episode allows the author to introduce a novel and apparently effective Ottoman practice used to patrol such remote and vulnerable locations. Guards stationed nearby were sent ahead of the caravan with drums which they played as they patrolled the road ahead. As long as travelers could hear the beating of the drum they knew it was safe to proceed.²⁵

²³ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 5v. This area, now protected as Bosnia and Herzegovina's Sutjeska National Park, features a tremendous monument to Marshal Josip Broz Tito and the Yugoslav Partisan Force. Helped by the topography described by Ramberti, Tito and the partisans did, in fact hold off an army, taking terrible losses but preventing a major Axis invasion force from achieving its strategic goals, a significant turning point in the war (May-June 1943).

²⁴ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 6r.

²⁵ Pierre Lescalopier, traveling the same stretch of road in 1574, also described a guard who communicated with the caravan by means of "ung petit tabourin de cuivre" Quoted in Edmond Cleray, "Le Voyage de Pierre Lescalopier, Parisien: de Venise à Constantinople, l'an 1574," *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 35 (1921): 21-55.

The tone of Ramberti's narrative changes distinctly when his caravan finally exits the mountainous territory of the western Balkans and arrives at the well-watered plains between Kosovo and southern Serbia, more fully integrated into the Ottoman domains than the western frontier. The dread and fear permeating his earlier descriptions is replaced by an impression of bucolic abundance: "Topliza," he writes, "is not only pleasant and beautiful, but also fertile and abundant with all things necessary to life, and here we began to breathe again after the long labor and danger of the road left behind."²⁶ While in Bulgaria, the customs and appearance of local women was striking enough to merit a substantial digression – a feature shared with many other travel narratives. Ramberti elaborately describes the long braids of unmarried girls, their spectacular caps covered with coins of all types, and their violent rituals of mourning in which women scratch their cheeks with their own fingernails until blood began to flow down their faces.²⁷

The Venetian author's spirits seem to improve in direct proportion to the population of the cities he encounters. Plovdiv, Sofia and Edirne are all given careful attention in the text, which records rough demographic information, lists of types of commerce and artisanal production. Ottoman architecture is also noted and appreciated. Ramberti was clearly much more at home in an urban, non-alpine environment, no matter whose empire it was part of. On reaching Constantinople, that vast and cosmopolitan city on the water, he speaks for the

²⁶ "È il paese di Topliza non solamente piacevole e bello, ma uberoso e abundante di tutte le cose necessarie al viver, e ove si incomincia à respirare dal longo travaglio e pericolo havuto nel lasciato camino." Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 7r.

²⁷ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 7v.

collective caravan in expressing the relief he feels on leaving the terrors of overland travel behind:

When we arrived here we felt as if we had been released from the inferno, because all the country we rode through – from Ragusa until a just a few days from Constantinople – is, for the most part, uncultivated, and nightmarish – not because of its natural state but due to the negligence of the inhabitants. It is full of awful forests and sheer stone cliffs, it offers extremely poor security against bandits, and its lodgings are exceedingly dismal and miserable: it was a good thing to have been there but actually going there was strange and difficult.²⁸

Paolo Contarini

Typically published under the name of the party's leading figure, *itinerari* were often written by secretaries or other lower-ranking members of the group. The *Diario del Viaggio* (1580) of Paolo Contarini, which records his voyage from Venice to Constantinople where he would hold the post of *bailo* for three years, was probably not written by Contarini himself.²⁹ In any event, this account, which documents a route nearly identical to the one taken by Ramberti and Ludovisi 46 years earlier, is an impressive achievement and a useful marker of the

²⁸ “Gionti che fussemo qui, ne parve esser usciti dell’inferno, perciò che tutto il paese, che si cavalca da Ragusi fino à poche giornate di Costantinopoli, è per la maggior parte incolto, horrido, non di natura, ma per negligenza delli habitatori; pieno di boschi horrendi, pieno di sassi pericolosissimi, malissimo sicuro da malandrini, tristissimo e miserrimo da alloggiare, di modo, che è bella cosa l’esservi stato, ma ben strana et difficile l’andarvi.” Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 11r.

²⁹ The diary “n’a pas été sans doute écrit par lui même mai par quelqu’un de sa suite.” Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs*. On Paolo Contarini, member of an illustrious Venetian family of which four members held the post of *bailo* at different times, see Gaetano Cozzi, “Contarini, Paolo (Polo)” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* vol. 28 (1983) and Erik Dursteler, “The Bailo in Constantinople,” pp. 7, 9, 11.

development of the Ragusa Road over time. The author (whom I will refer to as Contarini, for simplicity) combines the immediacy and eye for detail of Bonsignore Bonsignori with the pragmatic and systematic vision of Ramberti, suitable for an experienced, high level Venetian administrator. Contarini's account also vividly narrates several instances of conflict and potential violence between members of the caravan and local inhabitants, offering a rare glimpse into the world of low-level friction and conflict resolution on the road. Such anecdotes, too mundane to generate documentary evidence at the level of a court record, offer an invaluable – if fragmentary – glimpse into the kinds of tensions that bubbled under the surface of what appears to be a smoothly functioning system of mobility.

Paolo Contarini and his travel party embarked from Venice on the second of May, 1580. They crossed to the tip of the Istrian Peninsula then southwards along the necklace of ports and islands of the Dalmatian Stato da Mar. At every opportunity, the incoming bailo sought out information from local administrators regarding the current conditions of the Ottoman interior.³⁰ Unfortunately, the *Diario* gives no indication as to why the overland route from Ragusa was preferred to the maritime voyage or to other possible land routes that crossed from Venetian-controlled territory.

Arrival at Ragusa signified a definitive departure from Venetian domains. Two “magnificent ambassadors from the magnificent nobility of Ragusa” offered the travelers a heroic welcome and an elaborate feast, whose individual dishes were all recorded in detail.³¹ At

³⁰ Contarini, *Diario*, 9.

