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IMPRINTS OF A CIVILIZATION

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SKIRA

ARMENIA
IMPRINTS OF A CIVILIZATION

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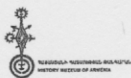
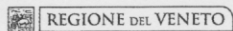
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VII. *A trifora*: Turkic Armenian Presences, Views and Writings in the Venetian Cultural Landscape

Giampiero Bellingeri

The memory re-emerges of cultural traits inscribed within the dynamic continuity in which the Armenians live, work and speak, traits that are reflected in the sources arriving in Venice from abroad, where they are re-elaborated and then spread across the world. A collection of information is presented here regarding an extensive geographical and political area, marked by Turkish-Persian and Tartar-Russian hegemonies which were vital to the Venetian Republic and familiar to the Armenians, who were a distinct, inseparable factor in that societal and historical space. We therefore take the Levant as our angle of orientation, a crucial and delicate cardinal point for the Republic in the fourteenth–nineteenth centuries.

In those lands and on these pages, in the landscapes, and in our texts and contexts, shadows emerge as the projections of the vital, weighty outlines of people and ideas recorded by industrious Venetians and incorporated not only into their science and political documentation, but also into published works. These were realms mapped out by observers during the course of their travels, whether real or textual, perhaps accompanied by prejudices in vogue at the time:

“We departed in the pre-dawn hours and at around the hour of vespers on the 25th of March in that year [1474] we entered the city of Caffa [...]. In Caffa an Armenian called Morach, who was acting as the ambassador from Rome to Uzun Hassan, proposed that I go together with another aged Armenian who [...] would take me down to a place known as Tina, about one hundred miles from Trabesunta (Trebizond), which was in Ottoman territory. [...] The Armenian who came with me from Caffa and said he was one of Uzun Hassan’s men [...] turned out to be a grand villain, and I was told that I was quite fortunate to be free of him. I took back the horse that I had given him and bade him farewell. I took an Armenian priest as my guide to take me to Tauris, finding him to be quite trustworthy” (Contarini/Lockhart 1973, p. 184–90).

Ambrogio Contarini (Venice, 1429–1499) – assigned with Josaphat Barbaro in the early 1470s on a mission to the sultan of Persia, Uzun Hassan (1433–1478), to establish a much-coveted but never achieved alliance between Venice and the Persians against the Ottomans – travelled to Iran across the Eurasian continent, i.e. via “lower Russia” and “Lesser Tartaria” (Crimea and the Transcaucasus), and returned home by the same route (1475–76). It was a winding path, which could not have failed in its meandering to offer opportunities for encounters with Armenians of such greatly varying temperament (as is the norm in the human race) as to allow the Venetian emissary to establish, if not an agreement with the Turkoman prince of Persia, at least a sort of reassuring entente somewhere between moral lowliness and loftiness. Others would end up regionalizing, generalizing, and “nationalizing” the characteristics of those human “types”:

“Many merchants go away from this city (Bitlis) to ply their trade in Aleppo, in Tauris and in Bursa. They leave because there are no wares to be bought or sold there [in Bitlis], given that it is full of Kurds and lowly men. There are also many Armenian Christians there; people worse than Mohammedans, and not just here, but everywhere in Persia where they are found...” (*De quel de Alepo*, 152r-175r; *Viaggio d’un mercante*, p. 437).

In the following passage we seem to hear the echo of and nostalgia for lost Armenian virtue:

“In days of old the nobles there [in Lesser Armenia] were valiant men, and did doughty deeds of arms; but nowadays they are poor creatures, and good at nought, unless it be at boozing; they are great at that.” (Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated by Henry Yule, Book 1, Chapter 1).

Detail of the map of Piazza San Marco showing the arrangement of the stands for the Fair of the “Sensa” (Ascension) (ASVe) (cat. 75)

This was certainly not hypocritical flattery of a people with whom the Venetians continued to interact, providing and gaining benefits, information and knowledge. Tracks and impressions are retraced and assimilated. And they are precisely what comes back to us embossed, imbued with values and suggestions for the title that springs from the matrix of this exhibition: a memorable print (1512) literally constitutes the pretext for reviving the memory of other old texts in a multipartite context or panorama. Nourished and also dissolved by the etymon that may evoke a negative "oppression/pressure", those marked tracks and impressions return to hover distinct in the air, almost like the silhouettes of talking rocks and tombstones, coming to rest then on the pages of memory, to transmit, to communicate, the features of the shadows, of the voices carved, engraved or imprinted on the pages of a Venetian, and thus European, culture – i.e. economy – that finds its outlet, as mentioned, in the publishing enterprise. The richer and more exemplary it is, the more we register inputs of different provenances, with specific, well assimilated contributions coming from or through the Armenians. And all of this takes place in the continuity of passages from one place and one time to another, in the stratification and transmission of knowledge, when memory expands, stimulated by the faintest relief, and traces out a tradition.

