

Profit and Commitment

Lorenzo Dolfin and the Commercial Family in Venetian Long-Distance Trade, c.1399-1475

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DANKSAGUNG	5
SYNOPSIS	7
TECHNICALITIES	9
CHAPTER I: REASSESSING THE VENETIAN COMMERCIAL PATRICIATE – A MICRO-HISTORICAL APPROACH	11
A. STATE OF RESEARCH	13
B. RESEARCH AGENDA: THE COMMERCIAL FAMILY	21
C. SOURCES	22
I. THE <i>COMMISSARIE</i> LORENZO DOLFIN AND BIAGIO DOLFIN	22
II. OTHER ARCHIVAL AND MANUSCRIPT SOURCES	26
III. KNOWLEDGE-SHARING: THE “MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN DIASPORAS DATABASE”	27
D. METHODOLOGY	28
E. STRUCTURE	29
CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – INCENTIVES AND DYNAMICS OF LONG-DISTANCE TRADE	31
A. VENICE, ITALY, AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN	32
I. POLITICS OF CONSOLIDATION	32
II. COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENCE	35
B. GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION AND THE END OF THE COMMENDA ECONOMY	37
I. WAS EUROPE’S TRADE HUB IMMUNE TO ECONOMIC DECLINE?	39
II. THE CLOTH TRADE – A SOURCE OF WEALTH	41
C. VENETIAN ASCENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS	44
I. SEDENTARY TRADE AGENCY	46
II. THE FAMILY AS A COMMERCIAL UNIT?	48
CHAPTER III: AN APPRENTICESHIP IN COMMERCE AND POWER – ALEXANDRIA, VENICE, LONDON (1418-1424)	52
A. BIAGIO DOLFIN <i>QUONDAM</i> LORENZO	52
I. GEM TRADER AND CONSUL: THE USE OF RELATIVES AS TRADE PROXIES	53
II. AGENT AND PRINCIPAL: BUSINESS SKILLS IN THE SERVICE OF FELLOW TRADERS	56
B. LORENZO DOLFIN QD. ANTONIO	58
I. LORENZO’S FAMILY BACKGROUND: THE GABRIEL SIDE	58

II. APPRENTICE BETWEEN VENICE AND ALEXANDRIA	62
III. LORENZO DOLFIN AS A FAMILY REPRESENTATIVE	65
C. CROSS-GENERATIONAL PATTERN: THE STRATEGIC TRANSMISSION OF BUSINESS SKILLS	68
 CHAPTER IV: MASTER OF AFFAIRS – FAMILY, POLITICS, BUSINESS ORGANISATION: VICENZA AND VENICE (1424-1427)	 72
A. THE TRANSFORMATION OF A BUSINESS NETWORK: BIAGIO’S DEATH AND LORENZO’S COMING-OF-AGE	73
I. NICOLÒ BERNARDO QD. FRANCESCO: A CROSS-GENERATIONAL BUSINESS CONTACT	76
II. GIACOMO DOLFIN QD. FRANCESCO: A NEW COMPONENT OF AN INHERITED NETWORK	81
III. RISE OF THE FAMILY	84
B. CREATING A FAMILY NETWORK	85
I. COGNATIC-MATRILINEAR ALLIANCE: THE GABRIEL CONNECTION	85
C. FAMILY AND POLITICS	90
I. CONSANGUINEOUS, AGNATIC FAMILY: DOLFIN	96
II. AFFINAL FAMILY: MOROSINI	100
D. FAMILY AND BUSINESS: EXPLOITING FAMILY LOYALTIES FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES	105
 CHAPTER V: LONG-DISTANCE TRADE – LONDON, FLANDERS, CONSTANTINOPLE, TANA (1427-1443; 1474)	 110
A. LONDON AND FLANDERS	110
I. THE RENIER NETWORK: A COMMISSION AGENCY MODEL	111
II. GIROLAMO BRAGADIN QD. ANDREA: AN INTERMEDIARY SOLUTION	115
III. MICHELE MOROSINI QD. MARINO: A COALITION AGENCY MODEL	117
B. ROMANIA	120
I. THE <i>COMPAGNIA</i> DOLFIN: A CONTRACTUAL, FAMILY-BASED COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE	120
II. THE DOLFIN-MOROSINI TRADE COALITION: A NON-CONTRACTUAL, FAMILY-BASED COMMERCIAL VENTURE	126
C. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND SENIOR YEARS	134
D. WEALTH AND DEATH	137
E. PRELIMINARY EVALUATION: THE PATRICIAN FAMILY IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE	140
 CHAPTER VI: THE PATRICIAN FAMILY AS AN ECONOMIC INSTITUTION	 142
A. PRIVATE-ORDER INSTITUTIONS	142
I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE <i>COMPAGNIA</i>	144
II. THE <i>COMPAGNIA</i> IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	146

III. THE INSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE FAMILY	148
B. WHICH MODEL OF THE FAMILY?	149
IV. SOCIAL FUNCTIONS: THE PERSONAL AND THE PUBLIC	150
V. A NEW MODEL: THE COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY	151
C. ANALYSIS: COMMISSION AGENCY VS. FAMILY REPRESENTATION	156
I. THE ROLE OF INCENTIVES	156
II. MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY PAYOFFS	157
III. INCENTIVES IN LORENZO DOLFIN'S NETWORK	159
D. TWO REFERENTIAL CASES: MALIPIERO AND SORANZO	161
I. DONATO SORANZO: A <i>FRATERNA</i> MERCHANT	161
II. AMBROGIO MALIPIERO: A DIASPORA MERCHANT	168
CHAPTER VII:	
CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK –	
TOWARDS A PROSOPOGRAPHY OF LONG-DISTANCE TRADE?	175
A. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: ANOTHER MERCHANT OF VENICE	176
B. EVALUATION: A FAMILY COALITION AS BUSINESS FRAMEWORK	178
C. FURTHER HYPOTHESES	179
D. OUTLOOK: PROSOPOGRAPHY AS A COMPLEMENTARY METHOD	181
APPENDIX	184
A. CHRONOLOGY	184
B. SELECTED DOCUMENTS	185
I. LETTER, BIAGIO DOLFIN QD. LORENZO, VENETIAN CONSUL IN ALEXANDRIA, TO LORENZO DOLFIN QD. ANTONIO IN VENICE	185
II. LETTER, NICOLÒ DOLFIN QD. BENEDETTO, PODESTÀ OF SACILE, TO LORENZO DOLFIN QD. ANTONIO, CAMERARIO OF VICENZA	186
III. LETTER, GIACOMO DOLFIN QD. FRANCESCO, VICE-BAILO OF CONSTANTINOPLE, TO LORENZO DOLFIN QD. ANTONIO	186
IV. CONTRACT CONCERNING THE PURCHASE OF A SHIP IN CONSTANTINOPLE, ISSUED BY GIORGIO DOLFIN QD. FRANCESCO	189
C. LIST OF CORRESPONDENCE, BIAGIO AND LORENZO DOLFIN	189
D. LETTERS TO AMBROGIO MALIPIERO	190
E. NETWORK AND COALITION STRUCTURE: A FORMAL APPROACH	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY	200
A. ARCHIVAL SOURCES	200
B. EDITED SOURCES	201
C. WORKS OF REFERENCE	201
D. LITERATURE	201

DANKSAGUNG

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist eine geringfügig geänderte und gekürzte Fassung meiner Dissertationsschrift, die am 23. April 2013 von der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Heidelberg angenommen wurde. Sie entstand während meiner Teilnahme am Forschungsprojekt „Kaufmannsdiasporas im östlichen Mittelmeerraum 1250-1450“ (2008-2012) im Forschungsbereich „Transkulturelle Studien“ der Universität Heidelberg. Für die großartige Unterstützung, die ich seitens meiner akademischen Lehrer, aber auch von vielen Kollegen, Freunden und Verwandten erfahren habe, möchte ich von Herzen Dank sagen. Alle verbleibenden Unzulänglichkeiten sind nur mir selbst anzulasten.

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Franz-Julius Morche

SYNOPSIS

Frederic LANE'S classic study "Andrea Barbarigo – Merchant of Venice, 1418-1449" (1944)¹ must be credited with introducing a new approach to Venetian economic historiography, making use of Venice's richness of mercantile sources to retrace the life of a patrician merchant. Unfortunately, and despite the abundance of comparable source material, this poignant methodology has thus far generated little following, as Benjamin ARBEL rightly pointed out in a recent article.² This study is intended to alleviate this shortcoming. Examining documents from the archive of the Venetian patrician Lorenzo Dolfin (born in the 1390s; died in 1475), it highlights the functioning of his personal and commercial networks and investigates the ways in which they overlap.

As in the case of Lane, who regards the business biography as a tool to understand wider issues of trade dynamics, economic development and institutional interdependence, this study is intended to illustrate general mechanisms of social and economic cooperation in late medieval Venetian long-distance trade. Of central concern is the increasing significance of economic agency in the context of trade representation: Lorenzo Dolfin's life coincided with the gradual decline of the late medieval *commenda* economy and the emergence of the early modern corporation economy. As a result, resident agents in distant locations increasingly replaced the travelling merchants of *commenda* ventures, managing sale and acquisition transactions for Venetian principals and maintaining commercial links on behalf of their clients. The particularity of the Venetian case, to which the *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfin* bears testament, is given by the predominant role of family structures in determining the underlying social dynamics of commercial networks. The transformation towards an economy of long-term partnerships (*compagnie*) occurred on the basis of the patrician family acting as a commercial unit. The rise of the corporation economy is therefore closely linked to the emergence of *family trade coalitions* in the economic sphere. As family relations were equally significant to the politics of the Venetian Republic, this study also has macro-historical implications: through the incentives of family-dominated commercial networks, we can derive the political incentives of the growing Venetian trading empire and hence the nature of economic

¹ Lane, Frederic C.: *Andrea Barbarigo, Merchant of Venice 1418-1449*, New York: Octagon Books, 1967.

² Arbel, Benjamin: "Operating Trading Networks in Times of War: A sixteenth-century Venetian patrician between public service and private affairs", in: Faroqhi, S., Veinstein, G. (eds.), *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, Paris etc.: Peeters, 2008, pp. 23-33.

relations between Christian Europe and the Islamic East championed by the Venetian Republic in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The analysis focuses primarily on the commercial letters contained in the *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfìn* and related archival collections, which provide valuable insights into the structures of business organisation and thus complement the information on commodities, prices, trade volumes, investments and profits found in contracts and account books. A first examination of these sources suggests that Lorenzo's family surrounding was crucial in the organisation of his business, as the vast majority of his correspondents were related by kin. Particular attention is thus given to the role of the patrician family in commerce and business: to what extent was patrician commerce organised within family hierarchies and consequently subject to cross-generational cooperation? How were business skills transmitted from one generation to the next, and what was the institutional basis for intra-family cooperation? Was intra-family commerce based on contractual dispositions, or did the patrician family operate as a general partnership, an infinite long-term commercial enterprise sustained by socio-cultural factors rather than individual economic incentives?

On the basis of the *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfìn* and related sources, we find that in many cases patrician families provided an early commercial socialisation for young nobles; in addition, the (extended) family would serve as a sphere of mutual commitment that could be tapped for business purposes throughout a patrician career. The continuity in Lorenzo's choice of commercial partners and the dominance of relatives in his commercial environment suggest the gradual emergence of long-term non-contractual partnerships. Family relations thus served as a means of selecting agents and partners for long-distance trade ventures. Family-based commercial coalitions entailed a range of advantages, from the transmission of skills to the sharing of commercial contacts. The complex structure of the patrician family requires a distinction between nuclear, extended and affinal families in addition to family clusters (comprising both patrilineal and matrilineal lineages), strategic coalitions, clans, and the "constructed" family (i.e. the inclusion of non-relatives into a family environment). With the "comprehensive family", this study presents a new model that captures patrician family dynamics in both the political and economic spheres and thus reflects the entanglement of politics and commerce in the Venetian Republic.

TECHNICALITIES

List of Figures

Figure 1: Pedigree Dolfín (da Santa Giustina)	54
Figure 2: Pedigree Gabriel (da Santa Maria Mater Domini)	59
Figure 3: Pedigree Gabriel (da Santa Maria Mater Domini) [= Fig. 2]	87
Figure 4: Pedigree Dolfín (da Sant'Anzolo)	97
Figure 5: Pedigree Morosini (da San Zaninovo)	101

List of Tables

Table 1: Members, Dolfín-Morosini Coalition	131
Table 2: ASVe, Misc. di carte non app. ad alcun archivio, b. 15, lettere Donato Soranzo	162
Table 3: ASVe, Misc. di carte non app. ad alcun archivio, b. 15, lettere Ambrogio Malipiero	169
Table 4: Correspondence Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín, ASVe, b. 181, fasc. 15	189
Table 5: Letters Biagio to Lorenzo Dolfín, ASVe, b. 282	190
Table 6: ASVe, Misc. Gregolin, b. 9	190

Abbreviations

ASVe: *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*

ASVi: *Archivio di Stato di Vicenza*

AvC: *Avogaria di Comun*

BMC: *Biblioteca del Museo Correr*

BNF-R: *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site Richelieu*

b.: *busta*

CBD: *Commissaria Biagio Dolfín*

ChC: *Christie's Collection*

CLD: *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfín*

MMDD: *Medieval Mediterranean Diasporas Database*

PSM: *Procuratori di San Marco*

qd.: *quondam (= defunct)*

Method of Transcription

The transcription of original sources generally follows the rules set out in Giampaolo Tognetti's *Criteri per la trascrizione di testi medievali latini e italiani*.¹ Punctuation marks and accents have been added to facilitate the reading. Personal names are given in the modern Italian form (e.g. "Zuane" as Giovanni, "Iachomo" as Giacomo etc.). All transcriptions are those of the author unless otherwise stated.

Dating of Sources

Before 1522, the Venetian calendar year began with the month of March. Sources dated according to the *more Veneto* calendarial system have been updated to the modern equivalent, e.g. a source dated 5 February 1422 appears as 5 February 1423 in the citation.

Referencing and Spelling

Full reference of secondary literature is given at first citation only and in abbreviated form thereafter. UK spelling is used throughout, except for quotations from (English) secondary literature, which are reproduced without alterations. Primary sources are cited in the original language.

¹ Tognetti, Giampaolo: *Criteri per la trascrizione di testi medievali latini e italiani*, Rome: Quaderni della rassegna degli archivi di stato, 1982.

CHAPTER I: REASSESSING THE VENETIAN COMMERCIAL PATRICIATE – A MICRO-HISTORICAL APPROACH

This study explores the role of family relations in late medieval Venetian long-distance trade, with particular respect to the dynamics of partnership formation. As the place of the individual's early socialisation, the family is a key transmitter of norms, hierarchies, and means of social cooperation across generations. On aggregate, it is a key driver of social development. For millennia, family ties have distributed political power in virtually all societies, and have shaped their economic lives in commerce, manufacturing, and finance. Yet, while the systemic link between family structure and economic development has attracted considerable scholarly attention in economics and anthropology, historical investigations have remained comparatively rare.¹

The present study seeks to reduce the scale of this gap. Based on the private archives of two consecutive generations of the patrician Dolfin family, it investigates how Venetian merchants arranged their transactions in long-distance trade against the background of changing political environments, technological progress, and increasingly integrated markets in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. The study advances the notion that, in Venice and its territories, family-based commercial coalitions became the primary business units on the brink of the early modern period, while at the same time different organisational structures made their appearance elsewhere. In Florence, another important commercial centre of the northern Italian peninsula, the predecessor of the modern business firm resembled more closely an institution that formalised links between (non-kin) commercial partners and put them under the protection of the emerging city state. Though strongly pronounced in the political sphere, family relations were not key to the development of commercial partnerships. When it comes to the

¹ For the relationship between family structure and economic development, see e.g. Pensieroso, L., Sommacal, A.: "Economic development and family structure: From pater familias to the nuclear family", in: *European Economic Review* 71 (October 2014), pp. 80-100. Also Diebolt, C., Rijpma, A., Carmichael, S., Dilli, S., Störmer, C. (eds.): *Cliometrics of the Family*, Cham: Springer, 2019. Useful historical approaches include Cavaciocchi, Simonetta (ed.): *La famiglia nell'economia europea secoli XIII-XVIII - The Economic Role of the Family in the European Economy from the 13th to the 18th Centuries*, Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010.

historical evolution of European business organisation, the specific (and varying) roles of the family should no longer be overlooked.²

I approach these issues by conducting a case study of the Venetian merchant and civil servant Lorenzo Dolfin (c.1399-1475), whose personal archive is held at the Venetian *Archivio di Stato*. This rich body of sources potentially harbours answers to a range of historical questions; yet, since Lorenzo noticeably surrounded himself with affinal and consanguineous kin during his commercial pursuits, the relationship between family structure and business organisation is an appropriate choice of focus when analysing the collection's commercial correspondence. In comparison to the commercial environment of his uncle Biagio Dolfin (c.1370-1420), Lorenzo further intensified the links between his family surroundings and his commercial activities. His example highlights the role of the Venetian patrician family as a *business unit*, the institutional structure in which economic entrepreneurship is organised.³ In late medieval Europe, and especially in Venice and the wider Italian peninsula, commercial organisation was subject to rapid institutional change that induced the progression from various types of partnership to the modern firm.⁴ While simple sea loans were still prevalent in Genoa and Venice in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, the rise of the *commenda* economy enabled risk-sharing between suppliers of capital and labour and thus made a fundamental contribution to the Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages.⁵

It would be wrong, of course, to suggest that family structure had an unambiguous effect on long-term economic change, or that the relationship between a society's economic outlook

² For the emergence of the Florentine 'partnership system', see Padgett, J.F., McLean, P.D.: "Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation: The Birth of Partnership Systems in Renaissance Florence", in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 111 (March 2006), No. 5, pp. 1463–1568.

³ It has been suggested that European business history displays a progression through roughly three different organisational forms, from *individually acting agents* via *partnerships* to *companies*, see Börner, Lars: "Breaking up is hard to do: Partnership Dissolution and the Economy of the Commenda", in: *Humboldt University Working Paper* (Aug., 2007).

⁴ Luzzatto, Gino: *Storia economica di Venezia dall' XI al XVI secolo*, Venice: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1961, pp. 227-230; Reynolds, Robert L.: "Origins of Modern Business Enterprise: Medieval Italy", in: *The Journal of Economic History* 12 (Autumn, 1952), No. 4, pp. 350-365; Spufford, Peter: *Handel, Macht und Reichtum - Kaufleute im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart: Theiss, 2004, pp. 11-44.

⁵ For a critical perspective on the historical significance of the commenda, see Williamson, Dean V.: *Transparency, Contract Selection and the Maritime Trade of Venetian Crete, 1303-1351*, Working Paper of the Antitrust Division, US Department of Justice, 2002; id.: *The Financial Structure of Commercial Revolution: Financing Long-distance Trade in Venice 1190-1220 and Venetian Crete 1278-1400*, Working Paper of the Antitrust Division, US Department of Justice, Aug. 2010.

and its social institutions was sustained by typical and universal patterns. Rather, I use the case of late medieval Venice and the biography of a single merchant to consider, first, the significance of the family to an individual's commercial career *in a specific historical context*, and, second, the ramifications of the relative importance of the family for the economic and, ultimately, the political functioning of the wider society. Despite not offering a grand-scale historical narrative, a micro-historical perspective is not principally void of generic insights. Documents on individual personal and commercial activities can, in fact, illuminate wider political, social, and economic conditions, as they typically contain the interpersonal structure of entire groups and thus reflect the circumstances of a significant number of actors. In the case of Venice, which in the fifteenth century also maximised its geographical sphere of influence, the opportunities and constraints faced by traders in long-distance commerce often reflected interregional political and cultural challenges. The life of a single merchant can therefore be seen, if not as representative of his wider social sphere, then at least as symptomatic for the social and political conditions under which he operated, and their technological, informational, and institutional constraints. Thus, with respect to his daily *experience*, his life can be compared more widely, providing a window into his sphere and time.

A. State of Research

This research draws on three distinct fields of study: late medieval economic and social history, with particular respect to the development of long-distance trade and a specific geographical focus on Venice, Northern Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean **(1)**; the evolution of business organisation – in particular, the emergence of the firm – as seen through the prisms of institutional theory **(2)**; and the historical sociology of the family **(3)**.

(1)

The sheer abundance of surviving mercantile sources in Venice and other Italian contexts makes it permissible – indeed, necessary – to ask about the wider social and political implications of commercial history. This was the primary aim of Frederic C. LANE'S study *Andrea Barbarigo: Merchant of Venice, 1418-1449*, a classic example of a comprehensive business biography.⁶ Andrea Barbarigo was born in Venice in the late 1390s as the son of the galley

⁶ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*.

captain Nicolò Barbarigo.⁷ He entered the world of commerce at around eighteen years of age with a small inheritance from his mother (his father had gone bankrupt after having famously been fined 10.000 ducats for wrecking a galley off the Dalmatian coast in 1417). He joined the merchant galleys as a “bowman of the quarterdeck” (*balestriere della popa*) and was later trained in the judicial service at the *Curia di Petizion*.⁸ He expanded his business activities with the support of relatives in Crete and friends from the Cappello family, into which he eventually married in 1439.⁹ As his fortune rose, he invested in property on the *terraferma* and focused his commercial activities on the cloth trade. In his later years, he separated his business from his family surroundings and established strategic alliances with young, ambitious nobles.¹⁰

The significance of the patrician family in the political sphere was further demonstrated by Patricia H. LABALME on the basis of the papers of the fifteenth-century patrician diplomat and scholar Bernardo Giustiniani.¹¹ Both Labalme’s and Lane’s studies led the way in rendering economic sources accountable to questions reaching beyond the economic sphere. Of course, individual examples cannot uncritically be deemed representative of their era, and Lane’s famous caveat with respect to his object of study applies just as well in the case of Lorenzo Dolfin: the reason he is being studied lies solely in the arbitrary survival of substantial parts of his personal archive.¹² Yet, as Benjamin ARBEL has shown, perusing the Venetian archives for additional sources is all but a futile exercise. His research on the papers of Giambattista Donà, a sixteenth-century Cyprus-based Venetian merchant, highlights the entanglement of political and economic spheres as well as a significant role of kinship structures in Venetian Eastern Mediterranean trade.¹³ Outside Venice, the huge collection of the *Fondo Datini* at the *Archivio di Stato di Prato* contains the most comprehensive known body of sources on late medieval commercial history in Italy.¹⁴ The example of the Tuscan Francesco

⁷ According to the Balla d’Oro register, Andrea Barbarigo was eighteen years of age in December 1417. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

¹¹ Labalme, Patricia H.: *Bernardo Giustiniani - A Venetian of the Quattrocento*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969.

¹² Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 3.

¹³ Arbel: *Operating Trading Networks*.

¹⁴ Cecchi Aste, Elena: *L’archivio di Francesco di Marco Datini, fondaco di Avignone inventario*, Roma: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali direzione generale per gli archivi, 2004; Brun, Robert: "A Fourteenth

Datini validates the notion that the lives of the Venetians Andrea Barbarigo, Lorenzo Dolfín and Giambattista Donà are typical in their own right, as their respective commercial careers display striking similarities. Datini's initial commercial activities, which centred around the cloth trade, were of striking similarity to the primary business of Lorenzo Dolfín (sale of Eastern spices in Venice and the main Western European markets, purchase of raw fabrics and processed cloth, subsequent sale particularly along the *Romania* trade route) while also employing similar instruments of finance.¹⁵

Eliyahu ASHTOR meticulously chronicled the rise of late medieval Venetian commerce vis-à-vis her Italian rivals amidst a general contraction of trade in Europe and the Near East.¹⁶ The notion of a pan-European late medieval commercial depression was further corroborated by Benjamin Z. KEDAR in a comprehensive sociological study of mercantile mentalities as key elements of the social foundations of commercial exchange.¹⁷ The building and maintenance of cross-regional commercial networks, in which Venice developed a competitive edge over its main Italian rivals, depended to a significant extent on a successful strategy of bridging differences in socio-cultural mentalities, enabling the Venetian diaspora to trade effectively in foreign lands. While LOPEZ, RAYMOND, and others documented the development of commercial techniques and the institutionalisation of trade routes in the late medieval Mediterranean,¹⁸ the particular role of commercial diasporas in facilitating cross-regional commercial exchange was most vividly highlighted in Philip CURTIN's seminal *Cross-Cultural Trade in*

Century Merchant of Italy: Francesco Datini of Prato", in: *Journal of Economic and Business History* II (May 1930), No. 3, pp. 451-466; Melis, Federigo: "Francesco Datini come operatore economico", in: *Economia e storia* 9 (1962), pp. 195-198; Origo, Iris: *The merchant of Prato: Francesco di Marco Datini*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1957.

¹⁵ Unlike Lorenzo Dolfín and Andrea Barbarigo, Datini was also active in the banking sector as a large-scale creditor. The structure of the *compagnia*, a typical method of financing commercial enterprises, is discussed in chapter VI below.

¹⁶ Ashtor, Eliyahu: *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 1983.

¹⁷ Kedar, Benjamin Z.: *Merchants in Crisis - Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression*, New Haven (Conn.) and London: Yale University Press, 1976.

¹⁸ Raymond, I.W., Lopez, R.S.: *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents - Translated with Introductions and Notes*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

World History. Eric VALLET, in turn, specifically analysed the Venetian trade diaspora in Syria on the basis of commercial correspondence.¹⁹

(2)

In addition, historical research on economic development has benefited from advancements in institutional economics, a field that owes much to Schumpeterian thought and thus is unambiguously historical in character. As studying the commercial development of late medieval and early modern Venice entails necessarily an examination of business units and their historical foundations, an institutional perspective can help categorise observable commercial practices by highlighting the systemic links at the intersection of social spheres (government, commerce, markets) and the specific incentives that guide them. A useful institutionalist model for this purpose has been proposed by Avner GREIF as an extension of the pioneering work of Douglass NORTH.²⁰ Greif's definition of institutions, which emerges from a context of medieval trade, encompasses a multidimensional perspective that includes crucial aspects of North's framework.²¹ To Greif, "an institution is a system of social factors (rules, beliefs, norms, and organisations) that together generate a regularity of (social) behavior",²² consisting of several components that Greif coins "institutional elements."²³

The aspect of "generating behavior" is critical, for a social factor that does not induce behavioural ramifications is not an element of an institution according to this definition. Unlike North, Greif regards "rules" as only one institutional element, not as institutions per se. Of equal importance are beliefs and means of collective action (organisations), in short, the mo-

¹⁹ Curtin, Philip D.: *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984; Vallet, Éric: *Marchands vénitiens en Syrie à la fin du XVe siècle - Pour l'honneur et le profit*, Paris: Associations pour le développement de l'histoire économique, 1999.

²⁰ Greif, Avner: *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; North, Douglass C.: *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

²¹ Greif first developed his approach when studying commercial cooperation among Jewish eleventh-century merchants in the Muslim west, see Greif, Avner: "Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders", in: *Journal of Economic History* 49 (Dec., 1989), No. 4, pp. 857-882.

²² Greif: *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*, p. 30.

²³ Ibid.

tivations for following the rules.²⁴ “Institutional elements are social factors as they are man-made, non-physical factors exogenous to each individual whose behavior they influence.”²⁵

This assertion is particularly fitting to the present historical context, as the institutional framework of Venetian long-distance trade arose on the micro-level from individual strategic needs but was ultimately determined on the macro-level as a ramification of collective political decisions that also reflected inter-state negotiations and conflicts as well as exogenous factors (such as climatic conditions). A radical substantivist stance is therefore unsustainable in the light of unambiguous evidence of economic incentive structures.²⁶

Greif’s approach is holistic in the sense that it extends existing definitions and solves their apparent contradictions. Most importantly, it combines *agency* and *structural* perspectives. An agency perspective holds that institutions are designed by individuals for specific purposes, whereas structuralists maintain that the origins of institutions lie outside of individual control. While the entirety of the Venetian institutional landscape can thus be described in the Greifian sense as a socio-political entity providing incentives for the following of rules, this study also resorts to more traditional definitions to describe specific social phenomena such as the family. Examples hereof are the perspective taken by Oliver E. WILLIAMSON, which identifies a range of different institutional layers, and North’s distinction between formal and informal institutions.²⁷ Using Williamson’s framework, the family can be described as a *social institution*, which corresponds to the terminology typically employed in sociological literature.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

²⁶ The pertinence of Karl POLANYI’S criticism of historical formalisation has been sufficiently discussed in North, Douglass C.: “Markets and Other Allocation Systems in History: The Challenge of Karl Polanyi”, in: *The Journal of European Economic History* 6 (Spring 1977), No. 1, pp. 703-716.

²⁷ Williamson, Oliver E.: “The New Institutional Economics: Taking Stock, Looking Ahead”, in: *Journal of Economic Literature* 38 (Sep., 2000), No. 3, pp. 595-613; North, Douglass C.: “Institutions”, in: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5 (Winter 1991), No. 1, pp. 97-112.

²⁸ As originally used by Parsons, Talcott: “The Social Structure of the Family”, in: Anshen, Ruth N. (ed.), *The Family: its Function and Destiny*, Oxford: Harper, 1949, pp. 173-201. For a critical discussion of recent literature, see Gilding, Michael: “Reflexivity over and above convention: the new orthodoxy in the sociology of personal life, formerly sociology of the family”, in: *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (2010), No. 4, pp. 757-777. Also see Greif, Avner: “Family Structure, Institutions, and Growth: The Origins and Implications of Western Corporations”, in: *The American Economic Review* 96 (May, 2006), No. 2, pp. 308-312, for an attempt to derive the emergence of business units and their impact on overall economic development from family structures.

Major organisational challenges of commercial exchange have been widely discussed in the institutionalist literature, and existing models are to a substantial degree interrelated. Situations such as Venetian merchants instructing trade partners in distant locations are known as *principal-agent-relationships* inducing a *commitment problem*, a core element of the *fundamental problems of exchange*: absent adequate means of monitoring, a principal has no ultimate control over their agent's doings and consequently can be deprived of (a portion or the entirety of) their share in a transaction.²⁹ To overcome these monitoring-related difficulties, a system of *trust* needs to be created either through credible commitment or by means of external enforcement.³⁰ Enforcement can be *endogenised*, that is, subject to an internal mechanism within the partnership, or provided by an *exogenous* factor such as a judicial system.³¹ In the context of medieval trade, private-order institutions such as mercantile coalitions resulted from a desire to improve transactional security. An important related characteristic of medieval commerce is the emergence of *collective liabilities* by which groups could be held responsible for individual actions. In a regime of collective liability, individual wrongdoing such as betraying commercial partners would lead to the sanctioning of the wrongdoer's associates in addition to the wrongdoer themselves. Degrees of association relevant in collective sanctioning could include family ties, religious affiliation, place of origin, or nationality.³² The creation of commercial coalitions may thus reflect a strategy to reduce the risk of collective punishment by spreading businesses across several jurisdictions and strengthening individual liabilities.

²⁹ For the theory of the principal-agent-problem, see Richter, R., Furubotn, E.G.: *Neue Institutionenökonomik - Eine Einführung und kritische Würdigung*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003, pp. 173-182; for the commitment problem, see Greif: *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*, pp. 62-65, 273; North, Douglass C.: "Institutions and Credible Commitment", in: *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 149 (1993), No. 1, pp. 11-23; for game-theoretic foundations, see Greif, A., Milgrom, P.R., Weingast, B.R.: "Coordination, Commitment, and Enforcement: The Case of the Merchant Guild", in: *The Journal of Political Economy* 102 (Aug., 1994), No. 4, pp. 745-776; for the fundamental problems of exchange, see Gelderblom, O., Grafe, R.: "The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe", in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40 (Spring 2010), No. 4, pp. 477-511; Greif, Avner: "The fundamental problem of exchange: A research agenda in Historical Institutional Analysis", in: *European Review of Economic History* 4 (2000), pp. 251-284.

³⁰ For a critical perspective on trust, see Guinnane, Timothy W.: "Trust: A Concept Too Many", in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1 (2005), pp. 77-92.

³¹ Greif: *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*, pp. 93-94, 343-345.

³² See e.g. Börner, L., Ritschl, A.: "Individual Enforcement of Collective Liability in Premodern Europe", in: *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 158 (2002), pp. 205-213.

(3)

With respect to Venice, Lane examined the role of the patrician family in the economic sphere from a legal perspective.³³ Venetian law encouraged the creation of family-based business units such as the *fraterna*, which enabled brothers to keep their inheritance in common ownership, invest their joint capital in common ventures, and share the returns accordingly.³⁴ Family-based businesses differed from other commercial arrangements in primarily three ways: first, their cross-generational outlook introduced a degree of permanence; second, they featured a strict internal hierarchy; lastly, their relatively well-defined boundaries meant that the selection of business agents followed predetermined, overall more exclusive patterns and was often restricted to the family as such.

David HERLIHY identified the *fraterna* as a general Italian phenomenon.³⁵ According to Herlihy, the “consortial family”³⁶ (derived from the Latin *consorteria*) was a ramification of the medieval great household, where several generations and family branches lived under one roof.³⁷ Herlihy notes an overall “increase in family solidarity”³⁸ in the High Middle Ages, particularly among the wealthy population, which in the context of Venice manifested itself as an intensification of inter-clan cooperation within the patriciate. The work of Stanley CHOJNACKI broadly confirms this notion.³⁹ The Venetian patriciate was based on a cognatic family system in which different consortial families were linked by marriage, thus creating inter-

³³ Lane, Frederic C.: "Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic", in: *The Journal of Economic History* 4 (Nov., 1944), No. 2, pp. 178-196.

³⁴ The until today most rigorous historical account of the legal dispositions of historical family partnerships and specifically the *fraterna* is Pertile, Antonio: *Storia del diritto italiano dalla caduta dell'impero romano alla codificazione - Vol. III: Storia del diritto privato*, Turin: Unione tipografico editrice torinese, 1894, pp. 274-284; also see Weber, Max: *Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften im Mittelalter - Nach Südeuropäischen Quellen*, http://www.textlog.de/weber_handel.html, 1889.

³⁵ Herlihy, David: "Family solidarity in medieval Italian history", in: *Explorations in Economic History* 7 (Autumn-Winter 1969), No. 1-2, pp. 173-184.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³⁷ Herlihy claims that “progressive consolidation” is the observable trend of family development in the Middle Ages, as opposed to the notion of “progressive nuclearisation” popularised by Marc Bloch. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ See, for example, Chojnacki, Stanley: "Kinship Ties and Young Patricians in Fifteenth Century Venice", in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 215-239.

family clans. These clans exerted their influence in both commerce and politics; there is thus a specific socio-political significance to the Venetian patrician family.⁴⁰

In what follows, I shall use the terms ‘kinship’ and ‘family’ for the most part interchangeably, referring to individuals related by blood or marriage as ‘kin’ and to those lacking consanguineous or affinal ties as ‘non-kin’. With respect to the inclusion of non-kin business partners into family arrangements, social affinity will be considered as a separate integrative factor (anthropological literature accounts for such phenomena and Venetian sources know numerous instances of congruence between family and social affinity).⁴¹

Wherever ‘family’ refers to a nuclear family structure, this will be made explicit. I use the term ‘clan’ in a provisional sense to capture groups of individuals banded together in patrilineal systems of descent. This emphasises the patrilineal dissemination of family names, as was customary among the Venetian patriciate.⁴² (The term is redefined in the proposed model of the Venetian patrician family presented in chapter VI.) Inter-family clan structures resulting from marital links will be named as such (e.g. Dolfín-Morosini, see in particular chapters III and IV). A family branch, by contrast, is a sub-group of a clan consisting of nuclear and extended family structures linked to a specific location in Venice, usually a parish (*parrocchia*). Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín, for example, originated from the Dolfín branch of Santa Giustina.

⁴⁰ The cognatic pattern with strong inter-clan linkages was also confirmed by Donald QUELLER and Thomas MADDEN, see Queller, D.E., Madden, T.F.: "Father of the Bride: Fathers, Daughters, and Dowries in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Venice", *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (Winter, 1993), No. 4, pp. 685-711. In addition, Trevor DEAN has examined evidence from inter-family vendettas in medieval Italy to explain intra-family solidarity: Dean, Trevor: "Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late Medieval Italy", in: *Past & Present* 157 (Nov., 1997), pp. 3-36. Daine HUGHES examined the important relationship between urbanisation and family structure in the context of late medieval Genoa: Hughes, Daine O.: "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa", in: *Past & Present* 66 (Feb., 1975), pp. 3-28.

⁴¹ For anthropological definitions, see Hammel, Eugene A.: "Family Structures and Kinship", in: Mokyr, Joel (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*, Vol. 2, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 261-266. In addition to the similarity of names as a basis for kinship bonds, there are other indications of the significance of social affinity. Etiquettes of merchant letters give important hints in this respect ("simel di fradello", "simel di fio"; nephews, at times, were addressed simply as "fio", see for example Biagio Dolfín's letters to Lorenzo, e.g. ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [13a]).

⁴² Chojnacki, Stanley: "Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice", in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5 (Spring, 1975), No. 4, pp. 571-600; id.: "Patrician Women in Early Renaissance Venice", in: *Studies in the Renaissance* 21 (1974), pp. 176-203; id.: *Kinship Ties*; Queller and Madden: *Father of the Bride*; Muir, Edward: *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 7, 170, 302.

B. Research Agenda: The Commercial Family

Overall, the literatures on medieval trade, institutional development, and family structure show that

- *the relationship between the geographical consolidation of Venetian long-distance trade and the social consolidation of the patrician family requires further examination.*
- *the role of the family as an economic unit beyond formal legal entities such as the *fraterna* has only been rudimentarily explored;*
- *further evidence is needed to assess the role of individuals within a social system of inter-family cooperation;*
- *identifying individual incentives within family relationships is crucial for assessing the macro-institutional landscape of late medieval Venice and, especially, the interplay of politics and economics in the context of long-distance commerce.*

This study hence asks about the extent to which the institutional landscape of late medieval Venice was shaped by individual decisions taken within changing family environments. Thus, it enquires about the impact of the family on the behavioural constraints of the individual, and in turn about the relationship between evolving family structures and the organisation of long-distance trade. The decisive question of “what drives changes in family structure” can be studied on the micro-level by looking at changing attitudes towards the family and its commercial function from one generation of a Venetian patrician family to another. Considering the apparent significance of intra-family commercial relations, there are grounds to suspect that the Venetian patrician family was not just a social unit, but that it also served as an operational framework in the economic sphere beyond formally recognisable units such as the *fraterna*. This hypothesis is quite particular in the context of medieval Italy, as comparable city-state economies do not display an equally central role of family relations in commercial affairs.⁴³ It raises a number of questions relating to the intentionality of family-based

⁴³ In Florence, which is most comparable to Venice on an institutional level despite a more pronounced dominance of specific clans, contracting family members in commercial contexts was both economically inefficient and politically inopportune (see further discussion in chapter VI below). See Goldthwaite, Richard A.: "The Medici Bank and the World of Florentine Capitalism", in: *Past & Present* 114 (February 1987), pp. 3-31; Roover, Raymond de: "The Medici Bank Organization and Management", in: *The Journal of Economic History* 6 (Mai 1946), No. 1, pp. 24-52; Weissen, Kurt: "Machtkämpfe und Geschäftsbeziehungen in Florenz im 15. Jahrhundert - Wie Cosimo de Medici seine Bank im Kampf gegen seine inneren Gegner einsetzte", in:

commercial arrangements, the means of selecting and monitoring family-internal business partners, and the periphery of family-centred commercial networks:

1. Was conducting long-distance trade within family structures a successful strategy for Venetian merchants?
2. Given the considerable size of family clans resulting from the cognatic system that dominated the Venetian patriciate, on what basis did merchants choose which relatives to include into their personal networks?
3. Which opportunities did a family-based commercial structure create for inter-family cooperation? Specifically, how could non-kin agents be integrated to a family coalition and how did their incentives differ from those of family agents?
4. Were family-based commercial enterprises decentralised or did they revolve around a central node? Did the composition of centralised networks change following the death or retirement of the patriarch, and how did the continuation of cross-generational networks function in practice?

The papers of Lorenzo Dolfin shed light on whether the observed patterns of trade organisation functioned as intended. To generate room for more generic conclusions, the above questions will be approached by separating distinct elements of Lorenzo Dolfin's biography (e.g. the early death of his father and its ramifications for Lorenzo's inter-family relations) from those elements of his life and career that were grounded in wider circumstances (e.g. his mercantile education and the geographical focus of his commerce). Commercial correspondence is particularly useful for detecting both the smooth functioning of, and unforeseen difficulties in, commercial transactions, as its newsletter-style structure was designed to capture a broad array of personal, commercial, and political information and thus accounts for the intricacies of inter-personal relations as well as their wider context.

C. Sources

i. The *Commissarie* Lorenzo Dolfin and Biagio Dolfin

Lorenzo Dolfin's archive is preserved at the *Archivio di Stato* in Venice (ASVe). The *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfin* (CLD hereafter) is a collection of the ASVe's *Procuratori di San*

Häberlein, M., Jeggler, C., *Praktiken des Handels - Geschäfte und soziale Beziehungen europäischer Kaufleute in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Constance: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2010, pp. 175-189.

Marco archive (sections *Citra* and *Miste*).⁴⁴ The *Procuratori di San Marco* contains the personal archives of Venetian patricians who entrusted the Procuratori with the execution of their wills. They in turn were incorporated into the ASVe between 1826 and 1877.⁴⁵

Lorenzo Dolfin was presumably born in the Venetian parish St. Giustina to Antonio Dolfin qd. Lorenzo and Cataruccia Gabriel qd. Nicolò. He originated from the same Venetian *casa vecchia* (or *i lunghi* as those Venetian patrician families that claimed ancient ancestry were referred to) that produced the fourteenth century doge Giovanni Dolfin (1356-61).⁴⁶ In the early fifteenth century, his paternal uncle Biagio Dolfin represented the Venetian Republic twice as consul in Alexandria (1408-1410 and 1418-1420), during which time he continued his extensive commercial activities that included trade with precious stones, spices, and cloth. Moreover, he was active on the Venetian property market.⁴⁷

Biagio Dolfin's archive (CBD hereafter) also is of crucial importance to this study.⁴⁸ It comprises a vast number of notarial deeds, judicial files, as well as Biagio's official and personal correspondence. These sources are briefly mentioned in F. Lane's *Andrea Barbarigo*, were first systematically used in E. Ashtor's *Levant Trade*⁴⁹ and have subsequently been included in a variety of studies.⁵⁰ G. CHRIST has analysed Mamluk-Venetian trade by using Biagio's

⁴⁴ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, *Citra*, b. 281-282; ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, *Miste*, b. 283. The bulk of the material is contained in b. 282.

⁴⁵ *Guida generale degli archivi di stato italiani*, vol. IV, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1994, p. 886.

⁴⁶ According to Venetian chronicles, other patrician families relevant to this study, such as the Bragadin, Contarini, Morosini, Querini, and Soranzo, were also part of this illustrious circle (see Labalme: *Bernardo Giustiniani*, p. 5).

⁴⁷ Christ, Georg: *Trading Conflicts. Venetian Merchants and Mamluk Officials in Late Medieval Alexandria*, Leiden: Brill 2012, pp. 94-105; for the housing business see e.g. ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. f. f. [15].

⁴⁸ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, *Miste*, Commissaria Biagio Dolfin, b. 180-181.

⁴⁹ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 149; Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 553.

⁵⁰ LABIB first mentioned the Arabic documents from the CBD (busta 181) in Labîb, Subhi Yanni: *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965, pp. 501-503. Following his recommendation, BAUDEN transcribed and discussed a 1419 document concerning the commitment of dragomans to the court of the governour of Alexandria in Bauden, Frédéric: "The Role of Interpreters in Alexandria in the Light of an Oath (Qasama) taken in the year 822 A.H./1419 A.D.", in: d'Hulster, K., Steenbergen, J. van (eds.), *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam - Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen*, Leuven etc.: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008, pp. 33-64; also see Bauden, Frédéric: "The Mamluk Documents of the Venetian State Archives: Handlist", in: *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20/21 (2002/2003),

involvement in mercantile and political conflicts as a case study. He shows that Venetian commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean was subject to both political and cultural constraints. On the institutional level, trade was enabled through official agreements, as in the pepper trade, but also through illicit phenomena such as smuggling and bribery. Personal bonds between merchants mattered significantly.⁵¹

The CLD displays a great deal of cross-generational continuity. It contains five letters written to Lorenzo, then resident in Venice, by his uncle Biagio during his second consulship (see table 5 in appendix C). We find that Biagio and Lorenzo share a great number of correspondents. Although select documents from the CLD have been used in previous scholarship, no comprehensive analysis of the entirety of the collection has thus far been attempted.⁵² The CLD contains Lorenzo Dolfin's correspondence, a significant number of accounts and lists of

pp. 147-156. Other studies to have used CBD sources include Ashtor, Eliyahu: "The Venetian Supremacy in the Levantine Trade: Monopoly or Pre-Colonialism?", in: *Journal of European Economic History* 3 (1974), No. 1, pp. 5-53; Pedani, Maria Pia (Fabris): "Balas Rubies for the King of England (1413-1415)", in: *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* V (2002), No. 7, pp. 1-13. For a complete list see Arbel, Benjamin: *Venetian Letters (1354-1512) from the Archives of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation and other Cypriot Collections*, Nikosia: The Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2007, p. 31. Arbel transcribed and translated a letter written by Biagio's business associate Andrea Verardin, see *ibid*, p. 72.

⁵¹ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 29, 105-106, 140-147.

⁵² Ashtor, Eliyahu. "Die Verbreitung des englischen Wolltuches in den Mittelmeerländern im Spätmittelalter", in: *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 71 (1984), No. 1, pp. 1-29; *id.*: "Levantine Weights and Standard Parcels: A Contribution to the Metrology of the Later Middle Ages", in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 45 (1982), No. 3, pp. 471-488; *id.*: *Levant Trade*; Doumerc, Bernard: "La crise structurelle de la marine vénitienne au XVe siècle: Le problème du retard des Mude", in: *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 40e Année (May-Jun., 1985), No. 3, pp. 605-623; Christ: *Trading Conflicts*; Doumerc, Bernard: "Par dieu écrivez plus souvent! La lettre d'affaires à Venise à la fin du Moyen Age", in: *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public. 24e congrès*, Avignon, 1993, pp. 99-109; Nam, Jong-Kuk: *Le commerce du coton en Méditerranée à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Leiden: Brill, 2007; *id.*: *Les réseaux maritimes de Venise à la fin du Moyen Age*, http://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%22les%20r%C3%A9seaux%20maritimes%20de%20venise%20%C3%A0%20la%20fin%20du%20moyen%20age%22&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fmahan.wonkwang.ac.kr%2Fmedsociety%2Fsymposium%2Fnetworks%2F03.doc&ei=B_1EUJw2ioriBPXLgPAL&usg=AFQjCNHXDvvpSO3c9xyqWrJrhus_XRajFw&cad=rja. In a comprehensive study of Italian insurance law, Marco ROSSETTI used (among other medieval sources) a transcribed document from the CLD to illustrate the origins of contemporary maritime insurance. Rossetti, Marco: *Il diritto delle assicurazioni. Volume I: L'impresa di assicurazione - Il contratto di assicurazione in generale*, Milan: CEDAM, 2011. The document is ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 2, int. 3, f. [1].

merchandise, and several types of contracts. It is among the largest individual collections held in the archive of the *Procuratori. Busta 282* alone, the core of the collection, contains almost 400 documents, mostly business letters. Almost all of the letters are addressed to Lorenzo Dolfín. Since most of the letters make reference to pieces of correspondence written and sent by Lorenzo, as well as to other pieces written by his correspondents, it is evident that a substantial part of the correspondence has been lost. The surviving letters, however, very neatly account for Lorenzo's long-distance trade across Europe and the Near East. They were likely preserved for this purpose to help assess claims against Lorenzo's estate. Yet there are also a substantial number of personal letters unrelated to commerce. As most of the surviving accounts were produced by correspondents, it is not difficult to link them to the business reports contained in the letters.

The letters, which include both personal letters and the *recordatio* (a semi-legal document often used to provide instructions to trade agents in distant locations⁵³), are of primary interest to this study as they provide direct insights into commercial organisation with information on actors, locations, goods traded, and operational objectives.⁵⁴ Correspondence with business associates was the primary source of information available to merchants, which explains the abundance of this type of source. Merchant letters, which often survive in several copies, display a high degree of structural congruence featuring personal news, trade-specific information and transaction-specific instructions. Thus, they enable conclusions regarding the personal relationships between merchants, the basis of their mutual commitment, and the wider economic significance of commercial agency.

Accounts, by contrast, reveal the cost structure of a commercial enterprise, giving details on prices, commissions (salaries of agents), creditors, and institutional expenses such as customs duties and taxes. Contracts indicate the institutional foundations of social and specifically commercial cooperation. The CLD contains both personal contracts (such as Lorenzo Dolfín's marriage contract with Giovanetta Morosini) and business-specific agreements. The latter include bills of exchange as well as unnotarised documents designed to establish forms of bilateral and multilateral business cooperation.

⁵³ Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, pp. 13-49.

⁵⁴ See e.g. Arbel: *Operating Trading Networks*.

ii. Other archival and manuscript sources

State chronicles document the wider social and political environment. These are official political histories commissioned by state institutions (such as the chronicle of Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo, secretary to the *Consiglio dei Dieci*⁵⁵) or influential members of the Venetian nobility (such as the *casa Celsi* that commissioned the chronicle of Giacomo Servidor⁵⁶, or the famous chronicle of Antonio Morosini⁵⁷).

In addition to the archives of Lorenzo and Biagio Dolfin, I include other personal collections from the Procuratori di San Marco series that directly relate to Lorenzo's commercial network. These include the archival legacies of Giorgio Dolfin, Andrea Gabriel (Lorenzo's maternal uncle), and Angelo Michiel (a trade agent in Alexandria).⁵⁸ Additional letters are preserved in the ASVe collection *Documenti commercial riservati* and in the private collection of Reinhold C. Mueller.⁵⁹ In order to compare Lorenzo's commercial activities to those of other fifteenth-century Venetian merchants, I include letters from the collections of Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero.⁶⁰

To a lesser extent, the analysis also includes legal and institutional sources. Legal sources are documents produced by the Venetian courts, such as the *Giudici di Petizion*, the lawmaking bodies, such as the *Deliberazioni del Maggior Consiglio*, state chanceries such as the *cancel-*

⁵⁵ BnF-R Ms. Ital. 320 (seventeenth century).

⁵⁶ BnF-R Ms. Ital. 319 (seventeenth century).

⁵⁷ Morosini, Antonio qd. Marco: *Il Codice Morosini. Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*. Tomo primo: *Introduzione e Cronaca-Diario dal 1094-1413 (fino a tutto il dogado di Michele Steno)*, ed. by Nanetti, A., Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010; Morosini, Antonio qd. Marco: *Il Codice Morosini. Il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*. Tomo secondo: *Diario dal 1414 al 1426 (dogado di Tommaso Mocenigo e §§ 1-445 del dogado di Francesco Foscari)*, ed. by id., Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010; Morosini, Antonio qd. Marco: *Il Codice Morosini. il mondo visto da Venezia (1094-1433)*. Tomo terzo: *Diario dal 1426 al 1433 (§§ 446-1983 del dogado di Francesco Foscari)*, ed. by id., Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010.

⁵⁸ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 119; ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137; ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Miste, b. 209A.

⁵⁹ These are copies of documents formerly owned by Christie's, London, which Professor Mueller kindly placed at my disposal (see bibliography, "Letters auctioned to unknown collectors in 1987-88 by Christie's-Robson Lowe, Bournemouth, GB, extant in photocopy"). Hereafter, these documents will be referred to as "Christie's collection".

⁶⁰ ASVe, Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 8; ASVe, Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15; ASVe, Miscellanea Gregolin, b. 8.

leria inferior and private notaries.⁶¹ Institutional sources include decrees of the senate (*Deliberazioni del senato*) as well as the archives of religious and other social institutions (such as *Ospedali e luoghi pii*) and charitable organisations such as *scuole*.

iii. Knowledge-sharing: the “Medieval Mediterranean Diasporas Database”

The primary sources used in this study have been identified and studied by the author in the ASVe and the *Biblioteca del Museo Correr* in Venice. As a means to facilitate future access, the documents have for the most part been digitised and included in the Medieval Mediterranean Diasporas Database (MMDD) initiated by Georg Christ at the Transcultural Studies programme of Heidelberg University.⁶² In return, this study has benefited from comparable source material contained in the database and from the collaborative research of the Transcultural Studies programme and its external associates.⁶³ Database technology facilitates the thematic collections of primary sources and secondary literature and the related exchange between scholars. In addition, research on kinship and business relations is enhanced through the storing and interlinking of prosopographical and genealogical data. In order to separate the insights gained from original archival research from those provided by database material, the acronym *MMDD* has been added to all citations of sources that were identified through the use of database technology rather than through original archival research.⁶⁴ Among the key support features of electronic data management were the classification of letters and other commerce-related documents according to criteria such as geographical origin, date, sender and receiver, and content (based on a preset keyword system); the linking of documents to specific persons, locations, and events in cases where primary information was unavailable; and the extended information on family relations generated through the matching of individuals on the basis of archival material and additional genealogical data.

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of these and other collections in the ASVe, see De Vivo, Filippo: "Ordering the archive in early modern Venice (1400–1650)", in: *Archival Science* 10 (2010), No. 3, pp. 231-248.

⁶² The MMDD has now been incorporated to the Linking of Knowledge in the Humanities (LoKiH) database at the University of Heidelberg: <http://lokih.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/web/>. I am indebted to Georg Christ for the opportunity to participate in the project as well as to Andreas Adolphs, Susanne Bosche, Andreas Greiner, Franziska Hauer, Vu Nguyen, and Christian Steinhaus for technical assistance and administrative support.

⁶³ I accessed the MMDD via LitLink, a FileMaker-based database application, which allowed for the collaborative work on transcriptions and the sharing of primary source material.

⁶⁴ As mentioned above, all transcriptions are my own unless otherwise stated.

D. Methodology

The key focus of the analysis lies on the mercantile correspondence between Lorenzo Dolfín and his associates. Particular attention is given to names and hierarchies, which are established by examining employed letter etiquettes in cases where information on the age or status of correspondents is unavailable. At this stage, the foundations of observable hierarchies are also scrutinised, which could be, for example, age, degree of kin, or financial strength.

The internal hierarchies of commercial partnerships are further examined with respect to their role in generating inter-personal systems of trust. This will illuminate the internal incentive structure of the business and the underlying institutions of enforcement.

Lastly, the duration of business relationships is taken into account. It remains to be seen whether the observed business structures featured an internal mechanism for the dissolution of commercial partnerships: were they primarily one-generational or primarily cross-generational associations, and how could they be terminated?

Of similar importance are the numerous balance sheets contained in the CLD, which are frequently attributable to a correspondent. They provide insights into the prices of traded goods, profit margins, and overall cost structures, which include payments made to agents. More specifically, they allow for assessing an individual's role within (and value to) a commercial partnership.

The letters are analysed with respect to **(1)** their content structure **(2)** involved actors and types of relationships **(3)** tertiary parameters (frequency, location, date, type of goods traded). The analysis aims to establish the composition of Lorenzo Dolfín's commercial and family surroundings, and to assess the significance of kin relative to non-kin actors as well as the relative significance of varying degrees of kin and systems of descent (matrilineal, patrilineal). Moreover, we can identify the employed investment and sales strategies.

- (1)** The letters can be classified as either personal or contractual (recordationes; both these types are examples of commercial correspondence, as only a handful of documents are entirely void of commercial content). Late medieval mercantile correspondence typically displays a generic pattern, a tripartite "newsletter"-style structure of personal, commercial, and political news.⁶⁵ Contractual letters, by contrast, are limited to instructions given from one business partner to another.

⁶⁵Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, p. 23; Christ, Georg: "A Newsletter in 1419? Antonio Morosini's Chronicle in the Light of Commercial Correspondence between Venice and Alexandria", in: *Mediterranean Historical Review* 20, No. 1 (2005), pp. 35-66.

Furthermore, we can differentiate between original documents and so-called copie (regrettably, Lorenzo Dolfín's own ledger of copies does not survive⁶⁶). Copies of letters were typically produced for a sender's own archive and filed in series of topical booklets (*quaderno di copialettere*).

- (2) By identifying the correspondents and the purpose of their writing, we can in most cases determine their degree of relatedness to Lorenzo Dolfín. Modes of expressing greetings, gratitude, reservations, disagreements, etc., can be used to identify varying degrees of formality.
- (3) The business model employed by Lorenzo Dolfín can be identified on the basis of geographical locations, goods traded, and the inter-personal structure of his commercial activities. Frequency of correspondence (i.e. number of letters associated with a given correspondent) is another significant indicator, as it may reveal a player's relative importance within a commercial enterprise (this, of course, cannot rely purely on the surviving record, which is likely to be incomplete; yet it is applicable in cases where missing letters are mentioned in surviving ones, hence allowing for an approximate reconstruction of a written exchange). Finally, the dates stated on the documents (both sending and reception dates) provide information about the time span of specific transactions.