³¹ “Vennero alle 23 ore due magnifici ambasciatori della magnifica signoria di Ragusi, e fatti li debiti ufizi di complimento dall'una parta e dall'altra ci presentarono sei capretti, tre paja di

Dubrovnik, while the caravan essentials were being organized, several new members joined the group, including “Pasquale the dragoman, who came with two janissaries, one called Cussein Brano and the other Musli.”³² These men were entrusted with the task of procuring the riding horses for the journey. Later, the author would complain bitterly and repeatedly about the incompetence or simple apathy of his dragoman, who played a critical role as mediating figure between the Venetians and the Ottoman officials and locals they encountered. Pasquale was clearly no Giovanni Maringhi, discussed in the previous chapter on Florentine travelers and go-betweens. The travel party also included the *bailo*'s family (names and numbers not provided), six Venetian gentlemen, presumably staff for the *bailo*'s office in Istanbul (with their horses and servants), and four French gentlemen, about whom nothing further is said.³³

Like much of the Dalmatian Coast, the narrow coastal plain around Dubrovnik is delimited by a massive limestone outcropping, the first of many topographical obstacles confronted by wayfarers on the Ragusa Road. The coastal range is not a gentle introduction to overland travel. Contarini complains about its steepness, rockiness, and the excessively hot temperatures, going so far as to compare the (rather low elevation) mountains to the Alps and Apennines.³⁴ Arriving at the city of Trebinje, the first significant town inland from Dubrovnik, the author offers the kind of informed and multi-layered observations about Ottoman

capponi, sei scatole di confetti, sei candele di cera, una cesta di carciofi, una di fava ed una d'insalata, a nome della loro signoria” Contarini, *Diario*, 10.

³² Contarini, *Diario*, 11.

³³ Contarini, *Diario*, 11.

³⁴ Contarini, *Diario*, 13.

monuments that characterize the *Diario*: “we came via a long plain along the abovementioned river to the Bridge of Trebinje, of [Sokollu] Mehmed Pasha, who made the bridge and a very beautiful caravanserai, covered with a lead roof, to lodge wayfarers for the love of his deceased son who had been sangiacco [*sancakbeyi*] of Herzegovina.”³⁵

Contarini’s account features many such rich descriptions of Ottoman structures. He often includes the name and background of a given monument’s patron, along with some version of the structure’s dedication and intended purpose. These descriptions are sometimes fanciful, but they indicate the basic legibility of Ottoman monuments to foreign travelers (mediated, of course, by the dragomans, who functioned both as trans-imperial agents and as local informants). The roofing material is not a random or formulaic detail, but an important observation that shows an implicit understanding of the value and status of the caravanserai. The seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi pays similar attention building materials as markers of status in his *Seyahatnâme*. Like the Çoban Mustafa complex of Svilengrad discussed in chapter two, the Ottoman town of Trebinje was similarly located one stage away from a key city (Dubrovnik) and also includes a bridge and a caravanserai, the quintessential infrastructural pairing used to enhance and control mobility.³⁶

Large scale architectural works attributed to grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha – the dominant figure of late-sixteenth century Ottoman politics and architectural patronage – are

³⁵ “...venimmo per una pianura lungo il detto fiume fino al ponte di Trebina, di Mehemet Bassà, il quale fece detto ponte ed un bellissimo caravanserà coperto di piombo per alloggiare viandanti per l’amore d’un suo figliuolo ch’era morto sangiacco di questa provincia di Cherzegò.” Contarini, *Diario*, 13.

³⁶ See Chapter 2 for the case of the Çoban Mustafa Paşa bridge.

repeatedly encountered and utilized in Contarini's *Diario*. From Trebinje, on the extreme western frontier of Ottoman territory, and extending eastward practically to the gates of Istanbul, Contarini's party consistently noted and benefitted from Sokollu's foundations. Ramberti, who made the journey 46 years earlier, was too early to witness the tremendous architectural interventions of Ottoman statesmen brought about by Sokollu and others, such as his great predecessor, the enthusiastic patron of architecture and infrastructure, grand vizier Rüstem Pasha (d. 1561).³⁷

From the first stages of the voyage, Contarini's *Diario* pays close attention to the geographical features and the architectural landmarks of the Ragusa Road. The text is also lovingly descriptive of food, and, to a lesser degree, shelter. The author lists consumed food items, frequently including prices for staples like boiled eggs. As in Bonsignore's letters, the availability and quality of wine fluctuated radically along the journey, a variable that was carefully noted. It is curious to see that despite the many "caravanserà" noted in the western Balkans, the party rarely spent the night in them. In the east, however, and especially along the imperial highway from Niš to Istanbul, lodging in more opulent caravanserais became the norm. Along the western reaches of the road, the travelers frequently stop for meals in caravanserais but continue on to spend the night in some remote location, usually one with a natural water

³⁷ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (grand vizier 1565-79) was of Bosnian origins. On his legacy as patron and shaper of empire, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 345-368. "Sokollu's pious foundations marked the territories of the empire with an enduring record of memories associated with his life and career. They promoted Islamic socio-religious institutions, urban and agrarian development, commerce, and travel. Like the bridges he constructed in Thrace and Bosnia, his monuments marking focal points of passage reflected his visionary preoccupation with communications and connections throughout the empire." p. 347. These processes are discussed in Chapter two.

source and open fields for the horses and pack animals. Rather than using the built accommodations available along the route, Contarini's caravan frequently preferred to set up overnight camps "in the country" under a large tent (*padiglione*), as they did on the third night out from Ragusa, despite having passed three caravanserais that very day.³⁸ The Venetians' caravan may have simply been too large to fit in the more modest caravanserais of the western Balkans. In addition, the availability of abundant and free fodder in open fields would have been appealing to caravan leaders responsible for feeding dozens or even hundreds of animals. The practice of sleeping in the open speaks to the travelers' confidence in their safety, although smaller groups would have more exposed to the danger of banditry. Naturally, sleeping outside meant the travelers were also vulnerable to extreme weather, as on the fourth night out when the main tent collapsed under during a heavy rainstorm, breaking the tent pole in the process (it was repaired, and the travelers slept until 12 the following day).³⁹

Besides caravanserais (many described as "bellissimo") and their tents, several other options for lodging were used by Contarini and his party. In the village of Ternoaluca, in central Herzegovina, they stayed in "six wooden houses, surrounded by extremely high mountains and woods"⁴⁰ where they saw pine trees growing out of exposed rock, an image the author recorded for its striking beauty.⁴¹ They would also spend the night at the Serbian Orthodox

³⁸ "alloggiammo in campagna" Contarini, *Diario*, 15.

³⁹ Contarini, *Diario*, 15.

⁴⁰ "...alloggiammo tutti in sei case fatte di lename, circondate da altissimi monti e boschi, vicino ad una fiumaja detta di Ternoaluca." Contarini, *Diario*, 16.

⁴¹ "...uno spettacolo bellissimo da vedere" Contarini, *Diario*, 16.

Monastery of Mileševa (east of Prijepolje, Serbia) and in the home of a Ragusan gentlemen in Sofia. The Ragusan's home was a last-minute replacement after Pasquale the Dragoman failed to arrange rooms in the attractive and well-furnished caravanserai in the city, despite having been sent ahead specifically to manage the task.⁴² The *itinerario* from 1591 of Lorenzo Bernardo (analyzed in detail in the next section), which describes a less developed alternative to the Ragusa Road, shows even more variation in lodgings, including stays in the homes of Ottoman officials and even the relatives of caravan personnel.