We were speaking of continuity as a fitting way to remember the centuries-long Armenian presence in Venetian spheres and documents, not only that relating to the usual stock-in-trade. We witness the formation of this lasting interaction, which also manifests itself in constant and reversible shifts in the forms of transmission over the course of changing times: from oral transmission, and from epistolary relations to more complex manuscripts, to printed works, to the manuscript again, as if to declare that a work or an operation is not completely finished by being crushed or suffocated under the force of the press. And we must not forget the regular rhythm of a sort of respiration: the living exchange between people of quips, phrases and opinions in a manifold relationship expressed partially through a traffic in tales that reorganize and update the views of the world, cultural discourses, and political plans in Venice.

We go back to teetering on the tightrope of a chronological sense that links the historical period when the texts were produced to that of their discovery or rediscovery, that is, their resurfacing and reinterpretation in Venice. From the perspective of a mature Humanism, we look back at the revived centuries:

"Now, this history written more than 150 years [ago] in an old book having fallen into my hands, I wished to take from it only the part in which the Tartars are discussed, finding it to correspond to what is told in the book of the aforementioned Signor Marco [Polo]. [...] And the thing that amazes me in this Armenian writer is the division of Asia into two parts, one called deep, the other greater, similar to what we find in Strabo, dividing it into two parts with a straight line from east to west" (Ramusio 1980, pp. 304–307).

Let us also go in search of mentions of this deep Asia – the "depths" of Asia – and of Greater Asia:

"There are four kingdoms in the land of Armenia, but one monarch always holds the lordship. Lengthwise, the land of Armenia begins with the Persian kingdom and stretches west to the kingdom of the Turks. [It] begins at the city of Darial, called the Iron Gate. This was constructed by King Alexander [the Great] because he did not want the various and sundry peoples living in the *depths of Asia* to enter *Greater Asia* without his command. [...] The people inhabiting the land of Armenia are called by various names according to their districts and localities. They are valiant warriors, both mounted and on foot. In respect to armaments, they imitate the Tartars, under whose domination they have been for a long time. As for letters, they have [different sorts of alphabets], some Armenian and another besides, called Alo'ye'n [Alcen, Aghuanian]. In Armenia there is one mountain, commonly called Ararat, which is taller than any other. And it was on the summit of this mountain that Noah's Ark first rested after the Flood" (modern English translation made by Robert Bedrosian from the Old English text published in Hetoum, *A Lytell Cronycle*, Richard Pynson's Translation (c. 1520) of Hayton of Corycus, *La Fleur des histoires de la terre d'Orient* (c. 1307) edited by Glenn Burger, Toronto 1988, Chapter 9, "The Kingdom of Armenia", italics added).

The above excerpt – while not taken exactly from the "history written more than 150 years [ago]" (it was composed actually much more than 150 years prior, almost 100 years more) of that "old book" of which G.B. Ramusio (Treviso 1485–1557 Padua) wrote – was distilled from strata of composite, polyphonic, precious sheaves of writings and descriptions archived in Venice. We are aided in a precise fashion here by an old vulgate translation (1337, still a neglected handwritten document) of a work which, with its repeated printings, testifies to a reiterated Venetian interest in certain tesserae in the world mosaic. This mosaic was also examined in the lagoon city through the Armenian perspective: we are talking about another manifes-



"Armenian Merchant",
Giovanni Grevembroch,
Venetian Dress, p. 53 (17th c.),
Venice, Museo Civico Correr

tation of *La flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* (*The Flower of Histories of the East*). This is the famous work by an Armenian politician who became a Premonstratensian monk, Hayton of Corycus, or as he was known in Venetian, Aitone/Haiton/Antonio "dal Curcho", (born c. 1230–45; died post 1309). He referred to himself as "dominus Curchi / lord of Courc" and was the nephew of the king of Armenia, Het'um I, who ruled from 1223 to 1268. In composing this famous work, Hayton drew on Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, Marco Polo (the *Milione* and *La Flor* are often published together), and those who continued William of Tyre's work on a history of the Holy Land. They prove Hayton's knowledge of these *itineraria*; he brought together elements from various sources, originally organized into three sections which, upon request from Pope Clement V (Raymond Bertrand de Got), were dictated in French – a language congenial to the Pope – to Nicolas Falcon, later translated into Latin in Poitiers in 1307.