E. Structure

The following six chapters are organised as follows: chapter II describes the historical context with a principal focus on the late medieval economic depression and the particularity of Venice as a crucial trade hub during an age of contraction in international commerce, her commercial strategy of territorial expansion and the occurring changes in economic governance and market structure. This relates primarily to changing dynamics in long-distance trade and the emergence of sedentary trade agency.

⁶⁶ Lorenzo Dolfín was seemingly reluctant to produce and preserve copies of his own letters. Despite his own impatience vis-à-vis his correspondents (also see Doumerc: *Par dieu écrivez plus souvent*), Lorenzo himself appears to have been a slow and irregular writer judging by the complaints made by many of his interlocutors. For example, his brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino, writing from Constantinople in 1438, lamented: "Honorado chugnado, in questi zorni pasati da miser mio padre et da nostri chugnadi hoe rezevudo soe et da vui che piui sperava ni una non ho rezevuto che molto me dissonforto. Dubiando non me voliate abandonar che non me credo che pur deliberavi de non me scriver me seria sta azeto chome se l'avete fato aver dito a miser mio padre over a Michiel mio fradelo me ne dovesse scriver qual chossa de vui. Ma non mene fano mention chome se non ve avesseno mai chognosuto et per questo prendo lizentia de scriverve et averla azeta chome mia" (letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 28.05.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [43]).

Chapters III to V, which form the core of the study, present an analysis of the archival legacy of Lorenzo Dolfin with a particular focus on his family surroundings and commercial organization. Chapter III describes the social position of the Dolfin family and portrays the commercial education of young patricians on the basis of the early mercantile careers of both Lorenzo Dolfin and his uncle Biagio, to whom Lorenzo acted as a trade agent. With respect to Lorenzo, this covers the period from 1418, the year of the earliest surviving correspondence between Biagio and Lorenzo, until 1424, the year of Lorenzo's last correspondence with members of his uncle's network. Chapter IV covers three decisive years in Biagio's personal development, ending in 1427, when the construction of his own (affinal)-family-based business environment was completed. These years also cover the beginning of Lorenzo's marriage to Giovanetta Morosini, his first commercial activities on the London and Flanders markets, his rise to the prestigious position of *camerario* in Vicenza and Capodistria, and his first success as an independent merchant. Chapter V eventually discusses the implementation of Lorenzo's long-term business strategy, the sale of spices and acquisition of textiles on the London and Flanders markets, and the sale of textiles along the *Romania* galley route (a period lasting at least until 1443).

Chapter VI offers a theoretical evaluation of the historical evidence. It discusses the merits and relevance of institutional theory, reassesses the applicability of various sociological models of the family, and proposes a new model of incentive structures within family-based commercial operations. As additional evidence, I evaluate documents from the collections of Donato Soranzo (a contemporary of Lorenzo Dolfin) and Ambrogio Malipiero (a successor). Chapter VII offers a conclusion.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – INCENTIVES AND DYNAMICS OF LONG-DISTANCE TRADE

Lorenzo Dolfin's life coincided with a series of political developments in Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean that had substantial implications for long-distance trade and commercial organisation. At the same time, the years of Lorenzo's commercial activity represent the climax of Venetian commercial and political expansion. In the aftermath of the great plague of 1348, the political economy of Venice had undergone significant institutional change that induced the gradual switch from a contract to a corporation economy. That is, a system of exchange based on short-term commercial contracts such as the *commenda* (known in Venice as *colleganza*) increasingly gave way to long-term partnerships based on principal-agent relations.¹

Section A of this chapter summarises the causes and consequences of the territorial expansion of the Venetian Republic amidst processes of political consolidation in fifteenth-century Italy (A.i), and the role of commercial correspondence in chronicling political developments (A.ii). Section B invokes the particular situation of Venice as a leading trade hub – especially in the textiles sector – as an explanation for Venice's commercial exceptionalism during our period of interest. Based on these insights, section C highlights the significance of sedentary trade agency for Venetian long-distance trade (C.i) and, in consideration of the political pertinence of the Venetian patriciate identified in previous scholarship, develops a hypothesis of the patrician family as an economic institution (C.ii) – that is, as a provider of social relations that facilitated economic exchange and thus allowed for its internalisation within family structures.

¹ For the *commenda* and its gradual decline, see for example Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, pp. 367-382; Börner: *Breaking up is hard to do*, pp. 3-6; González de Lara, Yadira: *Enforceability and Risk-sharing in Financial Contracts: From the Sea Loan to the Commenda in late Medieval Venice*, Florence: European University Institute, PhD Thesis, 2000, pp. 30-34, 147-186; Kedar: *Merchants in Crisis*, pp. 27-28; Lane, Frederic C.: "Investment and Usury", in: Braudel, Fernand et al. (eds.), *Venice and History - The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966, pp. 56-68; Luzzatto, Gino: "La *commenda* nella vita economica dei secoli XIII e XIV - Con particolare riguardo a Venezia", in: Comitato regionale di Napoli dell'Associazione italiana di diritto marittimo (eds.), *Mostra bibliografica e Convegno internazionale di studi storici del diritto marittimo medioevale*. Amalfi, luglio-ottobre 1934. Atti a cura dell'Avv. L.A. Senigallia, Napoli, 1934, pp. 139-164; Luzzatto: *Storia economica di Venezia*, p. 80-93; Pryor, John H: "The Origins of the *Commenda Contract*", in: *Speculum* 52 (1977, Jan), No. 1, pp. 5- 37.

A. Venice, Italy, and the Eastern Mediterranean

i. Politics of consolidation

The principal goal of Venetian foreign policy was to protect the Republic's access to land- and sea trade routes by diplomatic and military means. In Italy, Venice's access to the land routes to Germany and the Champagne fairs was endangered by the conflicts with its main rivals, Milan and Genoa. In the East, Venice's Mediterranean and Black Sea trade was put at risk by the rising political and commercial hegemony of the Ottoman Empire. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Republic pursued a proactive military strategy, which reached its climax during the dogeship of Francesco Foscari (1424-1457). With the Ottomans increasing their influence over South-East Europe up to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, a shrewd bipartisan policy of alliances allowed the Republic to limit any trade-related setbacks in response to the Ottoman dominance. Venice's status as a maritime power at the intersection of Latin Christendom, the fading Byzantine Empire, and the rising Ottoman power necessitated a balanced approach to protect the Republic's commercial interests across different zones of power.

Lorenzo's early years as a merchant and public official coincided with a period of territorial and political consolidation. Although not void of military conflicts, the period witnessed a strengthening of inter-state cooperation as well as a (temporary) mending of ecclesiastical divisions. In 1417, the election of Pope Martin V during the Council of Constance had ended the Great Western Schism, and, following the death of the Colonna pope in 1431, the conclave elected the Venetian Gabriele Condulmer as his successor. Born into a patrician merchant family (his mother was a Correr), Pope Eugene IV re-established the papacy as a suprapolitical power, positioning himself against Colonna heirs who expected papal authority to serve the interests of the Roman patriciate.² The political stabilisation of the Italian peninsula was eventually achieved during the pontificate of his successor, the Genoese Pope Nicholas V. (1447-1455).

Earlier in this long period of political consolidation, Venice had cemented its leading position as a maritime power with its victory over the Genoese fleet at Chioggia (1379-1381), which secured its naval and commercial hegemony in the Adriatic Sea. The Venetian expansion of the *terraferma* was driven by the Republic's desire to consolidate her territorial possessions

² Hay, Denys: *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures, 1971*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 26-48.

and her access to the northern markets by ridding herself of regional rivals. For this purpose, the Republic operated a policy of short-term purpose-driven alliances, such as a pact with Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan that ended the Carrara family's rule over Padua.³ The fact that Visconti Milan should soon turn into Venice's most formidable adversary highlights the volatility of contemporary intra-Italian relations, which could rapidly diminish the political weight of state actors. After its defeat in the battle of Chioggia, Genoa had entered an enduring period of military and political inferiority to Venice. The first half of the fifteenth century saw the emergence of a five-power system in Italy (Venice, Milan, Florence, the Papal States, Naples) of which Genoa was no longer part, having fallen under the dominance of Milan as the main regional power in north-western Italy.⁴

In accordance with the beliefs of the ruling elite, the Republic's territorial expansion was principally pursued to weaken its rivals, whom the Venetian patriciate suspected of harbouring a destructive desire for conspiracy against the *Serenissima*.⁵ A popular object of suspicion was the Carrara family of Padua, who pursued a policy of alignment with Genoa and Friuli by which Venice felt seriously threatened.⁶ Following the overthrow of the Carrara, Padua became Venetian territory in 1406. Prior to that, Verona and Vicenza had already been subjected to Venetian rule (in 1404 and 1405 respectively). These annexations strengthened the Republic's dominant political role on the Italian peninsula and further broadened her economic opportunities in trade and agriculture. Most crucially, they increased the political influence of the Venetian patriciate, whose members gained powerful administrative positions in the newly-subjected cities.⁷ Venice appointed captains as head of a city's administration (typically a *podestà* for administrative duties and a *capitano* as a military leader, two offices that occasionally were held by a single person as *podestà e capitano*), who were typically supported in their duties by a chief financial controller (*camerlengho*). These positions were a

³ Lane, Frederic C.: *Venice - A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, pp. 227-228; also see Black, Jane: *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan - Plenitude of Power under the Visconti and the Sforza 1329-1535*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 68-72.

⁴ Lane: *Venice*, p. 228.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

⁷ Queller, Donald E.: *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986, pp. 29-50; in terms of personal affluence, the patriciate was not a homogenous sphere, as the span of individual wealth was substantial. Also see Grubb, James S.: "When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography", in: *The Journal of Modern History* 58 (Mar., 1986), No. 1, pp. 43-94.

welcome additional source of income for aspiring nobles and equipped them with regional expertise that could be of good use in future commercial activities.

By aligning herself with Visconti Milan for the ousting of the Carraresi from Padua, Venice had acted in defense of her commercial interests in northern Italy, thus securing trade links with Lombardy and, via the Alpine region, with northern Europe. Politically, this strategy bore significant risk as the military cooperation allowed Milanese mercenaries to advance well into the Veneto region. In order to combat a growing Milanese hegemony, Francesco Foscari campaigned for a strengthening of Venetian ties with Florence, a traditional ally of the Serenissima. Following his election as doge, Foscari succeeded in containing the Milanese expansion by enlarging the Venetian territory westwards. Brescia, formerly controlled by the Visconti, fell to Venice in 1426. Bergamo became part of Venetia in 1428, having been under Milanese rule only since 1419 – a somewhat predictable outcome of a year-long power struggle in which a significant faction of Bergamo’s nobility favoured Venice to Milan.⁸ With the expansion of Venetian territory deep into Lombardy, Filippo Maria Visconti aligned Milan to the Crown of Aragon in a quest to counter-balance Venetian dominance in northern Italy. After the ascendancy of Alfonso I., King of Aragon, to the throne of the Kingdom of Naples in 1442, an enduring balance of power on the Italian peninsula was finally achieved, putting a Milanese-Napolese against a Florentine-Venetian axis with the Papal States mostly siding with the latter. Yet the longevity of the Lombardian Wars eventually necessitated an agreement between the two sides, which was reached in the Treaty of Lodi (1454).

By strengthening its influence on the *terraferma* and in the Adriatic Sea, the Venetian Republic stabilised its overland trade and the westbound galley routes (‘Flanders’, ‘Aigues mortes’, ‘Barbary’, and ‘al trafego’). In order to limit the Genoese influence in the Western Mediterranean, Venice forged partnerships with the Crown of Aragon and the Kingdom of Spain.⁹ By contrast, its commercial activities in the Eastern Mediterranean became more precarious as a result of the developing tensions with the Ottoman Empire, which substantially weakened Venetian commerce in the Black Sea and eventually led to the dismantling of the Romania galley route in 1452.¹⁰ However, the loss of the Romania trade must not be attributed to Venetian diplomatic negligence, as the Republic, compared to the other Western powers, had

⁸ Lane: *Venice*, p. 230.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

enjoyed rather stable relations with the Ottomans even after the failure of the Crusade of Varna.¹¹

The downfall of the Byzantine Empire cemented Ottoman dominance in the Black Sea and practically ended Italian trade with the Crimea and Romania regions (with the once important Genoese and Venetian outposts Caffa and Tana) for more than two decades. The Venetian loss of Negroponte in 1470 and Tana in 1471 to the Ottomans further confirmed this trend. Trade relations between Venice and the Ottomans only recovered with the peace treaty of 1479, which again granted the Venetian Republic access to the Romanian sea route and the right to pursue commerce in the whole of the Ottoman Empire, although having to permanently concede Scutari and Negroponte to the Ottomans.¹²

ii. Commercial correspondence

Contemporary mercantile correspondence illustrates the practical implications of these developments as experienced by Venetian merchants. Medieval long-distance trade depended to a critical extent on the availability of information, and the exchange of information through written correspondence was therefore a primary task of post-commenda merchants. Collections of letters such as the CLD, which contains a great number of letters with almost identical content (written as backups if particularly important pieces of information needed to be conveyed), bear vivid testament to this daily mercantile obligation. Their significance is particularly apparent in the context of the Venetian expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean, as the gradual decline of the Byzantine Empire and the parallel rise of the Ottomans created, for a brief period, a political and economic vacuum that Venice was able to fill.

Newsletter-style commercial correspondence represents an important milestone in the history of political communication.¹³ While the conveying of political news was an important aspect of the merchant letter, its principal motive was to assess the economic and commercial ramifications of political developments. Political news, therefore, was typically discussed against the background of commercial considerations. In the politically unstable and constantly fluctuating environment of the fifteenth-century Eastern Mediterranean, markets displayed a great deal of volatility resulting from interruptions of supply routes, impositions of collective

¹¹ Romano, Dennis: *The Likeness of Venice - A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari 1373-1457*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 181-184.

¹² Luzzatto: *Storia economica di Venezia*, p. 185.

¹³ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 38-42; Habermas, Jürgen: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit - Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990, pp. 69-71.

liabilities, and military conflicts. Political news with direct relevance to commercial activities was in no short supply.

The types of commodities traded in the Eastern Mediterranean by Venetian merchants, the vast majority of which must be classified as luxury goods, required particular attention to the whereabouts of rulers. For merchants such as Lorenzo Dolfín and his partners who specialised in the trade with precious cloth, princely courts were key clients on whom demand depended to a critical extent. The correspondence from Constantinople and other Romanian centres contains frequent references to the whereabouts of the powerful, which are precious historical descriptions of the contemporary political fragmentation of the Black Sea region.

A striking symptom of this is the frequent use of the term “imperator” in mercantile letters, which only in rare cases referred to the nominal imperial powers of Byzantium and the Holy Roman Empire and hence must be understood as a reference to political authority more generally. The Roman king Sigismund, for instance, appears as “imperator” in Venetian letters long before he was eventually crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1433.¹⁴ The eastern Black Sea, dominated by the Golden Horde in the north (in the area of Tana) and west (Crimea) and Trebizond in the south, was known to Venetian merchants as a profitable market with a great number of economically potent regional centres. Venetians resident in the Black Sea region closely monitored regional market conditions and reported their observations in their letters sent to the Serenissima. Merchants resident in Venice were thus able to estimate the quantities of goods likely to be sold and assess the overall risk of shipping them to a given destination. Their surviving correspondence depicts the Eastern Mediterranean and Romania regions as politically fragile and hence economically volatile areas in which the flexible Venetian trading-post system was well-placed to succeed. The phenomenon of sedentary merchants in Venetian outposts was quickly embraced by the Venetian mercantile milieu and thus unfolded strongly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁵

¹⁴ See e.g. Letter Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 27.10.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [5].

¹⁵ Lorenzo Dolfín’s (mostly Constantinople-based) correspondents provided ample information on the whereabouts of regional rulers. His cousin Giacomo Dolfín qd. Francesco, writing from Constantinople in 1424, reported, for example, on the movements of two Mongol rulers, likely referring to the Crimean *khan* – possibly the rising Haji I Giray (“imperator de Sorgati”) – and Barak Khan, the nominal ruler of the Golden Horde (“imperator del Lordo”): “Io iera desposto per nuove averiemo abudo da la Tane romagna da qui da passa che i pani nostri asai ben per el dito luogo iera acoloradi et ancor per proveder a i pani bastardi e i sex nostri igual seria per sto luogo. Hora per eser capitado in questo dy une nave da la Tane per laqual avemo ch’el inperador del Lordo iera retornado in suo stado e l’inperador de Sorgati non sa dove sia de che per questo ar(?) quanto

B. Geographical Expansion and the End of the Commenda Economy

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the geographical reach of the Venetian Republic was advanced through the expansions of the *stato da mar* and the *terraferma*. The Venetian expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean triggered the establishment of commercial outposts and thus permanently altered the dynamics of Venetian long-distance trade. In essence, it hastened the end of the commenda economy of short-term contracts, which had flourished during the medieval Commercial Revolution, and the creation of a new *corporation economy* based on long-term institutionalised partnerships. Despite its eventual decline as a major commercial centre, the foundations of this substantial shift were laid in Venice and eventually affected, through emulation and rivalry, the entirety of the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean region more widely.

Following the defeat of Genoa in the War of Chioggia, Venice achieved a second great wave of expansion. Korfu (1386), Nauplia (1388), Durazzo (1392), Argos and Malvasia (1392), Scutari (1396), Lepanto (1407), Patras (1408) as well as large parts of the Dalmatian coast (1409-1420) fell under Venetian rule or quasi-rule. The territorial expansion was driven by a combination of military and economic considerations. The Republic's principal goal was to maintain control over strategic locations across the Eastern Mediterranean in order to secure its naval trade in the region, which explains the concentration of Venetian outposts along the

pensa par meo faremo che non sava prima per eser quello puovolo in gran raro. Al prexenti tuty son in accendo e dixè che par tavolte de quelli no capito versso la Tana de che ve dicho io son disposto de montar suxo respeto che de qui nula si fano ben che mi deperti sia insido come vedenti.” Letter Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44]. Following Giacomo's death in 1433, his son Dolfino Dolfìn continued to correspond with Lorenzo. Also residing in Constantinople, he informed Lorenzo about the tense relationship between the declining Byzantine Empire and the rising Ottoman power: “Nuove de qui el signor turcho con el disporti fradel de l'imperador he acordato a desfacion de l'imperador e de Constantinopoli sollo per far signor el dispotti che tegno non su gneia facta alla raxon e no che questa de lo luogo non el s'offeria mai per dubio del turcho. Avixandovi che el predicto dispotti ogni zorno con el favor de turchi chare suxo le partte de qui che he gran dano a sto luochò per esser tucti i passe de Grettia seradi e Turchia. Et a vostra informattion l'imperador in sti zorni passatti mando suo ambassadori sollene al turcho iqual rettorno senza far nulla tegnando sechondo l'opinion mia la cossa antedictè starmo assai ai' zonsse che gram dano sera alla marchadantia. I enovexi a mandato in questi zorni do suo ambassadori al Turcho et in brieve a ho tegnudo bona paxe con el dretto che he bem facto perché si lor<o> fosse sta in guera totalmente bexognava abandonari sto luochò dicho in facto de con ma<i> piui spierano essendo avortta pera sera meni mal dio per la sua infinieta miserichordia faza el beni de christo.” Letter Dolfìn, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 17.06.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [20].

Eastern Mediterranean coasts. Originally, their purpose was to support the trading system of the *commenda*, as the control over key port cities and the military protection of regular naval trade routes improved the safety of travelling commenda merchants. Yet it was the increase in commercial security and inter-regional connectivity (with the related improvement in the flow of information) that eventually led to the commenda's decline, as the Republic's strategic expansion reduced the necessity to travel with merchandise.¹⁶ Instead, the unaccompanied shipping of wares became increasingly common as Venetian merchants opted to delegate their transactions in distant ports to sedentary trade agents.¹⁷

The historical literature on economic institutions has identified the corporation and the commenda contract as two distinct arrangements of business organisation whose institutional designs varied across regions. The commenda and its various regional variations have been regarded as a ubiquitous phenomenon in medieval Eurasian trade involving merchants from Latin Europe, Byzantium, Muslim Arabia, and China. By contrast, the corporation is said to have been a specifically European institution.¹⁸ In the historical progression from individually acting agents via partnerships to companies, the corporation is one (equity-based) variant that emerged much later than the commenda.¹⁹

Thus, the institutional evolution of contracting methods in late medieval Europe resulted primarily from the geographical expansion of European long-distance trade and the intensification of maritime trade in particular. The emergence of maritime insurance reflects the related increase in informational asymmetries.²⁰ Risk-sharing mechanisms, such as the commenda, arose as a direct consequence of informational asymmetries.²¹ Hence the gradual switch from debt-like contracts such as sea loans to equity-like contracts such as the commenda was pri-

¹⁶ Kamenaga-Anzai, Yoko: "Attitudes towards public debt in medieval Genoa: the Lomellini family", in: *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003), No. 4, pp. 239-263.

¹⁷ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 43-44. The colleganza initially rose in importance in Venice during the second half of the twelfth century, reflecting an economy of travelling merchants (Lane: *Venice*, p. 52). The Venetian colleganza "continued to be used in the fourteenth century for those branches of trade in which conditions still resembled those that had faced earlier travelling merchants" (Lane: *Venice*, p. 138).

¹⁸ Harris, Ron: "The institutional dynamics of early modern Eurasian trade: The commenda and the corporation", in: *Journal of Economic Behaviour & Organization* 71 (2009), No. 3, pp. 606-622.

¹⁹ Börner: *Breaking up is hard to do*, p. 2.

²⁰ Rossetti: *Il diritto delle Assicurazioni*, pp. 30-40. The CLD document transcribed in this work documenting Lorenzo's use of maritime insurance is ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 2, int. 3, f. [1].

²¹ Williamson: *Transparency*, p. 1.

marily linked to monitoring problems.²² In the case of Venice, it was facilitated by the development of strong state-provided enforcement institutions in the form of “verifiable information, coercive power, and incentives for merchants to submit themselves to the coercive power of the state.”²³

This literature regards state-provided enforcement institutions as an alternative to enforcement through reputation mechanisms in private-order networks. However, monitoring remained a ‘fundamental problem of exchange’ even after the commenda became widespread in Italy and across the Mediterranean. Family-based as well as other exogenously-induced commercial networks then added another layer of transactional security. Their emergence resulted from an increase in inter-regional connectivity, as the rise of principal-agent partnerships was paralleled by the relative decline of the commenda.²⁴ In addition, they played a crucial role in the evolution of business organisation and the emergence of companies.²⁵

i. Was Europe’s trade hub immune to economic decline?

A prominent branch of scholarship has purported the notion of a late medieval economic crisis. LOPEZ, their most salient representative, described the medieval Commercial Revolution as a period of demographic growth, emerging trade routes, developing contracting methods, fiscal stabilisation, technological innovation, and increasing agricultural productivity.²⁶ The political unrest in the Mongol states in East Asia and the subsequent deterioration of European long-distance trade routes, coupled with the destruction of one third of the European population in the great plague of the fourteenth century, subsequently led to a sharp decline in trade volumes and overall economic activity.²⁷ In short, this view questioned the continuity of economic progress between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.²⁸

²² González de Lara: *Enforceability and Risk-sharing*, p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. ii; also see González de Lara, Yadira: "The secret of Venetian success: a public-order, reputation-based institution", in: *European Review of Economic History* 12 (Dec., 2008), No. 3, pp. 247–285.

²⁴ Kedar: *Merchants in Crisis*, pp. 27-29.

²⁵ See chapter VI.A below.

²⁶ Lopez, Robert S.: *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350*, Englewood Cliffs (N. J.): Prentice-Hall, 1971, pp. 27-29, 56-59, 73-78, 79-84, 154-161.

²⁷ These are the two main causes of the late medieval depression according to Kedar: *Merchants in Crisis*.

²⁸ Cipolla, Carlo M: *Before the industrial revolution: European society and economy, 1000-1700*, London: Routledge, 1993 (part. chapters 9, 10).

The disagreements between “growth sceptics” and “crisis sceptics” can be summarised as follows: first, while there is agreement that the feudal economy did not produce for the market, its alledged inability to keep food production in line with population growth has been questioned.²⁹ Second, crisis sceptics have pointed to a greater degree of regional variability in grain output and technological innovation in agrarian production, thus contradicting the claim that economic stagnation was a general European phenomenon in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.³⁰ Third, and most crucially in the present context, crisis sceptics have challenged the idea that trade made only a minor contribution to economic growth. On the contrary, this line of argument holds, long-distance trade was the key driver of capitalist economic organisation, as merchants needed to reinvest their revenues to much greater extents than feudal lords.³¹ The expansion of markets through long-distance trade had spillover effects on agrarian production and manufacturing and was a crucial driver of technological transfers.³² In short, the proposition of a whole-scale late medieval commercial crisis has come under intense scrutiny.

Yet, regardless of its general historiographical validity, the purported decline in manufacturing and trade must have known regional exceptions, since innovations in commercial organisation did not generally cease. The historiography of European trade rightly regards the institutional development of the Venetian Republic as both a key contributor to the rise of medieval long-distance trade and a pivotal example of the impact of commerce on medieval economies in general. Venice’s dominant position in Mediterranean trade was rooted, on the one hand, in its innovative market institutions with the provision of staple rights and the auction-

²⁹ Epstein, S.R.: *Freedom and Growth - The rise of states and markets in Europe, 1300-1750*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 38.

³⁰ Cipolla, Carlo M: "Economic Depression of the Renaissance?", in: *The Economic History Review*, New Series 16 (1964), No. 3, pp. 519-524.

³¹ Cipolla: *Before the industrial revolution*, p. 183; Epstein: *Freedom and Growth*, p. 50-51.

³² For technology transfers through trade in the Later Middle Ages, see Jacoby, David: "The Economic Function of the Crusader States of the Levante a New Approach", in: Cavaciocchi, Simonetta (ed.), *Relazioni economiche tra Europa e mondo islamico, secc. XIII - XVIII*, Florence: Le Monnier, 2007, pp. 159-192; id.: "Cross-cultural Transfers of Industrial Technologies in the Late Middle Ages: Incentives, Promoters and Agents", in: *mimeo*, 2011.

ing of merchant galleys.³³ At the same time, a shrewd management of diplomatic affairs furthered the Republic's economic rise.³⁴

This privileged position may have largely exempted the Serenissima from the pan-European decline. This is consistent with the notion that the Venice's geographical expansions was driven by a rapid augmentation of its capital stock, which had profound social ramifications for the organisation of long-distance commerce. The family served, before developing into a commercial unit, as a socio-geographical link between the Serenissima, its overseas outposts, and the Venetian diaspora in foreign territories. As overseas commercial opportunities grew, family links between different commercial centres provided an easy and flexible means of enabling exchange.

ii. The cloth trade – a source of wealth

Among the key industries to contribute to the rise of Venetian commerce was the production of, and trade in, textiles (processed fibres). Production was concentrated mainly on the *terrafirma* where in the fifteenth century it reached output levels comparable to the great industries of Tuscany and Lombardia.³⁵ As a result of its geographical ubiquity – textiles were in strong demand across Europe and the Near East – the cloth trade was potentially least endangered by economic recession, and the labour-intensive textile industries had been a potent factor of late medieval urbanisation.³⁶ Four types of cloth dominated late medieval European and Mediterranean markets: wool, made from animal hair, typically of sheep; cotton, made from the fiber of the cotton plant; linen, made from flax; and silk, a luxury textile made from the cocoons of the mulberry silkworm. Wool was primarily produced in England and Spain (sheep hair is protective against both heat and cold gives cold and hot climates a comparative advantage in wool production) and exported either as an intermediary good or as a raw product to areas that had developed a comparative advantage in the processing of wool and other

³³ Gonzalez de Lara: *The secret*, p. 262; Stöckly, Doris: *Le système de l'incanto des galées du marché à Venise*, Leiden etc.: Brill, 1995, pp. 49-63.

³⁴ González de Lara: *Enforceability and Risk-sharing*, pp. 106-140; Fuess, Albrecht: "Why Venice, not Genoa? How Venice Emerged as the Mamluks' Favourite European Trading Partner After 1365", in: *mimeo*, 2011.

³⁵ Luzzatto: *Storia economica di Venezia*, p. 69; for the significance of the woollens industry to the medieval economy in general see Lopez: *The Commercial Revolution*, pp. 130-137.

³⁶ Hunt, E.S., Murray, J.: *A History of Business in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 20, 38-41; Schofield, J., Vince, A.: *Medieval Towns*, London: Leicester University Press, 1994, pp. 20-21.

fibres (that is, in the production and dyeing of textiles from raw fabrics and the fashioning of processed products). In Italy, major centres of wool-based textile production were Florence and, from the end of the fourteenth century, the Venetian *terraferma*.³⁷ The acquisition of English raw wool from Flanders and London in support of the domestic textile industries had, in fact, been a main reason for expanding Italian trade relations to Flanders and England from the early fourteenth century (the Venetian Flanders galley route was set up in 1319).³⁸

The cotton and flax plants flourish in hot climates, and thus the South-Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly Egypt and Syria, maintained a comparative advantage in cotton and flax production even as their processing industries declined in response to faster technological advancements in Europe. The decline of the Eastern textile industries, which began as early as the late twelfth century and was largely completed by the time of Lorenzo Dolfín, was met by an increase in European cloth exports to the Near East, where there continued to be a strong demand for luxury textiles of all sorts.³⁹ Silk, although traditionally an Oriental and far-Eastern speciality, began to be produced competitively in Italy for export to the Near East from the thirteenth century onwards.⁴⁰ Yet, the Black Sea markets of Tana, Trebizond and Constantinople – all three of which were among Lorenzo Dolfín's places of activity – remained crucial suppliers of Persian silk to Venetian merchants until the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, which terminated Venetian access to the Black Sea region.⁴¹

The commercial strategy of Lorenzo Dolfín with respect to the cloth trade very much reflects the general business model of fifteenth-century Italian merchants. Profits were made from the import of raw fabrics (mainly English wool in the case of Venice), and the sale of European cloth in Romania and the Near East. Revenues for the acquisition of wool in England and Flanders were generated through the sale of Eastern spices on these markets, which is captured in Lorenzo Dolfín's Bruges accounts maintained by the brothers Francesco and Marco

³⁷ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, p. 152; Mozzato, Andrea: "The Production of Woolens in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Venice", in: Lanaro, Paola (ed.), *At the Center of the Old World: Trade and Manufacturing in Venice and the Venetian Mainland, 1400-1800*, Toronto: CRRS, 2006, pp. 73-107.

³⁸ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 4. For the particular role of Venetian merchants see Gelder, Maartje van: *Trading Places: The Netherlandish Merchant Community in Early Modern Venice (1590-1650)*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 41.

³⁹ For the decline of the Eastern textile industry, see Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴¹ Molà, Luca: *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 57.

Renier.⁴² Processed textile products were typically marketed according to their places of origin. Major centres of English wool and cloth production in the fifteenth century were the Cotswolds (whose cloth products appear as *cotsegualde*⁴³ in the Venetian sources), Gilford (*gilfordione*), Essex (*sex*), Southampton (*santone*) and possibly Lowestoft, from where the famous coarse cloth typically referred to as *lovesti* or *loesti* in the Venetian sources may have derived its name.⁴⁴ English and Flemish cloth products that were produced from wool of different origins were sold as *bastardi*. The Italian term *pani* was used by Venetian merchants to refer to woollen cloth generally, but in most cases *pani* were Italian textiles. These types of cloth were sold in untailored rollable pieces – so-called *balle*⁴⁵ – whereas fashioned textiles, also exported to the Eastern Mediterranean markets, were named for their specific purpose (e.g. *veste*, *pelize*).⁴⁶

With the establishment of the Flanders galleys, London and the great Flemish cities – in dire need of Oriental spices – had become the main markets for Venetian buyers of cloth, a position they should retain throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (By contrast, the rival Catalan markets were more intensively frequented by the Florentines and Genoese.⁴⁷) By the 1420s, at the beginning of Lorenzo Dolfín's mercantile career, Bruges had long emerged as the primary market for textiles and retained its leading position at least until 1477 when King Louis XI. of France attempted the military conquest of the Burgundian Netherlands fol-

⁴² See below, V.A.i.

⁴³ As these labels were used for both raw and processed woollens, it can be difficult to distinguish between them in the sources. However, the context usually gives it away: raw products were not usually sold in Romania and the Near East because of a lack of processing industries in these regions.

⁴⁴ On *lovesti*, see Fleet, Kate: *European and Islamic trade in the early Ottoman state - The merchants of Genoa and Turkey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 177; also Kerridge, Eric: *Textile manufacturers in early modern England*, Manchester and Dover: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 23. A notable discussion of these brands can be found in the letters of Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea, see e.g. letter Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.03.1430, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [13]. Also see Vallet: *Marchands vénitiens*, p. 323 for a glossary of various textiles. The inferior English kersey is more of an end-fifteenth century phenomenon.

⁴⁵ See e.g. letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.07.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [12].

⁴⁶ "Pelize" (fur coats) are mentioned, for instance, in Catarucia Dolfín's testament, Dolfín née Gabriel, Catarucia: Testament, 30 April 1453. 30.04.1453, ASVe, Archivio Notarile Testamenti, b. 1157, prot. II, 62r. For mentions of "veste" (robes), see e.g. Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6].

⁴⁷ High-quality Florentine cloth was typically woven from Spanish wool, see Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 152.

lowing the sudden death of Charles the Bold.⁴⁸ On the Bruges market, both English and Flemish woollens were sold. The Flemish textile industry, at the time the largest in Europe by output, was in need of foreign raw fabrics to supply its manufacturers and thus imported English wool in addition to processing its rich homegrown production.⁴⁹ Through this channel, English suppliers of processed textiles found their way onto the Flemish markets and thus increased, through the help of Italian and specifically Venetian middlemen, their share on the marketplaces of Romania and the Near East.⁵⁰ By the mid-fifteenth century, the Syrian ports and urban commercial centres, formerly major export markets, had become chiefly importers, with import volumes of textiles far outweighing their export of plant-based fabrics such as cotton. Whereas Lorenzo Dolfin was not greatly involved with the Syrian cloth trade, the papers of Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero poignantly illustrate this development.⁵¹ In the early fifteenth century, Donato Soranzo still made a fortune as a leading cotton trader in Syria by supplying European manufacturing industries with raw fibres. By the time of Ambrogio Malipiero's commercial activity in Syria in the 1480s, the page had turned: his papers depict him as a major exporter of cloth, whereas his acquisitions in Syria remained feeble at best.

C. Venetian Ascent in Times of Crisis

Despite post-plague demographic change and economic setbacks, Venice's long-term military and naval hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean (in particular following the War of Chioggia, 1379-1381) secured its commercial advantages, which were also grounded in a papal permission for trade with the Islamic Levant (beginning in April 1344) and eventually by the conclusion of favourable trade agreements with the Mamluk Sultanate in 1415.⁵² As a re-

⁴⁸ Gelder: *Trading Places*, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁹ Hunt and Murray: *History of Business*, p. 160; Murray, James M.: *Bruges, Cradle of Capitalism, 1280-1390*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 261.

⁵⁰ At specific times English exports to Flanders were restricted, see Hunt and Murray: *History of Business*, p. 167.

⁵¹ See below, VI.E.

⁵² For Venetian trade agreements with the Mamluk Sultanate see "Litterae Scheich Mahmud soldani Babiloniae ad Thomam Mocenigo Duce[m] Venetorum", "Privilegia Venetis concessa a soldano Babiloniae Scheich Mahmud", in: Thomas, G.M., Predelli, R. (eds.): *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum sive acta et diplomata res venetas graecas atque levantis illustrantia a. 1351 - 1454*, pars II, Venice: R. Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria, 1899, pp. 306-315; also Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 56-60; Fuess: *Why Venice?*; for papal

sult, naval trade routes between Venice and its major trade hubs – mainly Alexandria and Candia – were strengthened through regularly operating state galleys. The *mude*, yearly galley tours between Venice, the Mediterranean and the North Sea, secured the Mediterranean waterways and thus yielded spillovers to private navigation and smuggling.⁵³ Public auctioning of state galleys, which began in 1329, enlarged access to commercial investments and significantly broadened the Venetian capital market by opening long-distance trade to wider parts of the population.⁵⁴ As a result, long-distance trade became an even greater pillar of the Venetian economy and led to a further expansion of the Venetian diaspora in the Eastern Mediterranean. Instead of relying purely on elaborate financing tools such as the *colleganza*, Venetian merchants increasingly made use of the services of commission agents and, eventually, family representatives.⁵⁵

Venetian trading diasporas existed both in foreign lands and in territories controlled by the Venetian Republic. Diasporic communities operating under foreign jurisdictions faced greater operational challenges than their counterparts in affiliated territories, often – as in the case of the Venetian diaspora in Mamluk Alexandria – being subject to stringent economic regulation as well as occasional religious discrimination.⁵⁶ Yet all of the known communities shared an economic significance for the facilitation of trade and a role as mediators. Diaspora traders acted as agents to business partners in distant locations while also being masters in their own

permissions, see Labib, Subhi Yanni: *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965, p. 73; Zachariadou, Elizabeth A.: *Trade and Crusade - Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)*, Venice: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post- Byzantine Studies, 1983, pp. 46-47.

⁵³ Christ, Georg: "Passagers clandestins? Rôle moteur des galères vénitiennes et concurrence des navires ronds à Alexandrie au début du xve siècle", in: Coulon, D., Valérian, D., Picard, C. (eds.), *Espace et réseaux en méditerranée médiévale, mise en place des réseaux, les politiques d'Etat dans la formation des réseaux*, Paris: Éditions Bouchène, 2010, pp. 275-290.

⁵⁴ González de Lara: *The secret*; Lane: *Venice*, pp. 129-131.

⁵⁵ In a *colleganza*, the typical Venetian commenda-type contract, "one party contributed capital and the other labour". The fact that these kinds of partnerships continued to be used in more hazardous environments up to the late fourteenth century indicates that their disappearance is linked to the establishment of overseas resident merchant communities and the resulting stabilisation of capital flows, see Lane: *Venice*, p. 138.

⁵⁶ Christ (2008, 2012) describes the conditions Venetian merchants in Mamluk Alexandria had to fulfil before being admitted to the Alexandria market. One element of this was the forced acquisition of pepper (above market price) from the Sultan. See Christ, Georg: "Les réseaux Vénitiens de navigation à Alexandrie au début du XVe siècle – rôle promoteur des galères et concurrence des navires ronds", in: *mimeo*, 2008, p. 4. On religious discrimination see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 167-186.

right. They acquired knowledge about their market environment, informed their collaborators about demand and prices, acquired goods for shipment, and received wares for sale.⁵⁷

Surviving correspondence indicates commercial links between Venetian merchants and diaspora agents that were largely generated by family ties.⁵⁸ Correspondence documenting the thriving commercial activity between Venice, Northern Europe and the Islamic Levant enables us to retrace the institutional foundations of principal-agent relationships, examine the incentives for the constitution of business networks, and thus explain the rise of the family as a commercial unit.

i. Sedentary trade agency

The system of trade representation in distant locations through sedentary partners (in the parlance of institutional economics, the system of principal-agent relationships) manifested itself in three main forms: first, there was the common principal-agent partnership between a Venetian merchant and an unrelated individual acting as commission agent (typically, but not necessarily a fellow Venetian). Second, there was the practice of sending junior merchants on apprenticeship missions to distant locations, which was partly a private, family-internal arrangement and partly backed by the state. Lastly, there were cooperations between related merchants of the same generation in different commercial centres. In such an arrangement, merchants were linked to each other through (consanguineous or affinal) family links or cooperated by reciprocally providing services such as the acquisition and sale of goods, the disbursement of bills of exchange, or the monitoring of accounts. As merchants typically operated in various ports along a given galley route, they were linked to a number of fellow traders on this basis, creating veritable webs of interconnections.⁵⁹

Lorenzo Dolfin's collaboration with fellow Venetians along the Romania route exemplifies this form of commercial cooperation, and the additional interaction between his various correspondents, as documented in their respective letters, reveal a densely interconnected multi-lateral business arrangement. Lorenzo's brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino, for example, was an important partner in Lorenzo's Romania business and provided Lorenzo with regular information on political and economic developments. A *recordatio*, left to Lorenzo before Giovanni embarked on a journey to Constantinople in August 1437, documents

⁵⁷ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, pp. 69-70; also Lane: *Family Partnerships*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195; Lane: *Venice*, p. 138.

⁵⁹ See appendix E for a formal definition of networks and coalitions.

the reciprocity of their arrangement. Lorenzo was asked to sell Giovanni's textiles during his absence from Venice and to pay Giovanni's debts to members of the Contarini family and Giovanni's own sister Giovanetta (Lorenzo's wife).⁶⁰ Giovanni thus instructed Lorenzo despite being his junior.⁶¹ While Lorenzo did not benefit financially from the transactions he performed, Giovanni shared his expertise of the Romania markets and reported, for instance, on commodity prices in Constantinople.⁶² In return, Giovanni heavily relied on the advice of his more experienced family partners such as Lorenzo.⁶³ His (often lyrically expressed) reflections on the nature of their relationship – prasing Lorenzo as a fatherly figure and invaluable source of trust – are a tangible illustration of the personal and emotional proximity that allowed patrician families to function as business coalitions in long-distance trade.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6]: “Richordaxòn fazo mi Zuane Morexim di miser Marrin [...] a vui miser Lorenzo Dolfìn fo de miser Antunio conzosia chossa che in bona gratia io vada a Constantinopoli con le prexente galie chapetanio miser Zorzi Soranzo per chaxon chome vui save io sio algune me veste di pani sonte che sicho me apar per uno mio libereto lequal mia intentiòn sie tute sia vendude. Et per tanto io ve priego charamente quanto a vui è possibile chel non ve sia da fano a prochura de vender le dite. Et chusi io ve priego debie vender tute le dite mie veste che apar per el mio libereto le qual debie vender per el priexio a vui parera et far dele dite chosse chome si vostre fosse et chome a vui parera in tuto e del trato de le dite o de quela parte vui vendere debie dar per mio nome a ser Mafio e a ser Anbruxo Contarini quondam miser Nicholò per ducati 50 achalenar proximii che die vognir. Anchora dibie dar a Zaneta mia suor ducati 8 per mi e del resto tignere apruono di vui fin che altro ordene io ve daro.”

⁶¹ Giovanni frequently addressed Lorenzo as “honorado chugnado amado quanto padre”. When Giovanni wrote from Constantinople, his brothers Pietro and Michele, then still adolescents, were entrusted to Lorenzo's guidance: “Che michiel inprenda ben a lezer et a scriver et far ben hogni raxon”, letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 27.12.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [30].

⁶² Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 28.05.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [43].

⁶³ “Per quello me confortate et per lo simel fano tuti hi nostri del mio rimanir in Constantinopoli. Et non me debia partir dali conselgli de ser Antonio nostro chugnato dichove che semper tenerò hi vostri conselli et anchor i quelli del dito”. See letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 21.10.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [41].

⁶⁴ See e.g. Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 05.10.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [29]: “Et dichove che chonosco fate per me quello die far el padre per el fiolo et chusi me reputo vostro in tute chosse. Et che abiate sopra di me in comandamenti et choretiam et tute altre cosse libertade quanto padre che altramente non ve tegno. Et perché me dite che le bon saver tenir hi amixi e masime quelli che me puol zovar. Questo conselio mi piazè.”

ii. The family as a commercial unit?

In the Venetian patriciate, family relations played a pivotal role in establishing social hierarchies and in generating inter-personal links for political and commercial purposes. Long-distance trade, a key economic activity, therefore frequently involved family-based partnerships.

These family relations exhibited a complex cognatic system of social order that was principally organised around consanguineous and affinal (marital) ties while also containing elements of social affinity (chosen relations between non-kin individuals based on friendship).⁶⁵ Affinal marriages represented a norm between members of the patriciate, whereas same-blood liaisons were rare due to their social and political inefficiency.⁶⁶ Affinal relationships in the sense of strong social bonds or common economic interests often existed between merchants in distant locations and complemented consanguineous ties as a means of overcoming commitment problems. Members of a lower class, so-called *cittadini*, could thus raise their social status by becoming integrated into a patrician family environment.⁶⁷ In some cases, even a similarity of names was sufficient to include individuals from outside the family.⁶⁸

The precise social significance of the patrician family was therefore all but straightforward. Families such as the Malipiero and the Dolfín did not display well-defined boundaries. Their structure was neither strictly patrilineal nor purely matrilineal. In commerce, just like in politics, the family of an individual's mother often was equally important as the side of the father. Various family archives document intra-family business relations among both matrilineal and

⁶⁵ Economic studies of social networks have found that social affinity, although being a widespread anthropological phenomenon, is more likely to occur between individuals with shared (specifically ethnic) characteristics, a phenomenon dubbed "social homiphily". See Currarini, S., Jackson, M.O., Pin, P.: "An Economic Model of Friendship: Homophily, Minorities, and Segregation", in: *Econometrica* 77 (July, 2009), No. 4, pp. 1003-1045.

⁶⁶ Chojnacki, Stanley: "Marriage Legislation and Patrician Society in Fifteenth-Century Venice", in: Bachrach, Bernard S., Nicholas, D. (eds.), *Law, Custom and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe - Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon*, Kalamazoo (MI): Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1990, pp. 163-184; also see Botticini, Maristella: "A Loveless Economy? Intergenerational Altruism and the Marriage Market in a Tuscan Town, 1415-1436", in: *The Journal of Economic History* 59 (Mar., 1999), No. 1, pp. 104-121.

⁶⁷ One example is Filippo di Malerbi, a *cittadino* resident in Cairo and "simel di fradelo" to many Venetian patrician merchants. See Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, e.g. p. 104; Apellániz, Francisco: "Lower-Rank Actors in Elite Networks: Venetian Merchants in Alexandria (early 15th Century)", in: *mimeo*, 2011, p. 7.

⁶⁸ E.g. the case of Leonardo Dolfín in Candia (Crete), see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 98.

patrilineal kin, and both matrilineal and patrilineal elders were potential supporters of aspiring young patricians seeking to launch their political careers.⁶⁹

As powerful patrician family clans controlled the legislative bodies of the Republic and shaped its trading system, wealth was a pivotal asset in the quest for political influence through the acquisition of public offices, and business and politics were interlinked to an extent that the mercantile and political careers of wealthy patricians often were two sides of the same strategic coin. Yet, the narrative of a homogenous Venetian patriciate that operated as a unified force in the service of ubiquitous economic interests is misleading. Although trade remained the key pillar of the Venetian economy and its main impetus for growth throughout the later Middle Ages, artisanry, manufacturing, and finance also gained in importance.⁷⁰ With the rising significance of the *terraferma*, agriculture emerged as another significant sector. For wealthy patricians, the retreat to the countryside and the switch to landownership was not merely a secure strategy of investment, but also an exercise in gaining additional social distinction through the emulation of continental aristocracy.⁷¹ Steadily broadening business and investment opportunities created divergent political needs within the patriciate. Consequently, the state's ability to mediate between different economic interests was increasingly neutralised.

On a second look, the economic role of the patrician family was thus far from straightforward. In many cases, the pursuit of different trades divided patrician clans. At times, emerging dichotomies in business interests could quickly halt family unity and cause severe intra-clan conflicts. The patrician family should therefore be understood not as a closed operational entity, but as a provider of basic informal mechanisms that facilitated personal exchange in

⁶⁹ Biagio Dolfin maintained business relations with members of the Pasqualigo family, who were descendants of relatives of his wife. For the significance of cross-clan cooperation in politics, see Chojnacki's discussion of matrilineal sponsors of *Balla d'Oro* applications in Chojnacki: *Kinship Ties*.

⁷⁰ Mackenney, Richard: *Tradesmen and Traders - The World of Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-c.1650*, Beckenham and North Ryde: Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 80-84.

⁷¹ As discussed in chapter III, Lorenzo Dolfin himself resided in the *terraferma* while on official duty in Vicenza and (about a decade later) in Padua. In Padua, however, he appears as the tenant (of a house owned by Pietro Dolfin qd. Domenico) rather than as an investor (Dolfin, Pietro qd. Domenico to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 1 September 1435. 01.09.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [10]). However, Lorenzo's branch of the Dolfin family was involved in *terraferma* property investments, as revealed in the correspondence between Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin (e.g. Letter Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 24.03.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. f, f. [5]).

business and commerce – such as mutual trust and loyalty amongst relatives with mutually compatible economic interests.

A distinction should therefore be made between the patrician family as a business entity and as an economic institution. Venetian law explicitly considered the (agnatic) family as an operating unit in economic affairs. Following the death of a patriarchal principal, his male heirs were able to keep his estate in common ownership, thus creating a *fraterna compagna*.⁷² In fact, the *fraterna* was the default arrangement of the cross-generational transmission of wealth. Within this arrangement, Donato Soranzo and his brothers Giacomo, Lorenzo, and Pietro jointly imported cotton from Syria.⁷³ It is also likely that Biagio Dolfin initiated his mercantile career in a *fraterna*-based venture with his brother Antonio, investing their common inheritance in the *Alexandria muda*.⁷⁴

By contrast, the (cognatic) family enabled intra-clan business cooperation on the basis of a family ethos placing a strong emphasis on intra-family loyalty and coherence. The employment of relatives as trade representatives in distant locations was hence a logical ramification of the rise of sedentary trade agency, as family loyalties could thus be exploited for commercial purposes. This widely neglected aspect of late medieval Venetian commerce was the key pillar of family-based business coalitions. Existing scholarship in trade history and economic institutions provides a number of plausible explanations for the use of family trade agents that are pertinent in the Venetian context: Venice's naval dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean around 1400 changed the organisational dispositions of long-distance trade in that it triggered the gradual decline of short-run contractual trade ventures. Contractors were replaced by sedentary trade agents who needed to be monitored.⁷⁵ For this purpose, family loyalties could be exploited by principals as a means of exerting control over agents. Because of their dual roles as trade representatives and heirs, family agents had a personal interest in increasing the wealth of the clan and thus to devote utmost attention to maximising gains from a given transaction. In addition, they could reasonably expect to build on their family's commercial coalition in their later careers. They were incentivised to maintain its external reputation in order to strengthen their own position within the coalition and to extend the coalition through their own personal networks. Besides operating as an officially legislated economic unit, the patrician family thus created a sphere of mutual economic interdependence that functioned as

⁷² Pertile: *Storia del diritto privato*, p. 282.

⁷³ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 145.

⁷⁴ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 97-100.

⁷⁵ Kedar: *Merchants in Crisis*, p. 27-29; Labib: *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens*, p. 288.

an initial network of commercial exchange. Through the inclusion of non-kin partners, these networks could grow into permanent coalitions and eventually formally institutionalised commercial units.

CHAPTER III: AN APPRENTICESHIP IN COMMERCE AND POWER – ALEXANDRIA, VENICE, LONDON (1418-1424)

According to Venetian chronicles, the Dolfín family originated from Torcello, the cradle of Venice, which would make it one of the oldest patrician families.¹ The first Dolfín to appear in historical sources is Domenico Dolfín, who became Procurator of Saint Mark in 1095, an office also held by his son Giovanni from 1114.² From its early beginnings the Ca' Dolfín developed into a significant *casa vecchia* that steadily increased its influence on Venetian politics, culminating in the election of Giovanni Dolfín to the office of doge in 1356.³ Throughout the later medieval and early modern periods, members of the Dolfín family held high political and ecclesiastical offices as procurators and cardinals.

This chapter describes Lorenzo's years as a commercial apprentice under the supervision of his uncle Biagio Dolfín. Section A retraces the commercial activities and public service of Biagio Dolfín (A.i) and examines the organisation of his business (A.ii). Section B turns to Lorenzo Dolfín, his family background (B.i), his commercial apprenticeship (B.ii), and his commercial operations as a junior merchant within a family environment (B.iii). Section C examines the biographical parallels between Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín, their respective ways of transmitting business skills from one generation to the next, and the resulting means of maintaining family relations as an operational framework in long-distance trade.

A. Biagio Dolfín *quondam* Lorenzo

Biagio Dolfín was presumably born in Venice in the second half of the fourteenth century to Lorenzo Dolfín *quondam* (= son of the deceased) Pietro and his wife Maria Malipiero. He

¹ E.g. Anonymous: *Cronaca di Venezia fino al 1446*, preceduta dal catalogo dei dogi e delle famiglie nobili fino al 1440, BNF, BnF-R Ms. Ital. 318; for a critical guide on the use of Venetian historical chronicles, see Thiriet, Freddy E.: "Les chroniques vénitienes de la Marcienne et leur importance pour l'histoire de la Romanie gréco-vénitienne", in: *Etudes sur la Romanie greco-vénitienne (Xe-XVe siècles)*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1977, pp. III: 241-292.

² Roberto CESSI's article in the original *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1932) is available online at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dolfin_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/

³ The dogeship of Giovanni Dolfín ended with his death in 1361.

began his mercantile activities in the late 1390s under the guidance of relatives.⁴ His paternal family was vested in a mercantile tradition, while his mother's side, the Malipiero, was comparable to the Dolfins in terms of size and political influence. Pasquale Malipiero succeeded Francesco Foscari as doge in 1457 and ruled until his death in 1462. The late fifteenth century also witnessed the consular service and commercial activities of Ambrogio Malipiero, who, because of a great number of surviving personal papers, has become a prominent figure in Venetian diasporic history.⁵

i. Gem trader and consul: the use of relatives as trade proxies

Biagio's earliest commercial journeys led him to Alexandria, where stays are documented for 1392, 1396, 1397 and 1398.⁶ In this initial phase of his career, Biagio relied heavily upon the contacts and skills of his older brother Antonio who travelled with him during the 1396 *muda*.⁷ In Alexandria, the two brothers worked closely with the Jewish merchant Sabatino Russo of Lecce.⁸ For their gemstone trade, they formed a business (*compagnia delle zoie*) with Giovanni da Canal⁹ and Perazio Malipiero, who was the Venetian consul in Alexandria from 1396 to 1398,¹⁰ which later was dissolved amidst controversies over outstanding claims.¹¹

⁴ The following biographical stub draws on Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 97-112 and Pedani: *Balas Rubies*, pp. 1-13. Primary source material is cited where consulted.

⁵ See discussion below, VI.E.ii. Also Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, p. 40; Vallet: *Marchands vénitiens*, p. 319.

⁶ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. a, f. [3]; ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [5]; also see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 95.

⁷ For the *muda* system, see Lane: *Venice*, pp. 68-73; also Stöckly: *Le système de l'incanto*, pp. 93-178.

⁸ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. a, f. [3-9].

⁹ Biagio describes Giovanni di Canal as "chugnado", thus indicating an affinal relation: "Zan da Chanal mio chugnado", Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo 1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 180, fasc. 8, f. [1].

¹⁰ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 97 corrects Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 552, who declared Malipiero's consulship as having lasted from 1398 until 1399.

¹¹ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 97-98; Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 552.