Contarini's account is perhaps most revelatory to the cultural historian in the few sections that detail tense, potentially violent encounters between caravan members and the local population. Unlike Ramberti, the author of this *Diario* was not afraid of heights and he does not dwell on the terror of crossing the narrow, exposed mountain roads of the western Balkans. Groups of villagers and townsmen encountered on the road, however, could be quite menacing. Two days before reaching Niš, one of the Venetian nobles ("il magnifico Molin"), exhibiting the Italian love for hunting birds, managed to shoot a stork with his musket.⁴³ This provoked a subtle yet palpably threatening reaction ("mormorazione") from the local "turchi" who, in common with the area's "christiani," held the bird to be a sacred animal. The Venetians' awkward attempt at a resolution only illustrates their discomfort and fear of angering the locals further. They take the dead stork with them into their tent, where they bury it, hidden from the

⁴² Contarini, *Diario*, 27.

⁴³ Contarini, *Diario*, 22.

eyes of the Ottoman population.⁴⁴ Afterwards, Contarini notes the sighting of many more storks in the region, but he and his companions sensibly refrained from shooting at them.

Before reaching Sofia, a sudden imbroglio broke out between unnamed members of the caravan and locals. It is unclear who or what initiated the encounter, but it is significant that Contarini's janissary guards (possibly the same "Cussein Branco" and "Musli" who joined them in Ragusa) are able to resolve the situation. The local men involved provided two geldings ("castrati") as restitution for an offense whose nature is not clarified.⁴⁵ Later, in the countryside outside of Çorlu (near Edirne, Turkey), another, more extensive conflict erupted. The text suggests the caravan group was simply looking to rest in a shady spot under some trees near a stream when some local "Turks" took exception. Here, again, the nature of the conflict is unclear but the dragoman and the janissaries were again at the forefront of the situation and its resolution. One of the locals raised a stick as if to attack but was himself beaten by the two janissaries. Having driven away the locals, the travelers enjoyed a peaceful lunch in the shade. But the matter was not yet finished. As the caravan resumed its journey, a chaotic sequence ensued involving an attempt by the locals to lock up one of the (straying?) Venetians in a nearby courtyard. One of the janissaries, attempting to rescue him, was hit on the hand with a stone thrown by one of the 'Turchi' and badly injured, while his partner resorted to firing a warning shot into the air. This gathered the dispersed caravan members but also attracted even more

⁴⁴ Contarini, *Diario*, 22-23.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, Contarini doesn't refer to the locals with any ethnic terms. He calls them "those of the [this] country" and "those villains" Contarini, *Diario*, 25.

locals to the scene.⁴⁶ Eventually the hubbub ebbed and the party was able to ride to its next destination.

Although rare, such anecdotes point to significant underlying tensions between long distance travelers and the Ottoman subjects whose lands they crossed. In both cases, it is noteworthy that these confrontations played out between the janissaries guarding the caravans and members of the local population. Although the sample size is small, these and other similar anecdotes suggest that episodes of violence and threatening behavior on the road were just as likely to occur between the local Ottoman population and the Ottoman members of the caravans (e.g. the janissary guards) as they were to involve Ottomans and foreigners. Indeed, the janissaries were in a particularly complex position regarding their identity and their loyalties. In theory, these men were born as Christians and converted to Islam at a young age, but not so young that they would have no memory of their maternal language and religion.⁴⁷ As caravan guards, they were embedded within the international groups whose safety they were

⁴⁶ “E volendo andar a fermarci per desinar sotto alcuni alberi ove corre un’acqua, li turchi incominciarono ad opporsi al dragomano ed a’ gianizzeri, ed uno alzò un legno per dar al gianizzero; però avventatisi tutti e dui li gianizzeri contra d’esso gli dettero di buone bastonate col busdegano, si che acquietati andammo a riposare e a desinare a quelle ombre. Desinato, partimmo subito, e nel partire essendo rimasto uno della compagnia, cioè Alvise Marchesini, s’accorsero i gianizzeri che li turchi venivano per serrarli la porta d’un cortile e serrarvelo dentro, e si fecero fuori alla porta. Sdegnato un turco tirò un sasso sulla mano al gianizzero, e l’offese gravamente e scampò subito via; per il che l’altro gianizzero gli tirò una frecciata. Il rumore si fece grande, e però saltai fuori della lettiga, e montai subito a cavallo e coremmo tutti al rumore, facendoci alla porta, non lasciandovi entrare li turchi che da diverse parti accorrevano; ed acquetato il rumore rimontammo tutti a cavallo, e muovemmo verso Zurlic [Çorlu].” Contarini, *Diario*, 37-38.

⁴⁷ For a first-hand account of janissary life for a boy born a Christian in the Balkans, see Konstanty Mihailovic, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. ed., Svatopluk Soucek (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1975).

responsible for. Bonds were surely formed over the course of journeys that could take months to complete. In fact there are examples of Janissary guards inviting Italian travelers into the homes of their relatives for meals and shelter.⁴⁸ In the event of a confrontation between caravan members and Ottoman subjects, they were in a peculiar position, with great potential for conflicting loyalties. The few episodes of violence directly encountered in Contarini's account featured Ottoman janissaries fighting with Ottoman subjects, scenarios that complicate a simple narrative of Venetian vs. Ottoman or Christian vs. Muslim.

Travel literature is one of the only locations where such low-level, quickly resolved incidents between individuals with multiple identities is likely to be found. As the cases never reached the level of even the local authorities such as the kadi or *sancakbeyi*, no other documentary record would have been created. We must attempt to tease out a larger picture from these fragmentary, subjective accounts in order to have some semblance of an understanding of the range of encounters occurring between caravan groups (with their European and Ottoman members) and the Ottoman subjects they encountered.

The confrontations described by Contarini were extremely rare. Italians and other Europeans traveling overland also had countless opportunities for positive interactions with members of a broad range of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social groups. Road travelers were immersed in the world of the Ottoman provinces in a way that maritime travelers – typically coasting from one Venetian-controlled port to another – were unlikely to experience.⁴⁹ Of

⁴⁸ Lorenzo Bernardo, *Viaggio a Costantinopoli di sier Lorenzo Bernardo per l'arresto del bailo sier Girolamo Lippomano Cav.* (Venice: R. Deputazione Veneta sopra gli Studi di Storia Patria, 1886), 30.