Hayton went on to add a fourth section, in which he illustrated the most appropriate stages and tactics for retaking the Holy Lands via an alliance with the Tartars (the "scourge of God", now instrumentalized), proposing to Pope Clement a "*parvum passagium*", the gradual deployment of fighters, who would initially be stationed in Armenia/Cilicia and Cyprus. His advice reads as follows:

"The general passage [the Crusade to liberate the Holy Land] could be undertaken via three routes. One would be via Barbary [i.e. North Africa] but I would not advise it, given the condition of the country. Another [route] would be by way of Constantinople [...]. I fully believe that the general passage might easily reach the city of Constantinople. But going through the Braz of Georgie [the Bosphorus] and by the Turks, the way would be uncertain, for Saracen Turkmens dwell in Turkey. Truly the Tartars may deliver and insure the route and might order that provisions be brought into the land of Turkey at reasonable price, sufficient for the pilgrim host and horses. As everyone knows, the other route is by sea. Therefore, if the passage will go by sea, at every port ships must be fitted out and other necessities readied to cross over with the pilgrims. [...] the pilgrims should refresh themselves and their horses in the realm of Cyprus until Michaelmas so that they might safely cross to the realm of Armenia. There they will find whatever they need" (modern English translation made by Robert Bedrosian from the Old English text published in Hetoum, *A Lytell Cronycle*, Richard Pynson's Translation (c. 1520) cit., Book 4, "The General Passage").

Such a scheme, opposed by other proponents of the liberation of the Holy Land, was considered unfeasible and partisan because it would have been unsustainable and was marked by the machinations of the "crafty" Hayton, who sought to ensure the protection of his fatherland: in effect, the purpose of the endeavour appears to have been to sensitize Europe to the dramatic situation of Armenia. Nonetheless, while deemed absurd by strategists, this plan for the Crusade, to be conducted with the support of the Tartars and prepared by means of a preliminary expedition, was not entirely displeasing to the Pope, and the "*passagium particulare*" would be discussed by Marin Sanudo the Elder (Venice c. 1270–post 1343) in his *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis* (presented in two copies to Pope John XXII in Avignon in September 1321). Here is another Venetian who consults this work, in addition to that of the Beluacensian, makes use of it, but does not speak of the suggestion received.

Heartfelt homage seems to be made both to the *Flor* and to the land of Hayton ("Courc") also by another distinguished and adroit Venetian politician, Josaphat Barbaro (Venice 1413–1494, in Persia from 1474 to 1478, after shuttling back and forth between Cyprus and the shores of Anatolia, i.e. "Armenia minor", 1473–February 1474):

"I returned to Curchio [Corycus] [...]. This Curchio is on the sea. It has [...] to the west a cliff about a third of a mile around. At the top [facing the sea] there once stood a castle [...], much of it currently in ruins. *On its main doors there are certain inscriptions in beautiful letters appearing to be Armenian, but not like the ones the Armenians currently use, given that the Armenians who were with me were not able to read them.* [...] In this castle there is another one with imposing walls and towers, altogether about two thirds of a mile in circumference. *Above its two doors it too has certain inscriptions in Armenian letters*" (Lockhart et al. 1973, p. 110–13, italics added).

Those letters, mysterious to the Armenians themselves, still allow us to venture an interpretation, or patchy review of another, more domestic text, conceived in Armenian, i.e. Hayton's tale and plan as told by Josaphat. He was, in turn and in different historical conditions, sent by his Republic, thanks to his preliminary expedition to the waters of Cyprus and the shores of Corycus, to undertake a dangerous "*passagium particulare*" that came close to the Holy Land in search of support from the successors to the Persian Mongols against the Ottomans. The outlines of a design were being retraced (Bellingeri 2006, pp. 91–127).

Continuing our exploration of this land, we come to a passage by Giovanni M. Angiolello (Vicenza c. 1451/52–c. 1524/25) (BMC, Angiolello, *Historia*; Donado Da Lezze-Ursu 1909). He is the famous author of *Breve narrazione della vita e fatti del signor Ussancassano...* (Ramusio 1980, pp. 369–420). The writer – a prisoner since 1470 of Mehmet II the Conqueror – took part in the expedition against the above-praised Uzun Hassan of Persia (summer 1473) and reported a regrettable incident that occurred on the march to Mesopotamia:

“Since the place [Erzincan] was not secure, most of the people had escaped across the Euphrates river. Nevertheless, some had remained, among whom, when the invaders arrived, an old Armenian was found in a church, seated among many books. The invaders called to him again and again, but he refused to respond. Indeed, he stayed there carefully guarding his books, some of which were open in front of him. He was overtaken by the fury [of the invaders] and slain, and the books and the church were burnt. When the grand Turk learned of this he was very upset because he understood that that man was a great philosopher” (BMC, Angiolello, *Historia*, 21r/48–49; Da Lezze-Ursu 1909, p. 51; Ramusio 1980, p. 379).

