Self-Fashioning in the Mediterranean Contact Zone: Giovanni Battista Salvago and his *Africa Overo Barbaria* (1625)

E. Natalie Rothman[1]

In Istanbul Anatolian Turks are not admitted to the Porte,[2] nor to the military or the ministries, because they are considered uncouth and rustic, as opposed to Europeans, who are deemed to be valorous, while they [Anatolian Turks] are deemed to be cowardly. Yet in Barbary, they are the most numerous and most eminent. It can be believed that from this difference is born the gut hatred that the Barbary Turks harbour for the Ottoman Porte, their repudiator. And therefore, abandoning their native huts and the plough, they rush to ennoble themselves in Barbary, where they can marry Moorish women. Their sons, called Culogli, that is, sons of soldiers,[3] succeed their father but, due to their ties to their Moorish mother, [since they are] spurious in a certain way and degenerate, are not esteemed as much as the renegades and the primitive Turks. This mixing of renegades and Turks creates a third species of Turks who speak Italian and Castilian. The renegades do not understand Ottoman grandeur which they have never seen, and the Turks expect from [the Porte] neither

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[2]Short for *the Sublime Porte*, an official title of the Ottoman central government.

[3]*kuloğlu*, Turkish for "son of [the sultan's] slaves."

> honours nor offices, and therefore it is little wonder if they lack in effective obedience, which is professed by mouth only.[4]

This passage, penned by Giovanni Battista Salvago in 1625, captures some of the complexities of the author's efforts to establish himself as a cultural intermediary between Ottoman and Venetian political elites. As a native of Istanbul and the descendant of a dynasty of dragomans – diplomatic interpreters – who had all served the Venetian bailo (or resident consul) to the Porte, Salvago was ideally positioned to claim expert knowledge of Ottoman society, history, and culture. At the same time, he often couched his observations of things Ottoman in the classicizing language of humanist learning, prompted, perhaps, by his broad education and extensive sojourns in Venice. Focusing on Salvago's report from North Africa penned in 1625 this article will show how the author sought to fashion himself as an educated metropolitan Venetian by simultaneously claiming insiders' knowledge of the Ottoman world and distancing himself from it.

Salvago may be seen as a paradigmatic early modern "trans-imperial subject," who straddled and brokered political, linguistic, and religious boundaries between the Venetian and Ottoman empires. Elsewhere, I explored how such Mediterranean trans-imperial subjects – colonial émigrés, redeemed slaves, converts, and Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects in Venetian diplomatic service – articulated geopolitical and ethnolinguistic categories for their metropolitan Venetian interlocutors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[5] In the same vein, this article examines Salvago's efforts to ally himself with Venice's ruling class by

[4] "Li turchi Asiatici, spacciati in Costantinopoli per rozi e rustici a paragon d'Europei, cimentati questi da gli Ottomani per valorosi e quelli per vili, non sono per ciò alla Porta ammessi, nè tra le militia nè tra li Ministri, in Barbaria, con tuttociò, avendo maggioranze e preminenze. Da tale differenza si può credere che nasca in Turchi Barbareschi un odio intestine colla Porta Ottomana loro ripudiatrice, e però, abbandonando i Turchi le natie capanne e l'aratro, corrono in fretta a nobilitarsi in Barbaria ove possono con More accasarsi et i suoi figli detti Culogli, cioè figli di soldati, subentrano al Padre ma, per la correlatione della madre Mora, come spurii in un certo modo e degeneri, non sono pregiati quanto i rinegati et i Turchi primitive. Questa mistione di rinegati e Turchi fa una tertia spetie di Turchi che parlano in Italiano e Castigliano. Li rinegati non capiscono la non vista grandezza Ottomana e li Turchi non aspettano da quella nè honori nè cariche, onde non è meraviglia se mancano di obedienza effettiva, in bocca sol professata." Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 78. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

[5] Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul."

developing spatio-temporal categories of Ottoman difference. This case suggests in particular how Salvago both appropriated medieval discourses of Turkish ethnogenesis and translated Ottoman notions of ethnicity and status into Venetian ones. By situating Salvago and his text in the broader context of the early modern Mediterranean contact zone, we will see how humanist and medieval tropes of Turkish otherness were often recalled precisely by those who, like Salvago, could make a strong claim to insiders' knowledge of things Ottoman, that is, by Ottoman subjects in Venetian service in Istanbul.[6]