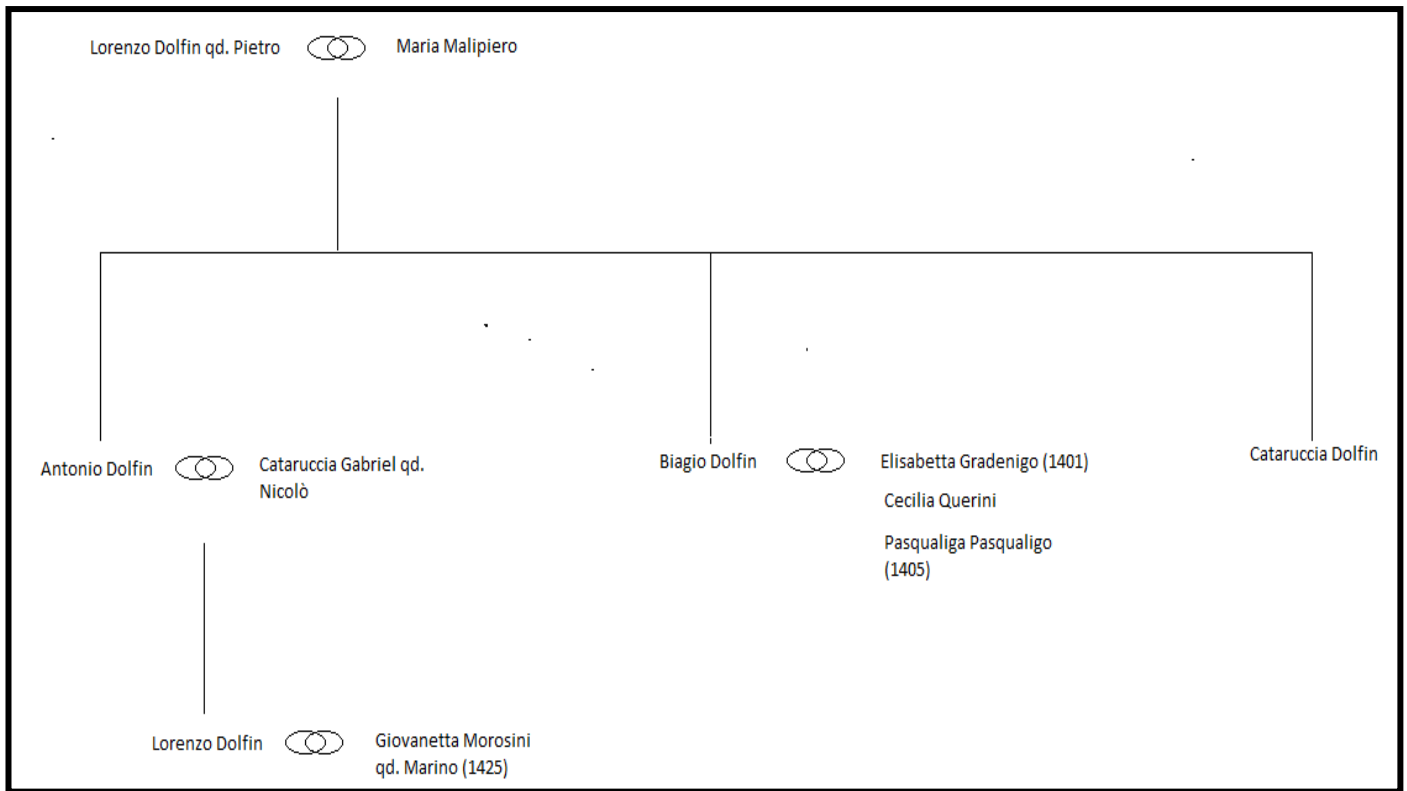


FIGURE 1: PEDIGREE DOLFIN (DA SANTA GIUSTINA)

Biagio Dolfin twice held the office of Venetian consul in Alexandria. Not much is known about his first spell in office from 1408 to 1410, whereas his second term from 1418 until his death in 1420 (while on official mission to the Sultan in Cairo) is well documented.¹² The bulk of the correspondence preserved in the CBD dates from these years, providing insights into Biagio's commercial affairs as well as into official and personal matters. During and between his consulships, Biagio remained active in long-distance trade, with his affairs chiefly focused on (but not confined to) the gemstone business, the only type of commercial exchange that was not subject to severe restrictions for the Republic's official representatives.¹³ After his return from Alexandria in 1410, Biagio established a regular gemstone business in London while working closely with his brother-in-law Polo Pasqualigo and the brothers Andrea and Nicolò Molin, who acted as his London-based agents.¹⁴

The surviving letters documenting Biagio's gem trade during his second consulship display a remarkable degree of congruence in terms of the roles attributed to involved individuals. While Biagio stayed in Alexandria, his nephew Lorenzo and his cousin Nicolò Dolfin were

¹² Most of the correspondence is contained in ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 181, fasc. 15.

¹³ For official restrictions, see Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 414.

¹⁴ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. b, f. 1; see also Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 96-101.

both resident in Venice and frequent recipients of Biagio's written commerce-related instructions.¹⁵ A notable example¹⁶ of this correspondence is a letter dated 1 November 1418,¹⁷ in which Biagio asked Lorenzo to enquire about the sale of two of Biagio's *balasy* (precious stones) that was meant to be performed by Polo Pasqualigo.¹⁸ Lorenzo was told to consult with Giovanni Morosini and Nicolò Dolfin about the specifics of the sale and to send the revenues to Alexandria as a bill of exchange.¹⁹ In case the gems had not been sold, Lorenzo was asked to exchange them for fine cloth (*veludy*) chosen by Morosini and Nicolò and to entrust Orso Dolfin, another close relative, with the transport to Alexandria. Another document reaffirms this business structure.²⁰ In a letter sent after 24 March 1419, Biagio mentioned the sale of two *balasy*, owned by Polo Pasqualigo, which Lorenzo was asked to supervise while consulting again with Giovanni Morosini. Biagio opines that Orso Dolfin ought to invest the revenues in the Alexandria galleys.²¹ Presumably, this indicates further involvement in the spice

¹⁵ Nicolò was the son of Benedetto Dolfin, captain of the Alexandria galleys in 1394, 1396, and 1398 (Stöckly: *Le système de l'incanto*, pp. 285, 309). Since the degree of kin between Biagio and Benedetto is not clearly known, Nicolò is referred to as a "cousin" here for simplicity (see also Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 95).

¹⁶ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Mistre, *Commissaria Biagio Dolfin*, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24].

¹⁷ The following draws on Morche, Franz-Julius: "The Dolfin Collection – A Medieval Venetian Trade Network (1418-1420)", in: Christ, G., Morche, F.-J., Zaugg, R., Kaiser, W., Beihammer, A., Burkhardt, S. (eds.), *Union in Separation: Diasporic Groups and Identities in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1100-1800*, Rome: Viella, 2015, pp. 555-570.

¹⁸ BOERIO defines "Balasso" as "pietra preziosa, ch'è una specie di rubino", Boerio, Giuseppe: *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano*, Venezia: Giunti, 1993, p. 8.

¹⁹ "Che li dity dener me sia mandady de qui per chanbio con pluy utel se pò", ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Mistre, *Commissaria Biagio Dolfin*, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24]. For the use of the bill of exchange, see Denzel, Markus A.: "Wechsel, -brief, Wechsler", in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, München and Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1989, pp. 2086-2089.

²⁰ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Mistre, *Commissaria Biagio Dolfin*, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. f, f. [5].

²¹ Ibid.: "Anchor romagno avixado de lo rezever tu fesy de la mie do balasy che aveva mio chugnado ser Polo Pasqualigo di qual sia el dito so scriver niente de avery fato che despiaxier de rezevuodo. Et inpero quando poso te prego che con ser Nicholo Dolfin et con ser Zan Morosini over senza el dito ser Zan si prochury de baratarly a veludy de le sorte ch'io avy el dito ser Zan Morexini el so parer de Veniexia et quely che pluy ve conseio et conforto sie de zetandin uno cremexi verde a veludi et deli vende plany et de grana plany uno cremexin plan ve saverian confortar pur che soto bone robeet non guardar al prexio ch'io ve scrisy che dovese meter a balasy che se ben me arechordo si fo duc. 4 d'oro del charato se per 1/4 de duc. mancho el charato et se vostra posa metely fin et mandady in man de Orso Dolfin arechordandote che quely ch'io paty con my non ho may posudo veder siche sa tuto te pode fra a le galie de insuge et quando ta non el posy far si li da conty destra et chautamente. Et

trade with the Mamluk Sultanate, with relatives such as Orso Dolfín acting as Biagio's proxies to circumvent the official restrictions on trade faced by representatives of the Republic.

Nicolò Dolfín provided similar services to Biagio in relation to the gemstone business. Biagio instructed his cousin to sell gemstones in Venice while following the advice of two other business associates, Bernardo Bembo and Matteo Spira.²² Nicolò was routinely asked to oversee the distribution of a gem shipment to various insiders of the Venetian market, among them Bembo and Spira.²³ The entirety of the surviving correspondence from the CBD reveals the relative importance of these players to Biagio's commercial operations. Fourteen of the letters relate to Lorenzo Dolfín while fifteen involve Nicolò.²⁴

The presence of both kin and non-kin components in Biagio's business is a noticeable factor, which reflects the ambiguous role of family relations in Venetian commerce. Whereas in various other historical contexts, family bonds seem to have played a lesser role (compared to other parameters such as ethnicity, religion, or language), scholars of Venetian history have long emphasised the importance of family relations to Venetian economic development.²⁵ The interaction of kin and non-kin, however, did not occur at random, but instead was subject to strategic selection.

ii. Agent and principal: business skills in the service of fellow traders

Acting as both providers and recipients of agency services was a key characteristic of the daily activities and obligations of Venetian merchants. Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín both acted as agents at certain points in their mercantile careers while also profiting, to an even larger extent, from the services provided by others. In this respect, their personal histories resemble those of other contemporaries.²⁶ It is worth noting that Biagio's and Lorenzo's experiences as *fattore* (agent) began early in their commercial careers, as it was common practice for young-

baratandoly chomo ho dito per le galie fa saver in to nome tuto et sovradezio non diro altro." (Transcription by G. Christ, MMDD).

²² ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Miste, Commissaria Biagio Dolfín, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [15].

²³ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Miste, Commissaria Biagio Dolfín, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [6].

²⁴ Other letters relevant to Biagio Dolfín are dispersed across other *fascicoli* of *buste* 180 and 181 as well as other collections (Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfín, Documenti commerciali riservati, Misc. Gregolin).

²⁵ E.g. Lane: *Family Partnerships*; Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*; Ashtor: *Levant Trade*; Christ: *Passagers clandestins?*

²⁶ E.g. Andrea Barbarigo, Francesco Datini, and the individuals mentioned in chapter VI of this study, Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero.

er patricians to gradually acquire commercial skills by submitting themselves to the guidance of elders and by providing services to others.

Biagio Dolfin was related to both the Morosini and the Bragadin families. The famous chronicler Antonio Morosini was his uncle,²⁷ the brothers Marco and Alban Morosini, whom Biagio represented as agent in Damascus in 1404, were his cousins.²⁸ Antonio Bragadin, Biagio's partner during his residence in Damascus, was his brother-in-law.²⁹ Thus, the Damascus episode of 1404 was essentially a family-based agency relationship.³⁰ In fact, his only direct correspondents to whom Biagio was not linked by affinal or consanguineous ties were the Jewish merchant Sabatino Russo and his commercial partners from the Molin family. Biagio's partnerships that involved non-kin all ended in controversy. It was only in 1414 that Sabatino Russo, who partnered with Biagio in the pepper trade during Biagio's early voyages to Alexandria, ceased to be confronted with Biagio's demands for compensation.³¹ Nicolò Molin, his representative in London from 1412 onwards, was eventually sued by Biagio in the *Giudici di Petizion*. Biagio's gemstone business with Giovanni da Canal, Perazio Malipiero, and Lorenzo Donado was taken to the *rason vecchie* and the *Giudici del Percolator* in 1419.³² While these episodes reflect an apparent difficulty of enforcing commercial cooperation among non-kin, Biagio reserved his most fervent wrath about supposed unduly behaviour for his maternal relatives, the Malipiero.³³ Biagio's reference to a Malipiero who most

²⁷ Christ: *A Newsletter in 1419?*, p. 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; on the Damascus episode see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ According to Christ, the episode is only documented in one account in b. 181, fasc. 23.

³¹ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 95.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 98; "Tu avesy meso li dener a li inprestedy tuta fiada se non dubitasy de lo ribaldo da cha Malipiero", letter Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 4 August 1419. 04.08.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [4]; "Et questo fazo a chaxion che quel ribaldo da cha' Malipiero non me dese inpazo", Letter Biagio qd. Lorenzo Dolfin to Lorenzo qd. Antonio Dolfin, 01.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24B]; "Apresso te arechordo che sete artento et date a sentir con mio suoxero over con ser Nicholo Dolfin se quello ribaldo da cha' Malipiero a fato far niente da nuovo et sel bixogna se sie solizito con tuty i nostri apomdege? azio chel non me fese dano et de quando senti sy sovradezio si manda? fa avixado", letter Biagio qd. Lorenzo Dolfin to Lorenzo qd. Antonio Dolfin, 22.01.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [4]; etc. "deve asentir se quel ribaldo da cha' Malipiero a fato far niente de nuovo", letter Biagio qd. Lorenzo Dolfin to Nicolò qd. Benedetto Dolfin, 22.12.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [3C] (transcriptions by G. Christ, MMDD).

fervently denied his compensation claims as “ribaldo da cha Malipiero” suggests that he connected his personal grievance with an individual to the reputation of this individual’s wider family.³⁴ A conception of collective liability could thus, as shown by this episode, be levied against parts of a patrician family: having unsuccessfully sought economic support from his maternal relatives, Biagio eventually abandoned this side of his extended family. In the same way the family could serve as a basis for the creation of commercial partnerships, it could also inspire a collective sense of distrust. Biagio’s rupture with his maternal family also highlights the flexibility with which family-internal commercial cooperation was established and dissolved if deemed unfunctional.

B. Lorenzo Dolfìn qd. Antonio

Lorenzo and Nicolò Dolfìn both played central roles in Biagio Dolfìn’s business. Lorenzo, the son of Biagio’s brother Antonio, was Biagio Dolfìn’s principal heir and thus an example of Venetian cross-generational business cooperation, stepping into his deceased father’s role as his uncle’s partner. While Nicolò’s precise consanguineous ties to Biagio are more difficult to retrace,³⁵ his long-term cooperation with Biagio makes him a primary example of the use of family loyalties in commerce.

As Biagio’s heir, Lorenzo likely rescued substantial parts of Biagio’s papers from Egypt before handing the documents over to the procurators. While this would partly explain his own centrality within the collection, the surviving correspondence between Biagio and Lorenzo (see table 4 in appendix C) is by no means the only documentation of their close relationship. In addition, Lorenzo is mentioned in many of Biagio’s surviving letters to third correspondents. The direct correspondence between Biagio and Lorenzo dates entirely from the years of Biagio’s second consulship in Alexandria (1418-1420).

i. Lorenzo’s family background: the Gabriel side

Lorenzo Dolfìn was born presumably in the 1390s as the son of Antonio Dolfìn qd. Lorenzo and Catarucia Dolfìn, daughter of Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea and his wife Coletta of the *parrocchia* Santa Maria Mater Domini.³⁶ Antonio Dolfìn’s wealth fell to his brother Biagio after

³⁴ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 98.

³⁵ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 96.

³⁶ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò, 11.11.1400, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie mi-ste, b. 181, fasc. 23, int. b, f. [1].

Antonio's premature death from the plague in 1399.³⁷ Lorenzo was raised under the auspices of Biagio Dolfin and his maternal family. His mother Catarucia had five siblings: a sister, Maria, who married Giorgio Loredan qd. Marco; and four brothers, Andrea, Michele, Benedetto (who had two sons, Alvise and Girolamo, and a daughter, Suordamor, with his wife Marina), and Silvestro.

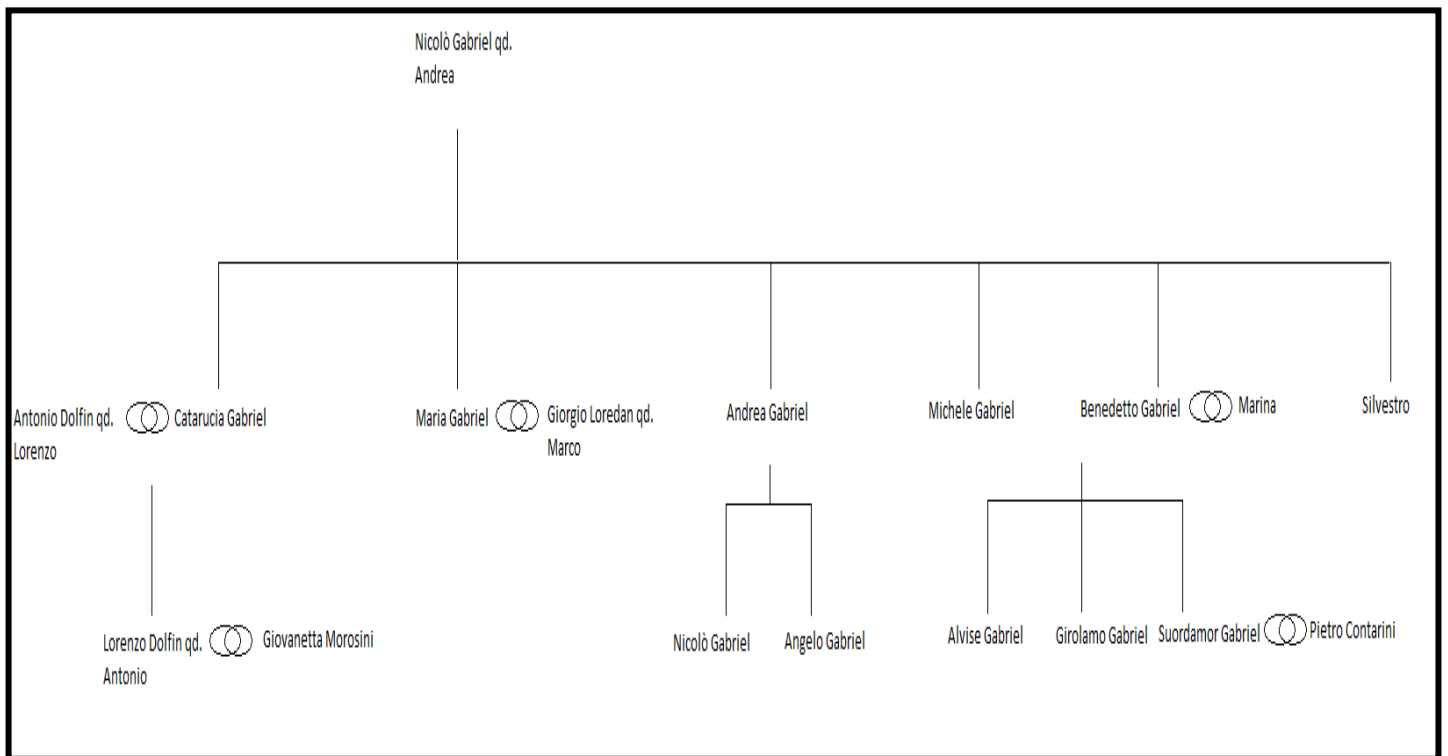


FIGURE 2: PEDIGREE GABRIEL³⁸ (DA SANTA MARIA MATER DOMINI)

The Procuratori di San Marco collection does not contain *commissarie* relating to either Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea or his wife, and of their children only Andrea had his will administered by the procurators.³⁹ Due to the resulting lack of surviving correspondence, little can be said about the intensity of intra-family relations within this branch of the Gabriel family. The testaments of Nicolò Gabriel and of his daughter Catarucia Dolfin must therefore serve as the primary points of reference.⁴⁰

³⁷ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 97.

³⁸ The above pedigree only represents an excerpt of this branch of the Gabriel family. Nicolò Gabriel's testament mentions other individuals who are less relevant to the present discussion.

³⁹ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137.

⁴⁰ Nicolò Gabriel's testament is contained in the busta of his son Andrea Gabriel, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137; Catarucia's testament can be found in Dolfin née Gabriel, Catarucia: Testament, 30 April 1453. 30.04.1453, ASVe, Archivio Notarile Testamenti, b. 1157, prot. II, 62r.

Nicolò Gabriel's testament can be found in the *Commissaria* of his son Andrea.⁴¹ Nicolò was the son of Andrea Gabriel and Catarina Gabriel of Santa Maria Mater Domini. The document reveals that Nicolò was married to Coletta Gabriel at the time of his death, yet, as the great number of direct descendants would suggest, he possibly had been married more than once. In addition to the sons and daughters listed in the above family tree, three additional unmarried daughters are mentioned in the testament as heirs of a total of 1000 ducats. Their respective share of this sum is intended as a dowry either for a potential marriage or for entry into a monastery.⁴² Nicolò's two married daughters, Catarucia Dolfin and Aloisa Querini, likely received their inheritance in the form of dowries at the time of their marriage as their share of the final inheritance is restricted to a modest ten ducats respectively.⁴³ The bulk of the inheritance, which includes the family property in Santa Maria Mater Domini, is given to Nicolò's male descendants. Although this would suggest a patrilineal focus in the cross-generational transmission of wealth, the provision of dowries and the inclusion of affinal kin in the notarial process highlight the cognatic structure of the patrician family. Aloisa's husband Marco Querini is named as one of the executors of the testament alongside Nicolò's cousin Zaccharia Gabriel, his nephew Andrea Bembo, a certain Andrea Contarini qd. Giovanni of Santa Sofia and Nicolò's widow Coletta. Affinal kinship thus emerges both as a social foundation for commercial cooperation and as a basis for the establishment of future marital links. Through affinal links such as the marriage between Marco Querini and Aloisa Gabriel, the Querini were linked both by kin and, as is evident in Nicolò Gabriel's testament, also economically to the Gabriel family of Santa Maria Mater Domini. Lorenzo Dolfin, as a descendant of this Gabriel branch, eventually became further involved with the Querini through his marriage to Giovanetta Morosini, as there had been previous marital links between the Morosini and the Querini. Lorenzo shared his father-in-law with a certain Francesco Querini qd. Fantino, who wrote to him in very personal terms (as "fradello e chugnado") from Candia in 1427.⁴⁴

⁴¹ See note 40.

⁴² "Anchor lago a mie fie per maridar o per munegar quado lexe a tempo per andar a marido o munegarse cioè a Sofia, Benicia, [...], Lucia, Maria, e ad altre me nascese che a quela parte le parera demandar ebia ducati mile." ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137, Testamento Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea.

⁴³ "Anchor lago a mia fia Aloicha Querini dexe et a mia fia Catarucia Dolfin vedea el vuier di un ano stagando con suo fradeli quoro voia ducati dexe chomo lago a soa suor Aloicha." Ibid.

⁴⁴ Letter Querini, Francesco qd. Fantino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.09.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [54]: „Seguro chome miser nostro suoxero me scrive..."

The significance of affinal relationships for inter-family cooperation and the creation of long-term inter-family partnerships is also visible in the testament of Lorenzo's mother Catarucia Dolfin, dated 30 April 1453 and drawn up by the notary Benedetto Croci.⁴⁵ As the executors of her will, Catarucia appointed Lorenzo, her sister Maria with her husband Giorgio Loredan, and her sister-in-law Marina, widow of her brother Benedetto. Following detailed specifications regarding Catarucia's burial and donations to various churches, the document determines the future ownership of her property. Next to personal belongings, such as Catarucia's clothing that she left to her sister-in-law Marina,⁴⁶ the bulk of her wealth comprised 1000 ducats in state bonds (*imprestiti*), which she left to Lorenzo.⁴⁷ In the case of Lorenzo not leaving legitimate heirs, the bonds would fall to Cateruccia's niece, Suordamor Contarini née Gabriel, whose marriage to Pietro Contarini was equally grounded in a long tradition of inter-family relations between the *Ca' Contarini* and the Gabriel.⁴⁸

Catarucia shared a household with her son Lorenzo until her death.⁴⁹ Lorenzo maintained a close relationship to his maternal uncles Michele, Benedetto, and Andrea qd. Nicolò and their

⁴⁵ Dolfin née Gabriel, Catarucia: Testament, 30 April 1453. 30.04.1453, ASVe, Archivio Notarile Testamenti, b. 1157, prot. II, 62r.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: "Ite lasso tuti mie drapi zoe de mio ... e pelize sia dade per amor de dio per anema mia iqual sian dadi a la districion e voluntade de mia cugnada donna marina relieta de ser benedeto Gabriel veramente se a la dita domina Marina i pariese de dover tegnir per si i dite over chosa alguna di i diti drapi e pelize io voio i si son contrata che la dita dona marina possa tegnir per si tuta vuer parte di i diti drapi e pelize e farne chome a lie aparera."

⁴⁷ Ibid.: "Item lasso ducati mille di imprestidi a Lorenzo Dolfin mio fio chondezionadi con le condicion sotoscrite"

⁴⁸ Ibid.: "E... che el dito Lorenzo Dolfin mio fio moresse senza heriedi legittimi e senza desendera legittimi in questo chaxo voio e si hordeno che i diti ducati 1000 di imprestidi sia seria a la chamera de imprestidi a la mia chomesaria iqual sia seria a la ditta mia chomesaria chon quondam che zamai per algun modo aver ingegno e non se possa vender ne dar ne denar ne impignar ne ublegar ne alienar ne tralatar ne chorlar da la dita chamera di imprestedi ma sempre e proprio el chavedal de i dia ducati 1000 di imprestedi si sera fermo a la chamera di imprestidi seria a la dita mia chomesaria e cun tute condicion sorascrie e sotoscrite el pro de i diti ducati 1000 di imprestedi voio chel debia esser e sia de mia neza Soradamor fia che fo de ser Benedetto Gabriel fo mio fradelo e moier de ser Piero Contarini zoe invita soa solamente de la dita mia neza Soradamor e da poi la moier de la dita mia neza Soradamor e voio che el soradito prodi i soraditi ducati 1000 di imprestedi debia esser e sia de la giexia e luogo de santa Justina in Veniexia per amor de dio per anema mia e de el dito Lorenzo Dolfin mio fio amprio di questa condicion e in cargo che quela che stesse a habitasse in la dita giexia e luogo de santa justina sia sempre e perpetuo tegndudi e ubligadi de dir over far dir a lo altrat de santa maria hogna setemana 4 mese sacramental per l'anema mia e del dito Lorenzo Dolfin mio fio."

⁴⁹ Merchant letters to Lorenzo written by close relatives usually contain wishes to Catarucia.

children. The intensity of these family bonds is well reflected in Catarucia's testament. Lorenzo had no siblings and thus his maternal family played an important role in his early socialisation and commercial career. He cooperated commercially with his uncles as well as with his cousins Alvise and Girolamo qd. Benedetto. By contrast, Benedetto's third son Andrea, who later became *Procurator di Ultra*, does not occur in the CBD sources. His testament is contained, as is the will of Nicolò Gabriel, in the *commissaria* of his uncle Andrea Gabriel qd. Nicolò.⁵⁰ Lorenzo's (extended) maternal family was also closely linked to his eventual affinal family, which provided further opportunities for family-based commercial cooperation.

ii. Apprentice between Venice and Alexandria

Lorenzo's earliest surviving correspondence with Biagio Dolfin dates from November 1418.⁵¹ In a long letter, Biagio, then just over a month into his second consulship in Alexandria, instructed his nephew, resident in Venice, on various transactions. Biagio and Lorenzo corresponded regularly until Lorenzo travelled to Alexandria with the autumn galleys of 1419.⁵²

Lorenzo's journey to Egypt occurred shortly before a planned official mission of the consul to Cairo. Lorenzo's last known letter to Biagio was written on 31 March 1420 from Rosetta, shortly before the consul's death less than a month later (on 26 April 1420).⁵³ Lorenzo reported his overland journey from Alexandria via Abû Oîr to Rosetta and the subsequent continuation of his voyage on the Nile to Cairo. He informed Biagio on the fading of a plague epidemic in Cairo, and a number of business-related notes suggest that he acted as a commercial proxy for his uncle.⁵⁴ Said letter was received on 2 April 1420 in Alexandria, shortly before Biagio left for Cairo himself, where he died presumably amidst a minor plague epidem-

⁵⁰ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137, Testamento Andrea Gabriel qd. Benedetto Procurator.

⁵¹ Letter Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [23]

⁵² The last of their letters prior to Lorenzo's voyage to Egypt is Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.08.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [4]. The record of their correspondence begins in November 1418 (Letter Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24]).

⁵³ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 97.

⁵⁴ Letter Lorenzo qd. Antonio Dolfin to Biagio qd. Lorenzo Dolfin, 31.03.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [50].

ic.⁵⁵ After Biagio's death, Lorenzo left Mamluk territory and returned to Venice carrying his uncle's bequest, which he had assembled despite opposition from Biagio's successors in the consulate.⁵⁶

Lorenzo entered the Republic's civil service and, at about 1426, became financial controller (*camerario*) of Vicenza, which had fallen under Venetian dominion in 1404.⁵⁷ He held this office until at least December 1427.⁵⁸ His marriage to Giovanetta Morosini, daughter of Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni, may have enhanced his political rise.⁵⁹ This marriage, begun in 1425, stood in a long tradition of affinal links between the Dolfín and Morosini clans⁶⁰ and created a number of advantageous relationships for Lorenzo that added to his already well-established interconnections within Venetian power structures: his maternal uncle, Andrea Gabriel qd. Nicolò, was governor with military and civil command (*podestà e capitano*) of Zimella,⁶¹ while Andrea's brother Benedetto was appointed *bailo* of Trebizond in 1436.⁶² Lorenzo's affinal uncle Giorgio Loredan qd. Marco held the office of *podestà e capitano* in

⁵⁵ Letter Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto, 15.03.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [19]; also see Christ, *Trading Conflicts*, p. 254.

⁵⁶ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, chapter XV.

⁵⁷ Letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni an Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 29.08.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [41].

⁵⁸ Letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [56].

⁵⁹ Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Marriage contract between Giovanetta Morosini and Lorenzo Dolfín qd. Antonio. 29.01.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [46].

⁶⁰ As noted above, there was an affinal link between Lorenzo's father Antonio (and his uncle Biagio) and the chronicler Antonio Morosini, who had been married to a paternal aunt of Antonio and Biagio. Giovanni Morosini, a commercial partner of Biagio's during his second Alexandria consulship, may have been the father of Lorenzo Dolfín's eventual father-in-law Marino Morosini. In a letter to Lorenzo, his father-in-law Marino Morosini mentions "Alban" as a cousin of Lorenzo's – possibly the Alban Morosini with whom Biagio Dolfín cooperated in Damascus: "Tu la festi montar su un por tanto e da puo la stete molto ben piaxer asai avesemo he festa molto ben a farla montar a chavalo piaxer asai avessemo che tu desmontasy a chaxa de tui cuxini miser Alban e miser Michiel he festu to honor he nostro" (Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [50]). Here, Alban Morosini appears as a resident of Vicenza.

⁶¹ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfín, Catarucia, 24.02.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [47].

⁶² Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 22 July 1436. 22.07.1436, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [9].

Chioggia and later became captain of the Flanders galleys.⁶³ Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto was appointed *podestà* of Sacile in 1426.⁶⁴

Lorenzo resided in Venice for most of his life. In 1423 we find him renting a house in Chioggia from Angelo da Canal qd. Giacomo.⁶⁵ Apart from his journeys to Alexandria as a young man and his spell as camerario in Vicenza, he must also have resided in Padua and Koper (*Capo d'Istria*, Istria/Dalmatia, modern-day Slovenia). In Padua, he rented a house near Santa Giustina from Pietro Dolfin qd. Domenico.⁶⁶ In Koper, he again held the office of camerlengo (as suggested by a letter addressed to “Lorenzo Dolfin onorado camerlongho”).⁶⁷ This office is equivalent to the post he occupied in Vicenza, but the heavily damaged document does neither reveal a sender nor a date.⁶⁸

One important aspect of Lorenzo’s commercial activity is the geographical dispersion of his business, which is particularly striking in comparison to the commercial activities of his uncle that were confined mostly to the Alexandria galley route (and, to a lesser extent, London). On the other hand, while Biagio’s commercial portfolio was more diversified, ranging from precious stones to real estate, Lorenzo’s much longer commercial career had a clearer focus on

⁶³ Giorgio Loredan was married to Maria Loredan, Giovanetta Dolfin’s maternal aunt. See letter Loredan, Giorgio qd. Marco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.10.1440, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [65].

⁶⁴ Letter Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 011.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [45].

⁶⁵ The purpose of this residence cannot be identified in the sources. There are eleven documents in b. 282 that were received by Lorenzo Dolfin in Chioggia. Canal, Angelo da qd. Giacomo an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 16 October 1423. 16.10.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [26].

⁶⁶ Dolfin, Piero qd. Domenico to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 1 September 1435. 01.09.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [10]; to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 15 November 1435. 15.11.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [12]. At the same time, Lorenzo occurs as landlord to Michiel Pentor, who had already been a tenant of Biagio’s. This must have been the inherited house in St. Giustina in Venice, where Lorenzo’s father-in-law collected rents on his behalf: Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 30 August 1435. 30.08.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [36].

⁶⁷ Letter Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [64].

⁶⁸ The “Rulers of Venice” database by Benjamin G. Kohl, Andrea Mozzato and Monique O’Connell (<http://rsa.fmdatabase.com/fmi/iwp/cgi?-db=venice4-0%20intact&-loadframes>) lists Pola (Dalmatia, modern-day Croatia) as an additional residence of Lorenzo Dolfin. There is, however, no documentation of this episode in the CLD.

the cloth trade.⁶⁹ Lorenzo began exploring the Romania trade route in the 1420s, forming a *compagnia* venture with distantly related members of the Dolfín clan. With his co-owners, the brothers Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfín qd. Francesco, he had previously shared a business in London.⁷⁰ In later years, Lorenzo traded in Romania by co-operating closely with affinal relatives who had settled in the Venetian communities in Constantinople and Tana.

The commercial links between Lorenzo and the Morosini also proved useful in Lorenzo's Flanders business. By the mid-1420s, Lorenzo had retreated commercially from Alexandria, settled all outstanding claims from his uncle's associates, and established himself as an independent merchant. From 1422, he began selling Eastern spices and acquiring cloth in Bruges through the brothers Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò, who acted as paid agents chosen on the basis of their commercial reputation and market-specific skills.⁷¹ The London business, first handled in association with Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfín, remained the second pillar of Lorenzo's commerce and was eventually taken over by the Dolfín-Morosini coalition. Lorenzo's brother-in-law, Michele Morosini qd. Marino, represented his commercial interests in London in the 1440s.⁷²

iii. Lorenzo Dolfín as a family representative

As a half orphan, Lorenzo Dolfín's political and commercial prospects were weakened from the beginning. Since an individual's standing within the patriciate depended on their wealth as well as on their personal integration into their social environment, a lack of paternal support was bound to imply social disadvantages. Though patrician family structures were not strictly patrilineal, and affinal kin relationships often were of equal significance to direct consanguineous ties, the early death of a father could reduce an individual's influence in his pa-

⁶⁹ This is not to say that other fields of business were not pursued by Lorenzo. There is evidence for his continued engagement in the gem trade e.g. in the correspondence with his nephew Dolfino Dolfín.

⁷⁰ Dolfín, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 20 September 1423. 20.09.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [67].

⁷¹ The oldest surviving letter documenting this relationship is Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.08.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [54]. Another document, a letter from the Renier brothers to Lorenzo Dolfín that presumably was previously part of the CLD, is included in Aboussouan, Camille (ed.): *Exposition "Le livre et le Liban jusqu'à 1900"*, Paris: Unesco/AGECOOP, 1982, p. 106.

⁷² The earliest letter is Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.10.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [14]; the last is Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.01.1446, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [57].

ternal family and hence damage his prospects because of the legal weight attached to paternal family relations.⁷³ The fact that Lorenzo's career still developed in every measurable respect like that of a successful and reasonably influential patrician bears testament to the impact of his uncle's mentoring. By the time of Biagio Dolfin's second consulship in Alexandria, Lorenzo had become his primary agent, closest personal aid, and heir. Biagio's personal affection to Lorenzo is expressed in his letters, in which Lorenzo is addressed as "dearest son" (*fio carissimo*). The scope of their surviving correspondence, as well as its confidentiality, further highlight their personal proximity.

In a commercial context, letters are the only evidence of direct personal interaction documenting the respective roles of principals and trade agents within commercial relationships (unlike notarial deeds, court records etc., which required mediators). Biagio Dolfin's archive contains seventeen pieces of correspondence with Lorenzo, whereas four letters from Biagio to Lorenzo survive in Lorenzo's *Commissaria*.⁷⁴ In addition, Lorenzo is mentioned in much of Biagio's other correspondence, and vice versa.⁷⁵ The references to Lorenzo in Biagio's letters, combined with the repetitive patterns of interaction between Biagio and his correspondents, constitute the foremost evidence for a coalition of traders bound together by a self-enforcing institution; that is, the coalition, an arrangement in which individuals collaborate for the benefit of long-term commercial advantages (primarily in the form of low per-unit transaction costs) rather than short-term monetary gains, was self-enforcing in the sense that no individual member could gain from breaking their commitment. The coalitional structure primarily emerges from the letters involving Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto as a correspondent. The CBD contains sixteen of these letters (or copies).⁷⁶ In Lorenzo Dolfin's archive, where similar frequencies of written communication can be found with other interlocutors, fourteen to seventeen documents also indicate a more profound relationship. For example, Lorenzo maintained a close partnership with the brothers Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò, his

⁷³ For the dual significance of matrilineal and patrilineal ties, see Chojnacki: *Kinship Ties*; also Queller and Madden: *Father of the Bride*. For the political importance of the clan see Faugeton, Fabien: "L'art du compromis politique: Venise au lendemain de la conjuration Tiepolo-Querini (1310)", in: *Journal des Savants* (2004), No. 2, pp. 357-421.

⁷⁴ Fourteen documents are contained in CBD, b. 181, three in b. 180; the four documents in the CLD are contained in fasc. 3.

⁷⁵ Mentions of Biagio are less frequent in Lorenzo's correspondence, but they occur nevertheless, see e.g. letter Polo, Nicolò di to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.02.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie di Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, int. 1, f. [1].

⁷⁶ One in b. 180, fifteen in b. 181.

Bruges agents, which is documented from August 1422 until January 1427. Eighteen of their letters to Lorenzo survive in the CLD. Another frequent correspondent of Lorenzo's was his brother-in-law Michele Morosini qd. Marino, who represented Lorenzo in London between (at least) 1441 and 1446 and of whom twenty-seven letters remain. Michele's father, Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni, has a surviving record of eighteen letters that were sent from Venice to Vicenza.⁷⁷ By comparison, the brothers Vettore, Giacomo, and Giorgio Dolfín qd. Francesco, who were partners in Lorenzo's first Romania *compagnia*, together have only sixteen letters surviving in Lorenzo's archive.⁷⁸

Because of a lack of direct correspondence between Lorenzo and Nicolò Dolfín, the intensity of their cooperation must be deduced from their respective correspondence with Biagio Dolfín between 1418 and 1420.⁷⁹ At the time of Biagio's second consulship, Lorenzo resided in Venice where he took care of Biagio's business interests, mainly in the gem trade, and administered his property.⁸⁰ Nicolò Dolfín qd. Benedetto equally provided agency services to his cousin Biagio. Their commercial relationship is further confirmed in a letter from Pasqualiga Dolfín, Biagio's third and last wife, which told Biagio about Nicolò's financing of a property deal with a certain Marco Teldi.⁸¹ Yet in addition to the letters documenting the individual agency roles of Lorenzo and Nicolò, there are surviving pieces of correspondence documenting their continuous cooperation.⁸² In total, the CBD and CLD contain ten letters authored and received by either Biagio, Lorenzo, or Nicolò Dolfín, which document the

⁷⁷ One of these letters is contained in Reinhold Mueller's Christie's collection, letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 13.01.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283.

⁷⁸ See below, V.B.i. Three of these letters stem from the Christie's collection.

⁷⁹ The aforementioned 1426 letter is the only surviving document (letter Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.11.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [45]). Their lack of written correspondence between 1418 and 1420 obviously results from the fact that both resided in Venice at the time.

⁸⁰ See p. 64, note 66.

⁸¹ Letter Dolfín, Pasqualiga to Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 16.06.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [37].

⁸² E.g. the November 1418 letter cited above: letter Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24].

commercial cooperation between Lorenzo and Nicolò as members of Biagio Dolfín's personal commercial network.⁸³

C. Cross-Generational Pattern: The Strategic Transmission of Business Skills

There are striking similarities between the commercial careers of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín. Lorenzo, like his uncle, undertook his first steps in commerce under the supervision of close relatives. Biagio Dolfín first travelled to Alexandria on the *muda* of 1398, accompanied by his elder brother Antonio. The galley convoy was commanded by Benedetto Dolfín, the father of Nicolò, who became one of Biagio's most trusted partners. As Biagio's associates, Nicolò and Lorenzo Dolfín cooperated closely and remained in close personal terms even beyond their commercial partnership.⁸⁴

Biagio Dolfín further developed his business skills as *fattore* to Venetian merchants in Damascus. As noted above, we know of transactions he undertook on behalf of Marco and Alban Morosini in association with his brother-in-law Andrea Bragadin in 1404.⁸⁵ Biagio's jewel business in London, which he initiated after his first consulship in Alexandria, was performed through an intricate network of (consanguineous and affinal) relatives and non-kin partners. He partnered with members of the Canal family and a certain Giovanni Dolfín,

⁸³ In addition to the 1 November 1418 letter, these are (taken from the MMDD): Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 27.10.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [5]; Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 30.01.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [7]; Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 24.02.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [2]; Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.04.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [13 a]; Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 24.04.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [5]; Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 29.05.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [38]; Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.08.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [4]; Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Nicolò qd. Benedetto, 11.11.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [5].

⁸⁴ There is no preserved correspondance between Lorenzo and Nicolò regarding Lorenzo's Romania and Flanders activities. The aforementioned 1426 letter is the only documentation of their (seemingly very cordial) personal relationship.

⁸⁵ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 96.

whose precise relation to Biagio remains uncertain.⁸⁶ The brothers Andrea and Nicolò da Molin represented their joint gemstone business in London until the partnership was dissolved amidst a judicial row.⁸⁷ Biagio's brother-in-law Polo Pasqualigo was eventually sent to London to take care of the Canal-Dolphin interests. Biagio's negative experiences regarding the reliability of non-kin and distant-kin associates (such as the Molin and the Malipiero) made him rely primarily on the services of Lorenzo Dolfin and his cousin Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto for managing his trade-related affairs during his second consulship in Alexandria. Lorenzo Dolfin, who in all likelihood never knew his father, benefited greatly from his experience as his uncle's understudy. While wrapping up uncle's Alexandria business after Biagio's death, Lorenzo worked with the Alexandria resident Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco who had been a galley commander during the 1418 muda.⁸⁸ He also corresponded further with Giacomo Barbarigo qd. Filippo, Gregorio Orso, Giacomo Zorzi qd. Giorgio and Matteo di Sori, all of whom had previously been correspondents of Biagio Dolfin.⁸⁹ In addition to the business links that he inherited from his uncle, Lorenzo relied heavily on the support of his mother's Gabriel family after Biagio's death. His maternal uncles Benedetto, Andrea, and Michele Gabriel qd. Nicolò all corresponded with him in commercial

⁸⁶ Letter Molin, Nicolò da qd. Michael to Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 08.01.1414, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. a, f. [2].

⁸⁷ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 97-99.

⁸⁸ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco: Galley cargo list, 11 November 1418. 11.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 13, int. carichi, f. [4].

⁸⁹ Giacomo Barbarigo qd. Filippo: Letter Barbarigo, Giacomo qd. Filippo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 23.09.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [15]; Gregorio Orso: Letter Orso, Gregorio to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 27.03.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [26], Letter Orso, Gregorio to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.07.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [26], Letter Orso, Gregorio to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.11.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [34]; Giacomo Zorzi qd. Giorgio: Letter Zorzi, Giacomo di qd. Giorgio to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.11.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [29], Letter Zorzi, Giacomo di qd. Giorgio to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.11.1425, ASVe, Documenti Commerciali Riservati (1985), b. 1, 211; Matteo di Sori: Letter Sori, Matteo de to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 12.12.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [16]; Letter Sori, Matteo de to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: 28 October 1422. 28.10.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [20]; Sori, Matteo de an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Declaration, 08 May 1430. 08.05.1430, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [58].

terms.⁹⁰ Michele Gabriel⁹¹ was Lorenzo's agent in Damascus while Lorenzo closed his Alexandria accounts.⁹² Benedetto Gabriel's son Alvise acted as Lorenzo's agent on the Beirut galley route, writing to Lorenzo from Acre among other places in the 1440s.⁹³

The dominance of family relations in commercial organisation was thus as pronounced in the case of Lorenzo Dolfín as in the case of his uncle Biagio, while the differences merely relate to different degrees of significance assigned to specific family branches. The nuclear family remained central to Biagio's commerce (through his brother Antonio and eventually his nephew Lorenzo), while Lorenzo was more heavily involved with his maternal and affinal families.

Cross-generation similarities between the careers of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín thus relate to both career development and mercantile strategies. In both cases, mercantile education was provided by the immediate family environment and supported by state institutions. Young patricians were gradually given more commercial responsibility within family coalitions, while facilitated access to merchant galleys created opportunities for the practical application of acquired business skills and for gaining additional commercial experience in distant locations. Their introduction to existing trade coalitions operating within wider commercial networks led them to strengthen their commercial links within their own families while simultaneously developing relationships with their families' external associates. Lorenzo Dolfín's continuous exchange with members of his uncle's network indicates that commercial partnerships, although often built for specific purposes and limited in scale and scope, were generally intended as long-term alliances that could be put on hold and reactivated at will.

Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfín thus shared a commercial strategy that connected them to a key circle of relatives and selected individuals from outside their family. Their personal

⁹⁰ According to Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.11.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [32], Benedetto died in 1437.

⁹¹ Michele Gabriel may have been the "merchant from Damascus" with whom Biagio Dolfín corresponded in 1419, see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 232, 299.

⁹² Letter Gabriel, Michele qd. Nicolò to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.10.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [18]. The "compagnia Michiel Gabriel" is also mentioned in the two CLD accounts signed by Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco: Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135]; Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1425. 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [104].

⁹³ Letter Gabriel, Alvise to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.11.1445, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [75].

commercial environments overlapped to some extent, yet Lorenzo also created a distinct sphere of personal and commercial interaction tailored to his specific circumstances. Both core and periphery of Lorenzo's own commercial environment emerged clearly only after the death of his mentor Biagio. However, the choices he later made in terms of investments and geographical focus were influenced by his uncle's experiences, to which he was a close witness as Biagio's agent.

CHAPTER IV: MASTER OF AFFAIRS – FAMILY, POLITICS, BUSINESS ORGANISATION: VICENZA AND VENICE (1424-1427)

In the lives of many Venetian patricians, pivotal instances of reaching personal maturity were not (merely) official events like marriage or entering the Great Council. For Andrea Barbarigo, subject of Frederic Lane's classic study, the most formative 'coming-of-age' moment was the bankruptcy of his father Nicolò following a fine of 10.000 ducats for the wrecking of a galley during his captaincy of the Alexandria fleet in December 1417.¹ For Lorenzo Dolfin, it was the untimely death of his uncle and mentor Biagio Dolfin in 1420. The loss of his patriarch obliged Lorenzo to return Biagio's property from Egypt to Venice, settle his accounts, fight off unjustified claims on Biagio's estate, and lead the transition of family hierarchies by gradually taking on his uncle's role as a family principal. While in Egypt, Lorenzo established close ties to the Venetian consulate and Venetian Alexandria residents. Most importantly, he had to act in his own interest when transforming his uncle's business into a set of arrangements that would facilitate his own commercial pursuits.

Although the legal formalities of capital inheritance are well established in Venetian historiography, less is known about the practical dynamics that structured the cross-generational transformations of Venetian business arrangements. Moreover, the wider social and political backgrounds of patrician commercial cooperation have rarely been considered as constitutional factors of partnership formation in long-distance trade.² When examining the early commercial career of a young patrician like Lorenzo Dolfin, the social context of personal, political, and commercial liaisons are therefore of primary concern. As the combined archives of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin contain a rare and relatively extensive documentation

¹ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 16.

² For capital inheritance, see Pertile, Antonio: *Storia del diritto italiano dalla caduta dell'impero romano alla codificazione - Vol. III: Storia del diritto privato*, Turin: Unione tipografico editrice torinese, 1894, pp. 274-284; also Weber, Max: "Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften im Mittelalter - Nach Südeuropäischen Quellen", in: http://www.textlog.de/weber_handel.html, 1889; for the specific case of Venice, see Lane: *Family Partnerships*. With respect to the social embeddedness of (economic) partnerships, the model of network co-constitution provided by McLean and Padgett is a useful framework for assessing the interdependencies between relational categories, although it has thus far not been evaluated against the Venetian context (McLean, P., Padgett, J.: "Obligation, Risk and Opportunity in the Renaissance Economy: Beyond Social Embeddedness to Network Co-Constitution", in: Dobbin, Frank (ed.), *The Sociology of the Economy*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004, pp. 193-227).

of cross-generational cooperation within wider patrician networks, the emerging interdependencies can be analysed in terms of both individual and collective incentives. The functioning of patrician networks thus also sheds light on the pertinence of political institutions and the commercial law to the development of trade.

This chapter examines the factors that enabled Lorenzo to build a commercial network spanning from the Near East to Flanders and London. While the operational specifics of Lorenzo's long-distance trade are described and analysed in chapter V, the following section (A) examines how Lorenzo created his own business opportunities by consolidating his links with Biagio's former partners and initiating new partnerships of his own, in the course of which family-based partnerships eventually emerged as his primary operational framework. Sections B and C explore Lorenzo's web of family relationships that became a crucial basis of mutual support in both commerce and politics, with different branches of Lorenzo's extended family each fulfilling specific roles. Section D explores the social interdependencies that generated intra-family cooperation and their extension into the commercial sphere.

A. The Transformation of a Business Network: Biagio's Death and Lorenzo's Coming-of-Age

Biagio Dolfin qd. Lorenzo died in Cairo on 26 April 1420 while serving the Venetian Republic for a second time as consul in Mamluk Alexandria. Lorenzo Dolfin resided in Venice during his uncle's service but was present in Egypt at the time of Biagio's death. Lorenzo's last letter to Biagio was sent on 31 March 1420 from Rosetta.³ Biagio's last preserved letter to Lorenzo, by contrast, had been sent as early as 4 August 1419 but reached Lorenzo more than half a year later, on 10 March 1420 (it had reached Venice after Lorenzo's departure and was then forwarded to Egypt on the spring cotton cogs).⁴ On the back of the letter, Lorenzo noted Alexandria as the place of reception.⁵

³ Letter Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio to Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 31.03.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. d, f. [50].

⁴ Letter Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.08.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [4].

⁵ Ibid.: „Rezevuto del 1420 a dì 10 Marzo per la nave patron ser Andrea da Charvaza in Allexandria...”

Lorenzo temporarily remained in Alexandria, from where he wrote his first letter after Biagio's passing on 11 May 1420.⁶ We further find a notarial deed drawn by the Candia-based notary Benedetto di Sori in the *Cancellaria inferiore*, dated 25 June 1420,⁷ and a bill of exchange benefiting Angelo Michiel qd. Luca, dated 20 October 1420.⁸ While still in Alexandria, Lorenzo wrote to Carlo Contarini qd. Giacomo, Biagio's successor in the office of Venetian consul⁹, on 11 November of the same year.¹⁰ A copy of a letter written to Matteo di Sori, brother of the aforementioned Benedetto, is dated 27 August 1421, but this document had very probably been written in Venice.¹¹ Lorenzo's definite return is documented in a letter to his maternal uncle Benedetto Gabriel qd. Nicolò, written from Venice one month later.¹² Another letter from Antonio di Gusanieri qd. Marco, which Lorenzo received in March 1421, further confirms his return to the Serenissima.¹³

Although only one document, testified by Giacomo Barbarigo qd. Filippo, documents Lorenzo's direct exchange with local residents during his stay in Alexandria, his later correspondence reveals that he used his stay in Egypt to forge strong ties to Biagio's former commercial partners on which he was to rely heavily in the following years.¹⁴ Between 1422 and

⁶ The recipient of this letter can no longer be identified due to damages on the document: Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 11.05.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (psm 180 fasc II), Commissarie miste, b. 180, fasc. 2, f. [1].

⁷ Notarial deed Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.06.1420, ASVe, Cancellaria inferiore (Canc Inf Notai 22), Notai, b. 22, fasc. 9, int. 3, f. [10].

⁸ Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: bill of exchange, 20 October 1420. 20.10.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM citra 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 2, int. 2, f. [2].

⁹ Carlo Contarini held the office on an interim basis. He was succeeded by Francesco Michiel qd. Giovanni (as specified in Gusanieri's letter, see note 13 below; also in: letter Barbarigo, Giacomo qd. Filippo to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 23 September 1420. 23.09.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [15]).

¹⁰ Letter Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio to Contarini, Carlo qd. Giacomo, 11.11.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [14].

¹¹ Letter Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio to Soro, Matteo, 27. August 1421. 27.08.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. f, f. [4].

¹² Letter Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio to Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò, 11.11.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [18].

¹³ Letter di Gusanieri, Antonio qd. Marco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.03.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [51]: "...miser Franzescho Michiel nostro consolo...".

¹⁴ Letter Barbarigo, Giacomo qd. Filippo to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 23.09.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [15]. It is, of course, not surprising that there is little documentation of Lorenzo's interaction with Alexandria residents, since all Venetians must have lived in the same *fondaco*.

1425, Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco, one of his uncle's former Alexandria associates, frequently informed Lorenzo about the Egyptian markets.¹⁵ Two letters survive from Giacomo de Zorzi qd. Giorgio, a Venetian merchant active in Alexandria during and beyond Biagio Dolfin's second consulship. In addition, Lorenzo received at least two letters from the aforementioned Matteo di Sori, which had also been written in Alexandria. Thus, parts of Biagio's commercial network also became the basis of Lorenzo's initial business environment.

The document testified by Giacomo Barbarigo qd. Filippo was written by Lorenzo Dolfin on 23 September 1420.¹⁶ Therein, Lorenzo challenged the decision of the Council of Twelve to seize 220 ducats worth of gemstones from Biagio's former commercial partner Angelo Michiel qd. Luca to settle Biagio's outstanding debt with the consulate. Lorenzo pleaded to spare the belongings of his uncle's associate and promised to repay any of his uncle's outstanding dues himself.¹⁷ The document has no commercial significance in the sense of a commercial partnership between Giacomo Barbarigo and Lorenzo Dolfin. Antonio di Gusanieri's letter, which Lorenzo received in Venice on 24 April 1424, had been written in Rhodes.¹⁸ Lorenzo had entrusted Gusanieri with settling his Alexandria affairs before leaving Egypt. Gusanieri accordingly reported on settling Lorenzo's remaining dues with the consulate and consigning Lorenzo's belongings (which the consul had declined to guard to avoid suspicions of bribery)

¹⁵ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco: galley cargo list, 11 November 1418. 11.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 13, int. carichi, f. [4].

¹⁶ Barbarigo, Giacomo qd. Filippo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: expertise, 23 September 1420. 23.09.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [15].

¹⁷ Ibid.: „Chonzossia che per miser Charllo Conttaryny consollo el me abia intromesso in man de ser Anzollo Michiel tuty zoy de raxon de mi Lorenzo Dolfin in spizialtade liqual se trova al prexente in man del dito ser Anzollo Mychiel. E fato metar i dity zoy al'inchontto per venderli con gran mio dano e vergugna per pagarse de ducati 220 el me domanda a my Lorenzo Dolfin da beny de miser B.D. fo nostro consollo per vigar et un parte paxa nel chonseyo di 12 a di 8 del prexente diqual beny et miser Blaxio Dolphin non mi trovo aver in le man alguna chosa in a le prexente. Ma per chaxon che i dity mye zoy non sia vendudi chon gran myo dano e vergogna et anchor perché el sia tolto zoxo el seiuessto fato a miser Anzollo Mychiel chome chonssento per dito myser lo consollo io si a prexentar in chorte ducati 220 faty de zusto pexo mesi in nun sacheto ligadi e boladi et lavanty segno de raxon de mi Lorenzo Dolphin. In spizialtade per chaxon de aver li dity zoy in mia libertade perché di beny de myser Blaxio Dolphin non me trovo aver alguna chosa in le raxon salvo e reservade le mye raxon azo chè a tenpo e a luogo e le posa li. Lorenzo Dolphin che fo de miser Anttonio scryse.”

¹⁸ Letter di Gusanieri, Antonio qd. Marco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Letter, 1 March 1421. 01.03.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [51].

to Pietro Bernardo qd. Francesco,¹⁹ brother of the aforementioned Nicolò Bernardo.²⁰ He concluded the letter by offering future services from Damascus.²¹

i. Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco: a cross-generational business contact

Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco was Lorenzo's most frequent Alexandria-based correspondent according to the surviving record. Nicolò was a galley captain on the Alexandria route who had transported Biagio Dolfin's cargo to Egypt in 1418.²² Nicolò Bernardo acted as Lorenzo's Alexandria agent until at least 1425, which is documented in two account books and twelve letters. The earliest of Nicolò Bernardo's letters from Alexandria is dated 3 March 1422,²³ while his last remaining letter was written more than two years later on 20 November 1424.²⁴ Nicolò's letters signal a certain personal proximity between sender and recipient, who is addressed as "fradelo" rather than as "mazor" despite instructing a principal-agent relationship. In Alexandria, Nicolò partnered with his brother Pietro who is mentioned in four of Nicolò's letters (the Bernardo brothers presumably operated as a *fraterna*, the default arrangement of intra-family partnerships).²⁵ They took strategic decisions in close cooperation when performing transactions on behalf of clients.²⁶ One of Nicolò's accounts (compiled in

¹⁹ The fact that Lorenzo entrusted Pietro Bernardo is remarkable since Pietro had been a major opponent of the Venetian consul Biagio Dolfin in the "Lorach affair", see Chris: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 236.

²⁰ Letter di Gusanieri, Antonio qd. Marco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Letter, 1 March 1421. 01.03.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [51]: „... vi avixo chome tuty denari vostri che resto pagado quello me dixese al vostro partir d'Alesandre ho consegnado in chorte a miser Franzescho Michiel nostro consolo. Simel le vostre taze e paroni e chuslier e la vostra corteliera fornida de le masarie vostre da chuxina e chase el dito miser Consolo non volve fese alchuna desegrazion in corte digando chel non volea guardar simel cose e per tanto provity de darle a ser Piero Bernardo de ser Francescho e da lui tute vostre masarie ho consegnado.”

²¹ Ibid.: „Altro per ora non ho per dirve salvo de ofirme a vostri piaxeri e se a Damascho vedy pose far chosa ve piazza son al vostro chomando che Christo ve guardi.”

²² Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco: galley cargo list, 11 November 1418. 11.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 13, int. carichi, f. [4].

²³ Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 03.03.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [6].

²⁴ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Letter, 20 November 1424. 20.11.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [33].

²⁵ Lane: *Family partnerships*.