⁴⁹ Yerasimos, *Voyageurs*, 25.

course the degree of interaction ultimately depended on the personality of the traveler, and the quality of his interpreters and mediators. Contarini's *Diario* exhibits exceptional receptivity towards a range of Ottoman characters. In the mountainous country between Foča (Herzegovina) and Pljevlja (Montenegro), the company stopped at a caravanserai where a "vaivoda" was already lodging with his retinue.⁵⁰ Showing exceptional hospitality, the official moved his people to the part of the caravanserai that was empty due to a damaged roof, freeing up the better rooms for the Venetians. Contarini writes: "we then became good friends, and I presented him with three loaves of sugar."⁵¹ This laconic description naturally raises many more questions than it answers. Who was the "vaivoda," and what were his intentions in so gallantly favoring the foreign travelers? Was the dragoman translating their interactions as they "became friends?" Did the two men ever encounter one another again? It is impossible to answer any of these, but the episode articulates the widespread but rarely documented practice of cross-cultural communication at its most basic level.

The very next day, Contarini's party reached Pljevlja, an important regional center where the author noted the "large and spacious lead-covered caravanserai" and the "superb

⁵⁰ "...ulus units were governed by *voyvodas*, and *cemaats* by *kethüdas*. Nomads registered into the army were supervised by *seraskers*. Like other administrative units in the empire, each confederation of tribes was also assigned a *kadi*, who served as the direct representative of the central government and adjudicated in intra- and intertribal matters. As a further indication of the government's willingness to accommodate these communities, the *kadis* accompanied the tribes through their seasonal cycles of migration." Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 24. *Voivode* is a Slavic term meaning 'Duke' or 'warlord' adopted by the Ottomans as 'voyvoda' *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük*, 8th Edition (Istanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1968), 1230.

⁵¹ "facemmo poi buona amicizia ed io lo presentai di tre pani di zucchero." Contarini, *Diario*, 17.

mosque.”⁵² The apparently curious and gregarious Contarini finds an “old man” who is responsible for the mosque and the two of them enjoy a long conversation. Unlike Ramberti, who seems eager to make his pragmatic notes and move on as quickly as possible, Contarini exhibits the worldview of a born traveler, one who took time to seek out interesting and unusual individuals with whom to converse, and whose thoughts he took seriously. Naturally, the actual content of their discussion isn’t mentioned, but the Venetian uses three very positive terms to describe his Turkish interlocutor: “he seemed to very sensible, very observant, and he showed himself to be a man of kindness [or generosity].”⁵³

What was the role of women in itinerario literature? Generally speaking, they are conspicuous by their absence. Contarini follows Ramberti’s lead in providing good detail about the stunningly outfitted women of Bulgaria, but these are observations made from afar, literally superficial remarks dealing with the visible features of the subjects: their hair, clothing, and jewelry. Contarini, who was headed to Constantinople for a term of at least two years, traveled in the company of his family. His wife, children and any female attendants are not mentioned once in the account. Caravan groups were generally male, mobile communities, and they spent weeks or even months together. The intimate lives of travelers remain obscure and indications of their sexual practices are almost entirely absent from the genre.

One final example drawn from Contarini gives a glimpse into what was surely a rich and complex world of entertainment and, possibly, sexuality. Monday the 30th of May began

⁵² Contarini, *Diario*, 17.

⁵³ “e trovai un vecchione che la ufiziava, con cui ebbi lunghi ragionamenti, e parvemi sensitissimo e molto accorto, e dimostrava esser uomo di molto bontà.” Contarini, *Diario*, 17.

reverently enough with mass in the Ragusan church of Sofia. That evening was somewhat livelier: “Some Turks came to show us a lioness, and to do lots of things in their way, and some played castanets, and a girl danced with certain instruments, and everyone gave them a tip.”⁵⁴ As always, the *Diario* merely provides a bare sketch of a very provocative situation. From the standpoint of the present study is impossible not to wonder about what further developments may have ensued, and what other possibilities existed for liaisons between travelers and the local population. Of the dozens of travel accounts I have studied, Contarini’s account comes the closest to revealing this nearly invisible dimension of travel history.

Travelers on the Ragusa Road – even observant, detail-oriented ones like Benedetto Ramberti and Paolo Contarini – rarely troubled to mention the mechanics of caravan travel. At times, we are given a rough number of horses and some precious indications about janissary guards, but the essential details of assembling the caravan’s animals and staff, selecting the route, and negotiating with local officials are seldom included. Perhaps these banal items were considered unnecessary or uninteresting for the projected readership, or maybe the travelers were simply not aware of the planning and organization that went on behind the scenes. There were, after all, professionals who specialized in the safe and efficient transport of travelers and their goods: the *kramars*, *kiridžijas*, and *caravanbassi/kervan-başı* who worked in Ragusa and across the Balkan hinterland.⁵⁵ It is tempting, reading accounts of travel along the sixteenth-

⁵⁴ “Vennero alcuni turchi a farci vedere una leonessa, a far molte cose a modo loro, ed alcuni a suonare di nacchere, ed una ragazza a ballare con certi stromenti, ai quali tutti fu data la mancia.” Contarini, *Diario*, 26.

⁵⁵ See chapter 1, and Bogumil Hrabak, “Kramari u karavanskom saobraćaju preko Sanđaka (Kramars in the Caravan Crossings through Sanžak): 1470-1700,” *Simpozijum: Seoski dani Sretena Vukosavljevića X*

century Ragusa Road, to imagine a frictionless point-to-point pathway across the Balkans with seamless transitions across the areas of authority of multiple local powers. It is only when Italian travelers deviated from the beaten path, putting together a caravan from scratch and taking a significantly less-traveled alternative, that the complexity of organization comes to the fore.

Lorenzo Bernardo

In April of 1591, Lorenzo Bernardo, formerly *bailo* of Constantinople, had only recently returned to Venice from a trip to Corfu and Cephalonia when he was approached by Venice's Consiglio de' X (Council of Ten) with an urgent, secret mission.⁵⁶ Venetian authorities had acquired information that implicated the current *bailo* of Constantinople, Girolamo Lippomano Kavalier, in multiple crimes, including the selling of state secrets to Spain.⁵⁷ A plan was hatched to send a small mission led by Bernardo to Istanbul where Bailo Lippomano would be extracted and returned to Venice to face the allegations. Bernardo would stay behind as temporary *bailo*

(1983), 191-223; Sergije Dimitrijević, *Dubrovački Karavani u južnoj Srbiji u XVII veku (Les Caravanes de Dubrovnik dans la Serbie du Sud au XVIIe siècle)* (Belgrade: Naučno Delo, 1958).