While mostly disparaging in tone, Salvago's interpretation of Ottoman North Africa tacitly acknowledges the complexities of Ottoman social and ethnic distinctions and signals their continuities with Roman and medieval political structures. His report sometimes reinforces a binary view of "Europeans" versus "Ottomans" but at others undermines it. The passage quoted above already suggests Salvago's acute historical and proto-psychological analytical skills. In it, Salvago captures some of the main contradictions of colonial societies in general, and that of Ottoman North Africa in particular, addressing processes of social mobility and reproduction, the intersection of ethnicity and gender, perceptions of "mixing" and the historical transformation of both metropolitan and colonial elites over time.[7] By recognizing the social distance between Ottoman metropolitan and provincial elites, and the growing autonomy of North Africa from Istanbul, Salvago was professing a distinctly metropolitan Ottoman perspective.[8] At the same time, he harnessed his historical analysis and humanist learning to the service of Venetian rather than Ottoman imperial aims. This is particularly intriguing given the author's own ambiguous, peripheral position in the budding republic of letters.

[6] By borrowing Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone," I wish to highlight the unsettled nature of cultural categorization on the Venetian-Ottoman frontier, and the special role of trans-imperial subjects in articulating emerging categories of Ottoman difference. For Pratt's definition of the contact zone, see her *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

[7] On the perpetuation of a distinctly Ottoman ruling elite in North Africa through the restriction of marriage to local women from the late sixteenth century onwards, see Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite," 330 and passim.

[8] For a treatment of Ottoman metropolitan elites' Orientalist vision of the Arab provinces, albeit in a much later context, see Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism."

The Author

Giovanni Battista Salvago was born in Pera, an affluent suburb of Istanbul, into a family of dragomans in the last decade of the sixteenth century. His family, of probable Genoese origin, had resided in Pera for generations and was part of the prosperous local Latin-rite community.[9] His grandfather had served as Venetian Grand Dragoman as early as 1539. His father Mateca and two older brothers had been similarly employed as Road Dragomans, accompanying newly appointed Venetian diplomats to and from the Porte.[10] As was customary in that milieu, Giovanni Battista was admitted to the bailo's house as an apprentice dragoman in his early teens, sometime around 1610.[11] Nine years later, already fluent in Greek (probably his first language), Italian, Turkish and Latin, he was appointed Road Dragoman in place of his brother Giuliano, who had died of the plague a few months earlier. Giovanni Battista continued to work as Road Dragoman until 1645, when war broke out between Venice and the Ottomans over the island of Crete. He died shortly thereafter.

Salvago was not only a valued dragoman, but also the bailo's landlord. From the 1570s on, his family's palace in Pera was transformed into the bailo's residence, with a household of over 200 people. This fact shaped in important ways Salvago's relationship with the Venetian government. Despite his obvious good reputation as a dragoman, Salvago constantly ran into conflict with the bailo over who was responsible for paying for much-needed renovations to the house.[12]

[9] On the Latin community of Pera, see Dursteler, "Education and Identity in Constantinople's Latin Rite Community, c. 1600," Schmitt, *Levantiner*; Dursteler, *The Venetians in Constantinople*.

[10] Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Constantinopoli*, 416. Mateca was appointed dragoman in the late 1550s or early 1560s, during the residency of bailo Girolamo Ferro. The latest record of his service in the bailo's archives dates to 1596. Mateca's eldest son, Gianesin, was nominated *giovane della lingua* (apprentice dragoman) in 1575, and appointed *dragomanno da strada* ("road dragoman") in 1596 in place of his father, despite a scandalous love affair with the bailo's barber in 1588. He died in 1619. Mateca's second son Giuliano became dragoman around 1595. In 1605 he was sent to Aleppo to serve as dragoman for the Venetian merchant community there. In 1619 he was back in Istanbul and was appointed road dragoman in place of his recently deceased older brother Gianesin, but he died of the plague that same year. ASV, Cinque Savii, seconda serie, b. 61, fasc. 1, (Sept. 5, 1605).

[11] Sacerdoti, "Introduzione," xi.

[12] ASV, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, reg. 104, fols. 174r–175v (12 May 1627).

In his capacity as Road Dragoman, Salvago physically crossed the borders between the Ottoman and Venetian empires dozens of time to accompany Venetian baili and ambassadors on their way to Istanbul and back. He thus served as a crucial link between two metropoles, often carrying news and material objects from one city to the other. His repeated trips between Istanbul and Venice helped Salvago forge ties not only in both capitals, but also with provincial elites along the way. In 1642, as the route between Istanbul and Venice became more dangerous, he acquired a safe-conduct from Sultan Ibrahim (r. 1640–1648), which permitted him not only to dress as a Muslim and don a turban while on the road, but also to carry arms.[13]