A traditional tale leaps to mind regarding the tragic death of Sayat-Nova, the great eighteenth-century Armenian *ashugh* (bard) famous throughout the Transcaucasus. He was the author of the complex songbook in Armenian, Georgian and Turkish-Azerbaijani. The loss, bewailed also by Mehmet the Conqueror, was eventually followed by a rebirth, a rediscovery, supported by the many books displayed here, of that man still immersed in study.

Several decades later, the voice of another direct Armenian involvement in Middle-Eastern history, couched in a geographic description, would reach Venice:

[...] in Totovan, Vastan is an island in the sea about two miles from the mainland. The island is completely rocky and rather high. There is a small city on top, almost two miles around; the city is as big as the island. The city is called Armenino and is well populated and generally inhabited by Armenians, no Mohammedans live there. There are many churches all officiated by Christian Armenians. Among them is the Church of Saint John, bigger than all the others, and it has a towering steeple with many bells. One of them is very big and when it rings it resounds through the city on the mainland. As you come to the island there is a large gulf, with a level area and many villas all inhabited by Christian Armenians with lots of good land and beautiful gardens with all sorts of fruit trees. There are *mountains all around that look like they touch the sky*, with the sea surrounding everything. [...] [After the defeat of Shaykh Haydar, his third son Ismail I, famous founder of the Safavid Dynasty in Azerbaijan] went to that island I described above, which is in the sea of Van and Vastan, and which is inhabited by Armenian Christians. The son of Siechaidar [Shaykh Haydar] stayed here four years in the house of a priest. His name was Ismail and he was 13 or 14 years old. He was kind and courteous and it seems that the priest in whose house he was living was quite knowledgeable in astronomy, and he learned that this youth would shake the world and have great power. And so the priest honoured him greatly in secret, and pampered him as well as he could. And he introduced him to our Holy Faith and trained him in the Sacred Scriptures, and taught him that the faith of the Muslims was useless and sad. After four years, the youth manifested his desire to leave Armengil [Aght'amar Island] and went to Ghilan” (BMC, Angiolello, *Historia*, 134v-135/289; Da Lezze-Ursu 1909, p. 51; Ramusio 1980, pp. 392–93).

There is a strong tradition in Venetian sources that has Shah Ismail I saved and raised by the monks of Lake Van. Similarly, in the most complete and well known records in Venetian archives, there are numerous reports of a certain segment of the history of Persia and Central Asia, the most meaningful passages of which we cite below:

“Please know, lord Donato (of the Lezze family), that your letters have reached my hand [carried by] my associate Vanes [Hovhannēs]. [...] I read that you would be happy to learn about Solfi [the Safavid leader, Shah Ismail], and because I was not informed on the matter, I did not provide a response to your lordship. But now, our Armenians having arrived [...] I summoned [...] one of them and enquired [...], I will write about what I learned, which was as follows: regarding the lord of Chiagatai (Shaybani Khan) and his militia, known as jachipachilie [yashilbash, “green heads” for the colour of their headgear, Sunnites, as opposed to the Shi’ite qzilbash, “red/crimson heads”], he came with a great force to take Shiraz, a large city under Soffi. [...] then Soffi rose up quickly with an endless militia and came to Shiraz in a few days [...] and Soffi defeated the lord of Chiagatai and captured him alive, and made a peace pact with him, and let him return to his lands [...]. Approximately one year later, the lord of Chiagatai broke



“Armenian Merchant”, Cesare Vecellio, *On Historic and Modern Dress* (1590), Venice, Museo Civico Correr