²⁶ E.g. Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 03.03.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [6]: “...i maudi de vostra raxon mi laso Piero ho spazadi e dene<r> tanto

1423, filed on 13 April 1424), as well as numerous references to his brother in Nicolò's letters, reveal that Nicolò and Pietro had common liabilities towards Lorenzo.²⁷

The accounts unequivocally state that Lorenzo Dolfìn was a buyer on the Alexandria pepper market. The oldest account, compiled during the *muda* of 1423 ("al viazo d'Alexandria"), lists the purchase of pepper as the only goods expense on the debit side, alongside expenses for taxation ("cottimo") and provisions for the agent.²⁸ The account's credit side lists the quantity of acquired pepper as well as payments from Pietro Bernardo qd. Francesco and Battista Contarini on behalf of Giacomo Dolfìn qd. Francesco. The second surviving account displays a similar structure.²⁹

The letters provide the most comprehensive insights into Lorenzo Dolfìn's early commercial career. Nicolò Bernardo, a long-term resident of Alexandria, had maintained close links to Biagio Dolfìn while serving as his *fattore* (agent) and accountant, and his letters reveal both his agency services to Lorenzo and his involvement in closing Biagio's Alexandria accounts.³⁰ They also prove Lorenzo's initial interest in the Eastern spice trade, as Nicolò performed a number of spice-related transactions on Lorenzo's behalf. By contrast, an involvement in the gem trade does not emerge from these sources.

chome a vui ho scritto per siché ... date qual hordene vi par ch'io mandero asechuziòn." Also, Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.10.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Commissarie miste, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [7]: "...dele arnixe Piero niente me dise ne non so che arnixe sia vostra perché fate che Piero perso e me ne avixa e date hordene a le dite che chusi seguirò...".

²⁷ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135]: "ser Lorenzo Dolfìn de aver a di 20 hotubre che ser Piero Bernardo me laso in maide maide 1006 a r. 34 a bx..."; also see: letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco an Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.07.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [12]: "I maidi me disegno mio fradello Piero di vostra raxon fo per conto maidi 1006 iqual spezie a maidi 34 per bx. trasente bx. 29 b. 13 e pui non ne o abuto."

²⁸ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco an Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135].

²⁹ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: account, 1425. 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [104].

³⁰ For Nicolò Bernardo's role in settling the Biagio Dolfìn accounts, see letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.11.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [33]: "Fradelo per le galie che qui zonse rezevi vostra equal intexa farove risposta e prima ve avixo ch'el resto di pane de la comesaria de ser Michiel ho meso a vostro conto. [...] Le maserie de vostro barba a chi dio perdone e no sta trovande in un albergo per afano deste galie niente ne o posudo far fenirole da puo."

In addition to the support Nicolò provided in securing Biagio Dolfin's estate, he enabled Lorenzo to pursue commercial interests of his own. Although there remain no letters from Lorenzo to Nicolò, the latter's diligence in referencing Lorenzo's instructions allows for reconstructing their entire correspondence. Lorenzo instructed Nicolò with the purchase of pepper at numerous occasions and asked to be kept informed about prices of both import and export goods in Alexandria, which Nicolò provided in almost all of his letters. Apart from the volatile price of pepper, Lorenzo was regularly informed about the Alexandria prices of different types of ginger, saffron, soap from Naples and Venice, honey from Candia and Koroni, *Lombardi* (Lombardian cloth), and metals such as tin and lead (*stagno, pionbo*), although Lorenzo does not appear to have purchased or sold large quantities of any of these goods.³¹

In the Dolfin sources, Nicolò Bernardo appears as Lorenzo's most significant Alexandria contact. Yet, repeated mentions of a number of additional individuals in Nicolò's letters give rise to a small network that Bernardo maintained on Lorenzo's behalf. In his first surviving letter, Nicolò gives account of numerous other documents relating to Lorenzo's dealings with Carlo Contarini qd. Giacomo, Biagio Dolfin's successor as Venetian consul, which were testified by the aforementioned Giacomo Barbarigo qd. Filippo.³² As an eminent Venetian merchant, Nicolò consulted with the consul at numerous occasions and accompanied him twice on official missions to Sultan Al-Ashraf Sayf-ad-Din Barsbay in Cairo.³³ Carlo Contarini's

³¹ E.g. letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 12.04.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [13]: "Fratelli per mollte mie a questo di ve ho scritto e d'avixadove che della moneda vostra niente aveva fato per non poder aver piper perché de qui non se ne trovava se no sporte 300 in man de mori che aveano le teste inferade perché tal piper vender i non vol se ai bx. 170 per le galie. [...] Nostre merze hoio val bx. 8 savoni da Napolli bx 8 ¼ da Venexia bx 7 ½ miel de Chandia bx. 6 de Choron bx. 5 ½ lonbardi bx. 4 ½ zira bx 24 stagno bx. 18 pionbo bx. 35 zafran bx. 4 ½ vari bx. 80 altre chose secondo uxanza."

³² Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 03.03.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [6]: "La letera scriveva [...] al consolo quela al dito die e subito el fexe conmandamento al suo chapelan che tute scritture e abi fati ne là al termenaziòn de ser Andrea Ziorzi e ser Iacomo Barbarigo."

³³ Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.02.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [49]: "Fradello per le gallie ve scrissi da puo nulla ve o scritto perché stado al Chaiero pa mexi 3 in compagnia con il consollo. E per el soldan ne vegni domanda ducati 25 milla per una so gallia laqual fo perexa da do gallie de chatillarii su lequal n'era molltti veneziani. E per ditta chaxo el ne domandava la soperaditta moneda e senpere per nui i fo risposta non i disamo un falaro pur la chosa e pasada che nui avemo convegnudo dar al soldan per nostro spazamento ducati 11 milla e dadi a la so perexenzia fosamo vestidi e subito vengnisamo in Allexandria a dì 26 del pasado que sta e sta la chaxon perché non ve o scritto

brother Battista was also part of this circle.³⁴ Making use of his close links to the consul, Nicolò represented Lorenzo in the aforementioned ‘gemstone affair’ in which Lorenzo sought to defend his inheritance against what he regarded as unjustified claims from the officials.³⁵ Nicolò Bernardo also maintained ties to Angelo Michiel qd. Luca, a former partner of Biagio Dolfìn, whom he convinced to transfer Biagio’s share of their common business to Lorenzo’s accounts.³⁶ Angelo Michiel is mentioned in three of Nicolò’s letters³⁷: he maintained joint accounts with Lorenzo, mostly in the cloth trade, with Nicolò Bernardo taking care of their exports to Alexandria.³⁸ They also partnered with the *compagnia* of Lorenzo’s maternal uncle Michele Gabriel qd. Nicolò in exporting cloth from Venice to Alexandria while purchasing Mamluk spices with the support of Nicolò Bernardo as their agent and local market expert.³⁹

abiatene pazienza e per l’avegnir ne farò el mando.” Second letter with identical message: Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.02.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [10]: “Fradello per le gallie ve scrivi da puo nula ve ho scritto per eser stado al Chairò zionnexi 3 et chonpagnio con el chonsollo. E per el soldan ne vegniva domandado ducati 25.000 per una so gallia laqual fo prexo de do gallie de i Chatallani sulle qual ne iera molli Veneziaiani e per dita chaxon el ne domandeva la sopradita moneda e senpre per nui i fo resposto non idasemo un folloro pur la chosa. È pasada che nui avemo convegnudo dar al soldan per nostro spazamento ducati 11.000 e dadi a la soa perexenzia fosamo vestedi e subito vegnisemo e Allexandria a di 26 del pasado. Questa e sta la chaxon perché non ve ho scritto abiate ne pazienza per l’avegnir ne farò el mendo.”

³⁴ First mentioned in (alongside Giacomo Dolfìn qd. Francesco, Toma Duodo, Pietro Bernardo, Nicolò Bernardo, Lorenzo Dolfìn): Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135]; letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.08.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [11] (which is the same as f. [12]).

³⁵ See note 17.

³⁶ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Letter, 20 November 1424. 20.11.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [33]: “Fradelo per le galie che qui zonse rezevi vostra equal intexa farove risposta e prima ve avixo chel resto di pane de la comesaria de ser Michiel ho meso a vostro conto...”

³⁷ One of which is preserved in two versions: b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [11] and f. [12].

³⁸ Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.07.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [12]: “Vui me avixate che ser Michiel Chabriel e compagni a charegato sula nave de ser Bernardo Fellato balle do pani loesti con hordene a mi siano dati perché ve avixo in diti aver rezev<u>di farò difenirlli chome per ser Anzollo e per vui me sta scritto e quanto ne seguìro nel’avegnir per mie ve ne avixerò.”

³⁹ Referring to a specific cargo of two units of Flanders wool, Nicolò Bernardo informed Lorenzo about the sale of twelve pieces of the said cloth for 20 ducats apiece. While the remainder could not be sold at the same price nor be exchanged for pepper as suggested by Angelo Michiel, Nicolò nevertheless acquired pepper from the

The support Lorenzo received from his uncle Michele Gabriel qd. Nicolò is documented more clearly in the letters of Nicolò Bernardo than in the direct correspondence between Michele and Lorenzo.⁴⁰ Michele Gabriel and his *compagnia* were active on the Alexandria market as sellers of fine cloth, mainly from Flanders, which was typically shipped to Alexandria on vessels captained by Bernardo Fellato.⁴¹ Lorenzo's commercial cooperation with his uncle Michele is further confirmed by Nicolò Bernardo crediting Lorenzo's account with wool cloth from his uncle's stock.⁴² A 1425 account, countersigned by Nicolò (the last of Nicolò Bernardo's documents in Lorenzo's archive), confirms this procedure; it was filed two years later in the books of the *compagnia Michele Gabriel e compagni*.⁴³ The same document also refers to Michele Gabriel's brother Benedetto as Lorenzo Dolfín's creditor.

The incentive and enforcement structure of Lorenzo's partnership with Nicolò Bernardo thus emerged from a cross-generational commercial network passed on by Biagio Dolfín to his nephew. As a result, Nicolò was well-acquainted with Lorenzo, and they were closely inter-linked through a number of additional actors. Monitoring was ensured through mutual dependencies, which prevented opportunistic behaviour. Nicolò, whose reputation in Alexandria was critical to his commercial success, received commission payments ("provision") for each transaction he performed.

Yet commission agency was just one form of business organisation that Lorenzo Dolfín adopted. The following two chapters will discuss the *compagnia*, Lorenzo's primary business

revenues of the cloth sale on behalf of Michele Gabriel and his *compagnia*: letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 23.10.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [25]: "De pani loesti de ser Michiel Chabriel e compagnia ne ho vendude peze 12 a ducati 20 la peza. El resto non ho posudo fenir a i diti prexii e baratari a piper chome me a recorda ser Anzol Michiel non ho posudo fenirvi el piui presto potro. Per dita raxon ho achata pero do rotoli piper prexa neto sporta 1 rotoli 11 costa bx. 128 el dito ho sig<nato> del segno di pani e scritto sia dato a ser Michiel Chabriel e compagni siate ne avixa."

⁴⁰ See section B of this chapter.

⁴¹ See note 38.

⁴² Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.11.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [33]: "prima ve avixo chel resto di pane de la comesaria de ser Michiel ho meso a vostro conto [...]"

⁴³ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1425. 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [104]. Verso: "rezevudo 1426 a di 8 Marzo. Meso in libro a di 15 luio 1427 in quaderno di la compagnia di ser Michiel Chabryel e compagni [...] el conto diga a mi Lorenzo Dolfín."

unit in the context of his Flanders and Romania trade.⁴⁴ For now, suffice it to note that the agency partnership was not as loose an arrangement as its name might suggest. Nicolò Bernardo and Lorenzo Dolfin's business relationship was buttressed by a social institution of trust – a network of reputation.⁴⁵ A crucial component of this network was Lorenzo's cousin Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco, who is mentioned in four of Nicolò's letters.

ii. Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco: a new component of an inherited network

A distant cousin of Lorenzo's, Giacomo was resident in Alexandria in October 1422, the date of his earliest record in a Nicolò Bernardo letter.⁴⁶ He played a crucial role in Lorenzo's Romania business towards the end of the decade.⁴⁷ In 1427, he wrote⁴⁸ to Lorenzo as the new Venetian *vize-bailo* of Constantinople, to which he had been appointed by the Council of Twelve by unanimous vote.⁴⁹ In the aforementioned letter, Nicolò Bernardo told Lorenzo about agreements he had reached with Giacomo, who clearly appears as a partner of Lorenzo's. Lorenzo and Giacomo kept a joint account and collaborated on the Alexandria market while employing Nicolò Bernardo as a market expert⁵⁰ who advised them on investments

⁴⁴ See chapters V; VI.A.

⁴⁵ The reputation mechanism within loose and informal patrician networks, however, must be seen as emerging from patrician identity politics and is thus different from reputation mechanisms in commercial coalitions (see chapter V.B). On patrician identity, see in particular Chojnacki, Stanley: "Social identity in Renaissance Venice: the second Serrata", in: *Renaissance Studies* 8 (December 1994), No. 4, pp. 341–358; O'Connell, Monique: "The Venetian Patriciate in the Mediterranean: Legal Identity and Lineage in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete", in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 57 (Summer, 2004), No. 2, pp. 466–493. For reputation based on commercial incentives, see for example Greif: *Reputation and Coalitions*; id.: "Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early Trade: The Maghribi Traders' Coalition", in: *The American Economic Review* 83 (Jun. 1993), No. 3, pp. 525–548.

⁴⁶ Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.10.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Commissarie miste, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [7].

⁴⁷ See chapter V.B.

⁴⁸ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.10.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282–283.

⁴⁹ Letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [56]: "Come per l'altra te scrisy el [Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco] me dise che te scrivese come so fradelo ser Iacomo fo fato vizo bailo da Constantinopoli per el conseio di 12 et ave tuti le baloti."

⁵⁰ Letter Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.10.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Commissarie miste, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [7] (heavily damaged document): „I maidi vostri vendi

and sales and implemented their joint transactions.⁵¹ A 1423 account countersigned by Nicolò Bernardo, which records details of Lorenzo's acquisition of pepper in Alexandria, further confirms the commercial collaboration between Giacomo and Lorenzo Dolfín.⁵² This partnership did not arise out of the personal commercial network of Biagio Dolfín, as Giacomo does not appear in Biagio's papers. Giacomo Dolfín is thus the first observable individual whom Lorenzo added to the commercial network he inherited from his uncle.

While Giacomo and Lorenzo Dolfín eventually partnered in commercial activities along the Romania galley route, the foundations of this cooperation were laid in the early years after Biagio Dolfín's death. Giacomo was of particular significance in Lorenzo's personal commercial network as they collaborated in all of Lorenzo's (foreign) places of business: Alexandria at around 1420 (covering the Near East), London in the early 1420s (covering Northern Europe), and eventually Constantinople (covering the Romania galley route). Giacomo's earliest recorded activities in Constantinople are reported in a letter to Lorenzo on 10 June 1424.⁵³ Prior to this, Giacomo cooperated commercially with Lorenzo in London, of which a 1423 letter and two accounts bear testimony. The letter, although heavily damaged and only partially legible, documents the sale of Lorenzo's Alexandria acquisitions on the London market. Giacomo thus performed an agency role akin to the one provided by the brothers Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò in Bruges, which according to their written record began around the same time.⁵⁴ Yet, unlike the Renier brothers, Giacomo appears as a

chome ve disi [...] bx. 29 s. 13 p. 0 e niente ne ho fato per eser pochi e perché ser Iachomo Dolfín me a dito i chometestri(?) che se ducati 250. I denti el non podeva investir secondo [...] hordene che qu[...] a mi el debia lasar perché se i diti el me lasera tegnìro anche per tanti dei maidi e seguirò l'ordene el me lasera e se niente el me lasera manderova queste [...] per eser pochi da investir qu'el ne seguirò ~~per man qui vene~~ qui soto ve ne avixerò.”

⁵¹ Ibid.: „Da puo per eser spirado el termene de conp<r>ar voxe e montra se a infuxa la testa a non vender a men de bx. 140 pero ser Iachomo me a disegna de vostra raxòn bx. 264 k. 19 <que di maidi> e bx. 29 k. 13 che eser bx. 294 k. 8 e da me lasa el vostro hordene i debia investir quando per cha m<e>ia conpererò. E chusì farò e spiero darve bona ventura. Altro per ora non me achade salvo che ai piazera vostra hoferirme. I dio ve conservi.”

⁵² Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135]: “...die 29 che ser Iachomo Dolfín me de ducati 31 mancho bixanti 3 karati 5 val.... Piper contrascrito die aver a di per ser Lorenzo Dolfín per la montar con tute spexe prodi 2 piper i mande per le galie chapetanio ser Toma Duodo...”

⁵³ Letter Dolfín, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁵⁴ See chapter V.A.

co-owner of the enterprise, thus performing his agency role as a co-investor rather than as a mere employee.

While Giacomo's 1423 letter documents Lorenzo's early commercial presence in London, where he acted as a seller of Eastern spices and a buyer of cloth,⁵⁵ their investment partnership (instead of a principal-agent partnership) emerges from Giacomo's references to their joint transactions.⁵⁶ The pair's acquisitions and sales strategies were partly based on barter deals ("baraty") of exchanging spices for cloth in cases where the monetary sale of spices would yield unsatisfactory gains. Giacomo reported on a concrete barter transaction intended to avoid the sale of ginger at an undervalued price. One unit of pepper and ginger respectively were exchanged for no less than sixty dozen ("dozene") of fine pieces of Lowestoft cloth (*loesti*).⁵⁷ He also monitored price levels on other northern markets, such as Bruges, and informed Lorenzo about where their spices should be shipped to and sold for maximal gains.⁵⁸

The earlier of the two surviving account books, dated 20 September 1423, details the ownership structure of the enterprise. The family branch of Francesco Dolfin was accordingly represented by Giacomo's brother Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco, who appears to have held a joint capital stock with Giacomo and additional siblings. Giorgio and Lorenzo Dolfin owned a *compagnia* of which Giorgio and his brothers held four fifth of the equity while one fifth was owned by Lorenzo.⁵⁹ Giacomo was involved as a co-owner through the Dolfin brothers' joint capital share and managed the *compagnia's* commerce in London as a family repre-

⁵⁵ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 27.08.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [52].

⁵⁶ Ibid.: "Anchor per quela ve avixai qu'el aveva seguido *de fati nostri* siché per questa pocho me achade ma per chaxòn che per tute ve abiady mia e per avixarvi dele cosse siegue a la zornada."

⁵⁷ Ibid.: "A mancho prexio i baratai botte una de piper e botte una de zonzeri a loesti molto fin iqual fono dozene 50 missi el piper per non valer a quel tenpo a ducati plui de 17 ducati 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ e i zonzeri ducati 18 esera la botte avy una corona e i pani eser 17 la dozana."

⁵⁸ Ibid.: "questy zorni el piper iera a montando a bruza a dì 18...."

⁵⁹ "Conto de ser Lorenzo Dolfin per 1/5 inssista de una conpagnia lui a con ser Zorzi Dolfin e fradelli al viazo da Londra. Capetano miser Larenzo Capolo asigna per mi Iachomo Dolfin fo de miser Franzesco." Page 2: "Piper botte 5 de raxòn de ser Lorenzo Dolfin per 1/5 e ser Zorzi Dolfin per 4/5 die dar dy 4 avosto...", Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 20 September 1423. 20.09.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [67]. This document is a complete account book ("libro di conti") containing twenty pages, whereas the younger account is a single sheet, which confirms, in lesser detail, the observations drawn from the account book. This second account is: Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1424. 01.03.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [91].

sentative. Two of the five transactions listed on the first credit entry (“die aver”) of the said account book are barter transactions that exchanged pepper against Lowestoft wool (*pani loesti*).⁶⁰ Similar barter deals are listed concerning the exchange of ginger for *loesti*.⁶¹

Although acting as a group of investors, Lorenzo and the Dolfin brothers kept separate accounts and made a clear distinction between their respective capital shares. Giacomo Dolfin made his living as a family representative in London partly by retaining a commission payment of two percent of Lorenzo’s share of the total turnover, which occurs in all debit-side entries of the compagnia’s accounts.⁶² By contrast, since the Dolfin brothers kept a joint account and thus presumably acted as a *fraterna*, Giacomo did not receive additional commission payments from his siblings.

The commercial relationship between Lorenzo and his cousins, and specifically between Lorenzo and Giacomo Dolfin, was thus, although partly grounded in family ties, guided by transaction-specific economic incentives. From Lorenzo’s perspective, the venture was a temporary instead of a long-term commercial commitment. Yet Lorenzo’s continuous commercial cooperation with Giacomo Dolfin, his only relative among his Alexandria contacts, constitutes an early sign of the eventual significance of family relations in Lorenzo’s commercial strategy.

iii. Rise of the family

The Nicolò Bernardo letters show that Lorenzo walked in the footsteps of his uncle Biagio in the early years after Biagio’s death. Lorenzo’s first steps in long-distance commerce were closely modeled on, but not unreservedly imitative of, Biagio’s business. Lorenzo was involved in the export of European cloth to Alexandria, while acquiring Eastern spices, primarily Mamluk pepper, for the Venetian, English, and Flanders markets. His papers do not, by contrast, reveal any gemstone-related transactions, which was Biagio Dolfin’s core business while active in Alexandria.

Yet the most striking fact about Lorenzo’s early Alexandria network is its congruence with Biagio’s commercial environment. While we can identify two new players who had not previously been part of Biagio Dolfin’s Alexandria circles (Michele Morosini and Giacomo

⁶⁰ Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 20 September 1423. 20.09.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [67], p. 3.

⁶¹ E.g. *ibid.*, p. 5: “di 20 dito ave ser Piero Michiel botte 1 de zonzeri abarato de pani loesti...”

⁶² E.g. *ibid.*, p. 4: “e per provixion mesi per valor de lira 43 soldi 12 a do perzento lira (0) soldi 17 denari 6 tocha per 1/5 al dito: lira (0) soldi III denari 6.”

Dolfin), Lorenzo did not add any non-relatives to his uncle's network. The key players involved in Biagio Dolfin's Alexandria business, primarily Nicolò Bernardo, his brother Pietro, and Angelo Michiel, all remained part of Lorenzo's business circle in Egypt. This continuity reflects the fact that Lorenzo had been closely integrated into Biagio's commercial activities and consequently had no incentives to change the partnership structure that was known to him as stable and trustworthy. More remarkable about the composition of Lorenzo's Alexandria network is the growing impact of his family environment as exemplified by the increasing significance of Michele Gabriel and Giacomo Dolfin. Lorenzo gradually abandoned social affinity as a principle for selecting agents and partners in long-distance trade; instead, he began appreciating the family as a social institution with mutually reciprocal functions in the economic and personal spheres. Regardless of whether this reflects an intentional strategy or a chance development, the intensification of family-based commercial relations is evidently noticeable in Lorenzo's business after Biagio's death. How exactly did this occur? And which branches of the extensive Dolfin-Gabriel-Morosini clan were most prominently involved?

B. Creating a Family Network

During the five years between his uncle's death and the beginning of his marriage to Giovanna Morosini, Lorenzo's commerce focused on Alexandria before gradually encompassing Flanders, London, and the Romania galley route. While Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco was the earliest link between Lorenzo's Alexandria and London businesses, he had not participated in Biagio Dolfin's commerce.⁶³ Instead, Giacomo and his brother Giorgio are repeatedly mentioned in the letters written to Lorenzo by his father-in-law Marino Morosini, which suggests a link to the Morosini circle.⁶⁴

i. Cognatic-matrilinear alliance: the Gabriel connection

In addition to the alliances inherited from his paternal uncle Biagio, Lorenzo relied heavily on the support of his mother's family after Biagio's passing. His three maternal uncles Benedetto, Andrea, and Michele Gabriel qd. Nicolò all corresponded with him in commercial

⁶³ Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account: Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [113].

⁶⁴ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.10.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [55]; Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [50].

terms. Michele appears as the most infrequent interlocutor, as only one of his letters survives in Lorenzo's archive. Andrea has four⁶⁵ letters, one of which is addressed to his sister Cataruccia, Lorenzo's mother⁶⁶ (another letter, which he wrote on behalf of his sister, can be found in the archive of Biagio Dolfin⁶⁷; in addition, he is mentioned in seven other documents⁶⁸). Three documents originate from Benedetto: one 1420 account of Lorenzo's, which Benedetto had countersigned, and two letters, written in 1434 and 1436 from Sacile and Venice respectively. He is mentioned in eight additional documents.⁶⁹ Benedetto Gabriel's son Alvise acted as Lorenzo's agent along the Beirut galley route, writing to Lorenzo from Acre among other places in the 1440s.⁷⁰ His brother Girolamo wrote to Lorenzo from Damascus in 1442.⁷¹ Alvise and Girolamo had two cousins, sons of their uncle Andrea: Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea repeatedly wrote to Lorenzo during Lorenzo's residence in Padua (in 1435 and 1436⁷²); his brother Angelo also corresponded with Lorenzo and countersigned two of Lorenzo's accounts.⁷³

⁶⁵ One of which is: Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Antonio qd. Lorenzo, 15.10.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283.

⁶⁶ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfin née Gabriel, Cataruccia, 24.02.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [47].

⁶⁷ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò, 11.11.1400, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 23, int. b, f. [1] (found by Georg Christ).

⁶⁸ Two of these are court files from the Giudici di Petizion: court file, 27 October 1423. 27.10.1423, ASVe, Giudici di Petizion (GdP S a G 34), Sentenze a giustizia, 34, f. 1r; court file, 18 May 1424. 18.05.1424, ASVe, Giudici di Petizion (GdP S a G 36), Sentenze a giustizia, 36 (both found by Georg Christ).

⁶⁹ Six of these are letters to Lorenzo written by Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni; the aforementioned marriage contract between Lorenzo and Marino's daughter Giovanetta; and a contract with Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco.

⁷⁰ Letter Gabriel, Alvise to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.11.1445, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [75].

⁷¹ Letter Gabriel, Girolamo qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 010.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [81]; Letter Gabriel, Girolamo qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.11.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [73].

⁷² See e.g. Dolfin, Piero qd. Domenico to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Receipt, 1 September 1435. 01.09.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [10].

⁷³ Gabriel, Angelo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1435. 001435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [15]; Gabriel, Angelo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1435. 001435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [15].

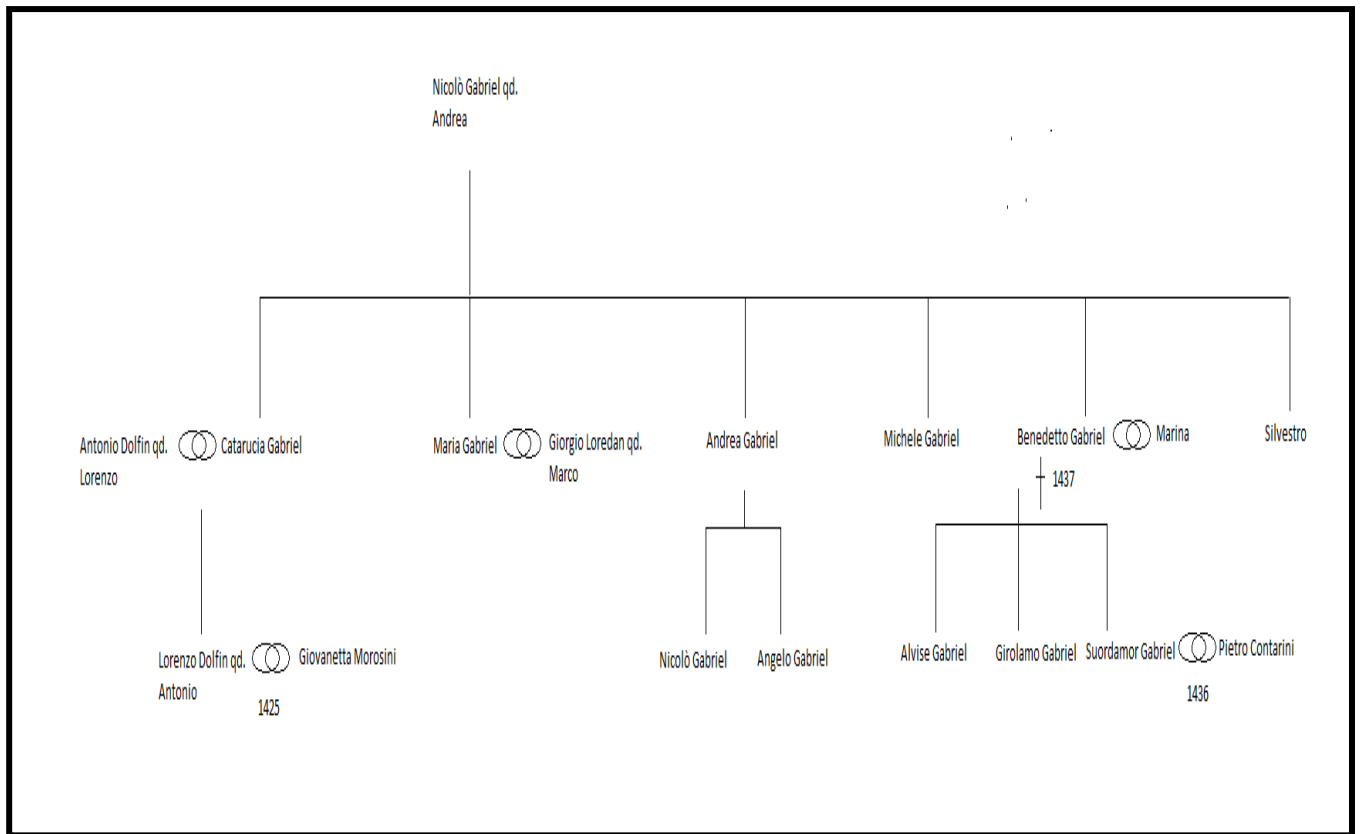


FIGURE 3: PEDIGREE GABRIEL (DA SANTA MARIA MATER DOMINI) [= FIG. 2]

Michele Gabriel wrote his only surviving letter from Damascus in 1421, when Lorenzo was closing his Alexandria accounts.⁷⁴ He mentioned his meeting with Andrea di Sori in Rhodes while en route to Syria, who reportedly told him to have instructed (his agent) Angelo Michiel qd. Luca to settle his outstanding debt with Lorenzo, presumably money owed to the deceased Biagio.⁷⁵ Michele’s brother Andrea Gabriel advised Lorenzo during Lorenzo’s tenure as *camerario* of Vicenza by keeping him informed about the Venetian cloth market and overseeing transactions on Lorenzo’s behalf.⁷⁶ Andrea Gabriel was appointed *bailo e capitano*

⁷⁴ Letter Gabriel, Michele qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.10.1421, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [18]; Michele Gabriel’s *compagnia* is also mentioned in the two accounts signed by Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco.

⁷⁵ Ibid.: „Me trovi esser a Ruodo con ser Andrea di Sori e li fixi la vostra anbassida e di li la so letera vuy mandavi e si la domanda el vostro conto el per lo simel lovesto e dito me paga de parole e dise me che la ve dao orde in Alexandria a ser Agnelo Michiel chel i fose dado el so conto e i danari e din quinto e dito so fradelo no i avese dadi che lo i scriveli al tuto per lo retorno de prexente galie o veramente per le galie d’Alesandria el solderave el dito conto e manderave el conto e la moneda.”

⁷⁶ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Antonio qd. Lorenzo, 01.09.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [42].

(envoy and military governor) of Negroponte in 1431. He did not maintain commercial links to Lorenzo during this tenure, and the letter he wrote after his arrival in Negroponte was of purely personal content.⁷⁷ Lastly, Benedetto Gabriel's three surviving documents are all commerce-related, albeit in a narrative fashion that does not allude to common liabilities. In his letter to Lorenzo, Benedetto wrote about his arrival in Sacile and asked Lorenzo to inquire about bonds (*imprestiti*) and cloth (*filadi*) on his behalf without alluding to any direct commercial relations between Lorenzo and himself.⁷⁸ His *recordatio* to Lorenzo and his son-in-law Pietro Contarini, by contrast, is of greater pertinence to family-related commerce.⁷⁹ In this document, Benedetto informed Lorenzo and Pietro about his departure to Trebizond on the Romania galleys, where he had been appointed to the office of *bailo*, and instructed them to settle his affairs in Venice, which mainly consisted of collecting rents on houses and interest payments from the *camera degli imprestiti*.⁸⁰ One year later, Benedetto's death was reported in a letter from Lorenzo's brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini.⁸¹

Of the next generation of the Gabriel family, Alvise Gabriel qd. Benedetto appears as Lorenzo's most frequent correspondent. Between 1443 and 1445, Alvise wrote to Lorenzo from Methoni, Beirut and Acre.⁸² His cousins Nicolò and Angelo Gabriel qd. Andrea wrote from Venice in 1435 and 1436. Their letters are mostly personal, although economic matters are also mentioned, such as the delay of a loan that Lorenzo was supposed to receive from his fa-

⁷⁷ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1431, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [37].

⁷⁸ Letter Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.02.1434, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [59].

⁷⁹ Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 22 July 1436. 22.07.1436, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [9].

⁸⁰ Ibid.: "Rechordaxiòn a vuy ser Lorenzo Dolfìn fo de ser Antonio e a vuy ser Pietro Contarini mio zènero fazo my Bendeto Gabriel consòzia che me ne vada con queste galie bailo in Trabexonda e a vuy priego ch'el ve piaqui azetar queste mie fazende chomo qui soto e notadi et mandarle a sechuziòn fina el piaxera a Christo e sia tornado de qua."

⁸¹ Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.11.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [32]: "...ve siano ricomandati de la morte de miser Bendeto vostro Barba molte me ne rechresse. Priego miser domino dio habii miserricordia de l'anema soa."

⁸² There is also one undated 'memoria' contained in the *Commissaria* of Biagio Dolfìn: Gabriel, Alvise qd. Benedetto to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. g, f. [4].

ther-in-law.⁸³ Angelo acted as caretaker of Lorenzo's property during Lorenzo's residence in Padua.⁸⁴

Although not indicating a concrete commercial partnership, the letters of Alvise Gabriel qd. Benedetto nevertheless contain commerce-related information. His letter from Methoni, intended to inform Lorenzo about his arrival in the Peloponnese city, provides Methoni prices of pepper and other goods after conveying particular regards to Giorgio Loredan qd. Marco, the husband of Lorenzo's aunt Maria Loredan née Gabriel.⁸⁵ In his Beirut letter, Alvise conveyed personal matters for the most part.⁸⁶ The letter from Acre is preserved in two identical versions.⁸⁷ Again, it does not reveal a concrete commercial relationship between Lorenzo and Alvise. Although Alvise evidently travelled to the Near East for commercial purposes, the letter mostly reads like a personal document, with Alvise informing his cousin about his arrival in Acre (coming from Beirut) and asking him to intervene on his behalf in a matter of personal debt. He describes his attempts to purchase cotton (*gottoni*), but there is no indication of Lorenzo's involvement in these transactions.

Lorenzo's relationship to his maternal family differed from the relationship that his uncle and mentor Biagio had experienced with the relatives of his mother, Maria Malipiero. While Lorenzo also enjoyed beneficial bonds to his maternal relatives not least with respect to his mercantile education, Biagio Dolfin's commercial experiences with his maternal family were less positive than those of his nephew. An early gem trade *compagnia* operating from 1396 to 1398 that had linked Biagio to Perazio Malipiero, then *bailo* in Cyprus, sold gemstones to the

⁸³ Letter Gabriel, Nicolò qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.08.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [63]: "El me dito mio barba che ve dieba avixar che de inprestedì che vostro suoxero ve doveva far schriver el non que a fato nienti perché le sta averder. Anchora dixè che de la quarta percento de i governadori la non è sta scr<i>eta el dito sta arnievar e de tuti sani..."

⁸⁴ Letter Gabriel, Angelo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 24.07.1435, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [61].

⁸⁵ Letter Gabriel, Alvise qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 27.02.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [13].

⁸⁶ Letter Gabriel, Alvise qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.01.1444, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [77].

⁸⁷ Both of which bear traces of a seal and were received by Lorenzo – thus, they are two originals, not one copy of an original: letter Gabriel, Alvise qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.01.1445, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [76]; letter Gabriel, Alvise qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.11.1445, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [75].

Lusignan king of Cyprus among others.⁸⁸ After the *compagnia*'s dissolution, Biagio directed claims against Perazio Malipiero's heirs, which they refuted. The matter eventually had to be settled in court.⁸⁹ Lorenzo Dolfin was spared such moments of discontent, possibly because he chose not to deepen the commercial relationship with his maternal family during his senior career. While he evidently received advice and practical support from his maternal uncles during his early commercial activities, his relationship with the younger generation of the Gabriel family appears to have been intense and cordial but not generally induced by specific commercial matters. A possible exception was Girolamo Gabriel qd. Benedetto, whose Damascus letters contain very specific information about the Syrian markets and thus document Lorenzo's continued commercial activity in Syria in the 1440s in addition to the Romania galley route.⁹⁰ Although Girolamo did not report on specific transactions, he appears as a market insider who could potentially be instructed by Lorenzo. Girolamo's example buttresses the notion of the extended patrician family as a loose network of potential commercial partners who could be included into actual commercial coalitions when needed. Girolamo's residence in Syria made him a valuable interlocutor for Lorenzo and other members of his commercial coalition, potentially creating opportunities for cooperation in both the political and economic spheres on the basis of sound intra-family relations.

C. Family and Politics

The political system of the Venetian Republic was a *de facto* – with the first closing of the Great Council 'in 1297' arguably *de iure* – self-sustaining oligarchy of patrician families.⁹¹ It was self-sustaining in the sense that all political decisions had to be weighed against the

⁸⁸ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 97-98.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ The October letter, listing in particular Syrian prices for pepper and a variety of spices, is particularly revealing in this respect (Gabriel, Girolamo qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 010.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [81]).

⁹¹ The *Serrata* of the Great Council, which according to the 'myth' of Venice was the last cornerstone in the creation of the Republic, was essentially "the product of a debate that lasted from 1286 to 1323 and [...] resulted in a complete change in the procedures for admission to the council that clearly defined who was eligible for the council and thus who belonged to the Venetian nobility" (Rösch, Gerhard: "The Serrata of the Great Council and Venetian Society, 1286-1323", in: Martin, John Jeffries, Romano, Dennis (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered - The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 67-88, [p. 70]). The notion of the closing of the council as a single legislative act that supposedly occurred in 1297 is thus misleading according to current scholarly understanding.

commercial interests of the patrician class, and the patriciate's resulting monetary gains were used to cement the exclusivity of political access.⁹² With respect to the systemic links between Venetian politics, commerce, and the patrician family, some studies have downplayed the role of family relations especially in the political sphere by pointing to the intricate Venetian system of political and economic institutions designed to limit the hegemony of single patrician families.⁹³ Yet, numerous state policies were designed to further the career prospects of young patricians in various ways. Lorenzo Dolfin's experience as a commercial apprentice was to a considerable degree enabled by the state, as had been the early career of his uncle Biagio. Both Biagio and Lorenzo, lacking the extraordinary wealth of other young patricians, likely made their first journey to Alexandria as *balestriere della popa*,⁹⁴ an office that allowed young nobles to serve on the galleys in return for cargo rights.⁹⁵ In all likelihood, Lorenzo Dolfin travelled on the galley of Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco in this capacity. Following his return to Venice, Lorenzo learned the practicalities of the civil service as a judicial trainee in the Republic's commercial courts before being promoted to more senior administrative positions in Vicenza and Capodistria.⁹⁶

However, it is less evident how unified the law-making class was in their economic pursuits, and the Dolfin sources provide ambiguous evidence on this matter. Like his uncle Biagio, Lorenzo Dolfin held official positions during his senior years, but he also travelled less frequently to the destinations of his trade. After his return from Vicenza, he continued to instruct his trade representatives from Venice.⁹⁷ The differences between Biagio's and Lorenzo's

⁹² Romano, Dennis: *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, esp. pp. 41-50, 152-158.

⁹³ This, in return, increased intra-class solidarity among patricians, see Chojnacki, *Kinship Ties*; Crouzet-Pavan, Elisabeth: *Sopra le acque salse: espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du moyen âge*, Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1992.

⁹⁴ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 96.

⁹⁵ Chojnacki, Stanley: "Measuring Adulthood: Adolescence and Gender in Renaissance Venice", in: *Journal of Family History* 17 (Oct., 1992), No. 4, pp. 371-395; Stöckly: *Le système de l'incanto*, p. 285; Andrea Barbarigo also served in this capacity, see Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁶ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 98.

⁹⁷ It is not possible to date Lorenzo's term as *camerlengo* in Capodistria on the basis of the Dolfin papers, as the only evidence on his term as *camerlengo* is an undated letter: Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [64]: (verso) "Al lo nobele e savio miser Lorenzo Dolfin onorado chamerlongo de chanodestria detur." Yet the registers of the *Segretario Voci* list him as "Conte di Pola" for the year 1445 (ASVe, Segretario Voci, b. 4, f. 66; "Rulers of Venice" database,

long-term commercial strategies show that commercial interests could differ more or less strongly even among close relatives and despite similar levels of affluence and mercantile education. This evokes the question of whether the political oligarchy of the patriciate pronounced itself as a homogenous social force in the economic sphere, which can be addressed by considering, first, the significance of specialisation in commerce as exemplified by degrees of agent specialisation within commercial networks, as well as sector specialisation; second, degrees of specialisation observable in the networks of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin provide a platform from which to approach the problem of the endogeneity of commercial law with respect to the commercial strategies of patrician merchants – that is, the extent to which Venetian legislation was influenced by the patrician commercial class as a whole and consequently should not be treated as an exogenous determinant with respect to long-distance commerce, but rather as a mitigating factor in the political process. By contrast, a greater degree of specialisation within commercial networks would indicate a greater diversity in individual commercial strategies and thus a greater degree of political heterogeneity within the commercial patriciate. The question of political heterogeneity in turn has important implications for the role of commercial law in the evolution of business units: if the political class was identical to the commercial class, and if the law was thus endogenous with respect to the transactional dispositions of long-distance trade, what, then, was the actual driver of institutional change?

The Eastern spice trade was a common element of both Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin's commercial orientations. In Alexandria, from where Biagio and Lorenzo received the bulk of their goods, the pepper trade was strictly regulated by the Mamluk authorities. Official trade agreements between Venice and the Mamluk Sultanate contractually⁹⁸ obliged the Republic to purchase specific quantities of pepper, which were transported on the Alexandria galleys and therefore open to investments from individual patrician merchants. The price of the 'sultan's pepper' was fixed arbitrarily above market equilibrium.⁹⁹ Biagio sold pepper in Venice, whereas Lorenzo mostly sent his spices to Bruges and London.¹⁰⁰ For both of them, the spice trade was an important means of raising revenues for their core businesses. The public-order institutional framework of the Venetian spice trade thus channelled business activity while

<http://rulersofvenice.org/main>). In his senior years, Lorenzo held duties as *Provveditore di Comun* in Venice, as well as a member of the *Auditori Vecchi* and the *Consiglio dei Rogati* (*ibid.*, also see chapter V).

⁹⁸ The agreements were technically not based on contracts, but on decrees issued by the sultan.

⁹⁹ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 244-245.

¹⁰⁰ See lists of goods for Bruges and London in b. 282, discussed below (VI.A).

providing transactional security: patrician merchants chose to engage in sectors of trade that were strategically significant to the Republic as those in turn provided the most secure environments in terms of information and logistics.

Yet it remains an open question whether public-order institutions such as state-level trade agreements and fixed galley routes really served the interests of the commercial patriciate *as a whole* or whether patrician commercial strategies had become too diverse by the early fifteenth century to account for a single political category. Strategies of business diversification often evolved over many generations of commerce-oriented patrician families, which makes it difficult to assess degrees and purposes of specialisation at specific points in time. Lorenzo Dolfín was more specific in his commercial pursuits in comparison to his uncle Biagio, focusing on the cloth trade while Biagio maintained more diversified portfolios consisting of gemstones, cloth, wine and Eastern silk. This difference in commercial strategy may well have resulted from shifts in exogenous factors (e.g. demographic and climatic change, altering consumption patterns especially with respect to Eastern goods etc.) in which case the strategic reorientation of the Dolfín network would be representative of a general development.

With respect to the dynamics of long-distance trade, an *exogenous* factor is any variable that cannot be directly influenced by the involved actors. Later medieval trade was not constrained solely by political hurdles and cultural barriers. Insufficient technological support to agriculture, manufacturing, and transport logistics meant that factors as diverse as droughts, political instabilities, and pandemics could bring about sudden shifts in demand and thus severely affect overall market conditions.¹⁰¹

Although the multidimensionality of formal institutional arrangements responded to a variety of patrician economic interests and thus may have occasionally impeded collective action in commercial affairs,¹⁰² trade policies were ultimately determined by the Venetian authorities (Ducal office, Senate and Council of Ten), which limited the scope of action of the Venetian commercial diaspora.¹⁰³ Venetian consulates such as in Alexandria, which served as a politi-

¹⁰¹ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, pp. 271f.; Cipolla: *Before the industrial revolution*, pp. 3-49; Id., *Economic Depression*.

¹⁰² Law, John E.: "The Venetian Mainland State in the Fifteenth Century", in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)* 2 (Dec., 1992), pp. 153-174; also Woolf, S. J.: "Venice and the Terraferma - Problems of the Change from Commercial to Landed Activities", in: Pullan, Brian (ed.), *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Abingdon: Routledge 2006, pp. 175-203.

¹⁰³ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 67-77.

cal link to the Mamluk authorities and was mandated to intervene in favour of Venetian merchants on various grounds, were financed through a specific tax levied at Venetians active abroad. This tax, the *cottimo*, was a means of generating state revenues in the interest of a *portion* of the ruling class.¹⁰⁴ The costs of maintaining commercial links to the Mamluk Sultanate were thus paid, at least officially, by the commercial elites who profited from their existence, not by the commercial class as a whole (similarly, the state galleys were to a large part financed by private investors besides state subsidies and the costs of construction, which were borne by the government).¹⁰⁵ Similar arrangements existed in Venetian outposts along the Romania route.¹⁰⁶ Yet, the consulates and their governing bodies, the Councils of Twelve, were answerable to (although only in rare cases directly appointed by) the Republic's central authorities, and their investiture occurred in accordance with the Republic's general economic needs for stable trade relations in strategically significant regions.¹⁰⁷ Life in the diaspora sometimes necessitated a flexible interpretation of the Republican mandate, which would manifest itself, for instance, in the inclusion of non-patricians to the Council of Twelve¹⁰⁸ and even in the deliberate circumvention of governmental directives.¹⁰⁹ However, such deviations from central directives mostly remained restricted to specific circumstances. Similarly, the emergence of a patrician sphere of landowners amidst the fifteenth-century Venetian territorial enlargement in the Veneto and Lombardy regions created new economic priorities but did little to diversify patrician politics as a whole.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 77; Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 401.

¹⁰⁵ For free-riding, see Christ: *Passagers clandestins?*

¹⁰⁶ Brown, Horatio F.: "The Venetians and the Venetian Quarter in Constantinople to the Close of the Twelfth Century", in: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 40 (1920), No. 1, pp. 68-88; Dursteler, Eric: *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 81-87; Lane: *Venice*, p. 348.

¹⁰⁷ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 70 etc., 317-327.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ These appear as "contra le ordene di Venezia" in the Venetian sources (see e.g. letter reproduced in appendix B.4).

¹¹⁰ See chapter II.B; the political subjugation of the Venetian *terraferma* was not paralleled by a deepening of economic integration. Instead, the Veneto region continued to consist of separate urban economies of which Venice itself came first in significance and size. Lanaro, Paola: "At the Centre of the Old World – Reinterpreting Venetian Economic History", in: id. (ed.), *At the Center of the Old World: Trade and Manufacturing in Venice and the Venetian Mainland, 1400-1800*, Toronto: CRRS, 2006, pp. 19-72.

If legal change alone cannot account for the evolution of trade institutions while exogenous factors are too random to explain the coherent gradual development of commercial practices observable in Venetian trade history, a solution is needed that takes account of both structural layers in a single explanatory framework. Explanations evoking endogenous institutional change are unsatisfactory since the incentives by which Venetian lawmakers arranged the trade-institutional landscape must have been related to the practical experiences of patrician merchants active in long-distance trade, which in turn were mostly subject to factors outside the Republic's legislative control.¹¹¹ The required explanatory synthesis must therefore encompass both the collective incentive structure of patrician lawmakers and the private-order institutional mechanisms that enabled patrician merchants to cope with (and to hedge against) exogenous factors affecting long-distance trade. This puts the analytical focus back on the patrician family as the basic component of the law-making class. While the micro-historical approach provides unambiguous perspectives on individual motivations in the commercial sphere, our sources also contain evidence on inter-clan dynamics that derive their economic significance from the operational dimension of the patrician family.¹¹² Thus, understanding the social manifestations of individual and family-level strategic incentives allows for extrapolating the collective incentive structure of the (patrician) commercial sphere and the prevailing coping mechanisms beyond the legal framework.

Lorenzo Dolfin maintained close social ties to both consanguineous and affinal kin, thus creating a network of intra- and inter-clan components. These relationships encompassed three main branches of Lorenzo's maternal, paternal and affinal families. As for the maternal branch, Lorenzo also corresponded with the notary Francesco Querini of Candia¹¹³ in addition to his uncles Benedetto, Andrea, and Michele Gabriel and their children (Alvise Gabriel qd. Benedetto, Angelo and Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea).¹¹⁴ Lorenzo was linked to the Querini family through the marriage of his maternal aunt Aloisa (Gabriel) to Marco Querini, as stated

¹¹¹ There are, however, generally satisfactory theories of endogenous institutional change applicable in other historical contexts. See for instance Greif, A., Laitin, D.D.: "A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change", in: *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004), No. 4, pp. 633-652.

¹¹² See chapter III.B.

¹¹³ Francesco addressed Lorenzo as "fradello e chugnado": letter Querini, Francesco qd. Fantino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.09.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [54].

¹¹⁴ The testament of Nicolò Gabriel mentions two daughters, Cataruccia and Aloisa, and four sons, Benedetto, Andrea, Michele, and Silvestro; the same *Commissaria* also mentions a procurator, Andrea Gabriel qd. Benedetto, who may have been a son of Benedetto Gabriel qd. Nicolò.

in the testament of Lorenzo's maternal grandfather Nicolò Gabriel qd. Andrea.¹¹⁵ Yet Lorenzo's links to his paternal and affinal families were of greater significance, since his personal commercial network was dominated by individuals from these branches. This eventually led to the creation of the Dolfin-Morosini trade coalition.¹¹⁶ Thus, the close commercial cooperation between Lorenzo and his agnatic and affinal kin is indicative of both the political dimension of individual incentives and intra-clan dynamics in long-distance trade.

i. Consanguineous, agnatic family: Dolfin

Francesco Dolfin was the son of Giovanni Dolfin and the grandson of Gregorio Dolfin, whom Marco Barbaro described as “the richest Dolfin” (“il più ricco della famiglia Dolfino”).¹¹⁷ Both Giovanni's and Francesco's brothers remained childless and hence Gregorio's wealth remained undiminished when inherited by Giacomo, Giorgio, Vettore, and three additional brothers, Orso, Nicolò and Giovanni (as shown in the following chapter, Nicolò also cooperated commercially with Lorenzo in the Romania trade as did Giovanni Dolfin, the son of Giacomo).¹¹⁸ Their wealth was an obvious motivation for commercial cooperation, but their precise relation to Lorenzo, and hence the foundations of their partnership in terms of *a priori*-existing mutual insurances against deviation, do not clearly emerge from Lorenzo's papers.¹¹⁹ Yet it appears that the descendants of Gregorio Dolfin exerted greater political influence than Lorenzo Dolfin's immediate paternal family. In 1417, Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco was voted into the Republic's Great Council at a young age, and their branch of the Dolfin family produced significant figures such as Giorgio Dolfin, the archbishop of Corfù until 1428.¹²⁰ By contrast, there is no evidence for Lorenzo Dolfin's early presence in the Great Council, although his service in the financial administration of the Venetian Republic also generated a certain prestige.

¹¹⁵ ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Ultra, b. 137, Testamento Nicolò Gabriel.

¹¹⁶ See chapter V.B.

¹¹⁷ ASVe, Alberi genealogici, M. Barbaro, Alberi, III.13 (Diedo-Donado), p. 291.

¹¹⁸ As listed in Barbaro's genealogical tree, see *ibid.*; however, since Orso and Giovanni Dolfin qd. Francesco do not appear in the correspondence, it is possible that they are wrongly listed as children of Francesco Dolfin in Barbaro's genealogy.

¹¹⁹ Barbaro's genealogy omits Lorenzo Dolfin and his ancestors; yet their addressing of Lorenzo as “fradello” suggests a close consanguineous rather than an affinal link

¹²⁰ See chapter III; also: letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40].

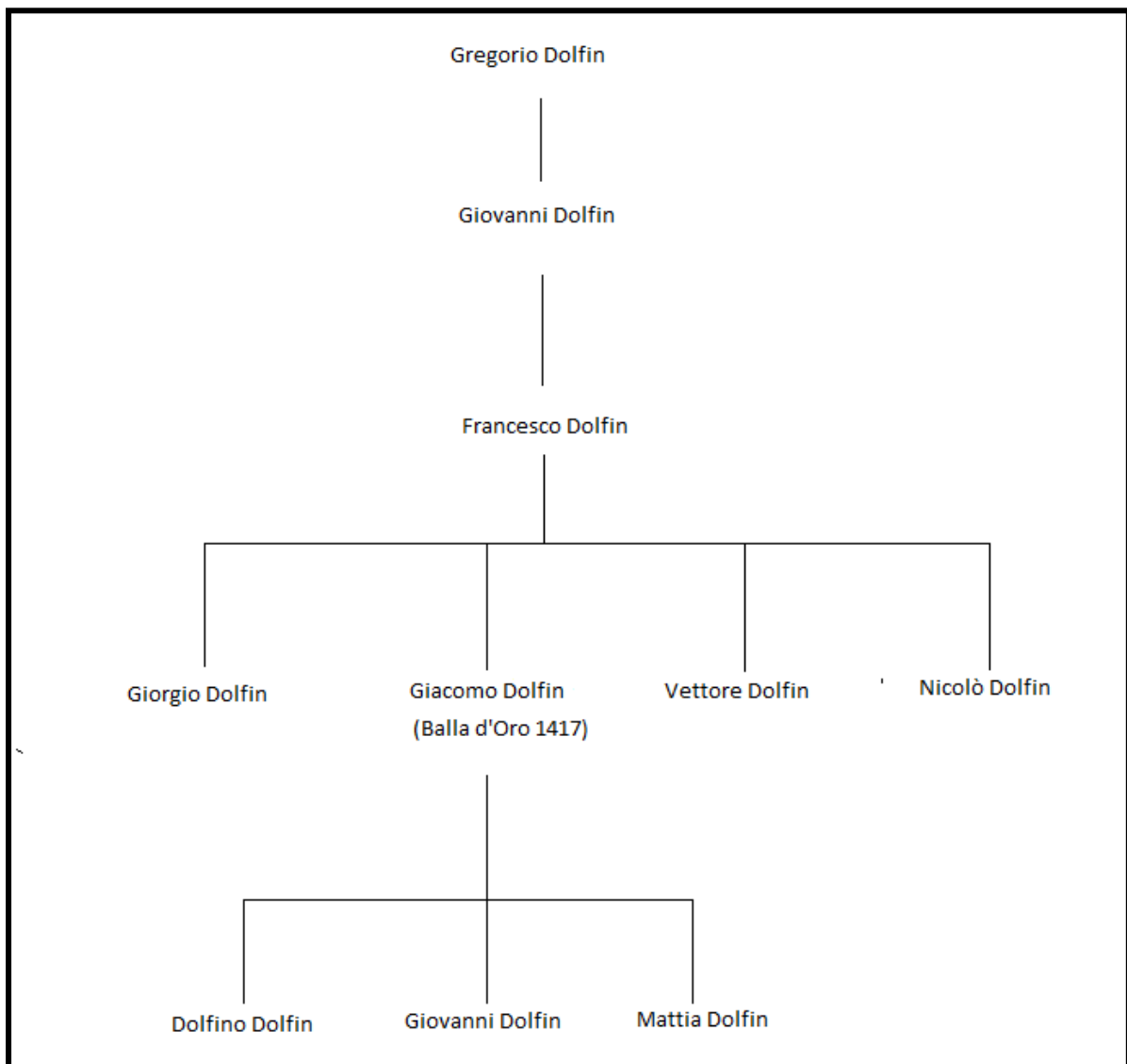


FIGURE 4: PEDIGREE DOLFIN (DA SANT'ANZOLO)

The letters written by Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco – according to the surviving record Lorenzo’s most frequent correspondent from this branch of the Dolfin family – indicate that the *compagnia* he and his brothers maintained with Lorenzo operated within a wider network of personal relationships. A number of these individuals are frequently mentioned in both personal and trade-related contexts, and the fact that many of these collaborators stem from the Dolfin family environment supports the notion that family relations could be constitutive even for contractually specified forms of commercial cooperation such as a *compagnia*. Among them are Antonio Contarini qd. Marino, the husband of Lorenzo’s sister-in-law Elis-

abetta Morosini¹²¹; one Francesco Morosini, who acted as the *compagnia's* agent in Trebizond¹²²; and non-kin individuals such as a certain Polo Corner and one Polo Foscari¹²³, as well as Ludovico Contarini, a ship captain who transported the *compagnia's* cargo between the ports of Constantinople, Bursa and Trebizond.¹²⁴

Yet regardless of the precise degree of kinship that linked the sons of Francesco Dolfin to Lorenzo, their branch of the Dolfin family was well-connected to Lorenzo's affinal

¹²¹ E.g. letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.08.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [39]: "...conforta Antonio Contarini e i altri nostri per parte mia..."