Nothing is known about Salvago's education beyond his initial language training in the bailo's house. Yet from 1622 to 1624 he was stranded in Venice, waiting for the newly elected bailo Michele Foscarini to recover from illness, so it is quite possible that during these two years he may have furthered his education, either in Venice itself or in the nearby University of Padua.[14] It was also in these two years that Salvago drafted several substantial texts: In 1624 he composed an "epigraph" and a "sonnet" in praise of Doge Francesco Contarini.[15] More revealing is a series of translations and adaptations of Turkish religious, legal, and historical texts he produced in 1622. These included "Of the Death of Muhammad, Prophet of the Muslims," taken from "The Lives of Saintly Fathers and Martyrs, including Hassan, Hussein, and others," "The Institution of the Muslims of Crying Out on their Towers," "On the Oration of the Muslims," "On the Form of the Litanies of the Muslims," and "The Unfortunate Life, and Unhappy Death of Sultan Osman, Son of Sultan Ahmed, and Nephew of Sultan Mustafa, the Current King of the Turks."[16] Unlike his many translations of official Ottoman docu-

For his work as dragoman, see ASV, Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371 (29 Sept. 1619); ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, Reg. 15 (29 Mar. 1624); ASV, Bailo a Costantinopoli, b. 371 (29 Sept. 1626 and 2 Mar. 1634); ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, filza 32, (5 Aug. 1641).

[13] ASV, Documenti Turchi, b. 13, fasc. 1485 (30 April 1642). Salvago acquired another similar safe-conduct in March 1645, although he apparently never used it.

[14] He must have acquired some reputation for his studies, for in 1631 he was sent to the Ottoman *Kapudan Pasha* (Lord Admiral), who had expressed his interest in cosmography and who had asked the bailo for a person knowledgeable in cartography with whom he could discuss some maps he owned: ASV, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, reg. 111, fol. 257b (4 Feb. 1630 m.v.). I thank Giorgio Rota for the reference.

[15] Donazzolo, *I viaggiatori veneti minori*, p. 207.

ments, Salvago seems to have undertaken these adaptations-translations of religious and historical texts on his own initiative. The choice of subject matter reveals his great interest in recent Ottoman history and in Muslim ritual practice. Salvago's narrative concerning the deposition of Sultan Osman II in 1622 and his portrayal of Muslim ritual practice underscore his conscious attempt to act as an intermediary, introducing Ottoman religious and historical thought to an Italian readership.[17]

These texts suggest Salvago's deep familiarity with classical Ottoman genres and themes and his embeddedness in Ottoman intellectual milieus. His report from Barbary, to which I now turn, while evincing an insider's understanding of Ottoman imperial governance, also betrays the author's effort to distance himself from things Ottomans and to establish his unambiguous position as a loyal, useful, and humanistically inclined Venetian subject.

The Text

In October 1624, instead of accompanying the new bailo from Venice to Istanbul, Salvago was sent on another diplomatic mission. He was to travel to the Regencies of North Africa as the Senate's official representative, to negotiate the release of twenty Venetian subjects captured by corsairs the previous June off the shores of Venetian Dalmatia. Upon his return from North Africa Salvago submitted his *Relazione* to the Venetian Senate, a report consisting of 48 folios 10"x10" in size, as well as pen drawings of "the famous cities" of Algiers, Tunis, and Bizerte.[18]

[16] MCC, Cod. Cicogna 2715, fasc. 22, fols. 224r–229v, fasc. 23, fols. 230r–233v, fasc. 24, fols. 234r–237r, fasc. 27, fols. 250r–251r, fasc. 38, fols. 315r–331v.

[17] On the historiography of the deposition of Osman II in 1622 and its links to contemporary political and intellectual factions, see Tezcan, "The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul," Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy*, Hagen, "Review of Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy*." I thank Tijana Krstic and Gottfried Hagen for stimulating discussions of the intellectual milieus of early seventeenth-century Istanbul.

[18] The full text of Salvago's *relazione*, based on the complete extant copy preserved in the Archivio di Stato of Venice and supplemented by additional relevant archival documents was published by Alberto Sacerdoti in 1937, at the height of the Italian colonial venture in Africa. To the best of my knowledge, it has not received much critical attention since, except as a source of information about seventeenth-century North Africa and the Mediterranean slave trade. The most extensive treatment to date is Grandchamp, "Une mission délicate en Barbarie."