⁵⁶ On Lorenzo Bernardo, see Giovanni Pillini, "Lorenzo Bernardo," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* vol. 9 (1967); Dursteler, "The Bailo in Constantinople," 10.

⁵⁷ On Girolamo Lippomano, see "Il Bailaggio a Costantinopoli di Girolamo Lippomano e la sua Tragica Fine" *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* (Venezia: F Visentin, 1903) and Preto, *Servizi Segreti*. For a challenge to the official Venetian narrative of Lippomano's suicide, see the chapter "Girolamo Lippomano: suicido o delitto di stato" in Carla Coco and Flora Manzonetto, *Baili Veneziani*, 51-55.

until a permanent replacement could be found and sent. The Council of Ten and the Senate, concerned by the potential ramifications that could arise if Lippomano became aware of the charges, deemed secrecy to be of the utmost importance. Lippomano was not to know he was under suspicion until Bernardo's arrival at the Ottoman capital (and even then, the charges were to remain as vague and non-threatening as possible). The difficulty was, how to organize and carry out such a journey while preserving its secrecy? Ultimately, after much consultation with local authorities, a plan was hatched that reworked the familiar sea-land route, but avoided the Ragusa Road entirely. Aware of Dubrovnik's excellent information-gathering and communications systems, Bernardo's party would take the most unexpected and lowest-profile route possible, that of the of the ancient *Via Egnatia* across Albania and northern Greece. In the process, Bernardo (or rather his secretary, Gabriele Cavazza) would record what appears to be the only travelogue from the sixteenth century to survive from what had been a major imperial road in the Roman transportation system.⁵⁸

Having set sail from Venice on the 26th of April, Bernardo's party arrived in Ragusa just before midnight on the sixth of May. Although it was prime season for Mediterranean sailing, it appears that their determination to continue by land rather than by sea was never in doubt. The only question was, what route to take? The Ragusa Road was out, due to the "curiosity of the Ragusans" who "informed the Turkish Porte of every event."⁵⁹ But it would be challenging for the Venetian party to assemble a caravan on their own without recourse to the resources

⁵⁸ Yerasimos, *Voyageurs*, 32. See also Elizavet Zachariadou, *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1669)* (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1996).

⁵⁹ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 22.

found in Dubrovnik. The Venetian dragoman Marchiò Spinelli was dispatched to inquire discretely about obtaining “36 horses, two or three ‘chiaussi’ (*çavuş*, an Ottoman messenger, sergeant, or guard), or janissaries, or *sipahis*, without giving away for whom or to where they would be heading.”⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the rest of the party continued southwards by sea to the Venetian-held ports of Kotor and Dolcigno. How Spinelli was to accomplish his task without arousing the notorious curiosity of the Ragusans is not mentioned in the text.

As the main group continues south past Dubrovnik, the narrative fills with the activities of go-betweens. These men were tasked with finding caravan leaders, horses and guards, and with contacting Ottoman authorities in the interior. In addition, they were instructed to gather up-to-date information about security and travel times along several potential axes. No less than six agents involved in the process are mentioned by name. Some, like Spinelli, were specialists who traveled from Venice with the party. Others, such as Zuane Bolizza and Vincenzo Pitcovich, were borrowed from local Venetian authorities in Dalmatia, used for their Slavic language skills and their knowledge of the surrounding geographic and human terrain. There were even occasions when go-betweens were sent to track down go-betweens, as in the case of the 12th of May, when Zuane Bolizza was sent to find Vincenzo Decca, who had not yet returned from his mission to negotiate safe passage from Ottoman officials in Alessio (Lezhë, Albania).

Even at this late stage, the party was still considering their overland alternatives. On the 13th of May, Bernardo went aboard the galley of the Provveditore dell’Armata (Commissioner of

⁶⁰ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 22.

the Fleet) to inquire about the ease and safety of the various roads to Constantinople. Thanks to the “Turkish ministers” of the Provveditore and knowledge of the Rectors of Corfu, Bernardo was finally able to make a final decision.⁶¹ They would make their entrance into Ottoman territory at Alessio (Lezhë, Albania), from which they would head south to Elbasan. From this provincial administrative center, they would continue east along the *Via Egnatia* to Thessaloniki and, eventually, Istanbul. This route was judged to be relatively safe and four days shorter than an alternative through Skopje. What’s more, the Elbasan Road (the term *Via Egnatia* never appears in this account) was rarely traveled, which lessened the likelihood of interested parties in Constantinople becoming aware of their mission.⁶²

By this time, the go-betweens were finally making progress in putting the caravan together. Spinelli and Bolizza negotiated with the Janissary Ağa in Dolcigno (Ulcinj, Albania) for the standard two janissary guards for the voyage. The four loaves of sugar, four boxes of sugared almonds and four large candles they presented to the Ağa seems to have expedited their request.⁶³ Vincenzo Pitcovich, meanwhile, had reached deal with “two Turks” in Alessio for 40 horses, although these were only to go as far as Elbasan, a few stages away, where they would need to be exchanged. On the 15th of May, Lorenzo Bernardo and his party was finally on

⁶¹ Paolo Preto has noted the practice by which Venetian officials across the Stato da Mar recruited Turkish informants (some of whom are noted as ‘bandito’) to observe Ottoman activities, especially in the period after the Battle of Mohács (1526) *Servizi Segreti*, 249.

⁶² “...deliberò di tener la via di Elbassano, perchè anche, essendo insolita a personaggi, fuggisse l’occasione che a Costantinopoli pervenisse l’avviso della sua andata prima del suo arrivo.” Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 25.

⁶³ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 25.

horseback, having spent the previous night in Ottoman Alessio in the voyage's first caravanserai, one he describes as rather bad and uncomfortable.⁶⁴ It is striking how quickly Bernardo's party was able to organize such a complex logistical operation, and equally striking how many experienced individuals were necessary to bring all the essential pieces together.

The attention given to the logistical details seen in Lorenzo Bernardo's 1591 account bears comparison to the experiences of Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori, written almost 100 years earlier. Like the Florentine humanists, Bernardo's mission depended on skillful negotiation by go-betweens, translators, and countrymen stationed abroad. As with Bonsignore's letters, these indispensable agents are listed by name in Bernardo's later narrative. The Italian travelers who followed Bonsignore along the Ragusa Road in the sixteenth century encountered a greatly expanded and improved transportation system served by experienced brokers, caravan leaders, drovers, and guards. Later accounts simply take the organization of caravans as a given, not worthy of comment or elaboration. Ramberti (1539) only spent five days in Ragusa, at which point he simply states: "we mounted our horses and set out from Ragusa."⁶⁵ Contarini's *Diario* from 1580 offers more detail, but it is clear that their operations are being handled locally by trusted professionals. There is no sending of fixers to and fro. After four days in Ragusa, Contarini's sizeable party set out in the company of a dragoman named Pasquale and two Janissaries, "Cussein" and "Musli." Based on the writings of these two Venetian travelers, their time was spent observing Ragusan customs, costumes, and

⁶⁴ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 26.