¹²² Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40]: „Anchor ho mandado bale do de nostri bastardi in Trabexonda igual ho dadi a ser Franzesco Morexini che va de li con questa galie. In le dite due bale sie pani 13 de la compagnia e pani 3 de raxòn de Zorzi Dolfin e fradeli.”

¹²³ Corner's and Foscari's relations to the Dolfin and Morosini families are not discussed at length in Giacomo's letters; while a direct involvement in Giacomo's and Lorenzo's commercial affairs is not mentioned, they appear to have been part of a wider patrician circle of mutual commitment. Giacomo describes Polo Corner as his "companion", who held an influential position in the *stato da mar*, possibly that of *capitano* of Zadar (see Capuzzo, E., Crevato-Selvaggi, B., Guida, F. (eds.): *Per Rita Tolomeo, scritti di amici sulla Dalmazia e l'Europa centro-orientale*, Venice: La Musa Talia Editrice 2014, p. 155), while at one point expressing doubts over his standing in the signoria: "Anchor me a rechordadi die fornissa Zaneta de la sua tela vi dicho quela o fornida ma io che la mostra e se quela non i piaxera lasa a mi. E diteli che la re<n>grazio del suo conforto rendado al [...] l'ofizio de mio conparo Polo Corner mi piaxe e quaxio che me despiaxe perché dubito hora lui ha in signoria non cura de i altri me conforto non ne non ma per tempo voio pur me fadi una grazia che li dite gramarze per mia parte de le letere lui me a scritto el simele a ser Polo Foscari ben che per mia fede a fato bene considerando el molto scriver ho de qui a voiudo scansarmi un pocho de afano ma pur mile saluti a cadaùn de loro. E plui dite a Polo Corner ch'el se dia over de questo suo ofizio de avanzar tanto ch'el se possy far una vesta ora ch'el vien in mar. Altra risposta non mi par sia de bexogno a la vostra" (ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40]). Polo Foscari's only surviving letter to Lorenzo provides equally interesting insights into the realities of political patronage in the aftermath of the Venetian territorial expansion in the early fifteenth century. Foscari asks Lorenzo to consider hiring a close friend ("uno mio intimo amigo") as advisor in case he will be appointed to a *podesta* position. While the person in question is not specified by name, he is described as "very honourable" ("el dito ne avere onore"), and Foscari hints at returning the favour in the future: "Quello fari al lui reputerò lo fazadi a mi" (letter Foscari, Polo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 23.04.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [17]).

¹²⁴ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40]: „Per aver raxìon vui possa aver denari al tempo de nadal ve mandai zoxo per la nave ser Lodovigo Contarini.”

family, which became Lorenzo's main platform for intra-family wealth aggregation.¹²⁵ The interaction between this Dolfin branch, Lorenzo, and Lorenzo's affinal family was continued in the next generation with the inclusion of Giacomo's sons Dolfino, Mattia, and Giovanni into the Dolfin-Morosini commercial coalition. Individual incentives for creating and maintaining this commercial arrangement on the basis of agnatic kinship were thus broadly similar for both sides. While the sons of Francesco Dolfin sought to enlarge the capital stock of their *fraterna*, Lorenzo himself benefited to an even larger extent from the collaboration with his wealthier cousins. In return, the venture was enhanced by including Lorenzo's personal commercial network, as exemplified by the *compagnia*'s employment of Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea as their agent in London.¹²⁶ Both Lorenzo and his cousins were incentivised to strengthen intra-family collaboration, thus creating investment opportunities for themselves and the following generation, and to increase the (extended) family's reputation in the commercial and ultimately the political spheres. The eventually emerging links between the *compagnia Dolfin* and the wider Dolfin-Morosini clan may be taken as a further sign of a strategic integration of agnatic kin-based commercial cooperation into a wider cross-family framework sustained by affinal ties.

¹²⁵ Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco is mentioned in Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 13.01.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283; Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [56]. Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco is also mentioned in Marino Morosini's letter from 10 December 1427 as well as in Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [50]. The latter document demonstrates the significance of Lorenzo's affinal family, and his father-in-law in particular, in constructing a family-based system of mutual obligations: for example, they served as a link between Lorenzo and his London agent Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea (see V.A., "chomo he vezo miser Jerolimo hi darò di danari che tu na ha gran bexogno") and administered Lorenzo's real estate in Venice (fasc. 3, f. [50]: "La caxeta non he ancora afitada ho mandado pluy fiade a recordarilo penso la tora el zenaro de dona Franzeschina ma la dixè che la piove tuta et che la voria asser coverta se la non fose coverta non la torave el marer conza como tu hordenasti l'albercheto de femene de la caxa granda hera molto marzio el tolse del la guama de caxa e de la calzina vechia hera in caxa et ha molto ben conzado per quello el me ha dito et non ha spexo alguna cossa salvo quello che tu festi conprar avanti el to partir et ha lavorato in tuto di 3"). Giorgio Dolfin is mentioned as a debtor to Lorenzo ("da puo che tute de quy che non ho vezudo mai ser Ziorzi ~~Quexini~~ Dolfin como el vederò hi arecorderò chel me dia quei danari che tu me dixesti chel me darave").

¹²⁶ See V.A.

ii. Affinal family: Morosini

Lorenzo married Giovanetta Morosini in 1425, and the marriage lasted until Giovanetta's death in 1444.¹²⁷ The marriage remained childless, and Lorenzo did not remarry after Giovanetta's passing. The nuclear family of Giovanetta Morosini became Lorenzo Dolfin's closest family environment both personally and commercially. Lorenzo frequently corresponded with his father-in-law Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni in the early years of his marriage to Giovanetta, which coincided with his spell as *camerario* in Vicenza. He also corresponded with his brothers-in-law Michele, Pietro, and Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino, maintaining a particularly close commercial relationship to Giovanni, who resided in Constantinople from the late 1430s onwards. In addition, the spouses of Giovanetta's sisters Elisabetta and Moresina, Antonio Contarini and Polo Pisani, eventually became part of the Dolfin-Morosini trade coalition.¹²⁸ Marino Morosini also had a brother, Andrea Morosini qd. Giovanni, whose name appears on a cargo list in the *Commissaria Biagio Dolfin*.¹²⁹ Andrea's son, Tommaso, later became an envoy of the Venetian Republic.¹³⁰ However, there remains no evidence of any direct contact between Lorenzo and Andrea Morosini or his son.

¹²⁷ See letter of condolence, Giorgio qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 30.05.1444, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [79].

¹²⁸ See V.B; Antonio Contarini and his wife Elisabetta née Morosini resided in Constantinople from the 1430s: "El non mi resta altro piasavi confortar asai mia cugnada et a mon suosero vi ricomando Isabeta e per lo simel a mia cugnada son presto a vui piaseri" (Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 15.10.1432, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [31]). Moresina Pisani née Morosini is mentioned in Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin née Morosini, Zaneta: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [8]: "...2 persone che non vol eser mento<n>ade contrascrite die dar a dì 7 marzo 1445 per Zaneta Dolfin xè che mi Lorenzo Dolfin quondam miser Antonio ho dado contadi in questo dì per nome di la dita Zaneta a Morexina Pixiani sorela di la dita Zaneta ducati 2..." Moresina's marriage to Polo Pisani emerges from the letters written by Lorenzo's brothers-in-law, e.g. Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.10.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [13]: "...miser Polo Pixani nostro chugnado..."

¹²⁹ Dolfin, Biagio qd. Lorenzo: Cargo list 1418 aus Alexandria. 001418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste.

¹³⁰ Tommaso Morosini qd. Andrea is mentioned in a letter from Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 28.09.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [22].

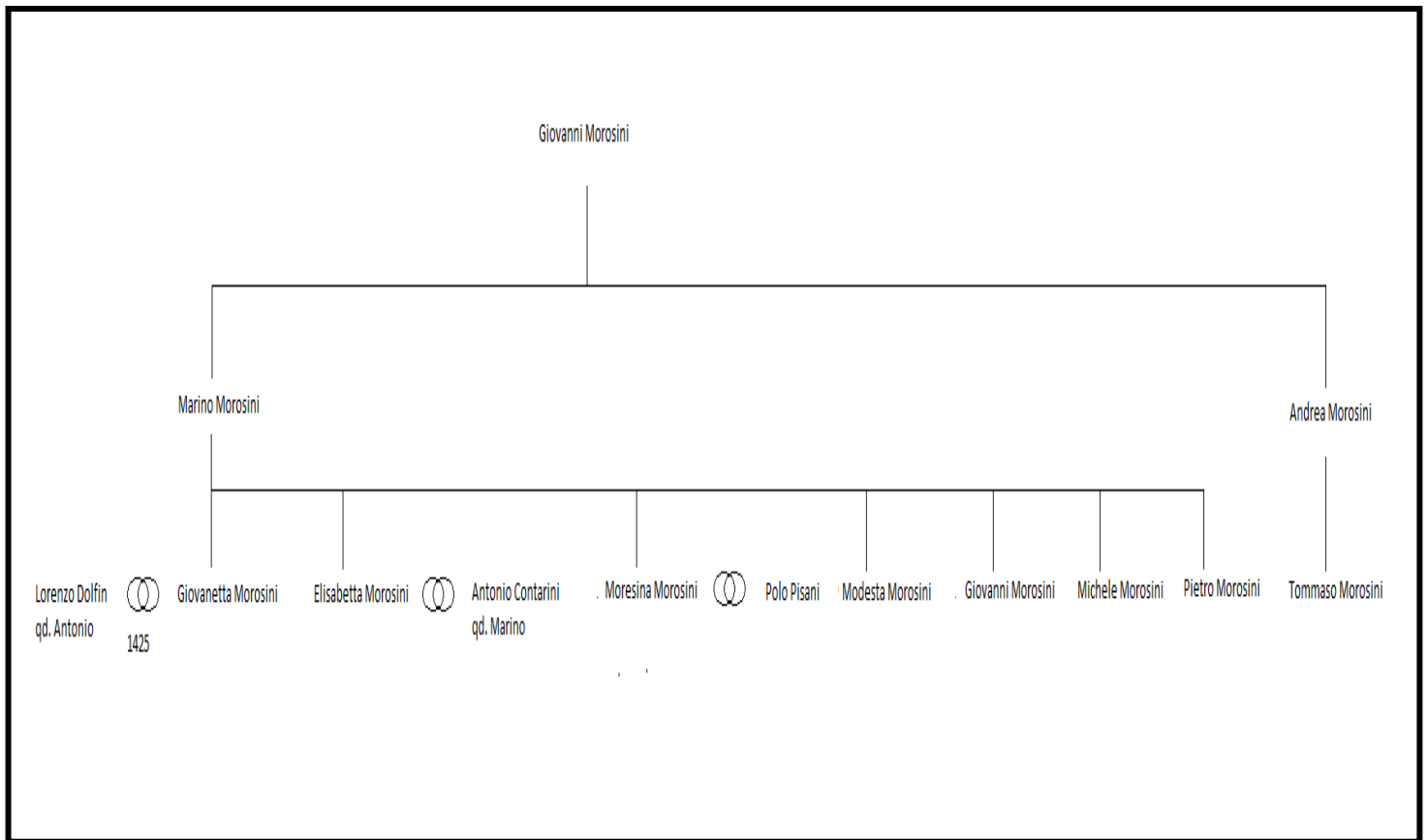


FIGURE 5: PEDIGREE MOROSINI (DA SAN ZANINOV)

Although mainly based in Venice, the extended Morosini family that Lorenzo espoused was strongly present along the Romania trade route. They were active in the Black Sea trade and partly resided in the Venetian quarter of Constantinople.¹³¹ Lorenzo's *commissaria* contains eighteen documents produced by Marino Morosini between 1426 and 1443.¹³² There are ten documents produced by Giovanni Morosini, written in Constantinople, Koroni, and Venice between 1437 and 1443,¹³³ and four letters from Pietro Morosini, written in Constantinople, Bursa and Caffa in 1442 and 1443.¹³⁴ Michele Morosini, who resided in London, has the

¹³¹ See V.A.

¹³² The first of these letters is Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [93]; the last is Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [93].

¹³³ First: letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [93]; last: letter Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [93].

¹³⁴ First: letter Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.07.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283; last: letter Morosini, Pietro qd.

greatest number of surviving letters. In total, there are twenty-seven letters, all of which were written in London between 1441 and 1446.¹³⁵

Lorenzo, having quickly integrated his affinal relatives into his relevant family environment, soon took on similar social duties vis-à-vis the Morosini as was generally common among patrician peers. Their relationship thus confirms the notion of the (extended) patrician family as a system of socialisation in which mercantile values and skills were passed on to young patricians by their more senior relatives. Mercantile education was as much a family as a state matter, and Lorenzo accordingly acted as a mentor to his more junior brothers-in-law. In his first letter from Constantinople, Giovanni Morosini, presumably the oldest son of Marino Morosini, addressed Lorenzo as “*honorado chugnado amado quanto padre*”.¹³⁶ In the same letter, Giovanni reflected on the state of the mercantile sphere and the career opportunities of his adolescent brothers. While asserting that Pietro “*will never become a sailor*”, Giovanni saw greater commercial talent in his second brother Michele and asked Lorenzo to guide him in his mercantile education.¹³⁷

Giovanni Morosini, who was active as a merchant in Constantinople, left instructions to Lorenzo before embarking on the Romania galleys in 1437 and 1439.¹³⁸ Marino Morosini began

Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.10.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [13].

¹³⁵ First: letter Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.10.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [13]; last: letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.01.1446, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [57].

¹³⁶ Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.11.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [32].

¹³⁷ Ibid.: “*E pratiche del mondo che vedo inchiato che l'omo che volia eser merchandante s'el non son pratico. Infati de marchandantia el se puol spender per niente siché biato [...]. Ve priego charamente che faze che Piero et Michiel non se perda chome ho fato mi et che la debiate far intrar in quel per bon esertizio. Non credo che Piero se pora mai far in Veniexa ma Michiel si ben siché fate el navigi chome son zerto che questo ve dicho el cognosete melio ch'a mi. Anchor ve dicho che in que stato non debiate ... dar al dir de miser mio padre ese varderete al so dir Piero non navegera mai s'el no avera l'anena apresso et fate che Michiel s'el non va piui a schuola che l'inprenda ben l'abacho et che l'atenda a ser Antonio nostro chugnado s'el dito avera bexogno di fati suo. Ve arechordo que sto perché son zerto el non hi mancherà zoveni.*” Also see letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 27.12.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [30].

¹³⁸ Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6]; Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín,

corresponding regularly with his son-in-law during the early years of Lorenzo's marriage. This correspondence depicts the Morosini family as a commerce-oriented economic entity of which Lorenzo quickly became an integral part. In fact, his marriage to Giovanetta was grounded in previous commercial and personal ties that linked his extended family to the Morosini. His uncle Biagio had acted as *fattore* (agent) to Marco Morosini in Damascus in 1404.¹³⁹ Lorenzo's maternal family was also linked to the Morosini. His uncle Benedetto Gabriel is mentioned in eight of Marino's letters (of a total of thirteen letters), while Benedetto's brother Andrea Gabriel is mentioned once.

The commercial interdependence between Lorenzo Dolfin and his affinal family bears traits of a "general partnership" or *societas*.¹⁴⁰ While his brothers-in-law lived abroad and took care of Lorenzo's business interests at their respective places of residence, their own commercial pursuits in Venice were overseen by Lorenzo. A formal contractual basis was not required, and consequently there are no notarised documents that bear testament to their commercial relationship. The economic dimension of Lorenzo Dolfin's affinal family relations even reached beyond matters of trade representation, as Lorenzo's papers also document a system of family-internal credit. Marino Morosini issued two debt receipts to Giovanetta and Lorenzo, which document a loan of twenty-two gold ducats from Lorenzo¹⁴¹ and eighty ducats from Giovanetta.¹⁴² The informality of these documents is evident in both form and content. Both appear to have been written by Marino himself, and no witnesses are mentioned in the documents as was common with official loan contracts, notarial deeds or testaments.¹⁴³ Second, the modalities of the loans specify a personal service rather than a commercial transaction. The receipt issued to Lorenzo merely contains four lines that confirm the loaned sum

Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Declaration, 20 June 1439. 20.06.1439, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [10].

¹³⁹ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 96, 100.

¹⁴⁰ See chapter I.E; also Trivellato, Francesca: *The Familiarity of Strangers - The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Debt contract, 3 July 1441. 03.07.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [17].

¹⁴² Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin née Morosini, Zaneta: Declaration, 9 September 1443. 09.09.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [13].

¹⁴³ The hand of the two documents is identical, although the declaration to Giovanetta is of higher calligraphic quality. Marino confirms that he is the author of the document (see citation in following note).

and the debtor's commitment to repay the loan at the creditor's request.¹⁴⁴ The receipt issued to Giovanetta, by contrast, specifies an accumulated debt. Marino confirms to have received eighty ducats *tra oro e monede* from his daughter on 1 August 1437, hence six years before the document was produced. The document then lists a number of commodity sales that Marino performed on his daughter's behalf between October 1437 and July 1443, which add up to 72 ducats and five grossi, leaving seven ducats and 19 grossi as debt to Giovanetta (1 gold ducat = 24 grossi).¹⁴⁵ Thus neither Lorenzo nor Giovanetta gained from the loans in any direct way, as no interests or loan premiums are mentioned. While in Venice's "informal economy" unofficial documents like these were often used to stipulate hidden interests in circumvention of the Republic's usury laws, the here documented arrangement depicts the patrician family as an economic entity in which individuals kept separate accounts while being able to enlarge their personal capital stock through flexible and unconditional support from their peers.¹⁴⁶ This suggests that the wealth of Venetian patricians should be seen in the context of a family-internal system of mutual economic obligations and benefits: as all capital owned by individual family members could potentially be tapped by their relatives, individual wealth was a composite of the aggregated wealth of the patrician family.

Another way of interpreting the observed family relations, especially in the context of economic interdependencies, is to understand them as a *family-based commercial coalition*. This conception of intra-family relations is advantageous as it can account for the cooperation be-

¹⁴⁴ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Debt contract, 3 July 1441. 03.07.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [17]: "Mi Marin Morexini fo de miser Zane ho rezevudo da ser Lorenzo Dolfín quondam miser Antonio mio zenaro ducati 22 d'oro per inprestado e deboi render ad ogni suo bon piaxer."

¹⁴⁵ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín née Morosini, Zaneta: Declaration, 9 September 1443. 09.09.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [13]: "In tuto lo amontar dele soradite cose vendude ducati 72 grossi 5. Iqual dener io abato dele soraditi ducati 80. Resta ducati 8 grossi 19. E per tanto mi Marin Morexini si confeso e si me chiamo debitor de la dita Zaneta mia fia dele diti ducati 7 grossi 19 iqual son per resto de soraditi ducati 80. Iqual ducati 7 grossi 19 io promesso de dar e pagar a la dita Zaneta a ogni suo bon piaxer. E per chiarezza de la dita mia fia e dele cose in questo prestate scritto notade ho scritto questo de mia man propria in questo zorno sorascrito de di 9 setenbrijo 1443." The transactions listed in this document are also documented in two accounts produced by Marino: Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [47]; Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfín née Morosini, Zaneta: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [8].

¹⁴⁶ For the practice of informal credit, see Shaw, James E.: "The Informal Economy of Credit in Early Modern Venice", in: *The Historical Journal* 61 (September 2018), No. 3, pp. 623-642.

tween different extended families – which in the Venetian context was primarily visible in the political sphere¹⁴⁷ – while at the same time illustrating the rationale for business cooperation beyond nuclear family structures. However, the coalition model also departs from the in the context of medieval and early modern Italy prevalent *societas* in that it was subject to long-term strategic construction, in the case of the Dolfín-Morosini coalition generated through marriage, whereas a general partnership – a system of shared liabilities and collective decision-making – is typically understood to emerge from agnatic family structures in the case of family-based enterprises.¹⁴⁸ A trade coalition among affinal relatives was of course only feasible and desirable where economic interests converged to sufficient degrees. Yet the very fact that such forms of long-term cooperation could occur between different patrician families is a strong indicator of the relative economic homogeneity of the patriciate.

D. Family and Business: Exploiting Family Loyalties for Commercial Purposes

Public-order institutions and state policies have often been portrayed as the primary generators of Venetian trade and finance.¹⁴⁹ Although private-order mechanisms do play a role in

¹⁴⁷ Chojnacki: *Kinship Ties*.

¹⁴⁸ Trivellato: *Familiarity*, p. 132; also see Brouwer, Maria: "Managing Uncertainty through Profit Sharing Contracts from Medieval Italy to Silicon Valley", in: *Journal of Management and Governance* 9 (2005), No. 3-4, pp. 237-255 [p. 242].

¹⁴⁹ The here advanced distinction between public- and private-order levels of the institutional framework follows Platteau's definition, according to which public-order institutions require "external sanctions systems" that "presuppose the existence of an authority structure" (Platteau, Jean-Philippe: "Behind the Market Stage Where Real Societies Exist - Part I: The Role of Public and Private Order Institutions", in: *Journal of Development Studies* 30 (1994), No. 3, pp. 533-577, here p. 535). For discussions of public-order institutions, see for example Arbel: *Operating Trading Networks*; González de Lara: *The secret*; Chittolini, Giorgio: "The "Private," the "Public," the State", in: *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (Dec., 1995), Supplement: *The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300-1600*, pp. S34-S61; Muir, Edward: "The Sources of Civil Society in Italy", in: *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29 (Winter 1999), No. 3, pp. 379-406. For other historical contexts, the significance of the family as a commercial institution has been called into question in recent studies. For example, Carsten JAHNKE finds that, with respect to the creation of mercantile relations, the significance of the family has been overestimated in traditional research on Hanseatic trade (Jahnke, Carsten: "Handelsnetze im Ostseeraum", in: Fouquet, G., Gilomen, H.-J. (eds.), *Netzwerke im europäischen Handel des Mittelalters*, Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2010, pp. 189-212 (here p. 199). For the limits of family networks in the context of eighteenth-century British Caribbean trad, see Haggerty, Sheryllynne: "I could 'do for the Dickmans': When Family Networks Don't Work", in: Gestrich, A., Schulte Beerbühl, M. (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society 1660–1914*, London: German Historical Institute London, 2011, pp. 317-342.

rational-choice approaches to Venetian commercial history, social institutions have typically been considered as auxiliary spheres rather than as basic elements of the economic life.¹⁵⁰ Yet, in light of the Dolfin papers, three additional aspects of family relations deserve closer scrutiny with respect to their economic significance:

First, family relations performed a didactical function in both Biagio Dolfin's and Lorenzo Dolfin's early commercial careers and their eventual rise to seniority: family elders acted as mentors to their younger relatives, and the cognatic family environment supported this process in social and commercial affairs. Biagio Dolfin was introduced to the dynamics of long-distance commerce from an early age and hence was well-equipped to compete even against potentially wealthier peers. Despite the Republic's intention to support young nobles in their commercial pursuits, the effectiveness of these efforts depended on individual circumstances, and the additional support Biagio received from his relatives (mainly his brother Antonio and the galley commander Benedetto Dolfin) facilitated his progress as a merchant. Lorenzo Dolfin enjoyed even greater opportunities thanks to the acquired wealth of his uncle Biagio, yet his early integration into Biagio's commercial environment and the organisational continuity in the development of his own arrangements were arguably even more crucial to his subsequent career.

Second, family relations served as a benchmark against which the reliability of potential external business partners could be assessed. In addition to widening commercial expertise, the cross-generational continuity of family businesses also served the intended purpose of providing transactional security. This ultimately explains the dominance of family relations in the social structure of Venetian commerce and in Lorenzo Dolfin's network of partnerships in particular. Both Biagio's and Lorenzo's commercial pursuits were to a critical extent supported by affinal and consanguineous kin, which facilitated their entry into the commercial sphere and remained constant although the composition of their networks changed over time. The etiquettes of mercantile correspondence further reveal that personal proximity was an invaluable asset in bilateral commercial relationships, and linguistic nuances such as "simel de fradelo", "fradelo" and "charissimo fradelo" were frequently used to signal close personal bonds.

¹⁵⁰ González de Lara: *Enforceability and Risk-sharing*; Greif, Avner: "Political Organizations. Social structure, and Institutional Success: Reflections from Genoa and Venice During the Commercial Revolution", in: *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 151 (Dec., 1995), No. 4, pp. 734-740.

Third, family relations ensured continuity through the cross-generational character of commercial networks. Biagio's and Lorenzo's respective commercial circles display great similarity regarding the choice of affiliates and their respective functions. Yet it was the congruence in terms of their non-kin components that was the true guarantor of stability, as the cross-generational dimension of the Dolfin network encompassed both kin and non-kin elements. Lorenzo Dolfin's Alexandria contacts and the London experience of his uncle Biagio enabled him to establish trade links to London. Former partners of Biagio Dolfin such as Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco, Orso Dolfin, Antonio di Gusanieri, Gregorio Orso, and Giacomo Zorzi qd. Giorgio were all significant to Lorenzo Dolfin's early commercial pursuits. Although some of them, like Orso Dolfin, had family links to Biagio, their significance to Lorenzo's commercial engagements vanished over time as Lorenzo's affinal family gradually became more important than his consanguineous ties and the social environment passed on to him by the previous generation.

Thus, while Lorenzo's commercial pursuits clearly built on Biagio's example, a number of significant affiliates of Biagio's commercial network either did not resurface at all in his nephew's business environment or did so in merely peripheral roles. Since Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto is among these omissions, his example may provide clues as to why the cross-generational network of partnerships also underwent specific alterations.

As Nicolò Dolfin was merely a distant cousin of Biagio Dolfin, he likely was of the same generation as Biagio and thus not a major co-operator of Lorenzo Dolfin for reasons of age. Second, he may have remained focused on the Alexandria trade, whereas Lorenzo developed a primary interest in the Flanders and Romania routes. Comparing Lorenzo's relationship with Nicolò to his later partnerships with other Alexandria contacts, such as Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco, it becomes clear that Giacomo had more compelling reasons to maintain his commercial links to Lorenzo as he and his brothers implemented a broadly similar commercial strategy in the Romania trade. His example further shows that patrician mercantile networks provided a platform for potential commercial links from which specific enterprises such as (short-term) *compagnie* and even (long-term) coalitions could be formed.

However, the significance of affinal families in the cross-generational Dolfin network is the most compelling explanation for Nicolò Dolfin's gradual retreat from his collaboration with Lorenzo. Biagio Dolfin had been closely aligned to the Pasqualigo (and Morosini) families, and Lorenzo later cooperated very closely with his brothers-in-law. While Nicolò Dolfin was not involved in Lorenzo's early commercial undertakings, it is unlikely that Nicolò and Lorenzo would have maintained a long-lasting commercial partnership even if they had cooper-

ated more closely in earlier years. As can be seen from the example of the brothers Giacomo, Giorgio, and Vettore Dolfìn qd. Francesco, whose commercial links to Lorenzo originated from Lorenzo's early engagements in Alexandria¹⁵¹, relatives of second order could potentially have a significant impact on network structure. However, as the impact of the affinal family grew stronger, affinal ties increased in commercial significance on the expense of distant consanguineous links.

Another likely factor in their separation was a difference in sector specialisation. Biagio Dolfìn had instructed Nicolò to oversee gemstone sales in Venice on his behalf, which remained Biagio's primary business throughout his life. Lorenzo imported spices from the Near East to Venice, Flanders, and London and re-invested the revenues in the cloth trade, primarily by acquiring English wool and selling processed cloth along the Romania galley route. Thus, their respective specialisations impeded further cooperation.¹⁵² There is little evidence for Lorenzo Dolfìn's involvement in gemstone-related transactions as a senior merchant, as he likely was deterred by the troublesome experiences of his uncle in this volatile and risky business segment.¹⁵³ In addition, the gemstone business was closely related to Alexandria, a place Lorenzo had no incentive to return to after relations between the Republic of Venice and the Mamluk Sultanate gradually began worsening in the course of the 1420s and were eventually severed in 1436, when Venetian merchants were expelled from Egypt and Syria. After years of diplomatic efforts, a new trade agreement was reached only in October 1442.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Bernardo, Nicolò qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, Alexandria 1423. 001423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [135]; see IV.A above for a discussion of the accounts of Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco.

¹⁵² Although specialisation in commercial networks is still a severely understudied subject, an increase in skills-based specialisation has been identified, for instance, in the context of late medieval manufacturing (see Vianello, Francesco: "Rural Manufacturers and Patterns of Economic Specialization: Cases from the Venetian Mainland", in: Lanaro, Paola (ed.), *At the Center of the Old World: Trade and Manufacturing in Venice and the Venetian Mainland, 1400-1800*, Toronto: CRRS, 2006, pp. 343-366). For specialisations in commercial networks (in a slightly later period) see Fusaro, Maria: "Cooperating mercantile networks in the early modern Mediterranean", in: *Economic History Review* 65 (May 2012), No. 2, pp. 701-718.

¹⁵³ Rare mentions of gemstone sales on Lorenzo's behalf are discussed in chapter V (B, C).

¹⁵⁴ Romano: *The Likeness*, pp. 181-182; tensions between the Mamluks and the Venetians even before the 1436 expulsion are well-documented in the commercial correspondence of the period, an example of which is the long 1427 letter from Marino Morosini to Lorenzo Dolfìn in which Marino reports on a trade embargo imposed by the Sultan after Venetian merchants failed to purchase the "sultan's pepper" at the requested price: "De le nuove de Levante perché le molti giorni le vene penso apièn tu si avixado, ma pur te ne avixerò el vene de

Thus, with respect to the significance of family relations in both the political and economic spheres, the particular significance of the affinal family in the Dolfin papers indicates a broad interdependence of the Venetian patriciate. Some of Lorenzo Dolfin's partnerships with non-kin individuals were established through his affinal relations (such as with the husband of his sister-in-law Elisabetta, Antonio Contarini qd. Marino), and the notion of a Venetian patriciate that was homogenous in terms of economic incentives despite displaying great social heterogeneity remains valid in light of the cognatic patrician family structure that resulted from cross-family cooperation along affinal lines. Lorenzo Dolfin relied on the support of both maternal and paternal families in politics and commerce, as affinal relations came to boost inter-family (commercial) cooperation within the patriciate, thus cementing a cognatic family structure across generations.

Candia ser Marcho Bocheta con una galiota et ha dato nuove de Levanti le zonto in Candia ser Lorenzo di Poli elqual hando in Alesandria et non ha ditto niente. El soldan non ha voiudo lasartar niente del nostro d'Alesandria per raxòn chel voleva che i nostri conprase le soe speziè he perché i nostri non le ha voiudo conprar per questa raxòn el dito soldan non ha voiudo lasar trar niente del nostro” (Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 19.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [50]).

CHAPTER V: LONG-DISTANCE TRADE – LONDON, FLANDERS, CONSTANTINOPLE, TANA (1427-1443; 1474)

The archive of Lorenzo Dolfín displays rather large gaps between its last documentation of long-distance trade (in the commercial letters written in 1443), its very last document (a 1467 *quaderno* unrelated to trade) and eventually Lorenzo's testament (dated 1474). Yet, the archive's wealth in commerce-specific documentation nevertheless allows for making assertions regarding the relationship between family structure and commerce in the Dolfín network and its wider social surroundings. As Lorenzo likely retired from long-distance trade in the course of the 1440s to focus on investments on the Venetian *terraferma*, the contents of his last surviving business letters indicate a gradual decline of his intra-family commercial cooperations.

This chapter examines Lorenzo's commercial activities in London and Flanders, and along the Romania galley route. Section A highlights the different types of principal-agent relationships observable in the CBD sources and analyses their respective institutional foundations. Section B does the same for multilateral commercial relationships, specifically the two operational frameworks primarily used by Lorenzo during his senior years: the Venetian *compagnia* (B.i) and the *coalition* (B.ii), the latter being an analytical term that does not occur in the sources. Sections C and D examine Lorenzo's late social environment and his inheritance strategy as revealed in his testament. Finally, section E offers an evaluation of the key insights gained from the three core chapters of this study (III-V).

A. London and Flanders

Lorenzo Dolfín began operating on the northern markets while representing his uncle Biagio in Venice in the years 1418 to 1420. We do not know about Biagio Dolfín's activities along the Flanders galley route, as none of his surviving correspondence originates from these ports (Corfu, Palermo, Lisbon, Bruges). However, the avid gemstone trader Biagio Dolfín could not ignore London, by many accounts the leading gemstone market of the later Middle Ages.¹ Lorenzo was frequently involved in Biagio's gemstone deals in Venice and thus also became familiar with the specifics of the London market.² Unsurprisingly, besides his early activities

¹ Pedani, *Balas Rubies*.

² Letter Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 01.11.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Psm 181), Commissarie miste, b. 181, fasc. 15, int. e, f. [24]; Letter Dolfín, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to

in Alexandria, he therefore undertook his first independent ventures in London and along the Flanders route. His thriving commercial activity along the Romania galley route did not take off until a decade after his commercial apprenticeship in Venice and did not reach its peak before 1440.³ While the Romania route had remained unexplored by his mentor Biagio, it had been intensively frequented by the branch of the Morosini family into which Lorenzo married in 1425.⁴

i. The Renier network: a commission agency model

Lorenzo's early commercial presence in Bruges and London is documented by a number of lists itemising the prices of typical trade goods. Of these lists, simply entitled "valuta de merchandata", a total of six survives in Lorenzo's archive, five from Bruges and one from London. The earliest of the Bruges lists dates from 1422, the year in which Lorenzo hired the brothers Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò as his agents in the Flemish metropolis.⁵ The list documenting London goods and prices dates from 1430 and is therefore less revealing with respect to Lorenzo's early years as a merchant, as he began operating in London as early as 1423, when he contributed one fifth of the total capital of the *compagnia Giorgio Dolfìn*.⁶ Yet even as his uncle's mentee, Lorenzo had been in steady contact with London residents such as Biagio's brother-in-law Polo Pasqualigo qd. Giovanni.⁷

Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 24.02.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [2].

³ The earliest letter written to Lorenzo from Constantinople dates from 1424: letter Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁴ Lorenzo's brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino appears to have resided in the Venetian quarter of Constantinople, from where he sent eight letters to Lorenzo.

⁵ Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Price list, 1 August 1422. 01.08.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [7]. The Renier brother's first letter to Lorenzo is Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.08.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [54].

⁶ See above, IV.A.ii (Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 20 September 1423. 20.09.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [67]).

⁷ Letter Pasqualigo, Polo qd. Giovanni to Dolfìn, Biagio qd. Lorenzo, 09.07.1418, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM citra 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 2, int. 2, f. [1].

Lorenzo's agency partnership with the Renier brothers lasted for at least four years, with the last of the Renier letters sent on 17 November 1426.⁸ Eighteen documents survive in total. In his first letter to Lorenzo, Francesco Renier refers to his departure from Venice, which appears to be for the purpose of an extended stay abroad.⁹ Francesco's signature appears in all of the letters, whereas his brother's name is added only in seven of the later ones.¹⁰ Two of the Renier documents are account sheets signed by Francesco Renier "on the journey from Bruges" ("del viazo de Bruza"). This indicates that he may have travelled on the Flanders galleys at these instances, possibly with his brother taking care of their joint affairs in Bruges.¹¹

Although there is no evidence of the Renier family co-operating with Lorenzo's uncle Biagio, nor of the circumstances under which their relationship to Lorenzo was initiated, the social foundations of the partnership were adequately strong. Francesco Renier routinely addressed Lorenzo as "simel de fradello",¹² in later letters even as "charissimo fradello".¹³ The letters signed by both Renier brothers are equally indicative of a close and cordial relationship.¹⁴

⁸ Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 17.11.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [38].

⁹ "Simel de fradello da puo il mio partir de Venexia nula ve o posuto scriver per non aver a i logi siamo stati avuto tenpo ese<r> per non aver di vostre cosse fir questo renenda seguito me par per dar precipio vinotrio questa con brevita ridero quanto superle se ale per tuti demare ha dantro el sta fato e prexi a preso del navigar nostro e prima chomo paso sapiate a di 8 mazo partimo da Malorcha a di 20 dito a Malcha a di 22 a Chades a di 26 zugno a Casca ovier a Lisbona a di 4 avosto a le Claze con salute." Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.08.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [54].

¹⁰ He is a signatory of the last letter: Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 17.11.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [38]. The first letter signed by Marco Renier is Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 15.04.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [41].

¹¹ Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1422. 20.01.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [112]; Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 20 December 1423. 20.12.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [58].

¹² E.g. letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.08.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [54].

¹³ Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 15.10.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [43].

¹⁴ "A di 9 rezevi vostra de 6 pasato per laqual del vostro a comparsavi n'avixate che a sumo piaxer e chome di fratello n'avemo avuto e non meno che ne nostri fradeli carnali de tute vostre consolacion et honori n'avesamo suimo piaxer. Pregemo i dio con felizità a suo laude trami vi conservi." Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 15.04.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [41].

Other than the Renier brothers, only one additional correspondent wrote to Lorenzo from Bruges. On 28 April 1424, Lorenzo received a letter from a certain Francesco Orsini.¹⁵ Orsini, whose name suggests a *cittadino* rather than a patrician background, addresses Lorenzo as “simel di fradello” and thus signals a close personal proximity.¹⁶ Orsini evidently provided agency services to Lorenzo. Referring to a letter from Lorenzo he had received a month earlier, on 15 March 1424, he reports about difficulties regarding the sale of *boràso* (borax, a mineral used in glassmaking and in household products such as soap) to a certain Giovanni Barbo.¹⁷ The letter further reveals that Lorenzo Dolfin cooperated with Angelo Michiel qd. Luca in this business, as Orsini complains about not receiving any replies from the latter despite numerous attempts of making contact.¹⁸ Angelo Michiel, as seen above, was an Alexandria contact of Lorenzo’s who had also partnered with Biagio Dolfin. His involvement in Lorenzo’s Flanders trade corroborates the cross-generational character of patrician mercantile networks and the highly individual character of personal commercial networks that enabled merchants to choose their commercial partners from a wide pool of potential links.

The Renier brothers dealt with Francesco Orsini on Lorenzo’s behalf, as Orsini was repeatedly mentioned in their letters.¹⁹ Whereas Francesco Renier’s first letter to Lorenzo still reported on a variety of transactions (involving similar goods as listed on the aforementioned “*valuta de merchandatia*” lists), their correspondence eventually became more focused on the *boràso* trade. This shows that Lorenzo maintained a degree of diversification in his business,

¹⁵ Letter Orsini, Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.04.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [46].

¹⁶ For Francesco Orsini status, see the CIVES database for “Orsini” entries: http://www.civesveneciarum.net/cerca.php?txtQuery=orsini&lingua=ita&nomeCampo=nome_italiano&tipo=semplice&titolo=risultati

¹⁷ For *boràso* and its use, see Lane, Frederic C.: “The Mediterranean Spice Trade, Further Evidence of its Revival in the Sixteenth Century”, in: *The American Historical Review* XLV (April, 1940), No. 3, pp. 581-590, (here p. 583).

¹⁸ Letter Orsini, Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.04.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [46]: “Simmel de fradelo a dì 15 del pasado rezevi una vostra de 16 fevrier per laqual me dite che del boràxo ... ser (Giovanni) Barbo de vostra raxon ne siegua hordene che per ser Anzolo Michiel me sara dado e simel hordene me vede el dito ser (Giovanni). El perché ve ho avixado per molte mie el dito ser Anzolo mai non mene a fato risposta alguna de che tegno el dito el asifina che altro hordene avero da vui ... da lui.” I assume that the mentioned Anzolo Michiel is the son of Luca Michiel, thus a former partner of Biagio Dolfin.

¹⁹ Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 06.05.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [49].

although he seems to have been a buyer rather than a seller on the Bruges spice market. His interest in *boràso* does not put into question the centrality of cloth and fibres in his portfolio. Rather, the Renier letters show that Lorenzo was first and foremost active on the Bruges cloth market, where the Renier brothers handled a great many of his transactions.²⁰

The two surviving account sheets further confirm Lorenzo Dolfin's activity as a buyer on the Bruges market. The first one, created during the 1422 *muda*, is dated 20 January 1423 (this is the "messo in libro" date, recorded by Lorenzo when filing the account in his books). The second was received and filed by Lorenzo on 20 December 1423.²¹ Both use the Venetian moneys of account, *lira/ soldi/ grossi*.²² As liabilities, the double-entry documents list the expenses on taxes and customs, as well as the commission salary of the agent (*provisiòn*). This payment amounts to 7 soldi and 4 grossi on the first account and to 3 soldi and 8 grossi on the second.

Lorenzo's Bruges business operated within a fixed network maintained by Francesco Renier as a central node. While managing Lorenzo's sales, Francesco Renier maintained links to a number of clients. One of them was the aforementioned Francesco Orsini. Another was the Bruges merchant François Lanense, who occurs as a buyer of Lorenzo's ginger as well as being listed on the credit side of Lorenzo's first Bruges account.²³ This network, however, was not buttressed by a strong social institution securing the commercial enterprise – it was based on *commission payments* from Lorenzo (the principal) and his partners (such as Angelo Michiel qd. Luca) to the Renier brothers (the agents), and the involved individuals had a transaction-specific monetary incentive for being affiliated with the network. By establishing links to the Renier brothers, Lorenzo was able to combine the commercial expertise present in his own personal network, mainly consisting of former commercial contacts of his uncle Biagio, with the market knowledge offered by the Renier and their commercial environment. Yet this arrangement was loose, purpose-specific and, as the lack of kin as network components indicates, not grounded in *a priori*-existing social dispositions and thus not intended as

²⁰ Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.08.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [45].

²¹ See note 11 above.

²² Christ: *Trading Conflicts* (appendix); Travaini, Lucia: "Un sistema di conto poco conosciuto: la « mano da quattro»", in: *Revue Numismatique* 153 (1998), No. 6, pp. 327-334.

²³ Letter Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.10.1422, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [53]; Renier, Francesco qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1422. 20.01.1423, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [112].

a long-term commercial arrangement. Instead, the commission model of commercial cooperation was used when intra-family cooperation was not a viable option.

ii. **Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea: an intermediary solution**

In the years 1429 to 1430, Girolamo Bragadin acted as Lorenzo's representative in London. Girolamo was the son of Andrea Bragadin, an affinal relative of Biagio Dolfin who had been one of Biagio's closest personal and commercial allies during his second consulship.²⁴ Similar to the aforementioned *compagnia* with Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco and his brothers, Lorenzo must have been a co-owner of a business as Girolamo Bragadin's letters are addressed jointly to him and a certain Benedetto Bembo.²⁵ In addition to four letters, one joint account provides detailed insights into this partnership.²⁶

Girolamo Bragadin was active in London as well as in Bruges, took care of the Dolfin-Bembo interests on both markets, and performed both sale and acquisition transactions on their behalf. As in the case of the Renier, these transactions covered both spices and cloth. Himself of a patrician background, he addressed Lorenzo and Benedetto as "charissimi fradeli", signalling a close personal bond. He clearly possessed insider expertise with respect to the northern markets and provided his interlocutors with detailed analyses of the business environments in Bruges and London.²⁷ In modern parlance, he was a consultant rather than a mere recipient of instructions.

²⁴ According to Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 105, Andrea Bragadin was a brother-in-law of Biagio Dolfin.

²⁵ The first of these letters is Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 09.08.1429, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [10].

²⁶ "Chonto di ser Lorenzo Dolfin e ser Benedetin Bembo asegniado per mi Jeronimo Bragadin de miser Andrea al viazo di Londra del 1429"; the account is Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account: Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio, 1429. 001429, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [132].

²⁷ Letter Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.12.1429, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [12]: "Fradeli [...] l'ultima mia ve scrissi fo a di primo di questi da poi non ho avuto vostra siché vederlo con brevità per questa dissive per la dita del finir di la lire vostra piper e di l'achatar di i chavezi di pani fine esei e chrixea e di sive che di la scuza per vui Lorenzo per non la trovar de simel ho venzo al prexio me diti hordene lo lasada star et a Veniexa s'el ve piaxera di poro aver un di quele me traco le per ducati 10 ½ che per dio a mi viene ducati 11 ma con vui non ne fazo conto. Anchor ve disì che del felzo et banchali non di podevi eser serviti per queste galie ho li hordenadi a ora et avere mio derada e mio roba. El conto del dito piper e di i pani ve mando troverati qui dentro [...] a trovando no alguno avixamere che subito la conzero i diti pani sono in un bala di miser Alvise Contarini i qual a Veniexa vedera e son chaxidi in

According to Girolamo Bragadin's letters, Lorenzo sold different types of spices in London, mainly pepper, and acquired both raw wools and processed cloth for shipment to Venice. Girolamo's last remaining letter to Lorenzo, dated 7 March 1430, is the most extensive of these documents.²⁸ Therein, Girolamo reports on price levels and his estimates regarding future demand for a number of spices. These goods correspond largely to the products listed on the aforementioned "valuta di merchandantia" list (which, based on the handwriting, can be attributed to Girolamo).²⁹ These include pepper (*piper*), different types of ginger (*zenzero verde*, *zenzeri mecheni*), cloves (*garofoli*), and nuts (*noxte*).

In the same letter, Girolamo also reported on the range of prices to be paid on the London market for different types of English wool, which are named after the products' places of origin. He mentioned *lovesti* (from Lowestoft), *gylfordione* (from Gilford) and *chotesgualde* (from the Cotswolds). The paragraph ends on a curious note: according to Girolamo, the English parliament had ordered English merchants not to sell to foreigners, although the latter were allowed to continue trading in London. Girolamo did not expect this situation to last for long.³⁰

The surviving account signed by Girolamo states that he received a commission payment of two percent of the total turnover he handled.³¹ The relatively short time span covered by Girolamo's letters suggests that he might have been hired on a short-term basis, possibly to replace a previously involved agent or just to exploit suddenly emerging favourable market conditions in London (the higher percentage of his commission pay compared to that of the

charavazo di marchadanti val piper d. 11 ¼ zenzeri verdi d. 23 in 24 garosti d. 35 chanele d. 16 et altri chosse avixato e per simele chosse [...] sta avixato ne da novo non avemo da conto.

Le galie me sentimo che a di 7 di questi hora a promuda e questo avemo per le galie di fiorentini qui zionte da poi dele diti [...] galie nula sentano speremo in dio le sia tirade de longo i dio piazzi condurle con salute.

Non me restando per hora altro essendo a vostri piazeri presto Christo ve guardi."

²⁸ Letter Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.03.1430, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [13].

²⁹ Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 07.03.1430, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [3].

³⁰ Note 28: „El parlamento de qui he sta hordenado che algion engleser non posse vender ad algun stranzier alguna chossa a tempo ma ben po el stranier vender al inglese che non credo tal hordenanza possi durar lungamente siché per tal hordenande durando tegnio le nostre galie avera poche chose de so retorno perché el non se achatera a gran zionta chome se soleva far per non poder deliverar le marchadente vien con quele che la piu i parte a tempo e tegnio che chi se trovera susso ducati contadi de qui avera de tute chosse bona derade."

³¹ Bragadin, Girolamo qd. Andrea to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account: Lorenzo Dolfín qd. Antonio, 1429.001429, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [132]: „E per provixion a 2 per cento, soldi VIII/ e per provixion a 2 per cento, soldi VI, denari 6.“

Renier – two percent as opposed to one percent – is likely to reflect a larger than usual profit margin). In this case, his inclusion into Lorenzo's commercial network stems from Lorenzo's (and Benedetto Bembo's) short-term demand for agency services in London, and the reason Girolamo was chosen are linked to the commercial involvement of his father with Lorenzo's uncle Biagio. Hence, Girolamo's commercial relationship with Lorenzo partly resulted from a family-based reputation mechanism. Girolamo thus represents an intermediary type of commercial associate, occupying a position between a non-kin commission agent (such as Francesco and Marco Renier) and a family representative that was affiliated to a trade coalition.

iii. Michele Morosini qd. Marino: a coalition agency model

Lorenzo Dolfin's archive does not contain documents relating to the Flanders and London trade for the decade between 1430 and 1440. In 1440, Giorgio Loredan qd. Marco, husband of Lorenzo's maternal aunt Maria, became captain of the Flanders galleys and wrote to Lorenzo from the ports of Sluis³² and Antwerp, which towards the mid-fifteenth century gradually began challenging and eventually replacing Bruges as the leading transfer market of the Low Countries.³³ Lorenzo's extensive correspondence with his brother-in-law Michele Morosini qd. Marino began in October 1441.³⁴ For at least five years, Michele Morosini acted as Lorenzo's agent in London, with his last letter written on 7 January 1446. A whole of twenty-seven letters document this family-internal agency relationship; however, because of the absence of any surviving account sheets, the size of Lorenzo's London trade in this advanced stage of his mercantile career is difficult to establish. The lack of accounts also impedes assertions regarding possible commission payments. As these are not mentioned in the correspondence, we are left with two possible scenarios: Michele Morosini may have received transaction-specific payments, as was the case with the Renier brothers; alternatively, he may

³² Letter Loredan, Giorgio qd. Marco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.10.1440, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [65].

³³ Letter Loredan, Giorgio qd. Marco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 12.12.1440, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [66]. For the growing significance of Antwerp, see Munro, John H.: "Bruges and the Abortive Staple in English Cloth - An Incident in the Shift of Commerce from Bruges to Antwerp in the Late Fifteenth Century", in: *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 44 (1966), No. 4, pp. 1137-1159.

³⁴ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.10.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [14].

have been affiliated to a family coalition as its London representative, investing the aggregated wealth of the coalition and retracting gains from his personal share. The latter explanation is more plausible in light of the surviving correspondence; in addition, it explains the disappearance of the Renier brothers from Lorenzo's personal network as a consequence of the development of a family coalition, a long-term commercial arrangement with mutual liabilities and obligations such as the provision of coalition agency services. Ultimately, the family-based commercial coalition benefited, in terms of its operational structure, from dependencies, hierarchies, and reputations that arose from the social context of the patrician family. It thus achieved a higher degree of transactional security than a commission-based relationship within loose commercial networks.

Michele Morosini was Lorenzo's brother-in-law, yet he must have been considerably younger than Lorenzo. Unlike Lorenzo's other hitherto mentioned correspondents, he addressed Lorenzo not as "fradello" but as "spectabile et egregio [chugnado]"³⁵ and even as "mazor"³⁶ and "spectabile ett honorado non menon di padre".³⁷ In this respect, his letters resemble those of his brothers who also reverentially looked up to Lorenzo as an almost father-like figure. "Egregio et honorado come padre" wrote Michele's brother Giovanni Morosini³⁸, whereas Pietro Morosini, writing from Bruges, echoed his brothers' formal style ("egregio e honorado chugnado").³⁹ Their formal language should not, however, be understood as a display of reverence towards a patriarch, a role still held by Lorenzo's father-in-law Marino.⁴⁰ Lorenzo was not a surrogate father to his in-laws, but a family senior who supported their commercial ambitions by providing opportunities of collaboration and guidance through a gradual but swift integration into the family coalition. His relationship to his junior in-laws reflects the same

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 14.06.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [22].

³⁷ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 21.09.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [15].

³⁸ Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.05.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [23].

³⁹ Letter Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 09.05.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [5].

⁴⁰ As Michele wrote in his first letter from London: "A di 20 de questo rezevi una de miser mio padre e de miser Polo...", Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.10.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [14].

family-internal process of mercantile education that he himself had received from his paternal and maternal uncles.

Although writing more than a decade after Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea had represented Lorenzo in the same location, the contents of Michele Morosini's letters are broadly similar to those of his predecessor. In his first letter, Michele reported on the state of the London spice and cloth markets, stating prices of pepper, ginger, clove (*garofoli*), nutmeg (*mazis*), and different types of wool.⁴¹ He ended by asking for further instructions, which would involve his godfather Giacomo Corner.⁴²

The Venetian business practice in the London and Flanders trade – export of spices and import of cloth – is also evident in Michele Morosini's letters. All of these documents provide current estimates of the likely yields on the London spice market (“de marchadantie venuti chon le galie val de qui...”⁴³) and the costs of specific investments (“le investiti de qui per Veniexia”⁴⁴), i.e. English cloth. Judging by the large quantity of surviving documents and the structure and contents of his letters, Michele was a frequent writer. These are typically rather brief, yet don't fail to mention both personal and political news in addition to market-specific information. He reports, for instance, on the appointment of Lorenzo Contarini to the Venetian consulship in London, of which he strongly approves.⁴⁵

Michele Morosini acted as agent not exclusively to Lorenzo Dolfín, but to the Morosini-Dolfín clan as a whole. Other members of this coalition were frequently mentioned in Michele's letters, such as a cousin (of Michele's) named Polo (Pisani)⁴⁶ and the clan's patri-

⁴¹ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.10.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [14].

⁴² Ibid.: “Priegove avixame se de qui debia pagar le spexe a miser Iacomo Chorner mio patrino.”

⁴³ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1441, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [25].

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.: “miser Lorenzo Contarini sie sa fatto chonsolo che molto me piazer.”

⁴⁶ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [24]; likely referring to Polo Pisani, also mentioned in Pietro Morosini's letter: Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 09.05.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [5].

arch Marino Morosini.⁴⁷ The coalition operated on the basis of reciprocity, as Michele also sent his instructions to the Venice-based network affiliates.⁴⁸

B. Romania

Most of Lorenzo's correspondents along the Romania galley route resided in Constantinople, while only a few of the surviving letters were produced in Tana and Negroponte. A striking similarity to Lorenzo's London and Flanders trade lies in the chronological order of his partnerships: whereas his first recorded venture was a *compagnia* with the brothers Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco, with whom he established the aforementioned partnership in London in 1423, he was supported by the Morosini family in his later activities. Two additional (and significant) correspondents were the Constantinople residents Antonio Contarini qd. Marino, of whom ten letters survive, and Giacomo Dolfin's son Dolfino ("simel di fio"⁴⁹), author of the last surviving Romania letter sent to Lorenzo in 1448.⁵⁰

i. The *compagnia* Dolfin: a contractual, family-based commercial enterprise

Lorenzo's partnership with Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco is not only documented in their surviving correspondence. An unnotarized contract about the purchase of a ship in Constantinople, dated 29 April 1428, reveals the ownership structure of their *compagnia*.⁵¹ According to this document, Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfin owned two thirds of the *compagnia*'s assets while the remaining third was held by Lorenzo. The document mentions Vettore Dolfin qd. Francesco, brother of Giacomo and Giorgio, as the buyer of the ship but not as a co-owner of the *compagnia*.⁵² Yet Vettore appears to have been involved in the business. In

⁴⁷ Letter Morosini, Michele qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 14.06.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 1, f. [22].

⁴⁸ Ibid.: "Anchor avixame si avette vendutto la barcha mia che mai non me avette scritto". (More instructions in the following lines.)

⁴⁹ Letter Dolfin, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.07.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [21].

⁵⁰ Letter Dolfin, Dolfino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.12.1448, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [7].

⁵¹ Dolfin, Giorgio qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Declaration, 29 April 1428. 29.04.1428, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [8].

⁵² Ibid.: „Enzio sia che ser Vettor Dolfin fo de miser Franzescho abia conprado una nave in Constantinopoli de laqual el ne da apartizipar charati VIII zoe charati 9 ala conpag<ni>a de ser Lorenzo Dolfin he Zorzi he

1427 and 1428, he wrote two letters to Lorenzo reporting on the compagnia's transactions in Constantinople.⁵³ By then, he had been added as an owner as he included himself in the accounts of his brothers.⁵⁴

While the sons of Francesco Dolfín maintained a business with Lorenzo, they also kept their own separate account, presumably as a *fraterna*. The account sheets handed to Lorenzo distinguish between the property of their joint compagnia and that of “Zorzi Dolfín e fradelli”⁵⁵ (this may also indicate the age hierarchy of the Dolfín brothers, with Giorgio being the oldest and Vettore the youngest).⁵⁶ Documentation of Lorenzo's commercial involvement with the Dolfín brothers in the Romania trade begins with a letter written by Giacomo Dolfín on 10 June 1424.⁵⁷ According to the archival record, Giacomo was Lorenzo's most frequent correspondent with fourteen documents surviving.⁵⁸ His long partnership with Lorenzo spanned various places: he collaborated with Lorenzo's agent Nicolò Bernardo in Alexandria in 1422 and later appeared as Lorenzo's partner in London in 1423 (see above, IV.A). From 1424 onwards, we find him residing in Constantinople, where he eventually became *vice-bailo* fol-

Iachomo Dolfín in laqual el dito ser Lorenzo ne partizipa in un terzo. Chely tocheria charati in el qual ser Lorenzo me a dito a mi Zorzi Dolfín chel dibita chel dito ser Vettor Dolfín non abia conprado la dita nave contra i ordeni de Venexia e per questo el non vorave aver in pazio algun per chaxion de la dita conpreda. E per tanto sia manifesto a cha' da' un che vedera questo scritto come mi Zorzi Dolfín per mio nome he per nome de mio fradeli ser Iachomo e ser Vettor Dolfín fazio seguro el dito ser Lorenzo Dolfín che la dita nave non ne conprada contra i ordeni de Venexia a se chaxio fosse chel fosse cognosudo che la fosse conprada contra i ordeni de Venexia per modo chel dito ser Lorenzo no rezevesse da no algun per la sovadita conpreda. Mi Zorzi Dolfín soradito per mio nome e per nome de i soradity mie fradeli so ubligemo el sia sopra de nui el dito da no vi aseguro el dito ser Lorenzo per la chaxion de la soradita conpreda per questa chaxion solamente. E mi Zorzi Dolfín li o fato questo per sua chrerezia.”