Salvago's report is kept in the Venetian State Archives as part of the series of *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori veneti* (B3). Its classification as an ambassadorial report is significant, as it gives insight into the author's ambiguous position as both an Ottoman subject and a Venetian ambassador. Although the vast majority of Venetian ambassadors were patricians, Salvago was not the first non-noble to be entrusted with delicate diplomatic assignments by the Venetian Senate. Almost a century earlier, in 1539, the Cypriot Michele Membré (1509–1594) was sent as a Venetian emissary to the Safavid court of Shah Tahmasp.[19] Membré later served as a dragoman, first in the bailo's house in Istanbul and then, from 1550 until his death, with the Venetian *Cinque Savii alla Mercanzia*, the all-powerful Board of Trade.[20] In 1570, just two decades after Membré's mission, the Senate dispatched another dragoman to Persia, Vincenzo degli Alessandri, a Venetian citizen who had previously served in the bailo's house in Istanbul for seven years.[21] Following in Salvago's footsteps, in 1633 another Pera-born Catholic subject, Ippolito Parada, was sent to Algiers to recover the possessions of Ambassador Cornaro in Spain.[22] As these examples suggest, the bailo's house in Istanbul served as a training ground for Venetian secretaries and diplomats. Its recruitment base included not only Venetian citizens, but also colonial subjects from Venice's maritime empire in the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean and Ottoman Catholic subjects. As will become evident below, Salvago's diplomatic writings were shaped both by his years of service in Istanbul and by his sojourn in Venice.

Upon return from mission, it was customary for Venetian diplomats to present an oral report to the Senate, and then to deposit their manuscripts for safekeeping in the Senate archives. Theoretically confidential, these reports circulated both in Venice (where patricians sometimes acquired copies for their libraries) and abroad. Although we do not know much about the circulation of Salvago's report, at least two autographed copies of part II of the text survived outside the Senate's

[19] Membré, *Relazione di Persia (1542)*, Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, Palombini, *Bündniswerden adendländischer Mächte um Persien*, 78–79.

[20] Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul," 352–354.

[21] Berengo, "Alessandri, Vincenzo degli," 174.

[22] Upon his return, Parada became a dragoman apprentice in the bailo's house, but died of the plague a few months later. ASV, Cinque Savii, Risposte, b. 149, fol. 54r (10 May 1633); ASV, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 118, fol. 611r (17 Oct. 1637).

archives and are now located in the Museo Civico Correr and the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.[23]

As Lucette Valensi argues, by the sixteenth century Venetian ambassadorial *relazioni* became so standardized as a literary genre that even non-patrician citizens, who did not hold ambassadorial positions and who were not required to present reports to the Senate, wrote them.[24] The circulation of these texts grew once they were printed, first in 1589 as *Il tesoro politico* (Cologne), and then in the following decade in Bologna (1595, 1598) and in Milan (1600). Additional parts of the *tesoro*, printed in the early seventeenth century, were translated into Latin and French.[25] According to Valensi, the popularity of the genre among European political elites lay with its ability to "observe and read the political realities of their day" through an "admirable grid":

> Following a codified order, they described and measured the limits of each state, its human, material, and financial resources, its army and its navy; they evaluated the government in power, took inventory of the alliances it maintained, the conflicts in which it was engaged; and they indicated what advantage Venice could gain from the existing situation. The reports offered not daily news, not facts and dates [...], but careful analysis.[26]

Salvago's *relazione* from Barbary certainly adheres to many of the rules of the genre regarding the ordering of information and in its analytical, rather than descriptive emphasis. It consists of three unequal parts, corresponding to the three sets of questions that Salvago had been asked to address in writing in his letter of appointment.[27] The first part describes his negotiations with officials in North Africa regarding the ransoming of slaves (pp. 20–52), including a section on the corsairs' objections to the Venetian position (pp. 34–36); the provisional agreement reached (pp. 36–38); and a translation of a response to the Doge's letter by Hüsrev Paşa ("Chusref Pashà"), the Regent of Algiers (pp. 50–52). The second part of the *relazione* describes Barbary (pp. 53–90). It includes, in addition

[23] MCC, MSS Morosini-Grimani, b. 547, fasc. 12 (51 pp., unnumbered), and BNM, MSS Italiani, serie VII, 7610.

[24] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot*, 14; see also Mallett, "Ambassadors and Their Audiences."

[25] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot*, 14–15.

[26] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot*, 15.

[27] Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 7–9.

to an historical overview of the region since Roman times (pp. 53–55) and a discussion of the evolution of the corsairs' naval technologies (pp. 56–65, 78–79), appraisals of the Regencies' political institutions (pp. 65–72), material culture (pp. 69, 73, 76, 81–83), and ethnic composition (pp. 75, 77–78). It ends with physical descriptions of the cities of Algiers (pp. 83–85), Tunis (pp. 85–86), and Bizerte (pp. 86–87) as well as cursory mentions of other North African urban centers, including Cairo, Tripoli and Fez. Finally, the third, and shortest, part of the *relazione* (pp. 91–98) provides details on the Venetian slaves held in Algiers and Tunis, including their numbers, places of provenance, previous professions, and current employment.[28]

The Rhetoric

Some scholars have suggested that travel writing might have the potential of deconstructing difference, either by bringing the readers into close encounter with "the Other" or by inscribing subjectivities whose relationship to their objects of observation can never be fully pre-determined.[29] This is clearly not what Salvago attempts in his *relazione*. Instead, he repeatedly distances himself from the people he observes along the way and, by extension, from their allies, the Ottomans. He achieves this distance through several strategies.