⁶⁵ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 5r.

women, not trying to organize a caravan. For Ramberti and Contarini, the professionals they hired in Dubrovnik ensured a smooth transition from the sea voyage to the overland phase of the journey, but no one could reduce the inherent physical difficulty of crossing the mountainous Dalmatian terrain. Contarini's account gratefully notes how his caravan leader "Marco Vanissirichi" arranged for roasted kid goats for their first dinner on the road, after which they slept soundly after the rigors of first day of overland travel through the rocky Dalmatian mountains.⁶⁶

It is worth taking Stephanos Yerasimos' conception of a bifurcated and unequal Ottoman transportation system seriously. In reference to the 'Left Arm' or Via Egnatia, he writes that the section to the west of Salonika, was "uncomfortable, poorly equipped, and little frequented." The eastern half, by contrast, was much more "animated and maintained," from Salonika to the Ottoman capital.⁶⁷ Similarly, the western section of the Ragusa Road, though much more developed than the *Via Egnatia* in the Ottoman era, still pales in comparison to the magnificent complexes that mark the eastern stages of the imperial road. West of Niš and Sofia, where the Ragusa Road diverted from the 'Middle Arm' or *Via Militaris*, there were many lead-covered caravanserais and impressive stone bridges, but few matched the grandeur of the awe-inspiring monuments seen on the approaches to Edirne and Istanbul across Thrace. Yerasimos' further argument of a conscious Ottoman policy of neglect regarding the roads of the frontier, whether in Herzegovina or in other border areas (such as north-west Hungary and in Kurdistan)

⁶⁶ Contarini, *Diario*, 12-13.

⁶⁷ Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs*, 36.

is intriguing, but ultimately unconvincing.⁶⁸ While the Ottoman architecture of the western border regions can't compare to the scale, magnificence, and sheer abundance of the empire's core areas, the presence of numerous scattered masterworks near the western border contradicts the idea of an intentional policy of underdevelopment.⁶⁹

While the *Via Egnatia* was an unusual choice for international travelers in the sixteenth century, it was nevertheless a well-used commercial road network. Bernardo describes seeing a great number of horses loaded with grain heading from the productive hinterland to the redistribution centers on the coast. On the 16th of May, as the Venetians made their way to Elbasan, Bernardo estimates the number of caravan horses encountered at over 500, each one carrying a load of grain to Alessio.⁷⁰ The agricultural/industrial character of the western half of the *Egnatia* route may explain the poor quality of the lodgings and scarce resources the travelers encountered in Albania and Macedonia. Bernardo explicitly warns future travelers that "from Alessio to this place (near Kruje, Albania), it is not possible to buy bread nor wine nor is any lodging to be found. . . we brought with us our own provisions."⁷¹ On May 20, Bernardo reports

⁶⁸ ". . . c'est le cas pour les autres *limes* de l'empire Ottoman, la haute Herzegovine, le nord-ouest de la Hongrie ou le Kurdistan." Yerasimos, *Les Voyageurs*, 38.

⁶⁹ Ottoman bridges in Višegrad, Goražde, Foča, Mostar, and especially Trebinje (only one stage inland from Dubrovnik) don't fit into Yerasimos' scheme of maintaining an intentionally bad road system on the borders as an obstacle to invasion. It is likely that the concentration of monumental patronage in the Eastern Balkan Peninsula (closer to the capitals and chief provincial cities) had more to do with prestige and the allocation of resources than with a consistent policy.

⁷⁰ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 28.

⁷¹ "È da avvertire, che da Alessio fin questo luogo non si trova da comprar pane nè vino nè si vede alcun alloggiamento; di che informati, ne portassimo con noi la provisione." Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 27.

more bad roads, plus rain, and “extremely bad lodging in some farmhouses of poor peasants” with “neither bread nor wine.”⁷² Even in a developed town like Monastir (Bitola, Macedonia), which featured a *bedesten* (covered market) and impressive Ottoman mosques, the caravanserai is described as “good for the horses but uncomfortable for people.”⁷³

On the other side of Thessaloniki the party’s lodging options were greatly improved. One day past Kavala, in Genizzè (Genisea, Greece), Bernardo’s caravan stayed at an “imaret” (hospice) described as “pretty comfortable” where bread and meat and wine were brought in from another village a mile away.⁷⁴ A few stages later, at “Ipsalia” (Ipsala, Turkey), having crossed the Maritsa River on ferries, they enjoyed the “very comfortable” caravanserai built, we learn, by Ibrahim Bey, the *kethüda* (steward) of Sokollu Mehmet Pasha.⁷⁵ The facilities at Ipsala were so congenial that the party stayed a few extra days to rest and recover from the previous stages of travel in excessive heat. The complex’s two fountains with “excellent fresh water” must have been greatly appreciated by the hot and tired travelers. At Rodosto (Tekirdağ), the caravanserai built by Rüstem Pasha offered wayfarers three free meals of bread and soup per day, all for the benefit of the soul of the patron.⁷⁶ Finally, on the eastern side of the bridge at Küçükçekmece, Bernardo’s account gives the *itinerario*’s single most elaborate description in his

⁷² “Avessimo anco cattivissimo alloggiamento in alcune cascine di poveri contadini; nè vi si trovò ne pane nè vino.” Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 29.

⁷³ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 30.

⁷⁴ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 36.

⁷⁵ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 37.

⁷⁶ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 38.

treatment of the “Imaret di Audiscelam” (Medrese of Defterdar Abdüsselam Bey).⁷⁷ The Venetians gladly stayed in the complex’s apartments, just across a “beautiful courtyard” from the mosque and the rooms of the medrese students.

The division of the Balkan roads into their more- and less- developed sections is useful as a schematic picture of infrastructural development, but ultimately merely confirms the obvious: proximity to major centers like Istanbul and Edirne led to more extensive and prestigious sites of patronage. Locations on the margins of the Ottoman provinces typically had more modest Ottoman monuments and infrastructure. From the perspective of cross-cultural history, the most revealing details of Bernardo’s account stem from the numerous times when the travelers found private alternatives to the unappealing caravanserais of the western *Via Egnatia*. The very first day out from Alessio, Bernardo and his group stopped in at the house of “Malcoz [Malkoç] Agha, relative of Mustafa, the kethüda of Krujë.”⁷⁸ A week later, near Lake Ohrid in a location without a caravanserai, they stayed in the house of a janissary. It was not very comfortable, the author writes, but they found good wine there.⁷⁹ These extraordinary recurring encounters raise countless questions which the text refuses to answer. Was it one of their own janissary guards who opened up his home? The text uses the indefinite article (“un gianizzero”) and gives no additional information about this individual. Did they know him? Was it his (Christian) family’s wine that they enjoyed? Did the Muslim members of the caravan

⁷⁷ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 39.