⁵³ These are: letter Dolfín, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [38]; and Dolfín, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [36].

⁵⁴ Letter Dolfín, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [36]: “...che ne partizipa per vostra raxun e nostra...”

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Dolfín, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40].

⁵⁶ Vettore is confirmed as the youngest Dolfín brother in Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.01.1428, ASVe, Documenti Commerciali Riservati (1985), b. 1, 212.

⁵⁷ Letter Dolfín, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁵⁸ Three of those are not contained in the CLD but in Reinhold Mueller's Christie's collection.

lowing the bailo's death.⁵⁹ One of his letters to Lorenzo was written in Tana, where he observed the detrimental effects of smuggling on Venetian investments.⁶⁰ In addition to his brothers and collaborators Giorgio and Vettore, Francesco had a third brother, Nicolò, who is mentioned in several of the letters preserved in the CLD.⁶¹

The business Lorenzo pursued with Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfìn consisted of the sale of various types of European (mainly English) cloth (mainly *pani*) in Constantinople, which at the time was still the principal Venetian trade hub along the Romania route. Vettore, by contrast, appears to have acted as a buyer of Eastern spices in Constantinople on Lorenzo's behalf and was only peripherally involved in Lorenzo's cloth trade.⁶² The sales of the *compagnia* were not confined to Constantinople. Instead, they sought to serve the entirety of the Romania galle route up to the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, where the Tatar princes of the (gradually disintegrating) Golden Horde were still among the foremost buyers of fine cloth.⁶³ The goods were transported on a ship owned directly by the *compagnia*, which allowed for more flexibility in reacting to shifting levels of demand in the Romanian ports compared to the *muda*.⁶⁴ The *compagnia* also made use of other private vessels.⁶⁵ In addition to travelling themselves

⁵⁹ Letter Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.10.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283. Giacomo also informed Lorenzo of the cause of the bailo's death: "El bailo e morto perché non a posudo horinar za zorni 25, aveva un gran chila e a la zorneda e molto plui ingrosada tanto che a le fin he melo. I dio i perdoni."

⁶⁰ Letter Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 31.05.1430, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [11]: "Gerolimo Bedeluto elqual a tolto una naveta de zenerii che contra i ordeni de Venixia pero tute robe son cargade suxo quela son contrabande a Veniexa siché vi avixo pur de qui non a tropo utele che algun non a voiudo dar nula per non meter el suo de per volo una solo a suo cosse et molto alevado per Constantinopoli elqual avesamo abudo tuto siché non voie che simel giotoni vene lui abia a contrafar le leze de quelì da Venexia sie chon Zorzi e voio far dano a lui come a fato a nui."

⁶¹ E.g. letter Dolfìn, Biagio qd. Lorenzo to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 04.08.1419, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [4].

⁶² See e.g. letter Dolfìn, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [38].

⁶³ See chapter II, note 15.

⁶⁴ See the aforementioned contract as well as letters Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.02.1431, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [34] (mentions the ship). Also, the ship purchase is justified in Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 25.01.1428, ASVe, Documenti Commerciali Riservati (1985), b. 1, 212 (previous owner: the *bailo* of Constantinople).

⁶⁵ E.g. the ship of a certain Ludovico Contarini, see Dolfìn, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40].

to the ports of the Black Sea (of which Giacomo's Tana letters bear evidence), the compagnia maintained a network of agents who would handle its sales outside Constantinople.⁶⁶ This network also included members of the wider Morosini clan, Lorenzo's affinal family. A certain Francesco Morosini is mentioned in three letters, while a Giovanni Morosini (presumably the brother of Francesco) is mentioned once, as is a Giacomo Morosini qd. Lorenzo. The latter appears in Giacomo Dolfin's very first surviving Romanian letter to Lorenzo, in which Giacomo reports on his upcoming journey to Bursa during which Giacomo Morosini is instructed to look after the Dolfin's cloth sales in Constantinople.⁶⁷ Francesco Morosini was a similarly loose associate of the compagnia: active as a merchant in the Black Sea, Giacomo mentions him, for example, as their caretaker in Trebizond when he embarked on the journey on the Romania galleys in autumn of 1425.⁶⁸ In a similar letter dated 3 September 1425, Francesco is mentioned in the same context, as Giacomo also portrays him as a victim of a minor credit crunch in Constantinople.⁶⁹ He is further mentioned in combination with his brother Giovanni in a 1431 letter (with attached account) in which they appear as creditors to the compagnia Dolfin.⁷⁰ Their permanent residence was likely in Constantinople, as was the case for members of Lorenzo's affinal family, notably Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino.

The precise family relation between Lorenzo Dolfin and the brothers Giacomo, Giorgio and Vettore Dolfin qd. Francesco cannot be precisely established from the CLD documents. They

⁶⁶ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.12.1432, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [2]. In this last letter, he informed Lorenzo about the death of their agent in Bursa, declaring his intent to travel there to recover their belongings: "La caxion de la mia ocupazion sie che uno mio fattor steva in Bursa he morto he per rechatar le cose nostre che non son poche mi convien andar li."

⁶⁷ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁶⁸ "Anchor ho mandado bale do de nostri bastardi in Trabexonda iqual ho dadi a ser Franzesco Morexini che va de li con questa galie in le dite due bale sie pani 13 de la compagnia e pani 3 de raxon de Zorzi Dolfin e fradeli." Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 001425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [40].

⁶⁹ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 03.09.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283: "In questi di a ser Piero de Grezi avegnado chel sia longo provedera averemo e li dovereno ...o serixandosse aver abudo pegio spazamento de le suo cosse nui non semo soli che abia induxia [...] altra tenpo da suo debitori ve avixo el simel esta in tuti ste marchadanti avixando [ve] che a Franzesco Morexini i resta a scuoder plui de un terzo de suo debitori se sera un pocho longo ... ne pero da dubitarsi de proveder solizetoro plui presto poro de scuoder."

⁷⁰ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.02.1431, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [34].

addressed Lorenzo as “fradello” (which, of course, may also signal a strong personal bond based on social affinity), typically expressed regards to Lorenzo’s mother and wife as well as to other individuals in their shared environment,⁷¹ and conveyed their affection for Lorenzo in powerful language.⁷² The surviving record of their letters is clearly incomplete and hence does not account for the whole duration of the partnership. Giacomo Dolfin’s oldest surviving letter to Lorenzo, the aforementioned document written from Constantinople on 10 June 1424,⁷³ was clearly not their first piece of exchange on the Romania trade. It begins by referencing a previous letter to Lorenzo, followed by Giacomo’s report on the compagnia’s sales in Constantinople and Tana. He appears as a co-owner of a sales venture, not as a trade agent acting on instructions, as he writes about “our” (i.e. his and Lorenzo’s) produce and its likely market yields (“de pani nostri”; “de i gilfordi nostri”⁷⁴). The produce Giacomo sold on the Romania markets correspond to those Lorenzo acquired in London, that is, primarily different types of English wool. In said letter, Giacomo mentions *pani*, *bastardi*, and *gilfordi*. The compagnia was both exporting to and importing from the Eastern markets. While selling English wool in Constantinople and Tana, Lorenzo Dolfin and his partners also acquired spices for sale in Venice, Flanders, and London. The letters of Vettore Dolfin document the compagnia’s export trade. In Constantinople, Vettore loaded the compagnia’s spices⁷⁵ onto

⁷¹ He frequently mentioned a certain Polo Foscari as well as a certain Polo Corner.

⁷² A good example is the last sentence of Giacomo Dolfin’s second-last letter: Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.02.1431, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [34]: “Vi prego non ve destege del mio amor se son stado tropo; anchor per uno altro anno deli beni star.”

⁷³ Letter Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Letter Dolfin, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [38]: “Io si va d’Acho aver chargado sula nave de Piero de Belveder de vostra raxon e nostra pa<rte> e dezera segnadi del segno de la compagnia chosa per 28 lira 6. Oltre è ffo abarato de piper aveva achatado per vostra raxon e nostra chome per altre ve disi savi raxun seguadagna del piper zircha per 6 ho la fati per avantazo de la zera che hora val per 29 lira 12 e plui ho chargado per vostra raxun e nostra chuori 441 nesuno per mita de vostra raxun e nostra l’altra mita de miser Zan Zane e compagnia”; Letter Dolfin, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [36]: “E qu’el nome de dio e saluamento ve dicho aver chargado sula prexenti nave patron Piero de Belveder chori 441 che ne partizipa per vostra raxun e nostra in la mita l’altra mita de misser Zan Zane e compagni.”

ships fitted in cooperation with a venture led by a certain Giovanni Zani (“per mita de vostra raxun e nostra l’altra mita de miser Zan Zane e compagnia”).⁷⁶

The partnership between Lorenzo and the sons of Francesco Dolfin likely ended after 1432, as no further correspondence survives. Yet Lorenzo’s cooperation with this branch of the Dolfin family continued through his collaboration with Giacomo’s son Dolfino who wrote from Constantinople in the 1440s.⁷⁷ It is important, however, to distinguish the mode of cooperation practiced by the *compagnia Dolfin* from both the commission agency and the coalition agency models. Commission agency was a system of instruction generating transactional security through a network of reputation, whereas the *compagnia* enabled commercial cooperation based on a legal entity, much like the *fraterna*, which was supported by the respective personal networks of its owners (individuals such as the aforementioned Giacomo Morosini qd. Lorenzo, who would act as provisional associates or agents). The system of *coalition agency* is still different as it combines the notion of a network of reputation with the mechanisms of capital agglomeration and collective liability inherent to the *compagnia*. Yet, unlike commission agency, the coalition agency model relied on social institutions such as the patrician family to generate individual reputations while, in contrast to the *compagnia*, the agglomeration of investments occurred on a broader, potentially unlimited scope. This family coalition model, which Lorenzo Dolfin maintained with his affinal family, was thus the institutionally most secure form of commercial cooperation. However, it was a socially highly complex arrangement whose successful implementation depended on both a common commercial interest among a given patrician family branch as well as external factors that created incentives for strong intra-family cooperation – for example, by geographically channelling shared commercial interests towards one particular region.

⁷⁶ Letter Dolfin, Vettore qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 18.08.1427, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [38]. This method of pooling must be understood purely in terms of capital agglomeration; it does not reflect a means of hedging against risk in hazardous environments, as suggested by D. Williamson on the basis of thirteenth-century data. Williamson: *Transparency*, p. 6: “Other types of contracts, recognized in this paper as ‘pooling contracts’, are not recognized by the historical literature. In these contracts a group of investors would outfit a vessel and staff it with a team of trading agents. Such contracts, as we will see, were applied in environments that featured extreme physical hazards. They seem to have been applied to contexts in which agents’ survival was particularly threatened. In such contexts, sending out a team of agents rather than a single agent promoted the likelihood of at least one agent surviving and remitting payments to investors.”

⁷⁷ Giacomo Dolfin’s last letter to Lorenzo is Dolfin, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.12.1432, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [2].

ii. The Dolfín-Morosini trade coalition: a non-contractual, family-based commercial venture

In 1433, Lorenzo Dolfín began corresponding with the aforementioned Giacomo Morosini in Constantinople, son of a certain Lorenzo Morosini and thus not an immediate relative of Lorenzo's wife. Between 1437 and 1442, he received letters from his brothers-in-law Giovanni and Pietro Morosini qd. Marino. The latter also wrote from Bursa and Caffa, places where Lorenzo had previously been commercially active during his partnership with Giacomo and Giorgio Dolfín. Lorenzo's most frequent correspondent (judging by the number of surviving documents) was Antonio Contarini qd. Marino, the husband of Lorenzo's sister-in-law Elisabetta, who addressed Lorenzo Dolfín as "chugnado".⁷⁸ Lastly, Lorenzo's archive contains one letter written from his uncle Andrea Gabriel qd. Nicolò from Negroponte in 1431, where Andrea acted as *bailo e capitano*.⁷⁹ The document is purely personal and shows no connection to Lorenzo's commercial interests in the region.

One important caveat with respect to Lorenzo Dolfín's Romania trade is that its geographical focus is not limited to the main ports of the Romania galley route (Corfu, Negroponte, Constantinople, Tana). Other important markets of the Ottoman Empire, such as Bursa and the ports of the Near East, were served by the same commercial network.⁸⁰

Giacomo Morosini qd. Lorenzo, as mentioned above, worked with Lorenzo and the sons of Francesco Dolfín as early as 1424, yet the earliest of his three surviving documents dates from 11 November 1433. This letter, in which Giacomo pledges to oversee the sale of a *balaso* (gemstone) owned by Lorenzo, hints at the death of Giacomo Dolfín qd. Francesco.⁸¹ Following the last document signed by Giacomo Morosini, an account dated November 1434, a three-year gap in the preserved record of Lorenzo's received Romania letters obscures his subsequent Black Sea trade.⁸² From 1437 onwards, Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino appears as

⁷⁸ E.g. Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 13.09.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [33].

⁷⁹ Letter Gabriel, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.12.1431, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [37].

⁸⁰ E.g. Caffa is mentioned in a letter from Constantinople. Letter Dolfín, Giacomo qd. Francesco to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 10.06.1424, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [44].

⁸¹ Letter Morosini, Giacomo qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 11.11.1433, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [46].

⁸² Morosini, Giacomo qd. Lorenzo to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Account, 1434. 001434, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [47].

a frequent interlocutor, writing mostly from Constantinople, twice from Koroni, and twice (1437 and 1439) from Venice.⁸³

Despite changing partnerships and, above all, a steadily changing market environment in the Black Sea region amidst political uncertainties, Lorenzo maintained an intense commercial activity along the Romania route for more than two decades, the documentation of which ends with Dolfino Dolfin's last letter in 1448.⁸⁴ It was chiefly characterised by a flexible strategy of commercial cooperation between well-acquainted individuals. Though Lorenzo cooperated most intensely with members of his extended and affinal families, a system of commercial partnerships based on *a priori* existing social bonds that guaranteed mutual accountability and thus provided maximum transactional security, this family-based commercial coalition also maintained an extensive network of collaborators who would take care of their merchandise in distant locations. While some of its members were permanent residents of the Romanian ports from which they wrote, such as the eventual vice-*bailo* of Constantinople Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco, others travelled on the *muda* for specific commercial purposes.⁸⁵ The sale of cloth, which was the key export commodity from central and western

⁸³ First document: Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6]; last: Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 02.01.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [17]; Koroni letters: Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 05.10.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [29]; Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 21.10.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [41]; 1439 Venice declaration: "Chonzo sia che mi Zan Morexini de miser Marin quondam miser Zuane del mexe d'avosto 1437 siando per partir mi de Veniexia per andar al viazo de Constantinopoli con le gallie de Romania chapetanio miser Zorzi Soranzo. Io si lassi in rechomandixia per vender certe mie veste et chosse a ser Lorenzo Dolfin quondam miser Antonio lequal veste et chosse si fo prima due manteli de scarlato fo drade de panze de schilati; una pelanda da dona de zent'anni a veludado negro con manege; averte v<e>gnolla a l'antiga una pelanda da dona di veludo negro hugnola con le manege; averte una pelanda da dona de pano di seda biancho con manege..." Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Declaration, 20 June 1439. 20.06.1439, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [10].

⁸⁴ Letter Dolfin, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.12.1448, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [7].

⁸⁵ For example, Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino was probably not a permanent resident of Constantinople, as revealed in a *recordatio* issued to Lorenzo in 1437, in which he instructed Lorenzo on transactions to be made on his behalf. Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6]: "Richordaxon fazo mi Zuane Morexini di miser Marrin a vui miser Lorenzo Dolfin fo di miser Antonio conzosia chossa che in bona gratia io vada a Constantonopoli con le prexente galie chapetanio miser Zorzo Soranzo."

Europe to Romania in the outgoing Middle Ages, also constituted the principal business of Lorenzo Dolfín and his partners. Wool was traded mainly from the British Isles and shipped to the ports of the Aegean and Black Seas on both *muda* galleys and private vessels such as the *shipped* owned by Lorenzo Dolfín and his cousins, the sons of Francesco Dolfín. With respect to the cloth trade, Venetian merchants benefited from their position as middle men, since wool-based cloth was principally produced in Northern Europe and distributed via Venice to the south and east. At the time, the English wool industries experienced a major boom, which was driven by the availability of labour and a relative abundance of key resources such as wood and water, and facilitated by the natural advantage of a mild climate.⁸⁶ The developing Venetian textile industry was not ready to compete on the same scale and consequently specialised in luxury textiles such as silk, while Venetian merchants had a lot to gain as buyers and retailers of woollen cloth.⁸⁷ Lorenzo Dolfín's involvement in the Eastern cloth trade must be understood accordingly. With the relative decline of the Venetian maritime rivals during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Venetian merchants rose to become the key distributors of European cloth in the Eastern Mediterranean, which was sold both as a wholesale produce for further processing and (more rarely) in the form of tailored items.

Overall, this situation was rather different from the circumstances faced by Venetian merchants operating in the Mamluk Sultanate a few decades earlier. It was also distinct from the Venetian diaspora towards the end of the fifteenth century, as will become clear from the discussion of the Malipiero sources (see chapter VI below). Venetian merchants in Romania on the eve of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople benefited from a political climate in which political authorities were either too dependent on foreign imports or too weak to levy restrictions on mercantile activity. The Venetian diaspora in Romania consequently developed into a network of politically relevant and economically powerful external territories that, with respect to their internal political structure, replicated the model of the *Serenissima* in that power rested with mercantile elites who exercised their authority in a "Council of Twelve".⁸⁸ Operating as a kinship-based trade coalition was thus an obvious choice for Vene-

⁸⁶ Munro, John H.: "Medieval woollens: textiles, textile technology and industrial organisation, c. 800-1500", in: Jenkins, David (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles I*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 181-227 (here pp. 186-189).

⁸⁷ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 152; Molà: *The Silk Industry*, pp. 3-19.

⁸⁸ For the functioning of a council of twelve (the governing council of a Venetian merchant community on foreign soil) see Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, pp. 67-76; for the Venetian mercantile representation in Constantinople, see Dursteler, Eric: "The Bailo in Constantinople: Crisis and Career in Venice's Early Modern

tian merchants, and the CLD documents suggest that Lorenzo Dolfín's co-operative strategy was in many ways typical for the Venetian Romania trade as a whole. The establishment of specific (both short-term and long-term) partnerships and the pooling of assets in shared accounts; the reciprocal provision of agency services at specific request; and the fostering of flexible commercial cooperations founded on non-economic (i.e. kinship-based) relations, were practices followed by most individuals identifiable in the CLD. The culture of kinship-based agency services, which had replaced the commenda economy of travelling merchants, thus gradually developed into a system with changing residences and flat hierarchies between commercial partners.

The evidence for the coalition-like organisation of Lorenzo Dolfín's Romania trade is two-fold: first, the documentation of the coalition agency model differs structurally from the partnerships involving some kind of commission agency; second, there are positive indications of family-based commercial cooperation along the principles of coalition agency in the correspondence.

In structural terms, commission agents did not maintain joint accounts with their principals, and instead recorded any performed transactions on separate balance sheets (as seen above with the examples of the Renier brothers and Girolamo Bragadin). The same applies to temporary ventures conducted within a *compagnia* framework. Lorenzo conducted his most extensive *compagnia* venture in collaboration with paternal kin, and the structure of their cooperation bears similarities to the Dolfín-Morosini coalition in which it was embedded. Yet, in contrast to commission agency and *compagnia* ventures, a coalition-based commercial partnership did not necessitate the formal separation of accounts. The transformation of individual into collective or coalitional capital – which in the present context may be defined as the permanent pooling of large shares of individual accounts and the interest-free provision of financial capital between coalition members – meant that coalition members were mutually liable. As a result, the archival documentation of Lorenzo's interaction with members of the Dolfín-Morosini coalition does not account for the remuneration of mutually rendered services such as the handling of transactions or the provision of loans. In fact, apart from two papers signed by the clan's patriarch Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni the documentation does not feature any account sheets at all.

Diplomatic Corps", in: *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16 (2001), No. 2, pp. 1-30 (this article deals with the post-1453 period, which saw the position of the Venetian diplomatic authorities in Constantinople strengthened to allow for a diplomatic *détente* with the Ottoman Empire).

While the debt certificates issued by Marino Morosini to his daughter Giovanetta and her husband Lorenzo Dolfin support the notion of coalitional capital, an account sheet signed by the Morosini patriarch, which lists financial obligations between Giovanetta and various Dolfin-Morosini family members, documents the financial interdependencies within the Dolfin-Morosini family coalition.⁸⁹ The document clearly reveals the existence of personal accounts even in the case of married women: for instance, it lists a loan of 10 ducats given to Lorenzo Dolfin by his wife Giovanetta.⁹⁰ The account lists additional financial obligations of Marino himself as well as, among others, Giovanetta's brother Giovanni, her sisters Modesta Morosini, Elisabetta Contarini, and Moresina Pisani, and a number of unnamed individuals.⁹¹ While some of the obligations remain unspecified, most of them relate to financial loans that Giovanetta had provided to or received from other family members.⁹² In neither case do the listed items incur interest or commission payments.

⁸⁹ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin née Morosini, Zaneta: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [8]. Page 3 of this document, which documents a loan of 80 gold ducats from Giovanetta to her father Marino and the sales performed by Marino on Giovanetta's behalf (described in chapter IV.C.ii above), also survives as a copy in the CLD: Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin née Morosini, Zaneta: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [8].

⁹⁰ Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni to Dolfin née Morosini, Zaneta: Account, 1 August 1437. 01.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 3, f. [8]: “ducati 10 di raxiòn di Lorenzo Dolfin quondam miser Antonio contrascryti die dar a di 25 hotubryo 1437 per Zaneta Dolfin xè che la dita Zaneta a dado contadi al dito Lorenzo Dolfin ducati 10...”; all financial obligations, even those referring to loans given in bullion, are expressed in moneys of account (lire/ soldi/ denari).

⁹¹ Ibid.: e.g. “Zaneta Dolfin die dar per una persona che non vol eser mentoada...”/ “[Zaneta Dolfin contra scryta die aver] per una persona che non vol eser mentoada...”

⁹² Ibid.: for instance, a loan to a certain Bianca di Priuli provided by Giovanni Morosini that was guaranteed by Giovanetta: “Ser Zuan Morexini de ser Maryn contra scryto die aver a di 14 mazo 1444 per Biancha di Pryoli xè che Zaneta Dolfin me dise in soa vita che la dita Biancha fo chontrata de star atrior(?) dal dito ser Zuane ducati 8 d'oro che el dito ser Zuane aveva abudo chome apar in so raxiòn e chusi instodi la dita Bianche chonfeso è contento e però io fazo la dita Biancha che la die dar el dito ser Zuane che el die aver per saldar la dita raxiòn...”

TABLE 1: MEMBERS, DOLFIN-MOROSINI COALITION

NAME	RELATION TO LORENZO DOLFIN	RELATION TO LORENZO DOLFIN'S AFFINAL FAMILY	RESIDENCE	NO. OF PRODUCED DOCUMENTS IN CLD ⁹³	TIME SPAN OF PRESERVED CLD CORRESPONDENCE
Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino	Husband of sister-in-law	affinal	Constantinople, Negroponte	9	1432-1444
Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio		affinal	Venice, Vicenza, Padoa	12	
Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò	Uncle	affinal	Venice, Sacile	3	1420-1436
Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino	Brother-in-law	consanguineous	Venice, Constantinople Koroni	10	1437-1443
Morosini, Michele qd. Marino	Brother-in-law	consanguineous	London	27	1441-1446
Morosini, Marino qd. Giovanni	Father-in-law	consanguineous	Venice, Morgan	18	1426-1443
Morosini, Pietro qd. Marino	Brother-in-law	consanguineous	Constantinople, Bursa, Caffa	4	1442-1443
Pisani, Polo	Husband of sister-in-law	affinal	n/a	n/a	n/a

The coalitional capital thus consisted of the aggregated assets of coalition members. In addition to the mutual provision of capital, a second crucial element of the coalition was the mutual rendition of transaction services. The 1437 *recordatio* issued to Lorenzo Dolfin by his brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini exemplifies this coalitional obligation: before embarking on the galleys to Constantinople, Giovanni instructed Lorenzo to sell his remaining Venice stock of processed wool products while giving him full operational responsibility for the sale. Giovanni asked Lorenzo to pay 50 ducats to Giovanni's associates Matteo and Ambrogio

⁹³ Includes documents from the Mueller-Christies collection.

Contarini qd. Nicolò as well as eight ducats to his sister Giovanetta, Lorenzo's wife. Lorenzo was to keep the remaining revenues from the sale while awaiting further instruction.⁹⁴

The (mutual) provision of agency and accounting services – is reflected to the same extent in the letters that Lorenzo received from his fellow coalition members abroad. The same Giovanni Morosini, upon his arrival in Constantinople, informed Lorenzo about the Romania markets and provided specific investment advice.⁹⁵ Coalition agents like Giovanni Morosini would still extract commissions from the turnover they handled, yet any increase in personal wealth would in turn be made available for joint investments – in other words, it would be added to the stock of coalitional capital. In his first letter from Constantinople, Giovanni announced an extended stay, which would leave him with enough time to fulfil his obligations towards his peers. His brother-in-law Antonio Contarini qd. Marino had arranged for him to stay in the house of a certain Nicolò Giustinian for a price of 20 ducats per year in addition to half of the commission payments Giovanni would receive for his transactions. These commissions, however, appear to stem from transactions outside the coalitional arrangement, performed on behalf of third parties. Antonio Contarini, who appears as a senior coalition agent

⁹⁴ Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 8 August 1437. 08.08.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [6]: “Richordaxòn fazo mi Zuane Morexini di miser Marrin a vui miser Lorenzo Dolfín fo di miser Antonio conzosia chossa chè in bona gratia io vada a Constantonopoli con le prexente galie chapetanio miser Zorzo Soranzo. Per chaxòn chome vui save io sio algune me veste di pani sonte che sichò me apar per uno mio liberètò lequal mia intentiòn sie tute sia vendude et per tanto io ve priego charamente quanto a vui e possibile chel non ve sia dafano a prochura de vender le dite. Et chusì io ve priego debie vender tute le dite mie veste che apar per el mio liberètò lequal debie vender per el priexio a vui parerà et far dele dite chosse chome si vostre fosse et chome a vui parerà. In tuto e dol trato dele dite o de quela parte vui vendere debie darper mio nome a ser Mafio e a ser Ambruxo Contarini quondam miser Nicholò per ducati 50 a charlevar proximo che die vegnir. Anchora debie dar a Zaneta mia suor ducati 8 per mi e del resto tignere a pruovo di vui fin che altro ordene io ve darò.”

⁹⁵ Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 22.11.1437, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [32]: “...del vegnir in quà alguna utilità di mie danari non de le mie investite per Venexia miser domino dio me dia mior ve<n>tura. Avixandove che la parso a mio chugnado ser Antonio io abia investido hi mie danari in piper”; Letter Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 28.05.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [43]: “de conditiòn de marchandantia de tuto se fano pocho per eser el paexe in mala conditiòn aza de quello reze le chosse sono pani fiorenze peperì 130 meziane peperì 100 et sone asai pani bastardi per 65 loesti peperì 1...”

and as a supervisor to the newly arrived Giovanni, would pass on specific assignments from third parties to his brother-in-law.⁹⁶

Whereas Giovanni mostly wrote about the textiles trade, Antonio Contarini was an insider to the gemstone market and also performed gemstone transactions for Lorenzo. This activity is documented in all of Antonio's letters, in which he reported on transactions made on Lorenzo's behalf,⁹⁷ as well as in a 1442 *recordatio* that Lorenzo gave to Antonio upon his imminent journey from Venice to Constantinople, in which Antonio was instructed on the sale of two *balasi*.⁹⁸ In sum, Antonio appears as Lorenzo's more crucial mercantile contact in Constantinople, as Giovanni's letters mostly highlight Lorenzo's agency services to Giovanni

⁹⁶ Ibid.: "Son zerto che per ser Antonio Contarini nostro chugnado sarete apièn avixato pur non resterò d'avixarve de quello me achaderà per eser zerto he ve averò con piaxesto a vui et a tuti hi altri. E per obedir el comandamento vostro et de mio chugnado ser Antonio io ho voiuto rimagnir de qui. El dito ser Antonio si m'a acordato con ser Nicolò Justinian a star in chaxa soa et io li debio pagar ducati 20 per spexe de bocha al'ano et apresso el dito ser Nicolò de aver la mitade de le provixiòn dele fazende ne meterà el dito ser Antonio in le man. Credo che per quest'ano seguirò pochà utilidade. Priego Christo me governi e si me prosperi per l'avegnir."

⁹⁷ E.g. Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 16.05.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [15]: "...De vostri ballasi 10 ho seguito ne plui prexio de quello vi disi mai ho posuto avener qui le zolie molto chasati de prexio e pero he de nezesso che mi a dati ordene..."; Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 02.1440, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [19]: "Honorado chome maggiore fradello, la prinzipal chaxon de questa picolla he per avixarvi chome scrivo a Lunardo mio fradello vi dia ducati zento e zinquanta igual se pode induxiati fim a le gallie a domandarlli non possudo induxiar per vostri bisogni e lui dara quanto voretti delqual balasso non ne va digno oltra ducati 32. [...]. Se avetti ne uno ballasso forado e per lla d'ogni sortta pur che non sia fina roba vi conforto mand<e>rati de qui che tegno se venderà ben s'el vostro ballasso fosse stato marro se vendeva molto mellio per raxòn."

⁹⁸ Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio to Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino: *Recordatio*, 29 July 1442. 29.07.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [5]: the gemstones should either be sold for bullion or bartered against commodities that would yield the largest profits on the Venetian market, a task for which Antonio was given full operational responsibility: "...e per atrovame balasi 2 igual ho dexaderyo di vender e di mandar al dito viazo per so ventura igual balasi 2 io ve o dadi che vui li portar con vuy al dito viazo e di i diti pregove prochura di vender in meterli fin ho a dener over a barato di quele chose che fazi per qui chon plui utilidade e mio avantazo ve sia posibel chome se i fosa vostri a rechordandove che barata deli che vui ve inpaze in quele chose che de qui ve parase me posi insir con mior profito...". Antonio eventually sold them for 55 and 48 ducats respectively: "non possando far mellio i dia per ducati 103 zoè uno per ducati 55 l'altro per ducati 48..." (Contarini, Antonio qd. Marino to Dolfìn, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Letter, 22 October 1443. 22.10.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [12]).

rather than vice-versa.⁹⁹ Although Giovanni was clearly involved with the coalition,¹⁰⁰ the rarity of his performed transactions on behalf of others reveals the nature of the coalition as a permanent, long-term arrangement that offered a potential for transaction-specific cooperation, rather than an organisation built for the purpose of a specific commercial enterprise such as the *compagnia*. As a coalition member, Lorenzo was free to use the services of his peers according to their specific skills and his requirements at specific points in time. From the mid-1430s until the mid-1440s, Lorenzo's most significant coalition partners – in terms of services provided to Lorenzo – were Antonio Contarini and his brother-in-law Michele Morosini in London.

C. Social Environment and Senior Years

The coalition was embedded into a wider system of personal networks. Individuals who were part of Lorenzo's personal network, such as his relative Dolfino Dolfin qd. Giacomo (a Constantinople resident), continued to assist him in his commerce. Dolfino wrote about commercial matters while also providing relevant political news.¹⁰¹ Yet, despite the lack of evidence

⁹⁹ Giovanni Morosini confirmed the services provided by Lorenzo in his letters, which illustrate their coalitional relationship in addition to the aforementioned *recordatio* and another document leaving instructions to Lorenzo ahead of one of Giovanni's journeys to Constantinople (Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Declaration, 20 June 1439. 20.06.1439, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [10]: "Chonzosia che mi Zan Morexini de miser Marin [...] siando per partir mi de Venexia per andar al viazo de Constantinopoli [...]. Io si lassi in rechomandixia per vender certe mie veste et chosse a ser Lorenzo Dolfin quondam miser Antonio..."). According to Giovanni's letters, Lorenzo sold (processed) textiles on Giovanni's behalf and managed Giovanni's account with the Soranzo bank (Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 05.10.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [29]: "...Per quella de Mafio Contarini et per la vostra rimagno avixato chome hi avete dato in el banco di Soranzi ducati 25 per mio nome et dite li son hi ducati dela vesta avete vendato lo resto m'avete servito...").

¹⁰⁰ E.g. reporting the sale of brocades from Damascus, which he postponed in order to increase returns by 8 to 10 percent (Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 20.05.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [23]: "...Come ve puol eser manifesto da ser Francesco Querini fo de ser Fantin me fo richomandati 3 peze de damaschini [...] brochati hi dovesse vender o baratar [...] onde li vendi a tempo del retorno dele gallie de mar mazor per miorarli in 2 mexi piui de quello poza far a i conttadi da 8 in 10 per cento"); reporting prices of European textiles in Constantinople (see above, Morosini, Giovanni qd. Marino an Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 28.05.1438, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [43]).

¹⁰¹ An example of Dolfino's description of the situation in the Byzantine empire is in Dolfin, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 17.06.1442, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1,

for his financial involvement with members of the Dolfino-Morosini coalition, his letters still resemble those of a family representative, maintaining a branch of the family business in a distant location.¹⁰² Dolfino provided information about the Constantinople spice market but did not explicitly report on performed transactions.¹⁰³

Although the letters sent to Lorenzo from Constantinople in the 1440s document Lorenzo's continuous involvement in long-distance trade, there is no documentation for the following two decades. It is possible that Lorenzo retired from his trading activities during the final two decades of his life.¹⁰⁴

Unlike his uncle Biagio, who died before reaching the age of fifty, Lorenzo Dolfino lived well into his seventies. His life was typical in the context of the fifteenth-century patriciate in that he gained experience in both commerce and the Republican civil service before taking the lead in ambitious long-distance trade ventures. Equally typical was his long-term investment strategy. In terms of its economic development, Venice was primarily characterised by the expansion and further economic exploration of the *terraferma* in the first half of the fifteenth century. Urban mercantile elites who retreated to the rural parts of Venetia soon created a distinct social class of wealthy landowners with quite differentiated economic interests.¹⁰⁵ Although Lorenzo Dolfino's life and career seem to fit this pattern of gradual retreat, he never settled permanently outside the city of Venice. Rather, Lorenzo's temporary settlements in the

int. 2, f. [20]: "Nuove de qui el signor turcho con el disporti fradel de l'imperador he acordato a desfacion de l'imperador e de Constantinopoli sollo per far signor el dispotti che tegno non su gnea facta alla raxon e no che questa de lo luogo non el s'ofreria mai per dubio del turcho. Avixandovi che el predicto dispotti ogni zorno con el favor de turchi chare suxo le partte de qui che he gram dano a sto luoco per esser tucti i passe de Grettia seradi e Turchia et a vostra informattion l'imperador in sti zorni passatti mando suo ambassadori sollene al turcho iqual rettorno senza far nulla. Tegnando sechondo l'opinion mia la cossa antedicta starmo assai ai zonsse che gran dano sera alla marchadantia."

¹⁰² Lane, *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 120; for branching, see Rubin, Jared: "Bills of Exchange, Financial Networks, and Quasi-Impersonal Exchange in Western Europe and the Middle East", in: Christ, G., Morche, F.-J., Zaugg, R., Kaiser, W., Beihammer, A., Burkhardt, S. (eds.), *Union in Separation: Diasporic Groups and Identities in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1100-1800*, Rome: Viella, 2015, pp. 545-554.

¹⁰³ Letter Dolfino, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 13.03.1443, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [16].

¹⁰⁴ The last Romania letter was written by Dolfino Dolfino in December 1448 (Dolfino, Dolfino qd. Giacomo to Dolfino, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 08.12.1448, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [7]).

¹⁰⁵ Lanaro, Paola: "Flexibilité et diversification comme réponse au risque: les investissements du patriciat vénitien et de la « Terraferma » aux débuts de l'époque moderne", in: *Working Paper, Department of Economics, Ca' Foscari University of Venice* 22 (2008).

terraferma and his eventual investments in *terraferma* real estate should rather be seen as elements of an archetypical patrician career that comprised consecutive stages as diaspora merchant, the pursuit of a *cursus honorum* in the civil service, and the pursuit of long-distance trade from Venice through a network of resident agents and a family-based commercial coalition. In this respect, Lorenzo's life resembles those of other patrician contemporaries, such as Andrea Barbarigo and Biagio Dolfin.¹⁰⁶

Lorenzo Dolfin's personal network served both social and economic purposes. The (extended) patrician family was a pool of support and mutual obligations, which served a variety of purposes well beyond commercial cooperation. This is particularly visible in the way state offices were distributed within patrician networks and executed with the backing of the family environment.¹⁰⁷ A great many of Lorenzo Dolfin's relatives served in official capacity in the *terraferma* and the Venetian overseas territories. When ascending to state service, Venetian patricians could usually count on the support of their kin in conducting their office and for the parallel pursuit of commercial affairs. As camerario of Vicenza, Lorenzo heavily relied on his affinal family in Venice, where his father-in-law Marino Morosini took care of his business interests. In return, Lorenzo supported his relatives who held official positions. The letter by which Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto informed his cousin Lorenzo about his appointment as *podestà* of Sacile is particularly insightful in this respect.¹⁰⁸ Nicolò wrote to Lorenzo (then still residing in Vicenza) to request ornaments, flags, and trumpets that Biagio Dolfin had used during his service as consul.¹⁰⁹

Yet, the commercial dimension remained the most crucial aspect of Lorenzo's personal network during his senior years. Apart from Lorenzo's own temporary residencies in the *terraferma*, an account book provides a glimpse into his investment strategies as a senior. This

¹⁰⁶ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*; Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*.

¹⁰⁷ O'Connell, Monique: *Men of Empire: Power and Negotiation in Venice's Maritime State*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, pp. 57-74.

¹⁰⁸ Letter Dolfin, Nicolò qd. Benedetto to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio, 011.1426, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [45].

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.: "Ve prego orna e bandiere da tronbeta el stendardo elqual fo de vostro barba. E se alguna arma de testa ve atrovese se quello ve piari conse<g>narme e inprestarme azio che quando a vui le bexognase avanti el mio [...] me oferò de mandarvele. E de questo me responder pluy presto che vuy par azio che posando fornirme per lo mezo vostro e posar andar al dito rezimento. Et in caxo che no me pose fornir dele sovrascritte chose [o verde perte dequale avexamente] perché diqua [e me ne] forniria al mio [ch'io po dar] avanti la mia partida."

quaderno of 1467 is at the same time the last preserved CLD document.¹¹⁰ The (single-entry) account book, signed by Lorenzo Dolfín himself, lists the returns from Lorenzo's real estate property. Unfortunately, only the (ripped-off) cover page is preserved with merely two items listed on the back.¹¹¹

D. Wealth and Death

Lorenzo Dolfín was the primary heir of his uncle Biagio, who had left him his entire real estate property.¹¹² In addition, his mother Cataruccia had left him 1000 ducats in state bonds. No testament survives of his wife Giovanetta, who died in 1444. Like his uncle Biagio, Lorenzo Dolfín had no obvious heirs. In his notarised testament, dated 18 July 1474, he appoint-

¹¹⁰ Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: *Quaderno*, 16 November 1467. 16.11.1467, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [14]: “*Quaderno de mi Lorenzo Dolfín fo de miser Antonio in lo qual io scrivero le raxion de i fiti de le mie chaxe da stazio e da sizenti con le spexe per chonzar le dite chaxe con altre spexe per le dite con le qual quaderno si chomenza a di 16 Novembryo 1467.*”

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*: „+ 1467 a di 16 Novembryo in Veniexe

Raxion de resti per el saldar de un libro de fiti de chaxe signado numero 3 per resti terati di el dito libro e portare su que fito die dar a di 16 Novembre 1467 per ser Zorzi Dolfín fo de ser Francescho xe per resto de un raxion de el dito el qual resto contrato de el dito libro signado numero 3 chomo in el dito libro apar a lin 5 horo.....in 2 L.....
Et a di dito per raxion de fiti de le mie chaxe da stazio condasi zente de mia raxion xe per resto de una raxion de la dita el qual resto contrato de el dito libro signado numero 3 chomo in el dito libro apar a lin 41 horo.....in 6 L.....xx”

¹¹² Bonfantin, Vittore de to Dolfín, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: *Testament*, Biagio Dolfín qd. Lorenzo, 27 April 1420. 27.04.1420, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, b. 180, pergamene, p. 59 [MMDD]: “*Item dimitto suprascripto ser Laurentio Delphino nepoti meo meum domum magnam sitam in contracta San Iustine in qua ad praesentem habitat vir nobilis ser Hector Bembo cum omnibus suis hntiis- et pertinentiis ve aporte viri nobilis ser Roberti Maurozeno et mei usque ad domum meam in qua habitat ser Petrus Dolze quaternarius hac conditione que dicta domus ire debeat in descendentibus masculis ipsius ser Laurentii nepotis mei et de sua prole per lineam masculinam usque in infinitum. Et volo quod dicta domus numquam possit vendi dari donari alienari transactari seu pro anima iudicari aut pignorari. Salvo quod volo quod possit accipi dotes super praedictam domus. Item dimitto superscripto ser Laurentio Delphino nepoti meo illam meam domum quam michi dimixit mater mea que fuit de cha Telnige post mortem - suprascripta dominae sororis Cataruzie Momalis monasterii Sancti Iohannis de Torzello liberam et expeditam. Et omnis alias meas domos a sequentibus dimitto eidem ser Laurentio Delphino nepoti meo liberam et expeditas” (transcription by G. Christ).*

ed his nephew Zaccharia Morosini as principal executor. Zaccharia, the son of his brother-in-law Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino, was to act in collaboration with the Procurators of San Marco.¹¹³ The appointment of the procurator *di citra* suggests that Lorenzo resided in Venice in his home parish of Santa Giustina when compiling his will.

The testament is unusually long and thus, as it is the only source providing a detailed account of Lorenzo's possessions, of critical importance for assessing Lorenzo's overall wealth at the time of his death. By contrast, since the document does not mention any relatives apart from the executor Zaccharia Morosini, his deceased parents Antonio and Cataruccia Dolfin and his deceased uncle Biagio Dolfin, for whom Lorenzo requested memorial services, his strategy of inheritance does not provide clues to his late intra-family relations, nor to his cross-generational links.¹¹⁴

A notable particularity is the priority given to charitable donations, which are mentioned in second place right after the extensive list of religious arrangements. Lorenzo asked for requiems to be held in Rome as well as in Venice.¹¹⁵ Lorenzo also endowed several parishes for the construction of altars, among them the Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua. He had distinguished himself as a major sponsor of ecclesiastical art in his later years and had financed the S. Lorenzo triptych of the Bellini school in Santa Maria della Carità,¹¹⁶ where he asked to be buried alongside his wife Giovanetta and his mother Cataruccia.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Testament, 18 July 1474. 18.07.1474, ASVe, Archivio Notarile Testamenti, b. 1240: "MCCCCLXXIII a di XVIII luio in Venexia mi Lorenzo Dolphin fo de miser Antonio de la contrada de San Iustina a Venexia son de la mente e del corpo voio e si ordeno questo sia mio ultimo testamento. Et prima recomando l'amia mia al nostro signor dio. Item lasso mie conmessii i signor procurator de miser San Marco zoe di citra et mio nievo ser Zacharia Morexini fo de miser Zuane."

¹¹⁴ Ibid.: "Item lasso per amor de dio per l'anima de miser Antonio Dolphin mio pate e per l'anima de miser Blasio Dolphin mio barba et per l'anima de madonna Chararuzza Dolphin mia ma<d>re ducati 200 d'oro [...]. E tuti soraditti frari e munege sia tegnudi et obligadi in le soe oration e messe e officii pregar dio per l'anime de tuti tre soraditti."

¹¹⁵ Ibid.: "Et simel a Roma in la giexia dove xè la perdonanza de dir una messa sacramental per l'anima mia."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.: "Item lasso di i fitti de la soraditta proprietade semper et perpetuo ogni anno ducati x d'oro al mio altar de San Lorenzo xè in la giexia de Santa Maria dela caritate xè in Venexia." For a history of the Bellini triptychs of Santa Maria della Carità and Lorenzo Dolfin's financial involvement, see Huse, N., Wolters, W.: *The Art of Renaissance Venice - Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, 1460-1590*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 182.

¹¹⁷ Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Testament, 18 July 1474. 18.07.1474, ASVe, Archivio Notarile Testamenti, b. 1240: "Item voio et ordeno el mio corpo sia seppelido e metudi(?) in la mia archa che xe a lo luogo de Santa Maria di la caritate xe in Venexia laqual archa xe in el dinofero(?) del ditto luogo a coverto in suxo el mirro de

Lorenzo's wealth at the time of his death was considerable and the testament contains monetary grants (held in bullion and state bonds) of more than 7000 ducats as well as a significant real estate property whose yearly yields were allocated to monasteries for charitable purposes. His family property in the parish of Santa Giustina, which were divided into six compounds since 1354, was to be given to the Santa Giustina monastery ("el luogo de San Iustina").¹¹⁸ The testament further mentions six small houses ("caxete") in Santa Giustina which the executors were asked to administer and to rent out for two gold ducats per year to people in need.¹¹⁹ Since there is no mention of the monastery of Santa Giustina in this part of the document, the *caxete* presumably did not belong to the family compound. Two additional houses in the parish of Santa Giustina were to be rented out for the highest possible yields,¹²⁰ to be given to the monastery of Santa Maria della Carità.

Apart from Lorenzo's executors and his deceased relatives, the only individual mentioned in the testament is his servant ("schiava") Maria who was to be freed and granted 20 gold ducats in addition to a yearly pension of eight gold ducats.¹²¹ The rest of Lorenzo's wealth, which was mostly held in state bonds ("imprestiti della camera degli imprestiti"), was given to ecclesiastical institutions. Bonds worth 3000 ducats were allocated to the church and the mon-

la giexia messa a nerto suxo modioni."/ "Anchora el ditto luogo de Santa Maria dela Caridade sia tegnudi et obligado semper e perpetuo de non meter ni far meter ne lassar meter ni ch'el sia metudo algun corpo in la ditta mia archa per algun muodo over integno dapoi sara metudo el mio in la ditta archa e in la ditta al prexente xè quello de mia ma<d>re e de mia moier e semper et perpetuo voio che sia fatto e observado chomo di sora ho ditto et ordenadi."

¹¹⁸ Ibid.: "Item voio e ordeno la mia proprietade messa in la contrada de Santa Iustina de Venexia laqual proprietade xè a pruovo la giexia e lo luogo de Santa Iustina laqual proprietade fo de miser Piero Dolphin e la ditta proprietade fo partida in 6 parte chomo apar per una divusiòn fatta in 1354."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: „Item voio e ordeno semper et perpetuo per amor di dio per l'anima mia le soraditte 6 caxete sia affitade per ducati 2 d'oro l'una a l'anno. E per el ditto prexio de ducati 2 d'oro l'una a l'anno sia dade e darsi se debia a persone che sia bone over de bona fama et che tegna honesta vità zoè a quelle persone che paresse e fosse mazor bisogna e marze."

¹²⁰ Ibid.: „Item voio et ordeno la mia proprietadi messe in la contradi de Santa Iustina da Venexia laqual proprietadi xè do caxe da statio zoè una ha riva e pozo e altana e l'altra ha ortto et pozo. [...]. Item voio semper et perpetuo la soraditta proprietade per i mie conmessery e non per altri sia affitadi per lo plui et mazor prexio se pora e far el meio sia possibile chomo ne ssi mie conmessery apparera. E semper et perpetuo i mie conmessery si debia scuoder et scuoda tuti i fitti de tuti la soraditta proprietade e tuti i dener di ditti fitti sia salvadi e salvar si se debia."

¹²¹ Ibid.: „Item lasso a Maria sorascritta ducati 8 d'oro ogni anno fin che la vuiera. Item lasso a la sorascritta Maria ducati 20 d'oro."

astery (“giexa e luogo”) of Santa Maria della Carità, which, in return, was asked to honour Lorenzo’s memory with a daily mass while displaying the Dolfin coat of arms on Lorenzo’s altar and inside the chapel of S. Lorenzo (“a perpetua memorie”).¹²² Another 500 ducats of *imprestiti* were allocated to the hospital of Santa Maria della Pietà (“hospedal de la pietade”), 1000 ducats in bonds to the *scuola* of Santa Maria dell’Anima. Yet another 2000 ducats of state bonds were put aside partly for the maintenance of the aforementioned two houses in Santa Giustina,¹²³ and partly for distribution, in amounts ranging from ten to thirty ducats, among several Venetian churches and monasteries, including San Francesco della Vigna and San Salvador.

Given the dominance of consanguineous and affinal kin in Lorenzo’s commerce, and the considerable degree to which he himself had been integrated into a comprehensive family environment despite the early loss of his father, the absence of consanguineous heirs in Lorenzo Dolfin’s testament is certainly surprising. The explanation herefore, it can be supposed, primarily lies in the rather long time-span of 30 years between the end of his recorded commercial activities in the 1440s and his death in 1475, as the family-based commercial coalition in which Lorenzo conducted his long-distance trade did not remain pertinent during his retirement. Furthermore, his own childlessness was of significance: the lesser relevance of the subsequent generation of the Dolfin-Gabriel-Morosini clan already during his years of commercial activity suggests that his bonds to his second cousins and the subsequent generation of his affinal Morosini family may have been weaker. Yet the appointment of Zaccharia Morosini as an executor confirms the overall importance of his affinal family.

E. Preliminary Evaluation: The Patrician Family in the Economic Sphere

Lorenzo Dolfin’s business relationships can be grouped into three principal categories. First, he maintained links with close kin, both affinal and consanguineous. This includes his uncle Biagio Dolfin, his cousins Giacomo, Giorgio, and Vettore Dolfin qd. Francesco, and the branch of the Morosini family from which his wife Giovanetta originated. Second, there are long-lasting relationships of trust that partly stemmed from a family relationship of second order (cross-generational partnerships), of which Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea is an exam-

¹²² Ibid.: “...e tegnir se debia semper et perpetuo le mie arme da cha’ Dolphin zoè da tre dolphini al ditto mio altar de S. Lorenzo e a la ditta mia capella.”

¹²³ Ibid.: „...do caxe da statio zoè una ha riva pozo e altane e l’altra a orto e pozo e tute do le ditte caxe xè a imsembre e xè a pruvo le proprietade fo da cha’ Corer...”

ple. Third, there are relationships without exogenous (i.e. not commerce-related) social foundation, as with Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò and Francesco Orsini (commission agency model).

It was Lorenzo's affinal family from which his most crucial arrangement of commercial cooperation emerged, a *family-based trade coalition*. The increasing significance of his affinal family was rooted primarily in the overlaps between his commercial interests and those of his affinal kin. Lorenzo Dolfin's core business model was predicated on re-investing revenues from the spice trade in Northern European textiles, and their eventual sale in Romania. The economy observed in the Dolfin sources was not an agency economy based on bilateral partnerships, as trade relationships served a much broader purpose than the mere delegation of authority. The environments in which the Dolfin-Morosini coalition operated were not particularly hazardous.¹²⁴ On the contrary, markets were framed by public-order institutional structures that minimised risks to individual merchants. The creation of long-term agency coalitions was motivated not merely by a quest for maximising short-term efficiency, but also by long-term economic perspectives that furthered the growth of the coalitional capital and thus offered secure forms of investment to individual coalition members. The patrician family, as observed in the Dolfin sources, was thus of critical importance to the wider Venetian economic sphere by facilitating the creation of commercial coalitions and related personal commercial networks.

¹²⁴ The link between the delegation of authority and operational risk (with delegation an increasing function of risk) has been established by ROIDER, who finds that "only if the exogenous risk is sufficiently large may the risk-neutral principal prefer to delegate authority over decisions to the risk-averse agent", see Roider, Andreas: "Delegation, Risk, and Project Scope", in: *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 165 (2009), No. 2, pp. 193-209.

CHAPTER VI: THE PATRICIAN FAMILY AS AN ECONOMIC INSTITUTION

This chapter provides an analysis of the institutional framework arising from the presented case study. Section A discusses the historiography of late medieval Venetian commerce against the backdrop of recent economic theories of social interaction. It will be shown, on the basis of a comparative discussion of the late medieval *compagnia* and the modern *company*, that neither rational-choice approaches nor sociological theories of the market can adequately account for the social and institutional structure of Venetian commerce (A.i, A.ii). Instead, the historical record shows that the patrician family had *economic* significance *in addition to* its various other social functions (A.iii). Section B illustrates these different roles more closely (B.i) before outlining a new generic model of the patrician family (B.ii). Section C discusses the incentives structures of commercial partnerships; most crucially, this shows how family bonds between commercial partners altered the incentives of individual actors compared to commercial relationships outside of family environments (C.ii, C.iii). Finally, section D introduces two additional historical perspectives from the early and the late fifteenth century respectively. A small body of sources documenting the commercial activities of the Venetian merchants Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero allows for re-contextualising the gained theoretical insights while also serving as a helpful reminder of the distinct complexity of commercial biographies, which can never be fully captured in abstract theoretical models.

A. Private-Order Institutions

Studies on the socio-political significance of the family have produced a wide array of conclusions in different contexts.¹ Italian city republics, fostering quite distinct political and economic environments, were particularly diverse in this respect.²

¹ Greif, Avner: *The Study of Organizations*; Jahnke: *Handelsnetze im Ostseeraum*.

² For the respective roles of the family in various Italian city-states during the late medieval period, see e.g. Crabb, Ann: *The Strozzi of Florence - Widowhood & Family Solidarity in the Renaissance*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000 (part. chapters 4, 5, 8); Hocquet, Jean-Claude: "Solidarités familiales et solidarités marchandes à Venise au XIV^e siècle", in: *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public. 27^e congrès*, Rome, 1996, pp. 227-255; Kamenaga-Anzai, Yoko: "The Family Consciousness in Medieval Genoa: The Case of the Lomellini", in: *The Mediterranean World XIX* (June

The Dolfin sources give grounds to assign significant social, economic, and political roles to the patrician family in fifteenth-century Venice. For both Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin, their family environments were of pivotal importance to their careers. The Venetian context, however, does not reflect a ubiquitous pattern in late medieval and early modern Italy. Scholars of Renaissance Florence, for example, have emphasised a structural distinction between the spheres of family and commerce. Whereas family relations played a major role in the political realm,³ commercial links in the Florentine economy were not typically formed on the basis of family bonds.⁴

By contrast, family structures dominated Venetian long-distance trade in the later Middle Ages and beyond. Venetian business law buttressed this development by facilitating the formation of business partnerships between brothers: the *fraterna* became the predominant economic institution of capital generation (from which female heirs were excluded).⁵ Venetian business history knows many prominent examples of *fraterna*-based business ventures, a notable one being the partnership of Donato Soranzo with his brothers Giacomo, Lorenzo, and Pietro. Their cotton-import business also included non-kin agents in addition to a number of more distantly related family members.⁶

The prominence of extended families in various types of commercial documents indicates that the *fraterna* was an important but by no means the only institutional arrangement of intra-family business cooperation.⁷ Extended families – meaning individuals linked by consanguineous and affinal ties outside the nuclear family, such as cousins and brothers-in-law –

2008); Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane: *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985 (part. Chapter 4).

³ Padgett, John F.: "Open Elite? Social Mobility, Marriage and Family in Florence, 1282-1494", in: *Political Networks Paper Archive Working Papers*, 2009; Padgett, J.F., Ansell, C.K.: "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400-1434", in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 98 (May, 1993), No. 6, pp. 1259-1319.

⁴ Padgett, J.F., McLean, P.D.: "Economic Credit and Elite Transformation in Renaissance Florence", in: *mimeo*, May 2006; Padgett, J.F., McLean, P.D.: "Social Relations in Florentine Markets: Quantitative Evidence from the 1427 Catasto", in: *mimeo*, 1997.

⁵ Pertile: *Storia del diritto privato*, p. 282; Mueller, Reinhold C.: *The Venetian Money Market - Banks, Panics, and the Public Debt, 1200-1500*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 96-110.

⁶ See Donato Soranzo's correspondence with Bernardo Bembo, e.g. ASVe, Misc. di carte non app. ad alcun archivio, b.8, fasc. 1, f. [6].