First, Salvago assumes a specifically Venetian perspective, one that envisions the Barbary corsairs, the Ottomans, and their Western allies, chiefly the Dutch, French, and English, as equally distant. Salvago repeatedly reminds his readers that if it were not for the Atlantic seaboard powers, the Barbary corsairs would be long gone.[30] These Atlantic powers also happened to be Venice's fiercest commercial rivals in the early seventeenth century. Salvago suggests that it is not only through cunning and violence, but also through friendship and alliance that the

[28] It is this numerical information about Venetian slaves that has received most attention from scholars. See, most recently, Davis, "Counting European Slaves."

[29] Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 154, Lomperis, "Medieval Travel Writing and the Question of Race," 148.

[30] On the Northern seaboard powers in the Mediterranean, see Fusaro, *Uva passa*, Goffman, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire*, Greene, "Beyond the Northern Invasion." Salvago was, of course, not the only contemporary observer to note the significance of these alliances; see, for example, the reports in early French periodicals in Turbet-Delof, *La presse périodique française et l'Afrique barbaresque au 17e siècle (1611–1715)*, 15–16.

Barbary corsairs have obtained from "the Ponentine nation" vital artisans as well as much needed professionals.[31]

Second, as suggested above, Salvago portrays the societies of Barbary as "mixed," using a hodgepodge of religious, social, historical and climactic explanations to account for their composition. He distinguishes between many ethnic groups: Africani, Barbareschi, Turchi, Turchi primitivi, Turchi nativi, Turchi asiatici, Mori, Mori terazzani, Mori bianchi, Arabi, and, finally, Culogli. The latter, according to Salvago, are the offspring of Turks and the "cittadine bianchissime," or "very white women town-dwellers" of Barbary.[32] This consciousness of the great ethnic diversity of Ottoman North Africa and of "Turk" as an ethnic, rather than a juridical descriptor, is particularly noteworthy. At the time, local populations in this region often referred to the Ottoman military-administrative elite as "Turks," a term that members of the elite themselves sometimes accepted.[33] Yet, according to Maria-Pia Pedani, the first use in Venetian documents of "turco" to describe ethnic affiliation rather than membership in the Ottoman dynastic ruling family dates to a 1637 *relazione* by Secretary Angelo Alessandri that distinguishes between "turchi" and "turchi nativi," as well as between "impero ottomano" and "ottomani," thereby recognizing that the state was Ottoman, not Turkish.[34] Salvago, whose *relazione* predates Alessandri's by over a decade, was one of Alessandri's chief dragomans during the latter's term of office in the bailo's house in Istanbul in the late 1630s. This suggests the role of Salvago and his fellow dragomans in introducing Venetian diplomatic and bureaucratic elites to the ethnic diversity of the Ottoman Empire and in elaborating a terminology for discussing this diversity.

At the same time, like many of his Venetian predecessors, Salvago too occasionally conflates "Turkish" with "Ottoman." Ultimately, he presents the Turkish element as what unifies North Africa's ethnic diversity, and imputes to the Turks nothing less than the creation of Barbary:

[31] Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 75.

[32] In Ottoman North Africa, this term usually referred to the male offspring of janissaries from the Ottoman heartland and local women. See Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite," 331, Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis*, 89.

[33] Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite," 327.

[34] Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*, 95.

> The corsairs of the province are called Barbaresques, but in reality they are a mass and a gang of ruffians of many races and progeny. The founders were Turks and they instituted a new militia of Janissaries in Barbary, ordaining that, except for Moors, Gypsies, and Jews, all the Nations should be admitted.[35]

If Salvago credits the Turks with being the "founders" (*originarii*) of Barbary while recognizing that other peoples – Moors, Gypsies, and Jews – were there first, chronologically speaking, it is because for him it is Ottoman law which reigns in Barbary and defines its political structures.[36] In that sense, Salvago's perception of North African society and politics was distinctly Ottoman-centric, bracketing other possible genealogies and continuities with the region's pre-Ottoman past.[37] It is also a telling product of its time in accepting as a given the predominance of corsairs and their military-political structures in Algerian and Tunisian societies as a whole.[38] Yet, the nature of the legal and political relationship between Barbary and the Ottomans in Salvago's account is far from simple. In fact, the passage above continues with a characterization of the Turks who arrive in Barbary as "evil-doers, transgressors, murderers, assassins, swindlers, dropouts, forgers, vagabonds and wanderers," that is, marginals and outlaws, hardly representative of the political core of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, these marginals are assisted, according to Salvago, by renegades and adventurers from Christian Europe.