the pact [...] and Soffi moved against him [...] and defeated him and cut off his head and sent it to Constantinople. I believe that you have heard everything up to this point. Then Soffi summoned the sons of the lord of Chiagatai and told them, 'Your father did not abide by my pact [...], but if you obey us I will make you lords of your father's kingdom'. And they responded, 'We ask only that we can live in the presence of your magnificence [...]. We will be your servants'. And Soffi said, '[...] I only want you to submit and that you bear my mark, the red and yellow crest...' [...] And they assented and swore in the name of their God and he let them leave. And Soffi made a seigniory of the city of Khorasan. [...] but the sons of the lord of Chiagatai went all the way to the city of their father, Samarkand. Many days later, the sons' uncle [...], who was one of the new king sultans of the northern part of the world, which the Turks call Duchuschan, came [...] and saw them and said, 'O senseless men, [...] you have abandoned God and pledged allegiance to one who is neither Turkish nor Christian [...]'. And so they resolved [...] and with great fury came to Khorasan and captured its citadel and killed many of Soffi's men [...]. Then, Soffi assembled and outfitted a great number of fighters and regarding what he went on to do, I shall continue writing [...]. The most humble bishop of the Armenians [...], written on the sixteen of November, fifteen hundred twelve to the reverend lord Donato Lezze..." (Sanudo 1866, p. 438–41; BMC, Angiolello, *Historia*, 140v, 141r and 172v-174r/307–11; Ramusio 1980, pp. 404–406).

This is a passage of strong impact that left a mark on the historiography produced in a city which, after the contribution – great and duly exalted – of Marco Polo to the history of Central, or “Middle”, Asia, would have looked to that region almost exclusively in a telescopic manner (via Muscovy, Persia, the Ottoman provinces, Cyprus, etc.). The lines just cited provide an example of the different ways of acquiring news of those lands in a lagoon often ruffled by serious concerns over the propinquity of the enormous Ottoman Empire just across its borders. In that relationship – complex yet all too easily reduced to a system of weights and counterweights in which the antagonisms between states give rise to potential alliances or ententes between Persia and Venice, and between the Ottomans and the above-mentioned “Chiagatai” – Venice obviously cared very much about the fate of the kingdom of the “Soffi” [the Safavids] and the friction, commitments and “distractions” between this kingdom, the Turks and the Tartars of Transoxiana; thus, the importance of the information we have just read, provided by an Armenian bishop of Cyprus to his Venetian correspondent, Donata da Lezze (Venice, 1479; Advisor to Cyprus in 1509–10; died in Cyprus as Lieutenant in 1526). We have an epistolary relationship that reveals a dense network of correspondence woven among the Armenian merchants plying their trade in an immense marketplace, who were frequent visitors to the territories of Venice (“my associate Vanes”, “our Armenians having arrived”, “I summoned one of them”) and whose visits were perhaps characterized by a sort of fond habitualness (Sanudo 1866, XX, pp. 245–47, 268–72). It was a fond habit that encompassed the inflections, linguistic, practical and theoretical knowledge made accessible to them by the Venetians. One example was the priest Hovhannēs Agop, who prepared a very useful Turkological tool for the Donà family in the euphoric post-Vienna years (1683):

“Most illustrious and reverend lord. If the fall of the Ottoman Empire is close, as it seems, and as promised by the many Christian armies now assembled to avenge the usurped kingdoms, it must be hoped that a good portion of that Turkish world has the good fortune to fall under the dominion of this glorious Republic and at that point it will be good, very useful, and perhaps necessary to have knowledge of languages, both for us of the Turkic world and you of Italy, for commerce between the peoples [...]. I hope [...] my booklet enjoys your benign gaze, so that it may receive light and splendour in appearing to the world, and that I too may appear as I might. *Venice, 4 June 1685* [...].” (Giovanni Agop 1685, pp. 3–4)

Redirecting our gaze to Persia, the country was occupied by the Afghans in the early 1720s, bringing an end to the Safavid dynasty. Albeit indirectly, an Armenian acted again to inform Venice of the turbulent conditions of that empire. And thus we return to face an Afghan presence that is ever pertinent and even then was active on the political scene:

“The Avugano [Afghan] people are divided into two principal tribes. The most powerful lives in the Kingdom of Kandahar, and in the time of the great Shah Abbas, king of Persia, to whom they were subjected, it was composed of 50,000 families, and this tribe was called Atugan Clisi. The other is called Abdulan and lives in the Kingdom of Harat [Herat]. At the time of the afore-mentioned Shah Abbas it was composed of 30,000 families” (ASVe, “Distinta Relatione [...] Persia” 1725; ASVe, “Relazione del Dragoman Ioseph”; BMC, *Relazione della Persia* 1725).

After an empire lasting two centuries, the Persian dynasty on which the Venetians had staked their re-

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TABLEAU DES PRONOMS DE PLUSIEURS LANGUES.