⁷⁸ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 30.

⁷⁹ “...ma alloggiassimo in casa di un giannizzero assai incomodamente. Ma vi trovassimo buon vino.” Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 30.

partake in drinking it? Did the travelers pay the family for their meals, lodgings and animal fodder? What did a high-ranking Venetian official and an Ottoman soldier from Macedonia talk about over dinner?

Besides a well-organized caravan industry, travelers who followed a secondary route like the *Via Egnatia* missed out on another important resource: the extensive network of Ragusan merchants. Ramberti repeatedly notes the presence of Ragusan merchant communities in the main settlements along the way, including Foča, Novi Pazar, and Sofia.⁸⁰ Contarini's account mentions a "fondaco dei ragusei" in Novi Pazar, while in Sofia, Contarini's group attended mass in the Ragusan church and were lodged in the home of a Ragusan gentleman after their dragoman failed to make proper arrangements at the city's caravanserai.⁸¹ Venice and Ragusa were political rivals, to be sure, but Venetian overland travelers on the Ragusa Road relied on a the dispersed population of Dubrovnik's merchants as a knowledgeable network of co-religionists and Italian speakers who could offer both spiritual and practical support.

Bernardo and his followers, of course, did all they could to avoid Dubrovnik's merchants, who were well known for their information-gathering and sharing with Ottoman authorities. In the absence of Ragusans, another well-connected minority dispersed through the Ottoman provinces seems to have served a similar function. In Monastir (Bitola) the party benefitted from the assistance of Rabbi Samuel Namias as they changed horses for the next portion of the journey.⁸² The following day, Bernardo sent some of his men ahead to Salonika to prepare for

⁸⁰ Ramberti, *Delle cose*, 5v, 6v, 7v.

⁸¹ Contarini, *Diario*, 26-27.

⁸² Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 30.

their next transfer point, hoping for a quick a transition as possible. Another local Rabbi, Abraham Namias (brother of the aforementioned Samuel) helped with the preparations.⁸³ Once the main group reached Salonika, Abraham showed them the sights of the city.⁸⁴

After Thessaloniki, Bernardo's account describes the series of well-furnished caravanserais and give no further mention of local Jewish support. Along this section of road where Ottoman infrastructure was developed to a high level it seems that there was little need for such practical assistance from local networks. The two-tiered road system suggested by Yerasimos, with a well-appointed eastern half and a more rudimentary western half, meant that travelers were often forced to rely on 'non-official' lodging and local assistance with their transportation needs. Ragusans and Jews were two communities found across the Ottoman Balkans and across the Mediterranean world, familiar and apparently supportive to travelers from the Italian states. The well-distributed merchant networks of these communities offered a kind of support system that helped make up for the deficiencies of the empire's travel infrastructure in the western reaches of Ottoman territory.

Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* focuses primarily on maritime travel as the defining force of 'connectivity' in Mediterranean history. Yet, like Braudel, the authors also make important points about overland mobility. "The main hindrance to the movements of people and goods by land," they write, "has usually been social rather than physical"⁸⁵ What

⁸³ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 31.

⁸⁴ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 33.

⁸⁵ Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 132.

are these 'social hindrances,' and how were they overcome? *The Corrupting Sea* points to security as an essential factor, one that was probably more significant than technical innovations or geographical barriers.

Establishing the status of the trader, ensuring the safe movement of an envoy, guaranteeing the embassy from harassment are more important than technical improvements in bearings, harness or road-surfaces.⁸⁶

The state, in this view, has the potential to reduce the friction of overland travel by ensuring the security of the traveler and his goods. Accounts left by Italian travelers in the Ottoman Balkans support this understanding, and also complicate it. The top-down mandates and investments made by the Ottoman state and its elite members were an essential basis for the success long distance overland travel. The freedom, security, and consistency with which Italians moved across long distance with their valuable cargoes is striking. Hostile encounters with local inhabitants or Ottoman officials are very rare. The legal guarantees offered to privileged foreigners in official documents (capitulations or *'ahid-nāmes*) seem largely to have held up in actual practice, even on the borders of empire. The Ottoman legal system, reliant on the kadis found in all significant settlements, earned the respect of Venetian travelers like Lorenzo Bernardo, who describes what he interpreted as a school for judges ("cadilaggio") in Monastir (Bitola). The school, he writes, "succeeded in producing men and documents with

⁸⁶ Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, 377.

which justice was administered, and for this reason [the graduates] were sent as kadis into various parts of the Ottoman Empire.”⁸⁷

The preceding accounts also make it abundantly clear that such official structures were only one dimension of a complex set of practices that supported overland travel. Local communities, whether the urban networks of Jewish and Ragusan traders or the rural populations who provided pack animals, drovers, and sustenance, were essential resources without whom consistent movement, particularly across the mountainous and distant western regions, would have been difficult if not impossible. Travel accounts confirm that reducing the ‘social hindrances’ of overland travel was a multi-layered and multi-faceted operation that flourished along certain privileged axes of mobility, despite minimal investment by the state in silver or manpower.

And what became of Lorenzo Bernardo’s secret mission to Constantinople? The party arrived in the Ottoman capital on the 15th of June after a 50-day journey across sea and land. The diplomats’ first order of business was to seek out ‘Pasqual Dragomano’ in the city, to find out what the current *bailo* and the Ottomans knew about their activities.⁸⁸ It turns out that all the secrecy and trouble of taking the ‘Left Arm’ had largely been in vain. The dragoman revealed that “they had already known for 10 or 12 days” about Bernardo’s imminent arrival,

⁸⁷ “Quivi sono buoni turchi per esser il luogo come di studio, dal quale riescono huomini sufficienti ed atti ad amministrar giustizia, che perciò si mandano per cadì in diverse parti dell’imperio turchesco.” Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 30.