In some sense, the attention to North Africa's ethnic heterogeneity serves to authorize Salvago's implicit claim to profound knowledge of the local society despite, it should be noted, the brevity of his sojourn

[35] "Chiamansi i corsari dalla provintia habitata Barbareschi, ma in effetto son una massa et una masnada di molte razze e generationi. Gli originarii furono Turchi e questi istituirono nuova militia di Gianiceri in Barbaria ordinando che, da Mori, Cingani et Ebrei in fuora, fossero ammesse tutte le Nationi": Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 77.

[36] Here, as elsewhere, the issue is further complicated by the conflation of "Turkish" and "Muslim," which was shared almost universally by Salvago's non-Ottoman contemporaries. On this conflation, see Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul," 388–438.

[37] This perception conforms with recent historiography. On the eclipsing of North Africa's indigenous Berber population by the occupying Ottomans, see Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, 158–165. On the deep impact of the Ottomans on their North African provinces, see Shuval, "Cezayir-i Garp," Moala, *The Regency of Tunis*.

[38] On the fraught relationship between the Ottoman janissary corps and the organization of the corsairs in Algiers, see: Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite," 328.

there. In addition, it also functions in Salvago's account as a denial of the region's a Roman past, a legacy it could otherwise share with other parts of the Ottoman-Venetian contact zone, thus unsettling any easy civility-barbarity dichotomy.[39] According to Salvago, Algiers and Tunis may have been Roman cities, but their current inhabitants are all parvenus: Turkish criminals, Muslims exiled from Granada, merchants from the East (the Levant) and the West (the Netherlands, England and France), and renegades from Italy. These non-indigenous elements also account, in Salvago's eyes, for what little industry exists in Barbary. In fact, he credits no inventions to locals, strictly speaking.[40] Manufacturing gunpowder and building harquebuses are the only technologies Salvago assigns to the Moors, but even these technologies, he does not fail to mention, came from Fez, where the Moors had learned them from their brethren expelled from Granada.[41] It is these immigrants who had introduced metal foundries to Barbary, but "with little success, and it is believed they will not make much profit."[42]

Salvago denies Barbary not only industry and innovation, but indeed any form of civility. It is on this issue in particular that his divergence from Leo Africanus, by far the best read early modern authority on North Africa, becomes most clear.[43] In Leo's narrative, binary oppositions

[39] For a detailed bibliography on Late Antique and medieval urban North Africa, see *Vandals, Romans and Berbers*; Roskams, "Urban Transition in North Africa," Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib*.

[40] Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 75.

[41] Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 76. Modern scholars do not agree on the introduction of gunpowder technologies to North Africa. Some support Salvago's observation by emphasizing the role played by Granadan refugees familiar with gunpowder technology in the Sa'dis' efforts to assert their power in Morocco in the 1470s. Others, however, suggest it was actually the Sultan in Istanbul—not Spanish or Portuguese monarchs—who supplied Granadan refugees-turned-corsairs with gunpowder technologies. Still others emphasize that gunpowder was already in use in Mamluk North Africa in the fourteenth century. See Bennison, "Liminal States," 21, Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe*, 78, Larguèche, "The *Mahalla*," 107, Buchanan, "Saltpetre: A Commodity of Empire," 74, Hess, "Firearms and the Decline of Ibn Khaldun's Military Elite," Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms*. I thank Bert Hall for prodding me to explore further the historical veracity of Salvago's contentions about the provenance of Maghribi gunpowder technology.

[42] Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 77.

[43] An early sixteenth-century Muslim ambassador from Fez, Hassan Al-Wazzan, known later as Leo Africanus, was captured by corsairs and brought to Rome, where he converted to Catholicism and befriended a group of Christian and Jewish intellectuals. For Leo's most recent and complete intellectual biography, see Davis, *Trickster Travels*. See also Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 28–44 for a discussion of Leo's own categories of African difference, and Zhiri, "Leo Africanus and the Limits of Translation" for a discussion of Leo's representational strategies.

operate to define *his* Africa – white, urban, socially stratified and culturally Arabized – as a site of civilization, as opposed to both the nomadic tribal Berbers lurking outside city walls and the unknown black tribes of sub-Saharan Africa. Port cities, for Leo, are the sites of civility and civilization, they are nodes that connect the North African shores of the Mediterranean with larger networks of exchange, encompassing both Europe and Arabia. To his contemporary European readers, everything in Leo's description of Algiers and Tunis would have invoked a sense of familiarity and orderliness, a link between Arab and European high learning.[44]

Past or present Arab letters, or indeed any sense of a larger cultural sphere in which the societies of Barbary operate, are largely absent from Salvago's account. For him, Africa "in ancient and modern times, whether due to celestial influence or to natural antipathy, has always been in various guises inimical and troublesome on the opposite side of Europe."[45] Salvago's binary opposition, then, is between Africa and Europe, rather than between the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa, as for Leo Africanus and, we may add, for the many classical authors on whom Leo built, including Pliny.[46] For Salvago, the networks that connect Barbary with the outside world are only those of corsairs who raid the opposite shores of the Mediterranean to capture slaves.