ՄԱՏԱՆԻ	ԵՐԲԱՆԻ	ՕՍԻՏԱՆԻ	ՔԱԿԱՆԻ	ՄԵԼՒԿԻ	ՀԱՆՔԱԿԱՆ
ա՛յ ինձ	ե՛ն ա՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն
այն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
ես	ի՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն
երես	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն
հին	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն
նա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
քան	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
զի	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
ապա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
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չի	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
լուր	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
հան	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
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ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ԲԱՍՄԱՅԻՆՆԵՐ

TABLIKA MESTOIMENNO PRAKHOVNIH BILZHIKI

ԵՐԲԱՆԻ	ՄԱՏԱՆԻ	ՕՍԻՏԱՆԻ	ՔԱԿԱՆԻ	ՄԵԼՒԿԻ	ՀԱՆՔԱԿԱՆ	ՄԱՏԱՆԻ
ա՛յ	ե՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն	նի՛ն
այն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
ես	ի՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն	ե՛ն
երես	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն	մա՛ն
հին	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն	սա՛ն
նա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
քան	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
զի	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
ապա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
պա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
չի	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
լուր	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
հան	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
նա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն
նա	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն	նա՛ն

peated hopes for a single coordinated move against the Ottomans was extinguished by an abdication. The report cited above is the fruit of direct observation by Hovsep Apisalaimian, the hard-working interpreter and secretary to Ange de Gardane, French consul in Isfahan: the Venetians, continuing their interest in a country that they no longer frequented as they once did, still obtained information in roundabout ways, which ended up in any case being reorganized in the particular context contemplated here.

There are also books that were translated and published in the Venetian Republic that use and reorganize the elements we have just discussed, coming from Hovsep Apisalaimian, scattered in ambassadorial dispatches, or diluted in manuscripts (*Storia Persia* 1730, pp. 12-15; Krusinski 1728 *passim*; *Histoire* 1728; *Târix* 1729; BMC, *Relazione delle ultime rivoluzioni*).

Looking back at the history of trade, we note some Armenian responsibility for the Venetian trade redirected centuries earlier first from the Black Sea, from the lesser Tartaria to the eastern Mediterranean, and then mentioned in the mid-seventeenth century by Marco Foscarini, illustrious scholar and, for a brief reign, Doge:

"This manner of communication endured between India and the northern regions of Asia into the final years of Tamerlane, who, destroying Cistrakhan, now Astrakhan, brought it to an end; or else it ended because of the industry of the Armenians, who found one route to be easier than the other, directed via Trebizond, as claimed by Ramusio; who ascribed a short duration to the other, that is, until the taking of Constantinople [...]. Whatever the case may be, as long as that route via the Tana [Tanais] was maintained, the Venetians used it preferably over all other, signifying that, from 1323 to the end of the century, they were able, without serious difficulties, to completely forego Egyptian traffic [...]. But after Tamerlane frightened trade off the Black Sea, the trade lost on that route was gained by the other, and especially Alexandria [...]" (Foscarini 1854, pp. 510-18).

In Foscarini's reconstruction, we find the Armenians actively involved (as interlocutors and antagonists, evidently polyglot, of the Venetians) in the theatres of trade, logistics, and probably also linguistics. We might also characterize their role as "alphabetic" (rendering literate), since they were able to re-educate the Venetians on the ranks and lines of the old interrupted trade routes with the Tartars. In the second half of the eighteenth century, when a possible trade treaty was being discussed with the Empire of the Russias, one of the recurring arguments by the patricians in favour of the plan was one that trusted in certain efficient intellectual equipment capable of exerting an impact or "impression":

Table of personal, demonstrative, possessive and relative pronouns in fourteen languages. Minas Bzhshkian, *Grammatica Polyglotta* (1844)

“Here in Venice we have the Ruteno Serviliano S. Cirillo, and Illirico S. Girolamo characters. [...] We also have printing with Armenian characters, and this is in S. Lazzaro with the Armenian Fathers with privileges of the most excellent Senate [...], to spread their work (in the Russias) and by spreading obtaining more employment for our labour [...] in appearing that it was possible to entice the Muscovites into a second manner of commerce, using the Armenians who are not very distant from them” (ASVe, “Memoria [...] stampatori [...] 1781”).