⁷ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*; Brun: *Francesco Datini of Prato*.

served as platforms for the recruitment of business partners and trade representatives as well as for the creation of general partnerships and coalitions.⁸

Patrician merchants to whom the *fraterna* was not an available option had to pool their investments in other ways. One type of arrangement that was widely used in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries (and that has received considerable attention in the theoretical literature) was the *commenda* contract.⁹ For our period of interest, however, we find no evidence for the lasting significance of this type of contract. The archive of Lorenzo Dolfin, for example, does not include a single document identifiable as a *colleganza* contract, and the mere word cannot be found in any of the documents supporting this study. By contrast, what we do find are references to commissions and *compagnie* with different ownership structures.¹⁰

i. The significance of the *compagnia*

The term *compagnia* had different meanings in the various legal contexts of late medieval Italy. In Venice, the *compagnia* was a legally recognised commercial institution that enabled merchants to combine their respective capital stocks, invest them in joined responsibility, and divide the returns proportionally.¹¹ Ownership could be divided between two or more investors, not all of whom would have to contribute equally. Total capital stocks differed in size, yet it usually was an arrangement that brought together investors of some strength. Capital contribution was imperative for all participants, which was not the case with the *commenda/colleganza*.¹²

Yet not all references to *compagnie* in mercantile sources invoke a formal institutional framework. In the Florentine context, GOLDTHWAITE emphasises the temporary character of

⁸ For definitions of “partner”, “associate”, “agent” see Greif: *Reputation and Coalitions*, pp. 864-865.

⁹ Pryor: *Origins of the Commenda Contract*; also Börner: *Breaking up is hard to do*; for a critical assessment of the scholarly focus on risk-sharing in the context of the *commenda*, see Williamson: *Transparency*.

¹⁰ In Lorenzo Dolfin’s archive, we find occasional references to commission payments, e.g. Gabriel, Benedetto qd. Nicolò to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Recordatio, 22 July 1436. 22.07.1436, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [9].

¹¹ For court recognition, see chapter III.A regarding the Giudizi di Petizion’s ruling on Biagio Dolfin’s “*compagnia delle zoie*”.

¹² However, the taker of the *commenda* would also bring in capital at least indirectly by virtue of his unlimited liability – the *compagnia* might thus be considered a continuation of the same concept: one partner being liable only for the capital he provides, the other travelling with the merchandise and being fully liable for both investments and returns. Also see Hansmann, H., Kraakman, R., Squire, R.: “Law and the Rise of the Firm”, in: *Harvard Law School John M. Olin Center for Law, Economics and Business Discussion Paper Series 546* (2006).

the *compagnia* and distinguishes its structure from modern-day companies: “Florentines conducted their business activities as a *social enterprise* organized by *compagni* and called a *compagnia*.”¹³ The Florentine *compagnia* combined capital from different contributors for a contractually agreed temporary venture, which in Goldthwaite’s estimate typically lasted up to five years.¹⁴ In these and other respects (e.g. contracts did not have to be notarised¹⁵), Florentine and Venetian *compagnie* were similar in outlook. According to ASTUTI, the Venetian *compagnia* was derived from the bilateral *commenda/ colleganza*, which (with the *unilateral commenda/ colleganza*) was one of two forms of the *commenda/ colleganza* contract in Venice.¹⁶ Whereas the unilateral *commenda/ colleganza* allowed for capital shares between *stans* and *tractator* of up to three quarters to one, the bilateral version asked the *tractator* to contribute a more significant share of up to one third. As noted above, this resembled the *compagnia* structure where all owners had to contribute a significant share of the capital stock. The *compagnia* thus combined the entrepreneurial flexibility of the *commenda/ colleganza* with the institutional security of the *fraterna* while also extending the scope of potential partnerships, which no longer had to be based on nuclear family structures.

In the course of his commercial career, Lorenzo Dolfin participated in numerous trade partnerships of various durations and for various purposes. Although his commercial network was partly based on the commercial links previously established by his uncle Biagio and hence was to a certain degree cross-generational, this continuity did not apply to his specific commercial pursuits. His achievement lay in creating and augmenting wealth through the pioneering of a new social sphere of Venice- and *terraferma*-based corresponding merchants, not in establishing *a lasting firm*.

Given the difficulty of categorising medieval business units according in modern terminology, the institutional analysis of the *compagnia* presents a major theoretical challenge. In particular, its functioning within finite horizons and under the simultaneous direction of several partners (who may otherwise have divergent economic interests) raises important questions regarding incentives, contractual enforcement, and strategic behaviour. These particularities

¹³ Goldthwaite, Richard A.: *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 64 (first italics mine, second and third his).

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 65.

¹⁵ Ibid.; the surviving partnership contracts setting up *compagnie* are not notarised documents.

¹⁶ Astuti, Guido: "Le forme giuridiche della attività mercantile nel libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (1436-40)", in: *Annali di storia del diritto* 12-13 (1968-69), pp. 65-130 (here especially pp. 69-70ff.).

can be highlighted by using our contemporary understanding of a commercial firm as a reference point.

ii. The *compagnia* in theoretical perspective

The first and foremost characteristic of modern-day companies is their recognition as a distinct legal entity. Second, the ownership structure of a modern firm can change without altering its general dispositions. Third, it operates within infinite time horizons. Finally, it comprises a much larger set of organisations, established for various purposes, whereas medieval *compagnie* were formed primarily for trade.

- (1) Economic theories of the firm make an institutional distinction between a company and the market in which it operates. The transaction costs approach, pioneered by COASE, postulates the necessity of the firm as a consequence of the costs involved in market exchange.¹⁷ According to this, all costs incurred in transactions – from the costs of gathering information to the costs of enforcement – can be reduced or even avoided through internalisation.
- (2) From the recognition of the firm as a legal entity results the possibility of a changing ownership structure. That is, ownership can be transferred from one person to another without altering the characteristics and/ or the general purpose and operational framework of the organisation. It operates within infinite time horizons, in contrast to the medieval Venetian *compagnia*, which was meant to exist for an a priori determined finite period. A transfer of ownership would therefore not have been a sensible or desirable option in any circumstances. Consequently, the *compagnia* and its owners were not legally distinguishable.
- (3) The time factor has a direct impact on commercial cooperation, as strategic decisions depend to a significant extent on the time horizons under which they are taken. Game-theoretic modelling demonstrates that strategic behaviour changes in time-restricted games, where opportunism typically increases with time.¹⁸ In infinite-horizon games, by contrast, players are continuously incentivised to demonstrate commitment. (One would expect the medieval *compagnia* to have faced severe commitment problems during the final stages of cooperation. Awareness of

¹⁷ Coase: *The Nature of the Firm*. Also, Coase, Ronald H.: "The Nature of the Firm: Influence", in: *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 4 (Spring, 1988), No. 1, pp. 33-47.

¹⁸ Farrell, J., Maskin, E.: "Renegotiation in repeated games", in: *Games and Economic Behavior* 1 (Dec., 1989), No. 4, pp. 327–360; Gibbons, Robert: "Trust in Social Structures: Hobbes and Coase Meet Repeated Games", in: Cook, Karen S. (ed.), *Trust in Society - Volume II in the Russell Sage Foundation Series on Trust*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001, pp. 332-353.

this problem might therefore have been a cause of the emergence of private-order institutions based on exogenous social factors, such as kinship-based coalitions.)

- (4) The *compagnia* in (late) medieval sources was thus a partnership created for the purpose of augmenting a given capital stock through trade. Outside long-distance trade, these entities were also formed in lending and even by petty Rialto merchants to diversify their sales.¹⁹ While the practice of creating economies of scale by pooling capital was thus also applied in other sectors, the medieval *compagnia* was less universal a phenomenon than its modern counterpart, which is the default commercial entity in all domains of business. Most crucially, the modern firm is not based on short-term contracts.

Our analysis indicates that a dichotomical understanding of institutions, separating them in formal and informal social phenomena respectively, does not fit the contexts of medieval trade and the gradual evolution of the firm. The Venetian *compagnia*, as it appears in commercial correspondence and court files, encompasses both formal and informal elements. As we have seen, partnerships were not typically formed between strangers. Both Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin primarily worked with relatives and specifically-selected non-kin individuals. These cooperations thus relied on *a priori*-existing systems of trust that were exogenous to contractual dispositions, i.e. they existed independently of the commercial sphere. In addition, partners mutually assured their commitment in unnotarised documents that amounted to nothing substantially more than a handshake (but could nevertheless serve as valid proofs in court). These are the informal dimensions of the medieval trade company.

There are, however, formal dimensions that impede the *compagnia*'s classification in a Northian framework. These have to be understood in the specific context of the Venetian legal system, which in itself presents a challenge to institutional analysis. The *Giudici di Petition*, the Republic's litigations tribunal, frequently admitted informal documents as evidence (such as letters or unnotarised contracts). An informal partnership agreement could thus be elevated to the status of a legally recognised organisation, that is, the state could, if necessary, act as a third-party enforcer of both contractual and informal agreements.

The Venetian *compagnia* was thus neither a formal nor an informal institution. It was a commercial arrangement enabled to a crucial extent by exogenous social forces and supported by

¹⁹ The Rialto pharmacist Agostino Altucci, whose account books provide insights into the integration of foreigners to the Venetian marketplace, formed such a partnership with the Venetian merchant Pietro de Bezzi. See Mozzato, Andrea: "Die Gewürze eines Fremden - ökonomische Integration und kommerzielle Tätigkeit eines Aretiner Apothekers im Venedig des Spätmittelalters", *mimeo*, 2011.

public-order means of enforcement. Hence our context requires a less categorical framework, one that allows for a broader set of parameters to determine the characteristics of social and political institutions. Here again, GREIF's notion of institutions offers a first means of systematisation.²⁰ Greif's approach is inclusive in the sense that it attempts to classify all dimensions of social cooperation within a single, continuous framework without discriminating between incrementally emerged or suddenly created institutional phenomena. The distinction between private-order and public-order institutions (i.e. those structuring interaction between non-state actors and those established by political authority²¹) is nevertheless recognised. Greif's own use of this framework to establish a rational-choice cultural theory of economic development in the context of medieval Mediterranean trade also provides an important link to the literature on economic embeddedness, which is often seen as a theoretical antagonism.

iii. The institutional role of the family

The idea that all economic exchange is embedded in collective social systems that are exogenous to individual agency does not seem far-fetched. Yet it presents an obvious challenge to rational-choice approaches, which regard economic outcomes as resulting primarily from individual preferences. GRANOVETTER regards economic behaviour as being channelled by social systems.²² BECKER has shown how individual behaviour aggregated by systemic forces can give rise to collective institutions such as markets.²³ The context of late medieval Venetian long-distance trade fits these propositions, since the case study of Lorenzo Dolfin highlights the economic significance of family relations. Family ties frequently correlated with economic links, to the extent that the Venetian economy can be said to have been structured by *personal* as opposed to *anonymous* markets. Yet the increasing diversification of individual commercial strategies over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries raises questions regarding the significance of individual decisions. Merchants indeed formed links for specifically economic purposes, yet the social range of these relations overlapped with the confines of other spheres, such as the family.

²⁰ See above, chapter I.A.

²¹ Greif: *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*, pp. 29-55.

²² Granovetter, Mark: "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness", in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 91 (Nov., 1985), No. 3, pp. 481-510; also Nee, Victor, Ingram, Paul: "Embeddedness and Beyond: Institutions, Exchange, and Social Structure", in: Brinton, M.C., Nee, V. (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Sociology*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 19-45.

²³ Beckert, Jens: "Die soziale Ordnung von Märkten", in: *MPIfG Discussion Paper* 07 (May, 2007), No. 6.

In the way of a schematic model, we can describe the operational structure of fifteenth-century Venetian long-distance trade in the following way: Venetian merchants operated on well-integrated markets. The dynamics of Venetian society were channelled, through institutional design, to serve the economic interests of the Republic and the patriciate in particular. As the mercantile sphere was essentially congruent with the political sphere, economic institutions were politically not difficult to create. This form of endogenous institutional change was fundamental to the creation of both public- and private-order institutions.²⁴ On the macro-level, commerce was enabled to a significant extent through the *muda* system, which in turn was boosted through intricate institutions of capital generation such as the public auctioning of galleys. Micro-institutional arrangements, such as the types of legally prescribed partnerships examined above, served as a legally enforceable means to establish and terminate commercial relations. Yet, in addition, private-order institutions were used to prevent opportunistic behaviour. Merchants made use of the family not only as a source of additional capital; it also served as a system of enforcement. The organisation of long-distance commerce as cross-generational enterprises, and the resulting individual advantages of being part of this arrangement, meant that there existed a system of institutional enforcement that was independent of the state. Lorenzo Dolfin – lacking a strong nuclear family surrounding – built a strategic network of family relations that eventually developed into a commercial coalition. He made extensive use of it during his early undertakings in London and Flanders, and later along the Romania galley route.

B. Which Model of the Family?

Lorenzo Dolfin's commercial career and personal surroundings were supported by a family environment with flexible boundaries. Since Lorenzo was a half-orphan from an early age and without siblings, the most common Venetian family-based commercial arrangement, the *fraterna*, was not available to him. Instead, he had to rely on a more loose family-based network, which, at the beginning, was deduced from the commercial surroundings of his uncle Biagio, thus entailing distantly consanguineous, affinal and selected external ties. Eventually, the family of his wife Giovanetta Morosini became a crucial source of support to his commercial ambitions, while the advice of his maternal uncles Benedetto, Andrea, and Michele Gabriel qd. Nicolò were critical during the years preceding his marriage. Other members of the wider Dolfin clan, like the brothers Giorgio, Giacomo, and Vettore Dolfin qd. Francesco

²⁴ Greif and Laitin: *Endogenous Institutional Change*.

were included into Lorenzo's personal commercial network. By contrast, the lack of non-kin components of the network is remarkable. In fact, it is the most crucial difference between the commercial surroundings of Lorenzo Dolfín and those of his uncle and mentor Biagio. While a number of individuals in Biagio's commercial network can be categorised as non-kin, hardly anyone (the aforementioned exceptions notwithstanding) in Lorenzo's circles can be said to have had no kinship links to Lorenzo.

iv. Social functions: the personal and the public

The example of Lorenzo Dolfín shows that existing social-scientific categories of family structure and systems of descent do not satisfactorily describe the fifteenth-century Venetian patriciate. Sociological concepts such as "nuclear", "extended" and "affinal" families, although visible components of the patrician family, fail to account for the observable realities of patrician family life. The mere need to invoke such a large variety of types suggests that an entirely new model may be required, one that is specific to the given context.

One way in which to illuminate the fundamental difference between contemporary (Western) understandings of the family and those prevalent in the patriciate of late medieval and early modern Venice is to look more closely at the social functions of the family. This necessitates a recognition of the *personal* (or *private*) spheres that gradually emerged with the beginning of the early modern period. The family as a bastion of the personal life that is distinct from professional/public activities (e.g. commerce and state service in the present context) developed amidst long-term shifts in social organisation, intellectual environments, and not least spatial dispositions in urban structure and architecture.²⁵

The notions of the public sphere and the "private versus public" dichotomy, however, are of limited use in the present context, as many of their implications specifically regarding the emergence of a *public sphere* out of a *sphere of representation* place a too heavy emphasis on the western- and central-European revolutionary age and fail to account for similar yet much earlier processes in the European periphery. In the Venetian patriciate in particular, the relationship between the "personal sphere" or "the family" and the "sphere of representation" was an ambiguous one, as the representation of the family necessarily had a political connotation. Hence, the social functions of the family were both personal and professional/ public,

²⁵ Habermas: *Strukturwandel*, pp. 90-107 (emergence of a discursive public), 109 (architectural ramifications of the developing public sphere). For public functions of the patrician *casa*, see Fortini Brown, Patricia: *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 23-52.

i.e. commercial. The Venetian patrician family, as exemplified by Lorenzo Dolfin and his personal environment, consisted of three core elements:

- (1) first, it gave room to a personal sphere, an environment of trust and affection, and transmitter of values and traditions across generations;
- (2) second, it was a tool of social representation;
- (3) finally, it was an economic entity, a basis for commercial enterprise with respect to generating of skills, personnel, and capital.

This particular combination of social functions was specific to Venice and cannot easily be extended to other Italian city states. In Florence, a Venetian ally and likewise a patrician-dominated society, only the first two were determinants of patrician family structures. The characteristics of the Venetian family as a social, political, and economic institution, however, are not pertinent to the Florentine context. As discussed above, Florentine merchants, in contrast to their Venetian counterparts, tended to separate their personal and commercial environments.²⁶ A similar case can be made with respect to Milan and, to a lesser extent, Genoa.²⁷ Yet most importantly, only element (1) survives in the contemporary understandings of the family that give rise to prevailing sociological categories. The historical analysis of (family-based) Venetian long-distance trade thus requires a reconsideration of both the institution of the family and the social-scientific tools to approach it.

v. A new model: the comprehensive family

Although it seems uncontroversial to assert that modern sociological categories of the family (such as the nuclear family, the extended family etc.) do not accurately fit the late medieval Venetian patriciate, this research shows that various existing concepts can be used to describe different sub-structures of the patrician family. Ultimately, the patrician family must be identified as a “clan” or, in its extended form, as a “comprehensive family”. These two models, however, consist of various sub-categories, each of which may have been relevant at specific stages of a patrician mercantile life (some of them more than others, and of course not all of them were pertinent to the patriciate as a whole). Specifically, this study has identified the

²⁶ Padgett and McLean: *Social Relations*; Weissen: *Machtkämpfe und Geschäftsbeziehungen*.

²⁷ Hughes: *Urban Growth*; Kamenaga-Anzai: *The Family Consciousness*. Also see Greif, Avner: "On the Political Foundations of the Late Medieval Commercial Revolution: Genoa During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries", in: *The Journal of Economic History* 54 (Jun., 1994), No. 2, pp. 271-287.

following layers of family structure, which, building upon each other, eventually result in a structure that may be called the *comprehensive family*:

- **Nuclear family** – this is defined as the basic bi-generational unit of family organisation, consisting of parents and their direct descendants. Although not identifiable as a relevant family unit in Venetian society in the period under investigation and beyond (indeed, the nuclear family as a dominant form of family structure is a very recent phenomenon that gradually occurred in affluent societies over the course of the twentieth century) the nuclear family is relevant to Venetian business history as the basis of the *fraterna*. The *fraterna* was a legal arrangement allowing brothers to commonly administer their inheritance and to invest their shared capital as a joint enterprise. As shown below, Donato Soranzo cooperated with his brothers on the basis of a *fraterna compagnia* throughout his mercantile career. In Lorenzo Dolfín's case, however, the nuclear family is not a relevant category. In order to enlarge his capital stock and broaden his commercial expertise, he had to establish links within an extended family environment.
- **Extended family** – this (cognatic) family structure is defined as a generational extension of the nuclear family, that is, the descendants of the nuclear family's second generation interact with each other along both patrilineal and matrilineal lines. The resulting co-operative arrangement is at least tri-generational (grandparents, children, and grandchildren who interact as cousins) and potentially even larger if it involves cousins of second, third etc. order. In the case of Lorenzo Dolfín, the extended family was predominant in providing initial social and economic links. During his years as a commercial apprentice, Lorenzo was mentored by his uncle Biagio and also received support from his maternal family (the Gabriel). In his early years as an independent merchant, he cooperated closely with both maternal and paternal cousins. Yet Lorenzo's early interaction with his extended family environment was by no means untypical for young Venetian patricians of his time. Lorenzo may have used his extended family more intensively for the purpose of capital accumulation than other contemporaries; however, patrician cooperation beyond the nuclear family was a ubiquitous phenomenon. For this reason, the extended family model dominates scholarly discussions of Venetian patrician family relations.
- **Affinal family** – identifying the “marital family” as “affinal family” is particularly meaningful in the Venetian context, as marital links were often formed in consideration of both family history and political and economic strategy (see below for “strategic coalitions”). This led to marital links between patrician families being repeated and thus reinforced in subsequent generations. Previously established inter-family contacts, including contacts of a purely commercial nature, were also potential factors on which marital links were formed. The Morosini clan into which Lorenzo Dolfín married in 1425 had maintained prior relations to Lorenzo's branch of the Dolfín fam-

ily, as Lorenzo's uncle Biagio had represented members of the Morosini family as trade agent in Damascus in 1404.²⁸ Lorenzo's marriage can thus be seen as resulting (partly) from inter-family politics. In addition, marrying Giovanetta Morosini also brought significant economic and strategic advantages, as Giovanetta's wealthy family vested Lorenzo and his wife with a considerable dowry.²⁹ More importantly, the Morosini family had vast expertise in the Black Sea trade along the Romania galley route, which benefited Lorenzo's own cloth and spice trade. Thus, the commercial orientation of his affinal family, some of whose members resided in the Venetian quarter of Constantinople, both influenced Lorenzo regarding his future investments and enabled him to trade in a more secure environment. The economic significance of the affinal family should not be overestimated on the basis of this individual example; however, the intensity with which Lorenzo cooperated with his marital relatives strongly suggests that economic considerations were constitutive to the marital link. In other words, the Dolfin-Morosini cooperation was a means of expanding the (extended) family, adding a strategic dimension to family politics.

- **Family cluster** – in combination, the extended and affinal families created a family cluster in which consanguineous and affinal ties were maintained or formed along ambilineal, matrilineal, and patrilineal lines. The practice of widening inter-family cooperation beyond the extended family is particularly visible in the case of Lorenzo Dolfin, resulting from the broad similarity of his commercial pursuits and those of his affinal family. However, family clustering was a common phenomenon in the Venetian patriciate; it was not restricted to the commercial sphere, as marital links between families frequently were exploited for political and social causes as well.³⁰ The extent to which Lorenzo's extended and marital families were intertwined is nevertheless remarkable, as it is a direct consequence of his status as an orphan. Members of his extended family supported Lorenzo not only in his early commercial undertakings, but also appeared as his legal sponsors in the context of his marriage, where his maternal uncles Andrea and Benedetto Gabriel qd. Nicolò acted as his guarantors.³¹
- **Strategic cross-generational family coalition** – the example of Lorenzo Dolfin poignantly reveals the strategic character of patrician family clustering. Marital links were not formed at random, but usually extended prior inter-family links. Lorenzo Dolfin's marriage contract, as a case in point, not only documents procedural stipula-

²⁸ Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 104.

²⁹ da Pozo, Benedetto qd. Domenico to Dolfin, Lorenzo qd. Antonio: Marriage contract between Giovanetta Morosini and Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio. 29.01.1425, ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [46].

³⁰ E.g. during *Balla d'oro* applications (see Chojnacki: *Kinship Ties*) or in processes of social cooperation in the Venetian *scuole grande* (Mackenney: *Tradesmen and Traders*, pp. 44-77).

³¹ Note 29.

tions such as the payment of dowries; it also highlights the role of Lorenzo's nuclear and extended families (referencing Lorenzo's mother Cataruccia and her brother Benedetto Gabriel qd. Nicolò). Yet the inclusion of marital relatives as equal members of the family environment was by no means the only strategic aspect of patrician family politics. Family-based cooperation in the economic sphere was neither unavoidable nor compulsory; instead, such partnerships were formed for specific purposes and often for a finite period. Yet, contrary to cooperations between families, they were constantly available, subject to fewer institutional constraints, and thus comparatively easy to establish. Purposes of cooperation could be educational (training of young patricians, e.g. Lorenzo acting as Biagio Dolfin's agent in Venice during Biagio's consulship in Alexandria), transaction-specific (e.g. the forming of a *compagnia* for the purpose of capital accumulation and risk-sharing for a single venture), or long-term (e.g. forming of commercial bonds for the cross-generational transmission of wealth and market skills). The option of forming intra-family commercial links within the extended family was available at all times, yet actual cooperation typically occurred as a result of strategic choices. The family cluster acted as a sphere of internal order and regulation on the basis of which strategic coalitions could be formed. In their most robust version, these were cross-generational bonds that ensured continuity in a family's commercial orientation.

- **Clan** – this study defines “clan” as the entirety of the hitherto listed layers of family structure: nuclear family, extended family, affinal family, family cluster, strategic family coalitions. This definition is more comprehensive than others that tend to identify a patrician clan as an “extended family” in the above sense, typically with matrilineal and patrilineal inputs on equal terms. However, the present context provides grounds for extending existing definitions, as the family-based economic cooperations of both Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin also included their extended and marital families. Lorenzo Dolfin's particular situation as an orphan explains his greater need to cluster different kin relations that remained separate in other cases. For example, the strategic choices of Donato Soranzo focused more exclusively on his extended (and nuclear) families (see below). The potential for wider family-based cooperation, however, was not confined to the Dolfin and Morosini families; it was an option to be used whenever cooperation with closer kin was not possible or less efficient.
- **Constructed family** – an additional layer of family interaction is given by the inclusion of outside individuals to the family (cluster) on the basis of social affinity, a similarity of names, or as a result of strategic commercial alliances. The inclusion of outsiders to family-based commercial networks often was essentially akin to an elevation to family status. Biagio Dolfin's commercial partners Nicolò and Pietro Bernardo qd. Francesco, for example, continued to interact with Lorenzo Dolfin after Biagio's death; Biagio's partnership with Leonardo Dolfin in Crete exemplifies inclusion on a

namesake basis.³² The constructed family captures the linkages between family and commerce, or, more specifically, between family relations and economic networks. It explains the composition of family-based mercantile networks and the re-occurrence of the same non-kin individuals (or their descendants) across mercantile generations.

- **Comprehensive family** – as an extension of the (redefined) patrician clan, the comprehensive family shall be proposed as a new integrative model of family structure. It shifts the focus to the systemic structure of Venetian mercantile networks, which were composed of kin (individuals belonging to the clan) and non-kin (skilled agents who were integrated to the family structure on the basis of social affinity). The economic dimension of the patrician family (as reflected in the structure of trade networks) and its social foundations conditioned each other. Understanding the composition of Venetian mercantile networks, i.e. the rationale behind the selection of partners and agents, thus requires an appreciation of how the patrician family was perceived, practiced, and socially constructed.

This multi-layered model of the Venetian patrician family is intended to account for different stages of a patrician mercantile career. The relative significance of each layer depended on personal circumstances and, more generally, on life stages. Nuclear and extended families were of particular importance during a young patrician's mercantile education and for supporting their early political aspirations. By the same token, a clan that included the marital family, and a comprehensive family that included non-kin, were a basis of support during a patrician merchant's rise to seniority, as they provided additional opportunities for investments, cooperation, and the transmission of knowledge and skills. The comprehensive family in particular allowed patrician merchants to establish flexible links with their peers and to devise forms of mercantile cooperation according to their specific commercial needs. As all of the components of a comprehensive family structure were subject to an internal hierarchical order, the pre-determined structure of social cooperation could be directly transferred to the commercial sphere, thus providing a basis of security and trust on which economic cooperation could thrive. There thus existed a straightforward rationale behind the establishment of family-based mercantile coalitions: to exploit the social enforcement of a hierarchical family structure for minimising the costs of economic transactions. The enforcement mechanisms provided by social institutions such as the patrician family, combined with the individual advantages of being part of a comprehensive patrician family, added a degree of transactional efficiency to long-distance trade that likely could not be matched by formal legal stipulations. Family-based mercantile coalitions thus exemplify possible efficiency gains through internal

³² Christ: *Trading Conflicts*, p. 98.

transactions rather than market transactions (in this case, the market of external agency services through which links were formed with no relation to pre-existing social structures).

C. Analysis: Commission Agency vs. Family Representation

The unique structure of the Venetian patrician family generates a particular interest in its dynamics in the commercial sphere. Following descriptions of the layers of a patrician family, the degrees of solidarity between its various branches, and the forms of commercial cooperation between different degrees of kin, we can add an analytical perspective to inquire into individual incentives within the proposed model of family structure.

i. The role of incentives

Thus far, a number of factors have emerged to explain the significant economic role of the Venetian patrician family: the decline of the travelling merchant and the rise of capital markets; the social consolidation of the patriciate, unrivalled in Europe for the volume and geographical spread of its long-distance trade; the interwovenness of political and economic interests resulting from the role of the largely (but not exclusively) trade-oriented patrician class as political elite.

However, the question about individual incentives is yet a different matter, for it primarily concerns the social equilibrium of intra-family cooperation. Modelling intra-family dynamics from an individual perspective can help determine the conditions under which the observed family structure was stable. This, in turn, can shed light on the potential benefits of cross-clan cooperation and the possible need for a restructuring of mercantile networks, including the switch from kin to non-kin agents and vice versa. The above model of the patrician family – which spans across the aforementioned three elements of a personal sphere, a sphere of social representation, and an economic entity – is a dynamic rather than a static proposition: cooperation within the family was intensified or reduced in line with individual needs, and individual actors were added or excluded accordingly. The “chosen” component of the family structure was not peripheral, but a critical tool particularly with respect to the family’s economic dimension.

Individual incentives within the given family model can be examined by looking at how decisions of intra-family (intra-clan) economic cooperation were made. Economic cooperation within the patrician family may have differed from cultural/ traditional factors or political incentives that were foundational to family solidarity in other spheres. Explaining the economic

significance of the patrician family first requires comparing family-based networks to alternative arrangements, thus determining the conditions that favoured the family as an operational framework. Hence, we ask

- (1) why the commercial careers of young patricians started within family structures;
- (2) why these structures typically remained intact for the duration of a patrician commercial career; and
- (3) which specific benefits this system of cooperation yielded to the individual actor in a commercial coalition.

As Lorenzo Dolfín maintained business ties almost exclusively with relatives, the distinction between kin and non-kin incentives is less obvious in his commercial network. His uncle Biagio, by contrast, had commercial links with both kin and non-kin partners. For this reason, we shall first derive a model of individual incentives on the basis of Biagio's commercial network, before discussing its applicability in the case of Lorenzo Dolfín. It will then be possible to explain the prominence of Lorenzo's affinal family in his commercial environment. Though Lorenzo may well have maintained a greater variety of commercial contacts also outside his family, his affinal family in particular was undoubtedly a critical base of support in his Romania trade during his senior years.

ii. Monetary and non-monetary payoffs

Biagio Dolfín's correspondence with his family representatives and his non-kin agents reveals two distinct types of principal-agent relationships.³³ The different underlying incentive structures result from the respective economic characteristics of the agents. Non-kin agents were not part of a family enterprise and thus had separate economic interests in a given transaction. They were market experts, sought for their market-specific skills in monitoring prices, exploiting price optimums, or judging the quality of goods. By contrast, family representatives were part of the family venture, and their incentives are not separable from those of the principal. They were entrusted with supervising transactions because of their kin relation to the principal and their thence assumed trustworthiness. Their involvement in the venture, although based on prior social ties, can thus nevertheless be explained economically.

³³ Richter and Furubotn: *Neue Institutionenökonomik*, p. 173.

In a standard network formation game, links between nodes are established or deleted according to the decisions taken by the respective agents (represented by nodes).³⁴ Agents establish links to other nodes in a network if these are likely to increase their payoffs. They delete links if the costs of maintaining them exceed the expected economic benefits. For example, a principal establishes a link (a partnership) with a trade representative in a distant location if the expected gains (e.g. from reduced transaction costs) exceed the agent's commission pay (or the opportunity costs of providing similar services to the agent).³⁵ Similarly, they delete this link if these conditions are not met or if the agent turns out to be a cheater.

How, then, do the two types of agents maximise their payoffs? As this study has shown, non-kin agents maintained transaction-specific links to the principal. They had a reputation for market-specific skills and reliability. Thus, their expected utility is the value of their commission pay, which can be represented as a generic function such as

$$(1) \quad E[U(w_a)] = p_t(r_a, k_h)$$

where the left-hand side of the equation is the agent's expected utility of wealth, p_t is the time-dependent stream of commissions, r_a is the agent's individual reputation, and k_h is human capital, i.e. the agent's market skills. The agent's goal is to maximise p_t given the budgetary constraints of the principal.

As the link between the principal and the family representative exists *ex ante* through their consanguineous or affinal ties, the economic aspect of their relationship is but one additional layer of interrelation. The lines between economic incentives, social relations, and legal obligations initially appear blurred. The family representative's (r) generic payoff function states that

$$(2) \quad E[U(w_r)] = f(r_f)$$

where r_f is the collective reputation of the family, which includes access to, and gains from, joint family capital. As the family representative's economic benefit is not transaction-specific, other parameters need to be considered in order to explain their commitment to the enterprise.

³⁴ Schweitzer, F., Fagiolo, G., Sornette, D., Vega-Redondo, F., Vespignani, A., White, D.R.: "Economic Networks: The New Challenges", in: *Science* 325 (2009), pp. 422-425.

³⁵ Greif: *Contract Enforceability*.

The case study on Lorenzo Dolfin shows that partnerships between members of the Dolfin family and its external partners were potentially cross-generational, that is, junior agents such as Lorenzo and Nicolò Dolfin made use of their principal's trade contacts even after Biagio Dolfin's death. Thus, the merchant family was potentially equivalent to a traders' coalition in that it provided access to constant capital streams as well as opportunities to invest at low risk and costs. It provided a platform from which long-term commercial coalitions could be formed on the basis of permanent mutual accountability. In order to benefit from a family business network in the long-run, family agents had a clear incentive to keep the network functioning by signalling reliability to the network's external components. Deviation on the part of one family agent could significantly damage the reputation of the family as a whole and thus reduce the trade and investment opportunities of individual family members. Family agents strove for maximising r_f as their own individual reputation was internalised by the family in a system of collective liability.

Yet equation (2) captures family-based commercial cooperation in non-permanent ventures rather than a coalitional arrangement. It may therefore serve as a description of the incentive structures of junior agents undergoing mercantile education in family-based commercial arrangements, or of family agents co-operating loosely within personal commercial networks. In order to capture the incentive structure of agents operating within a family-based commercial coalition, it needs to be extended to include the costs of coalition maintenance incurring to each coalition member.

iii. Incentives in Lorenzo Dolfin's network

In the commercial environment of Lorenzo Dolfin, the same intuitions apply in principle, yet we need to account for the employment of family agents as a dominant strategy. Also, Lorenzo Dolfin's surviving account sheets indicate that commission payments were not confined to non-kin agents, but were also granted to family agents (as in the case of Girolamo Bragadin qd. Andrea). Hence, equation (2) needs to be amended accordingly as agents representing the intermediary solution (V.A.ii) had to consider the value of the family relation that linked them to their principal. Although employed for reasons of specific market skills and a personal reputation for reliability, this type of agent was indirectly selected on the basis of a family reputation mechanism – by virtue of a distant consanguineous or affinal family relationship. The intermediary agent's (*i*) generic payoff function states that

$$(3) \quad E[U(w_i)] = f(p_t, r_i, r_f)$$

where r_i is the individual reputation of the intermediary agent and r_f is the collective reputation of the family (which in this context is of weaker significance than in equation (2), capturing the fact that the intermediary agent does not belong to a family coalition but derives their connection to the principal from a family relation of second order). By contrast, the family coalition agent (*ca*) has a generic payoff function such as that

$$(4) \quad E[U(w_{ca})] = f(r_f) - c_t$$

where c_t is the time-dependent (individual) cost of coalition membership (e.g. opportunity costs on foregone commission earnings) and r_f is the collective reputation of the family, which in this case includes access to family-based *coalitional* capital.

A merchant opts for the family-based coalition as their primary form of business cooperation if

- a. the gains from being affiliated to the coalition exceed the cost of coalition membership (condition for coalition being stable), i.e. $f(r_f) \geq c_t$.
- b. the cost of employing commission or intermediary agents is greater than the (individual) cost of maintaining a commercial coalition, i.e. $p_t \geq c_t$.

Again, both conditions were met in the case of Lorenzo Dolfin. Membership of the Dolfin-Morosini trade coalition allowed Lorenzo to expand his commercial activities along the Romania trade route within a secure long-term partnership between (affinal) kin, thus benefiting from a long-term decrease in per-unit transaction costs. In addition, his own cost of coalition maintenance was comparatively low since he did not act as a commission agent to external partners. Thus, the provision of Venice-based agency services to his peers did not incur significant opportunity costs to Lorenzo and, judging by the number of instructions in his preserved correspondence, was a rare occurrence in any case. The maintenance of a family-based commercial coalition, in turn, explains the dominance of kin-related individuals in Lorenzo's personal commercial network.

The functioning of the respective commercial networks of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin can thus be described in a similar fashion despite minor differences. By virtue of exemplification,

they provide a concrete historical model of how Venetian patrician families operated in the economic sphere. This can be illustrated further with reference to additional sources on family-based commerce coming from other personal archives. The following two sections evaluate, in a summarising fashion, parts of the commercial correspondence of the patrician merchants Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero.

D. Two Referential Cases: Malipiero and Soranzo

In order to contextualise the findings on Lorenzo Dolfin within the broader historiography of the fifteenth-century Venetian patriciate, this section offers a brief discussion of two comparable cases. This is by no means intended to provide a complete account of the commercial and official careers of Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero; in fact, the body of documents on which this discussion is based does not represent the complete archival record.³⁶ However, the here presented evidence, alongside the existing scholarly output, offers a point of reference by revealing the types of commercial organisation used by two contemporaries of Lorenzo Dolfin. The primary focus lies on the commercial relationships as well as the (personal) statuses of correspondents and commercial partners.

i. Donato Soranzo: a *fraterna* merchant

The archival legacy of the Venetian merchant Donato Soranzo is preserved at the ASVe.³⁷ The complete set of papers, which mostly comprises the correspondence between Donato Soranzo, his brothers, and other business partners as well as account books, is not among the ASVe's large private collections in that it is not contained in a single personal archive. However, it has gained historical prominence due to its use in Lane's "Andrea Barbarigo", Ashtor's "Levant Trade" and a number of other significant studies.³⁸ In this section, I limit the

³⁶ To my knowledge, a complete account of all available Malipiero and Soranzo sources has thus far not been created. Especially the bequest of A. Malipiero is dispersed across a large number of archival collections in the ASVe.

³⁷ ASVe, *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio*, b. 8; ASVe, *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio*, b. 15.

³⁸ Ashtor, Eliyahu: "Profits from Trade with the Levant in the Fifteenth Century", in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (June 1975), No. 2, pp. 250-275; id.: "Spice Prices in the Near East in the 15th Century", in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 108 (January 1976), No. 1, pp. 26-41; Martinelli, Alvaro: "Notes on the Origin of Double Entry Bookkeeping", in: *Abacus* 13 (June 1977), No. 1, pp. 3-27; Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, pp. 107-123.

analysis to a collection of letters that, to my knowledge, has not been discussed in previous studies, namely *busta 15* of *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio* (*busta 15* hereafter; Ashtor used the Soranzo letters contained in *busta 8* of the same collection³⁹). This is a collection of thirty documents, mostly letters, written between 1402 and 1416 by individuals associated with the business of the *fraterna Soranzo*. It is but a tiny fraction of the entirety of the known surviving documents, included here for the purpose of showcasing hitherto neglected documents. A discussion of other known Soranzo sources can be found in Lane's book.⁴⁰ As Lane rightly pointed out, the remaining series of letters are incomplete and at times difficult to match with the information provided in the account books.⁴¹ Hence this discussion is not intended to give a full account of specific transactions performed by the *compagnia Soranzo*; instead, it looks at the general dynamics of a family-based long-distance trade firm. The focus lies on the hierarchical structures within the venture, the internal incentives of cooperation, and the nature of the firm's relationship to external agents (i.e. the firm's network), as well as on the duration of partnerships and degrees of individual autonomy within a family business.⁴² The main comparative interest with respect to the CLD stems from the nature of the *compagnia Soranzo* as a *fraterna*-based venture and the biographical differences between Donato Soranzo and Lorenzo Dolfin, who developed his own commercial network and (family-based) coalition.

TABLE 2: ASVE, MISC. DI CARTE NON APP. AD ALCUN ARCHIVIO, B. 15, LETTERE DONATO SORANZO

Arch. Ref.	Type of doc.	Author	Recipient	Location (written)	Location (received)	Date (writ.)	Date (rec.)
f. [1]	Letter	n/a	Donato Soranzo	Venice	n/a	29.08.1407	n/a
f. [2]	Letter	n/a	Donato Soranzo	Venice	n/a	15.07.1407	n/a
f. [3]	Letter	Pietro Bembo qd. Andrea	Donato Soranzo	Alexandria	Damascus	09.09.1414	29.09.1414
f. [4]	Letter	Luca Morosini qd. Giovanni	Filippo Morosini qd. Nicolò	Damascus	Hama	09.04.1415	16.04.1415

³⁹ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 563.

⁴⁰ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 145.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁴² Lane claims that Donato kept his personal accounts in addition to those of the family business. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

f. [5]	Letter	Alvise Mancadelli	Donato Soranzo	Latakia	Damascus	04.09.1402	28.09.1402
f. [6]	Letter	Pietro	Donato Soranzo	Tripoli	n/a	15.09(?).1403	n/a
f. [7]	Account	n/a	Marco Polo	Hama	n/a	1403/1404	1403/1404
f. [8]	Letter	Bartolomeo Soranzo	Donato Soranzo	Foa	Hama	11.03.1404	13.03.1404
f. [9]	Letter	n/a	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	Hama	03.03.1404	07.03.1404
f. [10]	Letter	Bartolomeo Soranzo	Donato Soranzo	Foa	n/a	1404	n/a
f. [11]	Letter	n/a	n/a	Tripoli	n/a	1407	n/a
f. [12]	Letter	Stefano Stoloro(?)		Tripoli	Hama	08.03.1408	n/a
f. [13]	Note					1407	
f. [14]	Letter	Stefano Stoloro(?)	Donato Soranzo	Tripoli	Damascus	11.03.1408	20.03.1408
f. [15]	Letter	Pietro Soranzo	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	Hama	03.07.1415(?)	n/a
f. [16]	Letter	Giacomo Contarini qd. Pietro	Donato Soranzo	Foa	Hama	15.05.1409	19.05.1409
f. [17]	Letter		Donato Soranzo	Damascus		1414(?)	
f. [18]	Letter	Domenico			Damascus	29.08.1414	04.09.1414
f. [19]	Letter	Luca Morosini qd. Giovanni	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	Hama	14.01.1415	19.01.1415
f. [20]	Letter	Giovanni Venier qd. Francesco	Donato Soranzo		Hama	16.03.1415	18.03.1415
f. [21]	Letter	Luca Morosini qd. Giovanni	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	n/a	10.05.1415	n/a
f. [22]	Letter	Pietro Soranzo	Donato Soranzo	Hama	n/a	02.10.1415	n/a
f. [23]	Letter	Giacomo Pesaro	Donato Soranzo “ett sozis”	Damascus	Baalbek	05.12.1415	n/a
f. [24]	Letter	Alessandro Marin	Donato Soranzo		Hama	03.02.1416	05.02.1416

f. [25]	Letter	Andrea Donado Nicolò	Donato Soranzo		n/a	09.06.1416	n/a
f. [26]	Letter	Andrea Donado Nicolò	Donato Soranzo		Hama	10.07.1416	16.07.1416
f. [27]	Letter	Giacomo Pesaro	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	Hama	27.08.1416	01.09.1416
f. [28]	Account	Bernabò Dotogio(?) Andrea	Donato Soranzo	Tripoli	Hama	1416	05.04.1416
f. [29]	Envelope	n/a	Donato Soranzo	Damascus	Hama	n/a	26.05.1415
f. [30]	List of goods	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Donato Soranzo and his family-based personal commercial network lend themselves well to comparison not just because Donato was a contemporary of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin, but also because he was, like Lorenzo and (to an extent) Biagio, active in the textiles trade. The starting conditions of the commercial careers of Lorenzo and Donato, by contrast, could not have been more different. Unlike the half-orphan Lorenzo Dolfin, Donato Soranzo was born into a sizable nuclear family, and we know of several brothers who played important roles in his commercial life. Consequently, his first commercial undertakings were pursued within a *fraterna*.

The core period of Donato Soranzo's documented commercial activity are the years between 1402 and 1416, when he resided in Syria.⁴³ The family firm of Donato Soranzo and his brothers was mainly active in Syria, where the Soranzos traded their own capital while also acting as commission agents to fellow Venetians such as Andrea Barbarigo.⁴⁴ As a commission agent, Donato was a rival of Biagio Dolfin, whose residence in Syria is documented at least for the year 1414 when he handled the Morosini accounts in Damascus. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the European cloth trade with its related industries still depended to a

⁴³ Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, p. 119; Nam identifies Donato's residence in Syria as lasting from 1403 until 1416. However, letter f. [5] of *busta 15*, which was received in Damascus, suggests that Donato was resident in Syria as early as September 1402.

⁴⁴ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 88.

large extent on cotton imports from Egypt and Syria while Venice retained its position as a leading retailer of Eastern cotton.⁴⁵

As an reputable commission agent, Donato maintained links to a number of non-kin individuals, and his papers also include letters from merchants outside his own family. This is particularly the case for the letters contained in *busta 15*. However, studies based on a more extensive record of letters show that the *fraterna Soranzo* operated within a family-dominated commercial network in which a majority of correspondents had family links to the Soranzo brothers.⁴⁶ Thus, when reconstructing Donato's personal commercial network, it is important to distinguish between his own business circle and his commission clients. As there is no evidence for Lorenzo Dolfin having acted as commission agent, this difficulty does not arise with respect to the CLD.

Table 2 above lists the documents contained in *busta 15*. Only three of the identifiable authors were members of Donato's family-based business environment. These individuals are his brother Pietro Soranzo, writing from Hama and Damascus in 1415;⁴⁷ and Bartolomeo Soranzo, a cousin, writing twice from Foa in 1404.⁴⁸ Pietro was, with Donato and their brothers Giacomo and Lorenzo, a co-owner of the *fraterna compagnia* that was the initial centre of Donato's family-based business activities.⁴⁹ Bartolomeo was linked to their business as a family representative.⁵⁰ His style of writing and the contents of the letter resemble the reports sent to Lorenzo Dolfin by his family partners (see, for instance, the letters written by Antonio Contarini and Dolfino Dolfin from Constantinople, II.D, V.C), conveying information on

⁴⁵ Mazzaoui, Maureen Fennell: *The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages 1100-1600*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 87-104.

⁴⁶ Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, p. 122.

⁴⁷ Letter Soranzo, Pietro to Soranzo, Donato, 03.07.1415, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [15]; Letter Soranzo, Pietro to Soranzo, Donato, 02.10.1415, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [22].

⁴⁸ Unlike MELIS, NAM identifies "Foa" as a Syrian town: "F. Melis assimile cette dernière à Phocée, port principal d'embarquement pour le coton turc au XVe siècle. Mais il s'agit en réalité d'une ville syrienne, comme l'atteste la correspondance de la *fraterna Soranzo* [...]. On peut donc déduire que Foa ne se situait pas très loin de Hama, à la distance d'une journée environ" (Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, p. 107; Nam's reference is Melis, F., Cecchi Aste, E.: *Documenti per la storia economica dei secoli XIII-XVI*, Florence: Olschki, 1972, p. 302).

⁴⁹ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 145; Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, p. 119.

⁵⁰ Letter Soranzo, Bartolomeo to Soranzo, Donato, 11.03.1404, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [8]; Letter Soranzo, Bartolomeo to Soranzo, Donato, 001404, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [10].

market developments and on performed transactions.⁵¹ On behalf of the *compagnia*, Bartolomeo maintained links to fellow family representatives such as Marco Corner who also had a consanguineous relation to the Soranzo brothers.⁵²

Pietro Soranzo, by contrast, clearly appears as a long-term partner in a joint venture. He refers to jointly-owned accounts and mutual creditors due to be paid, and asks Donato to send him additional processed cloth for sale.⁵³ Their joint accounts reveal that Pietro and Donato did not operate on behalf of each other, but were part of a long-term joint enterprise. As the foundation of their partnership was a *fraterna* and thus a legally enforced entity, their cooperation was even closer than the coalitional partnerships maintained by Lorenzo Dolfin and his family peers, and their joint capital was a single unit rather than several parts of coalitional capital as in the case of the Dolfin coalition. All of their operations were conducted in joint liability, which thus represents a major difference to the coalitional model of mutual financial solidarity with simultaneous operational independence of individual coalition members.

The main structural similarity between the *fraterna* and the trade coalition is the maintenance of a loose network of partners and agents operating on the periphery of the enterprise. Yet, whereas the trade coalition is supported by various personal networks maintained by the respective coalition members, *fraterna* partners typically shared the entirety of their commercial connections. Their operational periphery was thus substantially more integrated to the joint business – that is, network affiliates were typically known to each other, integrating the *fraterna Soranzo* into a broad environment of mutually known individuals (who in turn may also have been linked to each other by closer commercial bonds such as a family coalition or indeed another *fraterna*). For instance, the *fraterna*'s creditor Filippo Morosini, who is men-

⁵¹ Ibid., f. [8]: “...ve digo che in questi paixi a ora non se atroveria gotoni a mancho di d(ucati) 1150 in 1200, ma in Alepo zia fa giorni 12 valeva d(ucati) 900 in 850...”

⁵² Ibid.: “...et anchor de quelli [gotoni] manda ser Marcho Corner et ser Bernardo Negro”; Nam: *Le commerce du coton*, p. 122, identifies Marco Corner as a cousin of the Soranzo brothers.

⁵³ Letter Soranzo, Pietro to Soranzo, Donato, 02.10.1415, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [22]: “Et prima vedo vo<l> se achatare per nostra raxiòn p(ani) 120 greze e che faze i sia boni [...]. Romagnio avixado vui ave scritto a ser Fellipo Morexini ch’el non me manda d(ucati) 300 e scrive el me dovera mandar che ve digo son contento. E abie scritto se vuy me mandere moneda per i ganbeliery ad’utomo ultimamente [i bocharin zorovia?] non me mando niente tig<n>erò modo de mandary a pagar a Damascho a vui e non siando lli che non m’el chredo i manderò a pagar a ser Felippo Morexini perché a le fiade de qui se atrovo chanbio per Damascho. [...]. Chome ho ve scritto [...] de mandarme algune chose de pani ne de sarze manda me ll<o> presto. E voria me avera me avera (*sic*) mandalo per ritorno de i ganbeliery perché de qui i vièn molto domandadi e spezialmente pany e che prima ne aduro i vendeva molto ben...”

tioned in Pietro Soranzo's letters to his brothers, was related to Luca Morosini qd. Giovanni, the author of three letters contained in *busta 15*. One of these is addressed to Donato Soranzo,⁵⁴ while another is directly addressed to Filippo (as "simel di fratello", which suggests a more distant rather than a direct consanguineous family relationship).⁵⁵ Luca, in turn, is repeatedly mentioned in a letter by Andrea Donado qd. Nicolò, himself a crucial business contact of the Soranzo brothers, who maintained links to the Barbarigo and Priuli families.⁵⁶ This personal network of the Soranzo brothers also relied on the services of commission agents (*fattore*) such as a certain Troilo Malipiero who is mentioned in Alvise Marcadelli's letter⁵⁷ as well as in the letters written by Stefano Stolero.⁵⁸ The network was partially but not exclusively family-based. Apart from the aforementioned Corner family branch, the clan of Donato Soranzo also entailed affinal links to a branch of the Ca' Pesaro,⁵⁹ the family of his correspondent Giacomo Pesaro (author of two letters preserved in *busta 15*).

⁵⁴ Letter Morosini, Luca qd. Giovanni to Soranzo, Donato, 14.01.1415, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [19].

⁵⁵ Letter Morosini, Luca qd. Giovanni to Morosini, Filippo qd. Nicolò, 09.04.1415, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [4].

⁵⁶ Letter Donado, Andrea qd. Nicolò to Soranzo, Donato, 09.06.1416, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [25]: "Vedo che per lo ditto vollette io ve mandi gottoni per ducati 500 de raxòn de ser Zuane di Priolli e fradelli perché ve avixo che atrovandome in Damascho como ve scrisi l'altro zorno per finir el mal averme lien deli e vinimene di compagnia con ser Lucha Morexini a Sardenaia. La mia cassa con l'aver iera dentro et tute altre mie anze e debitori lasi a ser Piero Barbarigo. Et a dirve il vero me avra timenado de lassarli tuti denari me atrovava a vostre ordene. Ma da posa me dubiti che el non tollese promixion desi como za ano fato di altri in Damascho. E per questa raxòn i lasi nela mia chassa con i altri me atrovava mie e di altre raxòn. E la chiave ho comeso mite la cassa e nela camera di ser Piero Barbarigo. Avixandovi che io ho scritto al dito a Damascho che ve mandi ducati 500 d'oro in gottoni e che quelli el bolla di sainbarlo e signa quelli del segno di ser Zuan di Priolli e fradelli. E cusi e son zerto el faza. Avixandovi che ser Lucha Morexini me li fa dar a ser Piero dito de li de denari else atrova di trato di algune so merze el a vendude. E tuto questo ho fato per non mandar le chiave dela mia chaxa a Damascho per i tenpi sospetti che ocora. E priego i dio che quelli conduga deli con salvamento che a saver i siano zonti ne averò grande piaxèr."

⁵⁷ Letter Marcadelli, Alvise to Soranzo, Donato, 04.09.1402, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [5].

⁵⁸ Letter Stolero, Stefano to Soranzo, Donato, 08.03.1408, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [12].

⁵⁹ Letter Soranzo, Bartolomeo to Soranzo, Donato, 001404, ASVe, Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15, f. [10]: ".....ser Felipo da Pesaro nostro barba...".

The structure of the Soranzo business was that of a *fraterna compagnia* surrounded by an intricate commercial network of agents and long-term associates. Some of its affiliates were relatives of the Soranzo brothers, others were linked to their business as commission-based associates. The letters of *busta 15* provide evidence for a direct involvement of family in commercial operations, as the documents produced by relatives also provide business-related content. This evidence thus corroborates the critical significance attached to the patrician family as a main provider of organisational support in Venetian long-distance trade in the early fifteenth century. Even in the context of a *fraterna compagnia*, the extended family seems to have played a critical role in providing a social basis for additional commercial partnerships, allowing for greater operational flexibility while at the same time augmenting the scope of the venture.

ii. Ambrogio Malipiero: a diaspora merchant

The papers of Ambrogio Malipiero are less well-known than the Soranzo archive, yet the sheer size his surviving body of documents warrants a recommendation for further study. Rendering a complete account of Ambrogio's life would face the initial challenge of assembling the entirety of available sources, which are spread across several collections in the ASVe and other archives.⁶⁰ To my knowledge, no systematic account has thus far been attempted, and this short introductory summary for comparative purposes is not intended to remedy this shortcoming. The following evaluation is confined to the documents known to me: a number of letters are kept in the same *busta 15* as the majority of the aforementioned Soranzo letters in ASVe, *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio*, while others are part of the larger collection ASVe, *Miscellanea Gregolin*.⁶¹ I admit to a limited reading of the sources, as perusing the entirety of the *Miscellanea Gregolin* in the search of additional documents would have been beyond the scope of this study. However, the material presented here already comprises a fairly large number of documents, which promise to provide an adequate overview of Ambrogio Malipiero's career as a merchant.

ARBEL has summarised the current state of research on the documents relating to Ambrigo Malipiero.⁶² According to this, LANE (in Andrea Barbarigo) and VALLET are thus far the only two studies to have used parts of Malipiero's archival legacy, basing their analysis on the

⁶⁰ Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, pp. 40-41.

⁶¹ ASVe, *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio*, b. 15; ASVe, *Misc. Gregolin*, b. 8.

⁶² Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, p. 40.

documents contained in *Miscellanea Gregolin*.⁶³ I therefore assume that the letters contained in *Miscellanea di documenti non appartenenti a nessun archivio, b. 15* have thus far not been analysed. Thus, as with the Soranzo sources contained in the same busta, this brief discussion is partly intended to introduce this material to the scholarly community.

The letters cover the final years of Malipiero's life, during which time he resided in Tripoli and served as Venetian vice-consul. He died there presumably in 1487.⁶⁴ According to Arbel, he was a second cousin to the brothers Pietro Malipiero, a Cyprus-based merchant, and Marco Malipiero, who served as Grand Commander of the Hospitallers in Cyprus.⁶⁵ There are 31 documents in said busta relating to Ambrogio Malipiero, mostly letters written by different correspondents, received in Tripoli between 1482 and 1487. Some of the documents are badly preserved and no longer reveal a date or sender. According to this record, Ambrogio corresponded with a certain "di Mafio" in Bruges; Francesco Morosini, Bernardo Pisani, Almore Donado (vice-consul⁶⁶), Giacomo Donado, Daniel da Zegnarato, Pietro Rizo, Francesco Zorzi in Aleppo; Giacomo Dolfín, Giacomo Gabriel, Dario Malipiero in Beirut; and Giovanni Mocenigo, the consul of Damascus. There are also two letters written by Ambrogio Malipiero from Venice to Girolamo Malipiero in Tripoli, both dated 1482; a number of small notes, accounts, and inventories (not all of which are addressed to Ambrogio); a copy of a piece of correspondence between two members of the Barbaro family; one piece of correspondence addressed to Ambrogio Malipiero whose sender remains unclear; and two letters to the brothers Marco and Lorenzo Bembo qd. Girolamo, written from Bruges and London by Alberto Contarini and Polo Tiepolo respectively. The documents not addressed to (or written by) Ambrogio Malipiero bear no relation to him.