For Leo, clothing could operate as signs not only of civility, but also of keeping up with international fashion. In his elaborate, 56-page-long description of the city of Fez, Leo mentions that "the inhabitants of the city, that is, the nobles, are really civilized people, and in winter they wear clothes made of foreign wool."[47] For Salvago, the same wool is the

[44] Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 116–124 and *passim*.

[45] "L'Africa... ha ben nella rivolution de superni giri successivamente mutato e forma e signoria, ma non già mai essentia nè natura, poichè ne gli antichi et ne' moderni tempi sia o per influenza Celeste o per antipatia naturale, fu sempre in varie guise infesta e molesta all'opposta parte dell'Europa"; Salvago, *Africa overo Barbaria*, 53.

[46] As Francesc Raleño argues in *The Shaping of Africa*, a clear conception of "Africa" as a distinct continent, separate from the Mediterranean Oikoumene, emerged in European geographical and cartographic discourse only in the late Middle Ages.

[47] "Gli abitatori della città, cioè i nobili, sono uomini veramente civili, e vestono il verno di panni di lana forestieri ..."; Leo Africanus, "Della descrittione dell'Africa," 183.

mark of simplicity: "The corsairs, both great and small, wear absolutely nothing but woollen cloth and never silk, very different from the superb dress of Constantinople."[48]

Barbary and Barbarity

Salvago's contrast between corsairs' woollen cloth and the lavish silk of Istanbul underscores his vision of Barbary as a backwater colony. In fact, throughout his report Salvago shows little interest in fitting Barbary into any larger contemporary Ottoman framework. He gives much greater attention to the corsairs' ships, military might, and trafficking in slaves than to the regencies' social hierarchies or political structures. Rather than contextualize these structures within the contemporary Ottoman polity of which they clearly formed part, Salvago employs a classicizing and archaizing vocabulary to describe them as a "popular republic" and a "military democracy" (Algiers, p. 69) or a "republic" now turned into a "despotic regime" through the "tyranny" of the dey (Tunis, p. 71).[49]

These archaizing gestures are central to Salvago's self-fashioning as a learned man of letters. They underscore both the spatiotemporal distance of his object – Barbary – from the Ottoman imperial metropole and the author's own classical erudition. They are, indeed, in line with at least some late humanists' strategies in translating Ottoman historical narratives into Latin and European vernaculars.[50] As a final example of Salvago's archaizing and classicizing strategies in formulating his perspective on the Ottomans, here is how he introduces the "Turks" in his narrative, collapsing widely disparate temporal and spatial units into a supposedly coherent and cohesive account of origins:

> New Thracians, native Tartars, people of Gog and Magog as the Divine Historian St. John calls them in the Apocalypse and so characterizes them with occult mystery; having renounced in the Caspian Mountains the pastoral life, wishing to rule they had long ago left Scythia, commonly called Tartary, and had come to occupy Thrace, today called Romania, a place where for the duration of centuries, not of decades or years, they had contact with all sorts of civil people, but still they have not acquired any kind of urbanity, that is they have not departed from their harsh Scythian and ferocious Thracian [origins], and in every way maintain the original rustic harshness and the inborn savagery, which they have never relinquished nor forgotten.[51]

Combining biblical, Greek, Roman and medieval tropes of Otherness, such as Gog and Magog, the Scythians and the Tartars, Salvago presents seventeenth-century Turks as the crystallized form of barbarity.[52] Despite centuries of contact with the civilized world of Christendom, they are impermeable to change, as barbarity runs in their blood. As noted above, Salvago was a native of Istanbul and had many friends among Ottoman elites.[53] The fact that he found it necessary to frame his account of Barbary within a schema of Turkish barbarity tells us little about his own understanding of either the Ottomans or of North Africa; it reveals, instead, the extent to which he trusted his Venetian readers' predisposition to accept such a biblically and classically inflected account of Turkish ethnogenesis, and his willingness to tell them just what they expected to hear.