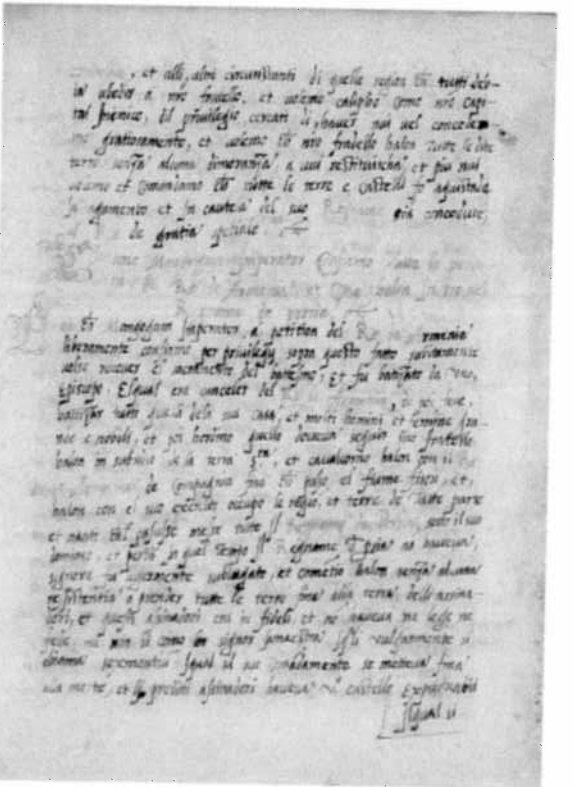
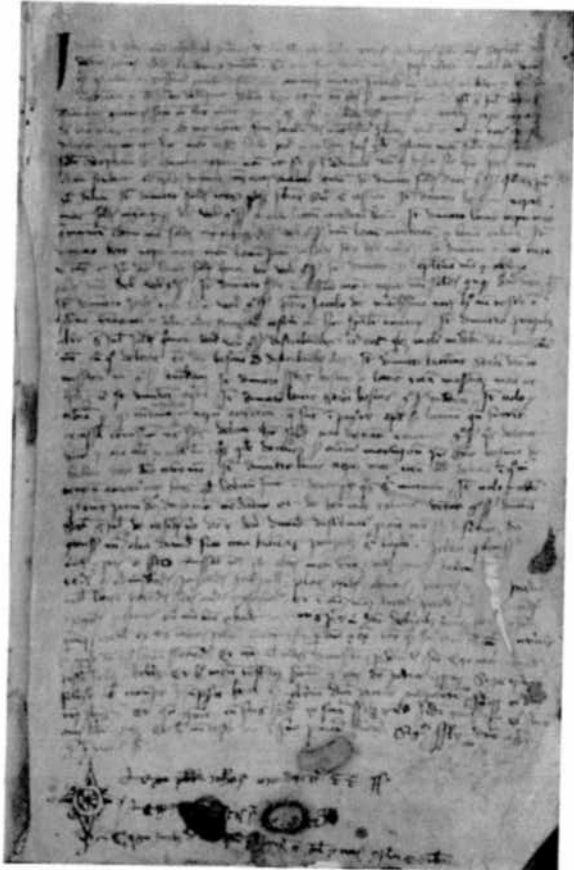
And twenty years earlier it was stated:

“Most Serene Prince, [...] we believe that Your Sereness, upon presentation of the goods in question, must limit [the principal bases for a commercial treaty with Russia] above all to the commitment, to be undertaken exclusively by Muscovy, to open a trade route for unhindered passage of various goods on the Black Sea, with some reduction in the duties imposed by the Ottomans [...], pursuant to the measures contained in the agreement regarding navigation, art, products and traffic, and particularly thanks to the opportunity of being able to trade with Greeks, and Armenians, who are present in large numbers in the Venetian domains and with whom [the Russians] are closely and intrinsically tied through shared religion, and who would be the principal tool for the new and auspicious trade” (ASVe, *5 Savv alla Mercanzia*, 23 November 1761).

But in Venice, a depressed city covetous of its hard-won neutrality, approval of the trade agreement would not be given. The conditions imposed by Catherine the Great were too avaricious and demanded, in exchange for the trade agreement, that the Republic of Venice sign a treaty, termed “defensive” (but deviously purposeful and aggressive), which would have re-ignited conflict with the Ottomans. Nonetheless, a singular and “most plural” grammar would indeed have left Venice for the Black Sea, Crimea and all of the Russias. It was a volume that was a vehicle for ambitions that the Most Serene Republic of Venice had abandoned, but which nevertheless were revived in the lagoon area by those who in previous centuries had contributed to the development of updated knowledge of that area that was vital to the city.

The book we are calling attention to here is the “*Grammatica Poliglotta*” by Minas Medici (Trebizond, 15 October 1777 – Venice, 26 November 1861; living in Crimea since 1825), printed in Venice by the San Lazzaro printing works in 1844. A grammar – nay, a grammatical, normative panorama – by an author who, as chance would have it, was Armenian, a Mekhitarist, who had naturalized in Crimea after applying to his original surname, Bzhshkian, the lucid Italian overlay of “Medici” (Medici 1844). The “*Grammatica*” would have left the Venetian printing presses for the Cimmeric Bosphorus, but not by will of the lords of Venice, but in the form of an Armenian-Venetian (Alishan 1893) and Armenian-Kipchak hope that new conquerors would take the shores of the Black Sea. A meditated passing of the baton noted in Venetian historical records.