TABLE 3: ASVE, MISC. DI CARTE NON APP. AD ALCUN ARCHIVIO, B. 15, LETTERE AMBROGIO MALIPIERO

Arch. ref.	Type of doc.	Author	Recipient	Location (writ.)	Location (rec.)	Date (writ.)	Date (rec.)
f. [32]	List of goods	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
f. [33]	Letter	Giacomo	Zacharia	Lepanto	n/a	18.12.1471	May 1472

⁶³ Lane: *Andrea Barbarigo*, p. 150; Vallet: *Marchands vénitiens*.

⁶⁴ Arbel: *Venetian Letters*, p. 40; Vallet: *Marchands vénitiens*, p. 319.

⁶⁵ Arbel: *Venetian letters*, p. 41.

⁶⁶ Vallet: *Marchand vénitiens*, p. 317.

	(copy, excerpt)	Barbaro	Barbaro				
f. [34]	Letter	Polo Tiepolo	Marco Bembo qd. Girolamo	London	n/a	01.04.1482	1482
f. [35]	Letter	Alberto Contarini	Lorenzo Bembo qd. Girolamo	Bruges	n/a	08.08.1480	05.09.1480
f. [36]	Letter	di Mafio	Ambrogio Malipiero	Bruges	Tripoli	01.11.1484	n/a
f. [37]	Note	Giacomo Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	02.11.1484	n/a
f. [38]	Note		Ambrogio Malipiero	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
f. [39]	Inventory			Aleppo	n/a	19.09.1485	n/a
f. [40]	Letter	Dario Malipiero qd. Giacomo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	30.10.1484	n/a
f. [41]	Letter	Francesco Morosini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	20.02.1486	
f. [42]	Letter	Bernardo Pisani	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	19.09.1485	23.09.1485
f. [43]	Inventory						
f. [44]	Letter	Bernardo Pisani	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	19.09.1485	n/a
f. [45]	Letter	“Mercatoris Maone”	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	06.08.1485	26.08.1485
f. [46]	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	16.08.1485	02.09.1485
f. [47]	Letter	Giacomo Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	04.06.1482	18.06.1482
f. [48]	Letter	Ambrogio Malipiero	Girolamo Malipiero	Venice	Tripoli	04.06.1482	n/a
f. [49]	Note	Giacomo Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	04.04.1482	06.04.1482
f. [50]	Letter		Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	25.04.1485	30.04.1485
f. [51]	Account	Pietro Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Bafo		1485	

f. [52]	Letter	prob. Ambrogio Malipiero		Venice		1482	
f. [53]	Letter	Daniel da Zegnarato	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	06.04.1487	n/a
f. [54]	Letter	Giovanni Mocenigo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	21.06.1487	n/a
f. [55]	Note	Marco Seguro	Giacomo Seguro				
f. [56]	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	18.11.1484	29.11.1484
f. [57]	Letter	Pietro Rizo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	06.11.1484	13.11.1484
f. [58]	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	03.11.1484	13.11.1484
f. [59]	Letter	Francesco Zorzi	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	18.11.1484	29.11.1484
f. [60]	Letter	Pietro Rizo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	18.11.1484	29.11.1484
f. [61]	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	November 1484	26.12.1484
f. [62]	Letter			Pora		July 1480	

The bulk of Ambrogio's correspondence from this sample was written from Aleppo, a significant centre of the Eastern cotton and silk trades in the late medieval period. As the final destination of the caravan route from Persia via Baghdad, a Venetian outpost had emerged over the course of the second half of the fifteenth century, overseen by a Venetian vice-consul.⁶⁷ The letter written by Ambrogio in Venice to Girolamo Malipiero in Tripoli shows that Ambrogio must have been residing in the Serenissima as late as 1482 and risen to his position in Tripoli only thereafter. Girolamo appears to have acted as agent to Ambrogio, who was active in the cotton trade even before his deployment to Syria. The first letter sent to Ambrogio in Tripoli was written by the (vice)-consul of Aleppo, Giacomo Donado, and received on 18 June 1482.⁶⁸ Giacomo Donado partnered with Ambrogio and took care of their common af-

⁶⁷ Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 397.

⁶⁸ Although technically a vice-consulate and not a consulate, Venetian vice-consuls "sometimes went by the title of consul" (Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 325), as does Giacomo Donado in this letter.

fairs in Aleppo. He referred to a joint account and mentioned a number of third persons with whom the pair interacted commercially, among them Giovanni Alvise Morosini.⁶⁹

This first schematic information on Ambrogio's commerce already illustrates two interesting distinctions Lorenzo Dolfin and, to an extent, Donato Soranzo. First, an obvious yet meaningful observation, Ambrogio resided at his main place of business himself, whereas Lorenzo Dolfin conducted his Eastern commerce primarily from Venice and its surroundings. Second, Ambrogio evidently did not recruit his commercial partners and agents from his family surroundings, but relied on the services of fellow members of the Venetian community in Syria, who quite often had resided in Aleppo, Damascus, and the Syrian ports for many years, were well-versed in the particularities of the Syrian cotton trade and thoroughly interlinked among each other. Both observations partly relate to personal circumstances and may thus be – to some extent – incidental. Yet they also reflect wider historical developments that altered the circumstances of Venetian long-distance trade in the Eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Ambrogio Malipiero's rise to Venetian consul in Tripoli is, of course, first a matter of personal achievement. In the case of Lorenzo Dolfin, members of his trade coalition took care of his business interests in the Venetian outposts, and as such he had no compelling reason to settle there himself. If a similarly extensive archival record was available for Giovanni Morosini qd. Marino, Lorenzo's representative in Constantinople, it might display a degree of interaction with non-relatives comparable to Ambrogio Malipiero. Yet other factors suggest that Ambrogio's strategy of interacting within the (not kin-based) Venetian commercial networks of Syria may have been driven by gradual systemic shifts. These resulted from political developments and are perhaps best illustrated by comparing the respective commercial surroundings of Ambrogio Malipiero and Biagio Dolfin.

While Biagio Dolfin's experiences as a merchant in Mamluk Egypt illustrate the particular challenges faced by Venetians operating in restricted foreign markets, which required close cooperation within stable networks of specialist traders, Biagio nevertheless worked within a family-dominated mercantile coalition whose members acted on his behalf both in Venice and on foreign soil. Ambrogio Malipiero also kept commercial contacts to his home market (although surprisingly few letters from Venice survive in his collection, see also table 6 in

⁶⁹ Letter Donado, Giacomo to Malipiero, Ambrogio qd. Francesco, 04.06.1482, ASVe, Misc. di carte non app. ad alcun archivio, b. 15, fasc. 3, f. [47]. The latter appears as "Zuan Alvise Morosini" in Vallet: *Marchand vénitiens*, p. 318.

appendix D), yet the vast majority of the available letters originated from fellow diaspora traders. Ambrogio was informed about developments in Venice through his correspondence with relatives and Venice-based commercial partners. The collection of letters contained in *Miscellanea Gregolin, b. 9* includes two letters from his mother, Suordamor, and one from his brother Alvise.⁷⁰ Further Venice-based correspondents included members of the Priuli family that had gained prominence in the Venetian community in Aleppo. The northern-Syrian metropolis was the origin of a vast number of letters sent to Ambrogio while he resided in Tripoli, but the collection also contains letters from Beirut and Damascus. An important Aleppo-based correspondent was Domenico Capelan, whose name may derive from a religious function.⁷¹

Ambrogio's much deeper commercial interconnection within the Venetian diaspora – compared to his predecessor Biagio Dolfin – also derives from the steadily improving macro-political integration of Venetian commerce in the Near East. The vast expansion of Venetian trade towards the mid-fifteenth century was principally driven by rising trade volumes in Syrian cotton, and the commercial expansion soon triggered geopolitical ramifications with a rapid growth of the Venetian diaspora in Syria, leading to the establishment of permanent settlements in Hama, Aleppo, Latakia, Beirut, Acre and Damascus, as well as the establishment of a consulate in Tripoli in 1442.⁷² These outposts were highly interlinked, both commercially and informationally, through regular land trade routes, good access to the ports and thriving networks of written communication. As a result, the Venetian commercial diaspora became a market of its own, large enough to allow its members to make independent choices of whom to trade with and under which conditions, yet small enough to not require external regulation. In fact – and although the consulate system represented a “formal” regulatory authority with the ability to mediate between merchants – the Venetian commercial diaspora in late fifteenth-century Syria was largely self-regulatory. The cooperation between merchants and the enforcement of agreements were enabled through a mechanism of reputation similar to the mechanisms of commitment generated by the system of family-internal trade representation. The political and social interdependence of diaspora merchants created a community of fellows in which mutual trust was a binding principle. The Malipiero letters illustrate the deep interwovenness of the Venetian community in Syria – with many of the correspondents

⁷⁰ See table of documents in appendix D.

⁷¹ Vallet: *Marchand vénitiens*, p. 317.

⁷² Ibid, p. 235; Ashtor: *Levant Trade*, p. 324 ; also Pedani, Maria Pia (Fabris): "Consoli veneziani nei porti del mediterraneo in età moderna", http://www.storiamediterranea.it/public/md1_dir/b687.pdf

also mentioned in letters written by others, thus indicating a large degree of interconnection – as well as providing insights into the daily routine of diaspora merchants. The vast majority of the letters were written to the merchant rather than the consul Ambrogio Malipiero and thus contain information on business proceedings rather than consulate affairs.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK – TOWARDS A PROSOPOGRAPHY OF LONG-DISTANCE TRADE?

The life and career of Lorenzo Dolfin symptomatically reflect the territorial growth of the Venetian Republic, the economic integration of its overseas territories and outposts into its long-distance trade, and the increasing significance of the family as a commercial unit. A more global, i.e. not geographically confined significance of these developments is the gradual emergence of the corporation economy, an economic system in which transactions are performed within long-term partnerships. As these partnerships were mostly family-based in the Venetian context, either in the form of direct consanguineous and affinal ties or as cross-generational alliances between non-kin individuals, their constitution was independent of economic interests and thus did not necessitate trade-specific contracts. The decline of the Venetian contract (or commenda) economy must be seen against this background.

Indeed, the *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfin* contains very few contractual elements, and the few contracts that it does contain mostly relate to personal matters such as Lorenzo's marriage. Commercial contracts are almost non-existent, which, from a source-critical perspective, is especially revealing given the nature of the source. Since the procurators kept the archives of deceased merchants mainly for the purpose of evaluating potential claims from third parties, they were adamant on the completeness of the records with respect to any commerce-specific documentation. As a result, much of Lorenzo Dolfin's commercial correspondence survives in the collection, alongside many accounts, *ricordanze*, and receipts. By contrast, the collection does not contain a single *colleganza* contract. In fifteenth-century Venetian long-distance trade along the established galley routes, the *colleganza* ceased to be practical as a result of the increasing economic and political integration of the Eastern Mediterranean region, and was thus replaced by alternative arrangements of capital agglomeration and shared investments. In the context of Venetian political and economic expansion in the region, family coalitions established permanent branches in the former commenda ports and thus developed a system of family-internal economic agency.

The corporation economy did not, of course, become fully developed during Lorenzo's lifetime. The collection also contains evidence of intermediary forms of contracting, such as the documentation of a *compagnia*. Furthermore, the corporation economy was not an economic system in which contracting was entirely obsolete. It subsumes a *range* of contracting methods (*compagnia*, bilateral partnerships, commission agency) that were not based on a distinc-

tion between suppliers of capital and labour. The resulting means of cooperation were structurally hierarchical and distinguished between an *internal order* of the partnership and the *external* level of the market.

In the following, I summarise the key propositions of the study. Following a recount of the historical narrative, I assess the significance of this new evidence with respect to Venetian long-distance trade more generally. Third, I highlight the extent to which the findings diverge from established considerations, and outline a few perspectives for further research. Finally, I set out concrete proposals for a wider micro-historic research agenda with respect to late medieval Venetian trade.

A. Historical Narrative: Another Merchant of Venice

The example of Lorenzo Dolfín qd. Antonio and his rise to commercial success highlight the importance of family solidarity and cross-generational cooperation within the Venetian patriate. Although a half-orphan from early age, and despite growing up without the benefit of a strong nuclear family, Lorenzo received the attention and support of relatives in his adolescence and during his education and professional training. His uncle Biagio Dolfín qd. Lorenzo, the brother of his deceased father Antonio, was a key figure from whom he inherited not only financial and material allocations but also a number of useful commercial connections. When Biagio Dolfín took up residence in Alexandria in 1418 for a second term as Venetian consul, Lorenzo became the primary caretaker of his uncle's affairs in Venice, overseeing mostly the sale of gemstones. He thus acquired and mastered skills that proved highly beneficial in his subsequent commercial career: an insider knowledge of the Rialto, crucial European markets such as London and Bruges, and the Venetian outposts in the East; an awareness of the increasing integration of European and Eastern Mediterranean markets; an understanding of the interdependencies of different players within commercial networks and coalitions, and of the advantages and pitfalls of business cooperation; and the ability to react to exogenous shifts in business environments by choosing a business model in accordance with personal abilities.

Lorenzo also travelled on Biagio's behalf. He was present in Egypt when Biagio died during an official mission to the Sultan in Cairo, originally for the purpose of transporting gemstones from Cairo to Alexandria and eventually back to Venice. As Biagio's main heir, he was soon confronted with claims on his inheritance, mostly from members of Biagio's maternal family, the Malipiero. Lorenzo learned from this episode that an assumed family solidarity would not

necessarily lead to uncompromising mutual loyalty, and that trust and reliability within a family-based commercial partnership would need to be backed by exogenous social incentives. Yet he also witnessed much more positive examples of functioning loyalties in Biagio's partnerships with Orso Dolfin and with non-kin partners such as Nicolò Bernardo qd. Francesco, Antonio di Gusanieri qd. Marco, Matteo di Sori, and Giacomo de Zorzi qd. Giorgio, with whom Lorenzo would correspond further after Biagio's death.

Lorenzo returned to Venice after Biagio's death and remained in the Veneto region, apart from a brief spell as camerlengo of Koper (Capodistria), for the rest of his life. He took residence in Chioggia (1423), Venice, and eventually in Vicenza, where he began his service as camerario in 1426. One year earlier, on 29 January 1425, he had married Giovanetta Morosini, daughter of Marino Morosini qd. Giovanni. Between 1422 and 1426, he corresponded commercially with the brothers Francesco and Marco Renier qd. Nicolò in Bruges, who acted as his agents and purchased (primarily) English wool on his behalf. At the same time, Lorenzo traded cloth and spices in London in collaboration with Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco and his brothers Giorgio and Vettore, a partnership that would last until Giacomo's death in 1433.

Soon thereafter, Lorenzo began exploring the markets of South-East Europe, which were linked to Venice through the Romania galley route that served, among others, Corfu, Negroponte, Constantinople, and Tana until 1452. With the brothers Giacomo, Giorgio, and Vettore Dolfin qd. Francesco, presumably distant cousins of considerable wealth, he maintained a *compagnia*, an institution of combined capital ownership and specialised labour, which applied a business model that he would maintain for the entirety of his mercantile career. The *compagnia* Dolfin purchased different types of fibres (mostly wool) on the London and Flanders markets and exported the value-added products, processed cloth, to Constantinople. It was dissolved in an orderly manner after 1432.

After concluding his partnership with his cousins, Lorenzo turned to his affinal family for support. Until 1448, the last year in which his commercial activity remains documented, he worked with his brothers-in-law Michele, Giovanni, and Pietro Morosini qd. Marino. Michele was resident in London, while Giovanni resided in Constantinople. Pietro wrote to Lorenzo from Constantinople, Bursa, and Caffa.

Lorenzo Dolfin invested his gains from long-distance trade in the Venetian property market. The last document of the CLD is the front page of a 1467 quaderno in which Lorenzo listed the rental income from his estate.

B. Evaluation: A family Coalition as Business Framework

In comparison to his uncle Biagio, two observations from Lorenzo's commercial biography are particularly remarkable: first, Lorenzo's commercial activities were a lot less diversified than those of his uncle. While Biagio traded with a variety of commodities (cloth, gemstones, wine), Lorenzo significantly reduced his engagement in the gem trade (although never abandoning it entirely) early in his senior career to focus mostly on textiles. This allowed him to lead a quiet life on the Venetian mainland without much need for changes in locations or travel. Second, Lorenzo built his principal commercial partnerships with members of his extended and affinal families. There is comparatively little exchange with non-kin correspondents, and even large parts of his family environment remained irrelevant in commercial terms. Lorenzo maintained close links to his maternal uncles Michele, Andrea, and Benedetto Gabriel qd. Nicolò and to their children Alvisè qd. Benedetto, Angelo qd. Andrea, and Nicolò qd. Andrea, but the surviving correspondence is mostly personal. Unlike Biagio Dolfin, Lorenzo did not have major conflicts with commercial partners, and his personal commercial network generally cooperated smoothly. There are no indications of legal disputes at any stage of his commercial career, not counting the settlements he had to reach on behalf of his deceased uncle Biagio.

The greater diversity of Biagio Dolfin's commercial network in terms of the inclusion of non-kin agents primarily underlines that his core business, the gem trade, implied much greater levels of risk and thus required greater degrees of specialist market knowledge that frequently had to be sought outside the boundaries of the family. Biagio's own experience as a trade agent in Syria had equipped him with the necessary intercultural business skills to embark on a career in the risky but profitable gem trade whose geographical core was the Mamluk Sultanate, specifically Alexandria and Cairo. His frequent change of residence reflected a range of available business opportunities. Specifically, his two terms as Venetian consul in Alexandria allowed him to closely monitor the Egyptian market for his own purposes and to influence Mamluk-Venetian trade relations, thus improving the general situation for Venetian specialist traders like himself.

The difficulties Biagio faced during most of his mercantile career likely persuaded Lorenzo to follow a different path. Yet, despite the differences between their business models and strategies of cooperation, both Biagio and Lorenzo operated in family-based commercial coalitions and maintained personal networks that included selected non-kin individuals. Both Biagio and Lorenzo acquired their business skills at an early age with the guidance of family

elders, and both extended their family environment for business purposes. Given that Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin pursued quite different commercial strategies, their common business culture especially regarding the generation of stable inter-personal business links is striking. In the way of a general observation, the examples of Biagio and Lorenzo – as well as those of their contemporaries Donato Soranzo and Ambrogio Malipiero – suggest that patrician merchants typically began their mercantile careers within commercial networks closely aligned to their family environments. They altered these cross-generational enterprises through their own input and eventually handed them on to the next generation. Yet, over the course of a mercantile career, a merchant's business environment did not remain confined to his family. It included kin and non-kin alike, yet to different degrees and for different purposes. Understanding Venetian business units as private-order *coalitions* and *networks* (rather than focusing on closed operational units, such as *compagnie, fraterne*)¹ therefore seems a better way to account for the entirety of a merchant's commercial links, thus also assessing the relative significance of both inter- and extra-family connections.

The economic significance of the family thus manifests itself in the composition of Venetian trade networks. In this context, a trade network is a system of regular, but not formally institutionalised exchange of information, services, and goods between individuals for commercial purposes. Links between individual network components differ in strength, while different components differ in centrality. That is, the relationships maintained by individual components differ in their intensities, and some members of the network maintain more links than others. Venetian trade thus consisted of a family-based core that maintained links to external, i.e. non-kin components. The evolution of this business structure is closely linked to the broader social significance of the patrician family, as it mirrors the complex relationships between different patrician clans as well as between the patriciate and the *cittadini*. The case study of Lorenzo Dolfin exemplifies the systemic structure behind these linkages.

C. Further Hypotheses

While one should not overstate the hermeneutic significance of a micro-historical case study, a few broader historical and theoretical insights can nevertheless be proposed – not as definite conclusions, but as informed deductive hypotheses. These relate to the contractuality of

¹ These business units, however, were not typically based on *a priori* determined legal dispositions. The juridical practice of the *Giudizi di Petizion* shows that the legal frameworks of liable commercial partnerships were often established *ad hoc* on the basis of available documentation.

commercial networks; the role of the family in generating commercial links; the historical conceptualisation of the Venetian patrician family; the incentive-structure yielding stable means of cooperation within commercial networks, which included direct monetary and long-term non-monetary payoffs; and the difference between internal hierarchies and the external market environment. To summarise:

5. Venetian Patrician commercial networks were not primarily contract-based. Instead, they were constituted of (cross-generational) interpersonal links based on kin relations. Our evidence suggests that a Northian institutional framework – one of formal vs. informal business relations – is nevertheless difficult to apply to patrician business organisation in fifteenth-century Venice. Non-contractual business links were still based on hierarchies derived from social contexts such as family.
6. The patrician family acted as an operational unit in the commercial sphere. This occurred mainly through the employment of family agents, the cross-generational transmission of business skills, and the cross-generational composition of commercial networks and trade coalitions. In the latter case, the agglomerated wealth of individual family-coalition members would be transformed into coalitional capital, that is, the wealth of any coalition member could be tapped by his peers as a source of additional capital for joint commercial ventures.
7. The Venetian patrician family combined elements of a personal sphere, a sphere of representation, and an economic unit. An adequate historical model should combine existing sociological concepts such as the nuclear family, the extended family, and the affinal (marital) family. By identifying the “chosen family” as an additional layer (i.e. non-kin individuals who become elevated to family-status through social affinity), we can observe a family structure that may be referred to as “comprehensive family”.
8. The comprehensive family served as a social basis from which mercantile networks and coalitions were created. In fact, commercial coalitions often were identical with (parts of) a comprehensive family structure. They typically revolved around a central node that created and maintained the coalition’s periphery, consisting mostly of kin and, where necessary, of non-kin agents who were part of a coalition member’s personal network (i.e. individuals that did not belong to the comprehensive family from which the coalition was established). The incentives of external agents differed from those of coalition members, as the latter were primarily concerned with their long-term income streams resulting from coalition-based rather than the payoffs from marginal transactions. An individual’s role within a patrician commercial coalition changed as they became more senior. A coalition’s long-term operation displayed elements of both general and limited partnerships. Different types of contracts were used, and coalition members performed agency services to each other. In preliminary forms of intra-family business cooperation, such as a family-based *compagnia*, part-

ners received commission payments for the transactions they oversaw. Thus, agents were either paid directly (by commission) or benefited long-term from reduced transaction costs.

9. Hence, there emerged distinct operational dependencies between coalitional partners on the one hand – subject to internal hierarchies derived from family dynamics – and the external market environment on the other. This is consistent with theoretical research on the development of firms from markets.² The increasing significance of internal hierarchies provided a strong impetus for the emerging corporation economy. Thus, in the given historical context, family structure had a direct impact on economic development through its role in the formation of commercial partnerships.

D. Outlook: Prosopography as a Complementary Method

This micro-historical research on the life of Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio, alongside similar studies on patrician individuals (I.A.i), can be used to develop further hypotheses on biographical constants of Venetian patricians. For instance, the initial integration into a family-based commercial enterprise is independently observable (albeit under different circumstances) in the cases of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin, Donato Soranzo, Andrea Barbarigo, and Bernardo Giustiniani. Biographical parallels of this sort should ideally be examined with reference to larger data sets.

Thus, further substantiation of the here presented evidence could be achieved, for example, by means of a large-N prosopographical study of the Venetian commercial patriciate. The prosopographical method, as “the inquiry into the common characteristics of a group of historical actors by means of a collective study of their lives”,³ is a meaningful extension of the business biography in that it allows for assessing the relative pertinence of biographical details against the background of more general biographical characteristics of wider social spheres. The commercial correspondence and account books of merchants active roughly between 1344 and 1501 – which are available in some abundance, albeit rarely as extensive as the archive of Lorenzo Dolfin – could be subjected to a questionnaire inquiring into the relevance of a set of core variables of commercial biographies such as

- dates of birth and death;
- means of mercantile education;

² Williamson, Oliver E.: "Markets and Hierarchies: Some Elementary Considerations", in: *The American Economic Review* 63 (May, 1973), No. 2, pp. 316-325.

³ Stone, Lawrence: "Prosopography", in: *Daedalus* 100 (Winter, 1971), No. 1, pp. 46-79 (here p. 46).

- age when first participating in a commercial enterprise;
- membership in a *fraterna*;
- age at marriage;
- business focus as a junior merchant (sector, geographical area);
- business focus as senior merchant;
- (number and types of) positions held in the Venetian civil service;
- principal forms of intra-family commercial cooperation (matrilineal, patrilineal, affinal);
- observable means of commercial cooperation (commission agency, family agency, *fraterna*, *compagnia*);
- estimated value of inheritance;
- estimated wealth at time of death;

Such a study could also include individuals without a major archival legacy of their own; in fact, most of the above variables can be constructed for individuals occurring in Lorenzo Dolfin's correspondence, such as his brother-in-law Michele Morosini qd. Marino. The potential of such an endeavour is twofold: first, it would allow determining the degree to which career development differed between sectors of trade and geographical areas of commercial activity. Second, it would be possible to further explore the link between family structure and economic development by considering the macro-dynamics of the Venetian trading-post system, thus examining possible divergences in family interaction between different locations of the Venetian diaspora. Both aspects would address some of the methodical limitations of the present study relating to the micro-historical focus on a single individual. A large-scale prosopographical data set could explain, in greater detail, the differences in the composition of the respective personal commercial networks of Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin as a consequence of shifts in transactional security, operational risk (stemming, for example, from financial, logistical, climatical, or cultural dispositions) and political uncertainties.

Yet, as I hope to have shown, the business biography remains an important prerequisite for macro-historical research on the commercial patriciate. Larger-scale statistical analyses must be seen as complementary to, rather than as a replacement of, micro-focused historical source work, since the biographical variables in prosopographical studies must emerge from real ob-

servations on individual careers. Additional micro-histories of individual merchants are therefore to be encouraged.

APPENDIX

A. Chronology

c.1399: Birth of Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio.

1399: Death of Lorenzo's father Antonio Dolfin qd. Lorenzo.

1404: Venetian annexation of Padua.

1408: Begin of Biagio Dolfin's first consulship in Alexandria.

1417: Martin V (Oddone Colonna of Rome) elected pope during the Council of Constance; end of the Western Schism.

1418: First correspondence between Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin; Biagio Dolfin begins second consulship in Alexandria.

1420: Death of Biagio Dolfin qd. Lorenzo (26 April). Carlo Contarini appointed his successor as interim consul in Alexandria.

1423: Francesco Foscari elected Doge of Venice; Lorenzo Dolfin resident in Chioggia.

1425: Lorenzo Dolfin marries Giovanetta Morosini qd. Marino.

1431: Death of Martin V. The Venetian Gabriele Condulmer elected Pope Eugene IV.

1435: Lorenzo Dolfin resident in Padua.

1447: Death of Pope Eugene IV. Tommaso Parentucelli of Genoa elected Pope Nicholas V.

1450: Francesco Sforza elected Duke of Milan by Milanese senate.

1453: Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.

1454: Peace of Lodi.

1455: Alfonso de Borgia elected Pope Callixtus III following the death of Nicholas V.

1458: Death of Callixtus III., Silvio Piccolomini of Siena elected Pope Pius II.

1464: Death of Pius II, Pietro Barbo of Venice (nephew of Eugene IV) elected Pope Paul II.

1467: Last document of the *Commissaria Lorenzo Dolfin*.

1470: Fall of Negroponte.

1471: Death of Paul II. Francesco della Rovere of Genoa elected Pope Sixtus IV.

1475: Death of Lorenzo Dolfin (7 February).

B. Selected Documents

i. Letter, Biagio Dolfin qd. Lorenzo, Venetian consul in Alexandria, to Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio in Venice

ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (PSM 282), Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [3]:

In Christo nomine 1419 in Alexandria

Fio charisimo,

per questa to fazo asavèr chomo io deliberando de far che in Zepro el sia chargado suso la prezentia nave patròn ser Iachomo Chaxopin zerta quantetade de sal zoè che la dita nave sia chargada tuta in laqual sal partizipo per 1/3. Et in pero quando con dio avanty la sera zonta a Veniexa fa che tu sie con ser Nicholò Dolfin in senba et deschargade che laverà el dito sal si prochura ch'el me sia sento a la chamera del sal el mio terzo. Et aviseramie de questo el sera fa zoè quanta meza et contado che mantera el dito mio terzo.

Apriso te avixo che de nostro el dito patròn si die tute in tuto ducati 200 diqual me tocha a pagar 1/3 che se L. 6 s. 13 d. 450 igual sise de pagar per tuto el mexe de hotubro prosimo che vostro siche sonta el dito pagamento. Te dato ordene per ser Iachomelio de Vaga chomo el se debia far et si provendito de la moneda tuta fiada ar<e>chordandite che sa soleziso aschuoder li ducati X de Marcho Dolfin et anchor le ducati 32 ch'io die aver da li provededari de chomun in chaso che li se tendese anchor li dener che me resta a dar mio suoxero per la raxiòn da Sibenicho. Arechadatio a Pasqualiga che de prochura avexandite che provenderò ben si che avanty el partir to' una de le galere el sera dele mie dener tanty dela che non schondando li sovradite si se para ben far el dito pagamento aleso. Non ho per questa a dirte salvo che prego Christo te conser<v>a con sanitade quando my proprio et diame grazia che con sanitade et alegaza se posemo veder. Io non samo per questa nave a Pasqualiga perché per Iachomelo de Vaga li samo elqual parte fin zorni 4 ma confortala per mia parte a sar che Christo ve guardi tuty et simel digo di mia suor

Per Blaxio Dolfin fo de miser Lorenzo to padre, chusa di 18 avril per ser Iachomo Chaxopin

Verso: Nobli domino Laurentio Delphino quondam domini Antoni filio charisimo Venetiis detur.

Rezevudo del 1419 a di 4 setembry per Iachmo Chaxopin.

ii. Letter, Nicolò Dolfin qd. Benedetto, podestà of Sacile, to Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio, camerario of Vicenza

ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 3, f. [45]:

+ a nome de dio in 1426 a dì 11 de Novembrio in Veniexa

Charisimo fradelo,

e no ve ò scritto da puo la vostra partida alguna mia per no eser sende bexogno. E per questa ve avixo chomo e son stà fato podestà e capitano a Sazele siò azetado per conseio e conforto de tuti i mie. E pero venerendo informado perché e son zerto de rezever apiasèr de ogni desero e honor io avese como e faria de ogno vostro desero e ben como de fradelo ch'io ve reputo che prego dio che me lase andar con laude de dio e honor de la nostra signoria e ben [carabimento] del dito luogeo.

Perché è [...] 2 mexi de andar al dito rezimento e molte cose me sta de bexogno lequal male le ponìa far far e pero se algune de quello ve atrovese lequal no ve fose de bexogno ve prego orna e bandiere da tronbeta el stendardo elqual fo de vostro barba. E se alguna arma de testa ve atrovese se quello ve piari conse<g>narme e inprestarme azio che quando a vui le bexognase avanti el mio [...] me oferò de mandarvele. E de questo me responder pluy presto che vuy par azio che posando fornirme per lo mezo vostro e posar andar al dito rezimento. Et in caxo che no me pose fornir dele sovrascritte chose [o verde perte dequale avexamente] perché diqua [e me ne] forniria al mio [ch'io po dar] avanti la mia partida.

Ne altro per questa me resta salvo [a orferirme senper apariado] la dove [e mesia] al vostro desero e onor como de caro fradelo che ve reputo. Che dio ve guardi.

Inprestede val ben L[ire]57 p[iccoli]2 e b[isanti]0

per Nicolò Dolfin simel de fradelo

con amor ve saluda a dì dito

Verso: per Egregio et Nobili omo domino Laurenzio Delphino honorabile camerario Vicenziis detur.

Rezevudo 1426 a dì 15 Novembryo.

iii. Letter, Giacomo Dolfin qd. Francesco, vice-bailo of Constantinople, to Lorenzo Dolfin qd. Antonio

ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco (Reinhold C. Mueller - Christie's Collection), Citra, b. 282-283:

Per ser Lorenzo Dolfin

In Christi nomine MCCCCXXVII in Constantinopoli

Caro fradelo,

da poi la mie pertida da Venexia nula mia ve ho scritto per non eser sia de bexogna. Et mi zora conto zerto non sener asido a Venexia ben chech'i<o> rende zertisimo de mio fradelo Zorzi senti sta avixa de tempo de mia salute hore zonto de qui per far il mio dover et a chaxiòn el simel fadi verso de ni ho ve vorado servier questo avixandovi del mio ben star dexiderando simel saver de vui i den che prego l'altisimo dio che conservi se poxamo veder con salute.

Nui zonso steno de qui a dì 18 setenbrio avemo abudo pegeo savegar non torna dano a nui qui ma he de darion a le galie verle Tane che da posa nui zonzesemomai non ne stado ben zentio che [...] per tolse le galie non a posudo desbachar anchore che dì 3 [...] dubito non andra al porto de la Tana.

Io voria aver trovado questo luogo mol<t>o in eseto non [...] de gran contrarii prione lì ne raport[o] de pese non poro elon(?) verso le nostre abitazion ne muori mi conforto el pon del' inverno a dì per respeton de algune nuove e sta levade za mexi 4 ch'el ne hongarie pasa su la Grezia per eser contra turchi. Questi marchadanti de la Grezia non hose conprar dubitanto de non eser robado [...] sula fosse. Et anchor quelli de la Turchia siché per questa le pamine sta in vel prexio ne conforto ne poche quantità e non porie vegare si pochi dimanda le cosse reinslave meio iquel non fa. Ma pur son molto contento io non mi trovo aver tropo pani de nostre raxion perché avemo spieno se fare pur qualche bene e spezialmente disonanti ben che son pochi i nostri per eserboni e ben acholoradi soie sera prima spazadi e quei d'altri non me che ne trovi.

Per la vegnuda nostra ne iere pur alcuni volontenaxi achonime me zonsse di nuovo subito zar pasadi el ne a bel grado che de qui sulle greze sula [...] ano fato star i Armeni molto sospesi e nu fide. Anchora questi botogieri non compra nula perché non par algun Turcho tuti e andari in hoste et posa questi Catelani anno tanto forni de suo pani e zenaxi de vervi e de suo stex a gran tade eser i nostri non vuol vervi deve valove pp. 15 or val pp. 52 stex valove pp. b[isanti] 7 or val b. 15. I Chatelany de suo grosse soplisse a i nostri brisani e iustavini compra quei con plui vantazie de nostri pp. 10 e son una bota ra nostri non ne hase altra el b. 300 de

pani e non mi nesia suol eser altri [...] plui de 500 sulse sparza a steguive b. 200 non ne stirize b. 30 mi piaxe non ne altramia se par aver abudo qualche bastarde per eser ne manchamento starie insido et destaga ne noria aver abudo fin miete 5 se ne quando piarie asai bene per ve-gnir [...] qual ani afar vui piede deli quel mi piaxine [...] a Zorzi par fanie de tuto.

Io non ho posudo anchor veder le nostre raxion de le chonpagnie avemo convertito per eser io stado achuzando pese da le galie. Ma secondo lui me a dito per sie nave pasade ve amando plui cosse e parmi sta astuoder anchor de le beteri vechi non se a posudo per zerte garbui e stadi investisse far adasio per seguir pezo. Ma per la dio gran spiero per el retorno de ste galie se pueder che de la raxion vechia ne restera pocho de qui non resta in vender altro che pani i bastardi per eser destoloradi non si ne puo inverso pensava i ne aveste duro me par. Spiero de parti in su deli merze fo manda i arzenti vivi ben vendudi e fasse gran guadagno e dio voleste ne avede frai uno aver duo man subito per l'avie de [...] over per l'avie. De anchorne avixo Zorzi de [...] zinabri ne avemo pari vi o rize male e itri fo bendudi per modo se ne guade gran non troppo tuto l'arzeno su le man resta e ne tropo [...] de qui puochi denari de i pani ho dato chon mi ve avixo ne vendudi pani 8 loesti app. 1 li 3 app. a nostri [...]. La moneda [...] he meio che averla venduda l[ira] 1 plui [...] perché [...] [...] pasa plui de avanti si la moneda spiero alizion l'avamo se an dele inchiete se sare bene. Anchor i spazo dez(?) 30 de nostra [...] al 13 per i suo colori son de quely le dasie a 12 a dicho [...] fasa el ver al tropo de le nave. Speremo daro vie el resto et anchor i loesti de i pani fini nula ho fato aver abudi avanti altri [...] sine cognasse la bontade non pero che se perda ma pocha utilità sala far de si meio vi [...] dir tuto de quei da dialze ne ho comienza a spazar parte spiero se ne far.

Io ve avixo che questo anno non poso eser in Veniexia perché per la morte del nostro bailo che fo a dì 30 setenbrio io son sta fato vize bailo siché non vegno romagnir de qui. Et anchor me convieni tagnir Vetor per ise..(?) de la marchidantia. Avixandovi che avera salario non vi sodia la quantità sue die eser provisto per [...] siro di dodixi servi fati avanti el [...] con la dita condizion questa mi sera de utilità et a la marchandatia me zovera asai. El bailo è morto perché non a posudo horinar za zorni 25 aveva un gran chila e a la zorneda e molto plui ingrosada tanto che a le fin he morto. I dio i perdoni.

Altro per questa non mi resta presto per vui rechomandami a vostra madre salute Zanetaper mia parte le vostre fiane(?) son apariade [farole meta sita] la vesta e manderovele per le galie i dio vi conservi in salutà.

Per Jacomo Dolfin vize bailo

In Constantinopoli saluti di 10 hotubrie

iv. Contract concerning the purchase of a ship in constantinople, issued by Giorgio Dolfin qd. Francesco

ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco, Citra, b. 282, fasc. 1, int. 4, f. [8]:

+ 1428 a di29 avril in Venexia

Enzio sia che ser Vetor Dolfin fo de miser Franzescho abia conprado una nave in Constanti-
nopoli de laqual el ne da apartizipar charati VIII zoe charati 9 ala conpag<ni>a de ser Loren-
zio Dolfin he Zorzi he Iachomo Dolfin in laqual el dito ser Lorenzo ne partizipa in un terzo.
Chely tocheria charati in el qual ser Lorenzo me a dito a mi Zorzi Dolfin chel dibita ch'el di-
to ser Vetor Dolfin non abia conprado la dita nave contra i ordeni de Venexia e per questo el
non vorave aver in pazio algun per chaxion de la dita conpreda. E per tanto sia manifesto a
cha' da' un che vedera questo scritto come mi Zorzi Dolfin per mio nome he per nome de mio
fradeli ser Iachomo e ser Vetor Dolfin fazio seguro el dito ser Lorenzo Dolfin che la dita na-
ve non ne conprada contra i ordeni de Venexia a se chaxio fosse chel fosse cognosudo che la
fosse conprada contra i ordeni de Venexia per modo chel dito ser Lorenzo no rezevesse da
no algun per la sovadita conpreda. Mi Zorzi Dolfin soradito per mio nome e per nome de i so-
radity mie fradeli so ubligemo el sia sopra de nui el dito da no vi aseguro el dito ser Lorenzo
per la chaxion de la soradita conpreda per questa chaxion solamente. E mi Zorzi Dolfin li o
fato questo per sua chrezeria.

Verso:

Scryto di ser Z. Dolfin che fo di ser Francescho

C. List of Correspondence, Biagio and Lorenzo Dolfin

TABLE 4: CORRESPONDENCE BIAGIO AND LORENZO DOLFIN, ASVE, B. 181, FASC. 15

Arch. ref.	Type of doc.	Author	Recipient	Location (written)	Location (received)	Date (writ.)	Date (rec.)
int. d, f. [44]	Letter	Lorenzo Dolfin	Biagio Dolfin	Venice	Alexandria	20.06.1419	14.08.1419

int. d, f. [50]	Letter	Lorenzo Dolfin	Biagio Dolfin	Rosetta	Cairo	31.03.1420	02.04.1420
int. d, f. [57]	Letter	Lorenzo Dolfin	Biagio Dolfin	Venice	Alexandria	30.05.1419	29.07.1419
int. e, f. [4]	Letter (copy)	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	22.01.1419	n/a
int. e, f. [13]	Letter (copy)	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	18.04.1419	n/a
int. e, f. [24]	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	01.11.1418	23.11.1418
int. f, f. [5]	Letter (copy)	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	24.03.1419	n/a
int. g, f. [4]	Letter	n/a	Lorenzo Dolfin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

TABLE 5: LETTERS BIAGIO TO LORENZO DOLFIN, ASVE, B. 282

Arch. ref.	Type of doc.	Author	Recipient	Location (written)	Location (received)	Date (writ.)	Date (rec.)
fasc. 1, int. 2, f. [1]	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	18.04.1419	04.09.1419
fasc. 3, f. [2]	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	24.02.1419	27.05.1419
fasc. 3, f. [3] ¹	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	24.04.1419	15.06.1419
fasc. 3, f. [4]	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	04.08.1419	11.11.1419
fasc. 3, f. [5]	Letter	Biagio Dolfin	Lorenzo Dolfin	Alexandria	Venice	24.04.1419	16.06.1419

D. Letters to Ambrogio Malipiero

TABLE 6: ASVE, MISC. GREGOLIN, B. 9

Arch. ref.	Type of doc.	Author	Recipient	Location (written)	Location (received)	Date (writ.)	Date (rec.)
Fasc. 1, f. [1]	Letter	Daniel de Inzegnarati	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	1480s	n/a

¹ Letters f. [3] and f. [5] are of almost identical content, reflecting the practice of sending several copies of the same letter to a given destination to increase the chance of reception.

Fasc. 2	Letter						
Fasc. 3	Account					1484	
Fasc. 4, int. 1	Letter	Giorgio	Marco Bembo			1483	1483
int. 2, f. [1]	Letter	Michiel Barbaro	Marco Bembo qd. Ieronimo	Rhodes(?)	Venice		02.09.1483
int. 3	Letter	Antonio Negro	Marco Bembo		Venice	31.10.1483	09.01.1484
int. 4	Letter	Pietro Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	02.03.1483	n/a
int. 5	Letter	Giacomo Querini	Marino Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	09.09.1483	n/a
int. 6	Letter	Antonio	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	1483	27.09.1483
int. 7	Letter	Gianpietro	Ambrogio Malipiero		Tripoli	02.01.1484	n/a
int. 8	Note	Pietro Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	30.01.1484	n/a
int. 9	Letter	Suordamor Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero qd. Francesco	Venice	Tripoli	14.02.1484	03.04.1484
int. 10	Letter	Giovanni Valaresso qd.	Ambrogio Malipiero qd. Francesco	Venice	Tripoli	20.02.1484	26.x.1484
int. 11	Letter	Chiara de Prioli	Ambrogio Malipiero	Venice	Tripoli	19.02.1484	03.04.1484
int. 12	Letter	Suordamor Malipiero (“tua madre”)	Ambrogio Malipiero	Venice	Tripoli	20.02.1484	03.04.1484
int. 13	Letter	Francesco Anzelini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	28.02.1484	06.05.1484
int. 14	Letter	Giacomo Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero qd. Francesco	Venice	Tripoli	February 1484	03.04.1484
int. 15	Letter	Alvise Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	29.02.1484	03.03.1484
int. 16	Letter	Domenico	Ambrogio	Aleppo	Tripoli	04.04.1483	11.03.1484

		Capelan	Malipiero			(sic)	
int. 17	Letter						
int. 18	Letter		Michele Foscari qd. Filippo		Venice	20.10.1483	n/a
int. 19	Letter		Pietro Salamono qd. Giovanni (di Santa Maria Formosa)		Venice	29.10.1483	
int. 20	Letter	Jacobo	Andrea	Venice		09.02.1484	n/a
Fasc. 5, int. 1, f. [1]	Letter	Alvise Dolfìn	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	03.03.1484	04.05.1484
f. [2]	Letter	Bernardo Sarabini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	03.03.1484	11.03.1484
int. 2	Letter	Ieronimo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	03.03.1484	11.03.1484
int. 3	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero ("vice con.")	Aleppo	Tripoli	04.03.1484	11.03.1484
int. 4	Letter	Ieronimo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	04.03.1484	11.03.1484
int. 5	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut(?)	Tripoli	24(?)03.1484	26.03.1484
int. 6	Letter	Alessandro	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	27.02.1484	06.03.1484
int. 7	Letter	Polo Capello	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	07.03.1484	21.03.1484
int. 8	Letter	Pietro Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	16.03.1484	09.04.1484
int. 9	Letter	Francesco Zorzi	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	17.03.1484	26.03.1484
int. 10	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	17.03.1484	28.03.1484
int. 11	Letter (no envelope or	Domenico Capelan	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	prob. Tripoli	17.03.1484	n/a

	seal)						
int. 12	Letter	n/a	n/a	Nicosia	n/a	31.03.1484	n/a
int. 13	Letter	Pietro Rizo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	22.03.1484	29.03.1484
int. 14	Letter	Girolamo Canpanato	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	prob. Tripoli	24.03.1484	28.03.1484
int. 15	Letter	Girolamo Canpanato	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	prob. Tripoli	28.03.1484	29.03.1484
int. 16	Letter	Alvise Dolfìn	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	26.03.1484	29.03.1484
int. 17	Letter	Bernardo Tiepolo (consul?)	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	30.03.1484	03.04.1484
int. 18	Letter	Pietro Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero		Tripoli	30.03.1484	03.04.1484
int. 19	Letter	Girolamo Canpanato	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	01.04.1484	02.04.1484
int. 20	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	01.04.1484	09.04.1484
int. 21	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel (vice-consul?)	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	01.04.1484	02.04.1484
int. 22	Letter	Giacomo Dolfìn	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	1484	03.04.1484
int. 23	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	02.04.1484	03.04.1484
int. 24	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	03.04.1484	n/a
int. 25	Letter	Giovanni Gafaro	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	02.04.1484	03.04.1484
int. 26	Letter	Alvise Dolfìn	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	07.04.1484	09.04.1484
int. 27	Letter	Giovanni Corner	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	14.04.1484	26.04.1484
int. 28	Letter/ Account	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	01.09.1484	07.09.1484
int. 29	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	18.04.1484	26.04.1484
int. 30	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	22.04.1484	09.05.1484
int. 31	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	26.04.1484	09.05.1484

int. 32	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	22.04.1484	09.05.1484
int. 33	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	26.04.1484	May 1484
int. 34	Letter	pro. Marino Malipiero. Also mentions Antonio Loredan and Antonio Gradenigo (recycled envelope).	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	28.04.1484	08.05.1484
int. 35	Letter	Pietro	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	08.04.1484 (?)	09.05.1484
int. 36	Letter	Alvise Dolfín	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	26.04.1484	03.05.1484
int. 37	Letter	Uv-lamp required				13.04.	09.05
int. 38	Letter	Federigo Corner	Ambrogio Malipiero		Tripoli	21.05.1484	09.06.1484
int. 39	Letter	Benetin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	02.05.1484	09.05.1484
int. 40	Letter	Angelo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagosta	Tripoli	02.05.1484	09.05.1484
int. 41	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	04.05.1484 (or March?)	17.05.1484
int. 42	Letter	Giovanni Corner	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	04.03.1484	11.03.1484
int. 43	Letter	Giovanni Corner	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	05.05.1484	13.05.1484
int. 44	Letter	Toma	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	06.05.1484	16.05.1484
int. 45	Letter	Ieronimo Querini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	07.05.1484	13.05.1484
int. 46	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	02.05.1484	13.05.1484
int. 47	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	09.05.1484	14.05.1484
int. 48	Letter	Giovanni "schivino"	Ambrogio Malipiero		Tripoli	09.04.1484	13.04.1484
int. 49	Letter	Alvise Dolfín	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	13.05.1484	16.05.1484

int. 50	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	18.05.1484	21.05.1484
int. 51	Letter	Giacomo Gabriel	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	19.05.1484	24.05.1484
int. 52	Letter	Nicolò Vi-ziatti(?)	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia(?)	Tripoli	19.05.1484	n/a
int. 52	Letter	Marino Malpiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	22.05.1484	02.06.1484
int. 53	Letter	Giacomo Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	29.05.1484	02.06.1484
int. 54	Letter	Francesco Zorzi	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	07.05.1484	13.05.1484
int. 55	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Cyprus	Tripoli	22.05.1484	02.06.1484
int. 56	Letter	Marino Malipiero	Ambrogio Malipiero	Nicosia	Tripoli	31.07.1484	30.08.1484
int. 57	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	01.08.1484	08.08.1484 (?)
int. 58	Letter	Ieronimo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	30.07.1484/ 01.08.1484	08.08.1484 (?)
int. 59	Letter	Pietro Rizo	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	04.08.1484	20.08.1484
int. 60	Letter	Ieronimo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	09.08.1484	20.08.1484
int. 61	Letter	Toma Marin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	09.08.1484	20.08.1484
int. 61	Letter	Toma Marin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	08.08.1484	28.08.1484
int. 62	Letter	Giovanni Alvisè Morosini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	09.08.1484	19.08.1484
int. 63	Letter	Giovanni de Prioli qd. Pietro	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	09.08.1484	August 1484
int. 64	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	10.08.1484	15.08.1484
int. 65	Letter	Giovanni Corner	Ambrogio Malipiero	Famagusta	Tripoli	16.08.1484	30.08.1484
int. 66	Letter	Toma Marin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	18.08.1484	30.08.1484
Fasc. 6	Letter	Antonio Negno(?)	Marco Bembo qd. Ieron-	Damascus	Venice	21.08.1484	05.12.1484

			imo				
int. 68	Letter	Toma Marin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	August 1484	30.08.1484
int. 69	Letter	Toma Marin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	Tripoli	23.08.1484	23.08.1484
int. 70	Letter	Ieronimo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	29.08.1484	31.08.1484
int. 71	Letter	Alvise Dolfin	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	29.08.1484	30.08.1484
int. 72	Letter	Domenico Capelan	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	31.08.1484	07.09.1484
int. 73	Letter	Girolamo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	31.08.1484	07.09.1484
int. 74	Letter	Francesco Zorzi	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	31.08.1484	07.09.1484
int. 75	Letter	Girolamo Querini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	31.08.1484	n/a
int. 76	Letter	Girolamo Querini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	31.08.1484	07.09.1484
int. 77	Letter	Bernardo Donado/ Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	n/a	10.08.1484
int. 78	Letter	Giovanni de Prioli	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	01.09.1484	07.09.1484
int. 79	Letter	Domenico Capelan	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	06.10.1484	n/a
int. 80	Letter	Girolamo Contarini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	06.10.1484	n/a
int. 81	Letter	Giovanni de Prioli qd. Pietro	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	07.10.1484	n/a
int. 82	Letter	Angelo Malipiero(?)	Ambrogio Malipiero	Beirut	Tripoli	08.10.1484	n/a
int. 83	Letter	Domenico Capelan	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	November 1484	Requ. UV lamp
int. 84	Letter	Domenico Capelan	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	23.12.1484	31.12.1484
int. 85	Letter	Alvise Malipiero (“tuo fratello”)	Marino Malipiero	Scan 437	439	13.01.1486	n/a
int. 86	Letter	Francesco	Ambrogio	Damascus	Tripoli	14.02.1484	03.03.1484

		Marzello	Malipiero			(no more veneto ?)	
int. 87	Letter	Alessandro de Martini	Ambrogio Malipiero	Venice	Tripoli	n/a	22.04.1485
int. 88	Envelope		Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	n/a	28.03.1484
int. 89	Letter	n/a	n/a	Famagusta	n/a	n/a	n/a
int. 90	Letter	n/a	Ambrogio Malipiero	Damascus	n/a	1484	n/a
int. 91	Letter	Almoro Donado	Ambrogio Malipiero	Aleppo	Tripoli	01.09.1484	n/a

E. Network and Coalition Structure: A Formal Approach

This section presents a formal representation of the terminology of networks applied in this study. The following model of network formation is that of JACKSON and WOLINSKY, adapted to fit a trade-historical context.² In addition, this section draws upon adaptations of the Jackson and Wolinsky model by BLOCH, GOYAL, and VEGA-RODONDO.³

In economic network theory, cooperatively-formed coalitions, coalitions resulting from non-cooperative games, and networks represent a structural progression of increasing complexity. In the context of trade theory, we consider cooperative games and random networks, thus modelling coalitions and markets respectively. Let α be a network of finite size with $N = \langle 1, 2, 3, \dots, n \rangle$ nodes. This network defines a market with N participating agents. Let $\alpha_{ij} \in \{0, 1\}$ denote a link between nodes i and j ($\alpha_{ij} = 1$ if there is a link, $\alpha_{ij} = 0$ if there is none). The network α is determined by the number of links. The set of all possible networks

in $N = \langle 1, 2, 3, \dots, n \rangle$ is denoted by Ω , which includes the empty network where $\sum_{x=1}^n \alpha_{ij} = 0$.

In the network α connections are two-sided, i.e. players (nodes) form connections based on mutual agreement. A decay factor $\delta \in [0, 1]$ captures the fact that the value $w_{ij} \geq 0$ that i de-

² Jackson, M.O., Wolinsky, A.: "A Strategic Model of Social and Economic Networks", in: *Journal of Economic Theory* 71 (Oct., 1996), No. 1, pp. 44-74.

³ Bloch, Francis: "Coalitions and Networks in Economic Analysis", in: Bourgine, P., Nadal, J.-P. (eds.), *Cognitive Economics - An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2004, pp. 417-428; Goyal, Sanjeev: *Connections - An Introduction to the Economics of Networks*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 143-162; Vega-Redondo, Fernando: *Complex Social Networks*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 195-214.

rives from being connected to j depends on the geodesic distance d between i and j , i.e. is proportional to the proximity of j to i . The utility of each player i from the network α can thus be written as

$$(i) \quad u_i(\alpha) = w_i + \sum_{j \neq i} \delta^{d(i,j;\alpha)} w_j - \sum_{j:ij \in \alpha} c_{ij},$$

where $c_{ij} \geq 0$ is the cost incurred by i for being linked to j .

As the network α describes a market, it cannot take the form of an empty network as this would impede market activity. Yet the empty network is a Nash equilibrium for any network formation game.⁴ Hence players in α are assumed to have incentives to maintain links so that the conditions of pairwise-stability hold:

$$(ii) \quad \sum_{x=1}^n \alpha_{ij} \geq 1$$

$$(iii) \quad \text{for every } \alpha_{ij} = 1, u_i(\alpha) \geq u_i(\alpha - \alpha_{ij}) \text{ and } u_j(\alpha) \geq u_j(\alpha - \alpha_{ij})$$

$$(iv) \quad \text{for every } \alpha_{ij} = 0, u_i(\alpha + \alpha_{ij}) > u_i(\alpha) \text{ and } u_j(\alpha + \alpha_{ij}) < u_j(\alpha)$$

Similarly, it is assumed that no player profits from deleting their links. There is a pairwise equilibrium if the formation game defined by the set of strategies $S = \{s_1, s_2, s_3, \dots, s_n\}$

$$(v) \quad \text{has a Nash equilibrium } S^* \text{ that yields } \alpha$$

$$(vi) \quad \text{for any } \alpha_{ij}(s^*) = 0, u_i(\alpha(s^*) + \alpha_{ij}) > u_i(\alpha(s^*)) \text{ and } u_j(\alpha(s^*) + \alpha_{ij}) < u_j(\alpha(s^*))$$

The market described by the network α is thus profitable for all participants. The market network is decentralised and no player is assumed to be dominant, i.e. no player's behaviour can influence other players' strategies outside the bilateral link.

⁴ Goyal: *Connections*, pp. 150-153.

There may be a subset of N , $N_s = \langle i, j, k, \dots, n - \sigma \mid \sigma < n \rangle$, which decides to form a group within α . This group shall be called a *coalition*. The formation of coalition $\phi \in \alpha$ differs from the formation of network α in the following ways: first, there is one player (node) i who is central in the sense that they initiate the coalition. This player shall be called the principal. Second, the principal i forms links with other nodes in N_s and these form links between each other only if they possess a link to i , i.e. $\phi_{j,k} = 1$ if and only if $\phi_{i,j} = 1$ and $\phi_{i,k} = 1$. In other words, the principal is the owner of the coalition and coalition members do not freely form links within N_s . Third, coalition members may freely form links with any node $a \in N$ that is not part of the subset N_s . This results in a sub-network $\beta \in \alpha$ containing the coalition ϕ and all nodes outside ϕ to which nodes of N_s maintain links. The sub-network β is a *core-periphery network* consisting of two types of nodes, $N_s \subset N$ and $N_{l \notin \phi} \subset N$. The nodes $N_{l \notin \phi}$ constitute the periphery and each have a link to at least one node in N_s . Nodes in N_s constitute the core and may be fully linked with each other. The utility of each node $l \in N_{l \notin \phi}$ derived from forming a link with a node in N_s is assumed to be the same as in equation (i), and vice versa. The utility of each node $j \in N_s$ derived from being a member of coalition ϕ is given by

$$(vii) \quad u_j(\phi) = \sum_{i \neq j} \delta^{d(j,i;\phi)} \varpi_{ji} - \sum_{i: ji \in \phi} c^*_{ji},$$

where $\varpi_{ji} \geq 0$ is the value for j of being a member of the coalition (maintaining a link to the principal). The cost c^* of coalition membership is assumed to be lower than c , reflecting the incentive of entering the coalition structure.

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