⁸⁸ Could this be the same Pasquale who annoyed Contarini with his incompetence during their journey in 1580?

and from more than one source.⁸⁹ Pasqual couldn't say with certainty which of the many channels of information had betrayed them, but his casual list of the possibilities reveals the rich flow of information from the periphery to the center of the Ottoman world. Several possible informers are mentioned by the dragoman, including anonymous sources in Ragusa and Kotor, their own caravan leaders, Ottoman officials in Elbasan (who might have sent word by messenger to the grand vizier), and the Levantine merchants encountered in Elbasan who had taken the quicker sea route from Salonika to Istanbul.⁹⁰ The good news, from Venice's perspective, was that none of the above parties was privy to Bernardo's motivation for coming. Nevertheless, the accused *bailo* Lippomano had also been alerted, due an error committed by the Venetian "inquisitori" (members of the Council of Ten) themselves, whose letters with instructions intended for Bernardo were inadvertently delivered to Lippomano five days prior to his replacement's arrival.⁹¹ The sitting *bailo* was understandably extremely perturbed to learn that Bernardo's ultimate aim was to ensure Lippomano's extradition to Venice to face interrogation by the Council of Ten. Despite having seen this secret correspondence, it seems that the full extent of the charges he was facing was not revealed.

The Lippomano affair shares many similarities with the resolution of the Pazzi Conspiracy, over a century earlier. Bernardo's mission echoes that of Antonio de' Medici, one of the earliest documented Italian travelers on the Ragusa Road. Both were experienced

⁸⁹ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 40.

⁹⁰ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 40.

⁹¹ Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 40.

diplomats sent to resolve a major political crisis that linked Istanbul with an Italian state. In both cases the carefully selected agent took the combination sea/land route to cross the Adriatic and the Balkans; both returned with the accused entirely by the maritime route. Like the fugitive conspirator Bernardo Bandini dei Baroncelli, Girolamo Lippomano's life ended on return to his native city. Lippomano, however, managed to avoid being tortured, interrogated, and disgraced at the hands of the Venetian authorities. Gabriele Cavazza, the secretary who likely wrote Bernardo's account, returned to Venice by sea with Lippomano, and was present for the dramatic denouement of his life's narrative. As their ship entered the lagoon of Venice, passing the "two castles" that marked the final approach to the city itself, Lippomano, who at some point on his return to Venice had received details from his brother about the severity of the charges he was facing, suddenly threw off his clothing and jumped overboard. His body was recovered, "more dead than alive," but Bailo Lippomano expired shortly after in the nearby Church of San Nicolò del Lido, whose namesake was and remains the patron saint of those who traveled by sea.⁹²

⁹² Bernardo, *Viaggio*, 46.

Conclusion

Geographers have coined the evocative phrase 'desire path' to describe the human and animal habit of taking shortcuts and veering from official routes. The phenomenon, in which a traveler instinctively selects the shortest and most efficient route, is known by many other names: game trail, social trail, herd path, goat trail, deer trail, and bootleg trail being only a few. The desire path is the bane of landscapers and urban planners, who are forced into a choice: do they fight these wildcat trails with fencing and strategically placed shrubs? Or should they simply embrace the spontaneously generated path, adapting to the desires of the crowd rather than imposing an unwanted structure? The Ragusa Road's history shows that the simplest pathway is not always the most popular. Mobility in the Ottoman Balkans was governed by many other factors beyond efficiency.

Human history is, in many ways, a history of movement. It is no accident that journeys are so prominent in sacred texts and origin stories (the Exodus from Egypt, Aeneas' flight from Troy to found Rome, the Hegira of Mohammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina, etc.). Pilgrimages, likewise, are undertaken by believers of all faiths around the world. Despite the centrality of mobility, historians have been reluctant to explore its principles in much detail. Nomads moved with their flocks, traders exploited their networks, soldiers followed the dictates of politics and power. Mobility, underlying all of these processes, is taken for granted. Like gravity it is simply a force that exists, requiring no explanation. It is only when confronted with strange contradictions (a sultan leading his army across a river on horseback within view of a magnificent stone bridge, for example) that such assumptions begin to fall apart.

This dissertation has attempted to capture the forces that governed mobility by investigating the multiple conditions, policies, technologies, and individual actions that impacted patterns of movement along a specific axis over time. The citizens of Dubrovnik were walled in by both nature (the karst mountain chains of the Dinaric Alps) and politics (territorially encircled by the Ottoman empire). As a result, they would appear destined for a life of seafaring. To be sure, Ragusa's marine endeavors thrived. Its deep engagement with the Balkan hinterland beyond its borders, however, makes less intuitive sense. The resourcefulness and energy that Dubrovnik's leaders poured into the maintenance of their political and economic agreements with the Ottomans can be understood as a reflection of the inherent insecurity of the city's position. Ragusans understood that their city thrived as a central point between land and sea networks. Once its place as an outlet for road networks degraded, Dubrovnik became just another port city on the Adriatic. Yet, by understanding its position, caravan travel from the City of St. Blaise remained viable for centuries, thriving during the so-called Classical Age of the Ottoman Empire.

To some readers, the kind of forward-thinking by Ottoman officials that I have argued for may seem far-fetched. In the absence of explicit archival evidence, we cannot know for sure what the intentions of Sultan Murad II were in offering Dubrovnik such a favored position in the imperial order. Perhaps the unique privileges given to the republic were only meant as a temporary measure, a stopgap as the empire came to terms with the vast territories and populations it had conquered in its first centuries. The abundant road architecture of Rumelia is a convincing indication that Ottoman leaders did, in fact, have a coherent understanding of the value of the empire's Ragusa policy. The capitulations that helped ensure Dubrovnik's

prosperity were also beneficial to the Ottoman provinces and the imperial center. The bridges, caravanserais, public baths, and covered markets built by Ottoman patrons gave the merchants of Dubrovnik and the entire Adriatic region further impetus to follow the Ragusa Road, enlivening the markets of remote Balkan mountain towns with the products of a globally connected world.

It is striking to compare the reports of Italian travelers in Ottoman Rumelia with the observations of Europeans encountering the New World. Although descriptions of the Balkans are sprinkled with references to Pliny, Ovid, and Philip of Macedon, it is clear that their authors, like those in the Americas, were encountering a deeply foreign place. To see the ways these travelers made sense of the inhabitants of Rumelia is to realize how little even well-educated Europeans knew about the world around them. Moreover, their reports give clear indications of how badly the ideological demands of nationalism have shaped our expectations of the past. In traveler's eyes, the region's ethnic and religious categories are fluid or break down entirely. Caravan groups were populated by individuals whose identities were not defined by the categories too often described as 'timeless' in Balkans. Go-betweens, translators, caravan-leaders, and janissary guards were in constant dialogue across cultural and imperial borders. By looking closely at mobility and its cultural consequences, these and other problems in Ottoman and Mediterranean studies come into focus in new, and I hope productive ways.

"Meander," a novelist wrote, "if you want to get to town."¹

¹ Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

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