This compilation, which just one century earlier would still have seemed a plant emerging in a stimulating tree nursery – a guide to the Tanais, commissioned in Venice once again to the Armenians – was not addressed to the Doge or to his foreign successors. Instead it is dedicated, in French, to S.M.I. Nikolaj Pavlovic, Emperor of all the Russias, from Karassoubazar in Crimea, 15 August 1841. A logical development, and a revival: in passing the baton, it was a confirmation that left deep traces on maps of routes and itineraries, and in printed works.



70
 Testament of "Maria armina"
 1341 (2 October), Rialto --
 Venice
 Parchment
 ASVe, *Notai di Venezia*,
Testamenti, b. 722
Bibliography: Alishan 1896;
 Mutafian 1999; Ortalli 2004

"Maria armina, massaria domus Arminorum, de confinio Sancti Iuliani" prepared her testament, naming various members of the Armenian community living in and around Venice at the time as heirs to her estate. Along with legacies of money, there are bequests of other items, such as peacocks: "Item dimitto tres pavones dicto archiepiscopo [an "archiepiscopus Arminorum" was previously cited in the document]. Item dimitto unum pavonem dicto presbitero Iacobo [Iacopo da Monte, priest of San Zuliani, named as trustee] Item dimitto unum pavonem presbitero Francisco custodi ecclesie Sancti Marci. Item unum alium pavonem volo dari pro anima mea". Another bequest was made for the restoration of the "house of the Armenians" in Venice: "Item dimitto domui nostre Arminorum de Veneciis florenos octo pro aptando ipsam". The testament was drawn up before the notary Iacopo Marchesini and is conserved as a seriously deteriorated bond on parchment (*Cancellaria inferiore*, *Notai*, b. 116), and as a transcription in a document registered by the same notary, of which a fragment remains. (A.P.)



71
 Hayton of Corycus (Het'um Patmich'), *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient*, Italian translation, *Historie delle parte de oriente*
 16th-c. copy
 Manuscript
 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS it., cl. VI, n. 141a (5876)
Bibliography: Huttich 1532, pp. 419-481; *Historia* [...] *scritta da Haitbone* 1562; Bergeron 1735; Kohler 1906, pp. 113-253, 254-363; Marco Polo 1928, pp. XXXV-XXXVII, XI, VII, CV, CXXXVI; Yule 1967, pp. CXXVII-CXXIX, CXXXI; Dédéyan 1997

Hayton of Corycus (Het'um Patmich') was the governor of the city of Corycus (Korikos) and

nephew of Het'um I (Hethum I), ruler of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. Hayton was exiled from Cilicia after conspiring against his cousin Het'um II and became a monk in Cyprus. He travelled to France and promoted plans for a new Crusade at the Pope's court in Poitiers. His dream was to retake the Holy Land with the help of the Mongols. In 1307, still in Poitiers, he composed *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient*, a work he dictated to Nicolas Falcon, who immediately translated it into Latin. What we have here is an overlooked and precious translation into Italian dating to 1337 by "Don Chimento da Ragusi" (Don Clemente da Ragusa/Dubrovnik). Venice still held dominion over Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in 1337 (the Venetians would hold power there until 1358) when Don Clemente da Ragusa wrote that he had completed the translation of "el libro delle historie delle parte de oriente". We may thus have a copy of the translation from Latin to vulgar Italian of *Liber historiarum orientis Asiæ*, whose original predates the retranslation into French from Latin, made in 1351 by Jean le Long (Jean d'Ypres, abbot of Saint Bertin). Jean erroneously dated the work to after 1310 and was perhaps unaware of the existence of the older "original" French text, which was less widely circulated than its Latin counterpart. A number of copies of the French version by Jean d'Ypres/Jean le Long executed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are found in a number of thematic collections, such as the *Itineraria* of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, Odoric of Pordenone, the *Hodoeporicon* of Wilhelm von Boldensel, the "Letters" of the Great Khan of Cathay and the Christians of Canbaluch to Pope Benedict XII (1338), the Pontiff's "Response", and the "State and government of the Great Khan of Cathay" by Jean de Cor, archbishop of Soltaniyeh. This is one of the first works of oriental history written in medieval Europe. Hayton describes the districts and histories of Asia – based on his own direct experiences and also referencing Marco Polo – and explains with particular emphasis the alliance between the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, Antioch, and the Mongols in 1259–60. (G.B.)



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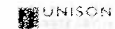
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