Other Venetian dragomans in Istanbul at the time also invoked the trope of "barbarity." Indeed, it could be seen as instrumental to efforts by dragomans – who were often Ottoman subjects themselves – to

[48] "Vestono i Corsari, e grandi e piccolo, positivissimamente di solo panno e non mai di seta, molto diversi dal superbo vestir Costantinopolitano": Salvago, *Africa overo Barbarìa*, 69.

[49] The greater autonomy from Istanbul of the Tunisian dey post-1591 has been interpreted recently as predicated rather on a common Ottoman method of provincial governance. See Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis*, 12–18.

[50] On "classicizing" the Ottomans, see McJannet, "History Written by the Enemy," Burke, "Translations into Latin," 80. On the wider implications of spatiotemporal distancing, see Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

[51] "Traci novelli, Tartari oriundi, popoli di Gog e Magog, nell'Apocalissi chiamati dall'Historico Divino San Giovanni, e così con occulto misterio intitolati; i quali, rinontiando a Monti Caspii la vita pastorale, con brama di signoreggiare, usciti già dalla Scithia, volgarmente Tartaria, et venuti ad occupar la Tracia, appò moderni Romania, posto che per processo di secoli, non che di lustri e d'anni, prattichino con tutte le sorti di gente civile, non havendo però ancor acquistato spetie d'urbanità, punto non tralignanti posteri del duro Scita e del feroce Trace, tuttavia conservano l'original durezza rustica e l'insita ferità non mai deposta nè dimenticata": Salvago, *Africa overo Barbarìa*, 54.

[52] On Gog and Magog in medieval thought and the significance of the "blurred" and unspecific nature of this category, see Westrem, "Against Gog and Magog," 56, 70. On medieval myths of the Scythian origins of the Turks see Meserve, "Medieval Sources for Renaissance Theories" and *Empires of Islam*.

[53] This was openly recognized by the Venetian Senate: in Salvago's letter of commission of 18 October 1624 the Senate lauded "la prattica che tieni con turchi" (the expertise you have with Turks), urging him to make good use of it during the negotiations with the regents of Barbary; Salvago, *Africa overo Barbarìa*, 14.

implicitly reaffirm their distance from the Ottomans and their affinity with Venice. In 1649, the Venetian dragoman Cristoforo Tarsia, a native of Capodistria who had resided in Istanbul for several decades, sought Venetian support in a civil litigation in which he was involved, claiming that without government backing he would surely turn into "food for the voracity of these barbarians."[54] A decade later Tarsia again invoked "Turkish barbarity" as part of a rhetoric of self-justification in his effort to mobilize more junior colleagues into collective bargaining.[55] While this attempt was crushed shortly after its inception, it left an indelible impression, forcing the Venetian authorities to take dragomans' interests into consideration and to acknowledge more fully their collective power. These and other similar cases highlight the way in which Venetian dragomans, who by the seventeenth century had become thoroughly localized and highly endogamous members of the Latin community of Pera/Istanbul regardless of individual provenance, sought to play on Venetian fears of alleged Ottoman "barbarity" to achieve their own ends. They thus underscore the role in articulating emerging discourses about Ottoman otherness of precisely those like Venetian dragomans – who could claim to know Ottoman society from the inside.

Conclusion

My analysis of Salvago's *relazione* from Barbary has underlined the importance of his claims to insiders' knowledge in authorizing his role as diplomat and intermediary, but also the unstable and paradoxical nature of these claims. Intimacy with things Ottoman (and a partially Ottoman-metropolitan perspective on the Ottoman colonial periphery of North Africa) was a precondition for Salvago's claims to knowledge in his *relazione*. Yet, his authority also depended, or at least so he thought, on ultimately distancing himself from his Ottoman object of description. By invoking the image of Turks as barbarians and Scythians, Tartars and people of Gog and Magog, Salvago was drawing on a humanist trope of some political urgency, as well as on longstanding medieval topoi.[56]

[54] ASV, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, b. 132, fols. 756v and 757r (28 Feb. 1648 m.v.).

[55] ASV, Inquisitori di Stato, b. 418, unpaginated letters by Giovanni Battista Ballarino (16 and 22 Aug. 1660). On this affair, see also Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul," 292–297.

[56] Jones, "The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe," 398–399, Westrem, "Against Gog and Magog," Meserve, *Empire*. On the connection between the Turks and Scythians in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's (later Pope Pius II) *Cosmographia* (1458–1460), see Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary?" 194.

However, more than signalling the Turks' barbarity, in his report to the Venetian Senate Salvago was indexing his own worthiness as an "acculturated" Venetian subject, fully immersed in classicizing, proto-Orientalist humanist thought while remaining fully grounded in the medieval tradition that formed its basis.

University of Toronto Scarborough

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