

**Vuk Uskoković**

## AN INTERROGATION OF VENETIAN COURIERS FROM 1723

### **Abstract**

The paper studies one typical interrogation (*costituto*) from early eighteenth-century Venetian couriers who walked the republic's overland connection from Cattaro to Istanbul. In considering how time and space are reported in the included primary source, this article looks at how these modes of spatial and temporal representation relate to the structural realities of early modern long-distance travelling, thereby recovering the early modern road with its infrastructure and courier networks as a dynamic locus of contemporary politics.



On 7 October 1723 a group of three Venetian couriers arrived with the republic's diplomatic bag in Cattaro (Kotor, present-day Montenegro), the capital of the frontier province of Albania Veneta<sup>1</sup> and the junction of the maritime and the overland route between Venice and Istanbul. The journey took twenty-five days on foot from the day they were consigned the bag by their master, the *bailo*, who was the Venetian permanent representative to the Porte; the bag they brought contained the *bailo's* official correspondence with his government and the provincial Venetian authorities, as well as private mail addressed from the Golden Horn to Venice and beyond. Upon arrival, the trio was confined in the city's *lazaretto* to undergo the quarantine mandatory for anyone traveling from the Ottoman Empire. There, in compliance with sanitary regulations, the couriers were interrogated from a safe distance by *cavaliere* Gerolimo Bucchia, a nobleman of Cattaro and the republic's most important official of local extraction. Bucchia, in addition to organizing the transmission of the *Serenissima's* mail to Istanbul, was also charged, under the title of superintendent, with intelligence gathering and cross-border mediation on the southern end of the Veneto-Ottoman frontier. After asking the couriers prescribed questions about the course of their journey and news they picked up in Istanbul and along the road, the superintendent drew up an official report recording their answers in a bare, bureaucratic form for his and

*Vuk Uskoković is a PhD researcher in the Department of History at the European University Institute, Florence. Email: [vuk.uskokovic@eui.eu](mailto:vuk.uskokovic@eui.eu)*

his superiors' uses. The document, normally referred to as *co(n)stituto* in Venetian administrative jargon (signifying a sworn statement before public officials), was attached in copy to the report which Bucchia's immediate superior, the proveditor extraordinary of Cattaro, wrote to their government on the occasion of forwarding the diplomatic bag. The bag and the report were then shipped to Venice via Zara, the seat of the proveditor-general who served as the supreme Venetian civil and military governor in the two East Adriatic provinces, or via direct route in case of urgency.<sup>2</sup>

Neither the journey nor the document was in any way exceptional. Such groups of couriers as the three above, recruited from among the (mostly) Orthodox peasant communes on both sides of the border, had trampled the road to Istanbul and back—the sacks with letters on their backs, and sometimes even a firman destined for a frontier pasha tucked in their trousers, or runaway slaves smuggled in their company with the *bailo's* connivance—for at least a century beforehand, serving, under the direction of members from the Cattarene Bucchia or Bolizza families, as the republic's ordinary means of communication with the Ottoman capital.<sup>3</sup> When not carrying mail, couriers were either in their villages by the seaside or in the mountains of Montenegro awaiting their employers' summons from Cattaro, or, at the other end of the road, living in large numbers in Pera's Venetian embassy. There they were lodged "in a rundown house in the courtyard" and employed as servants, cooks' helpers, and liveried guardsmen to the *bailo* during formal functions, until it was their turn to carry the valise back home.<sup>4</sup> Due to their errant lifestyle in Istanbul, the couriers were subject to sanitary isolation within their quarters during outbreaks of plague, to which they frequently fell victim, whether in Istanbul or on the road.<sup>5</sup>

As typical as the trio was, so was the *costituto* which recorded, through the superintendent's mediation, details from their journey that interested their employers. Venetian authorities routinely used this type of interrogation to gather intelligence from the newly arrived batches of couriers as well as from merchants and other travelers from Ottoman cities and ports. These interrogations offered supplementary, second-rate sources of information to Venetian authorities, who used these accounts to crosscheck the more substantial updates they received from the *bailo*, their consular representatives, and from their networks of informants. But it is precisely the interrogations' bureaucratic banality— their regularity, their formulaic character, their duty to report malfunction or disruption— which conserves in them a

systematic record of one particular type of early modern mobility: the courier service that made up Venice's vital line of communication with Istanbul in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which these *costituti* make possible to reconstruct in considerable detail.

Such as they are, the *costituti* also preserve the experiences of subaltern individuals from the periphery of the two imperial systems who routinely traversed the vast geographical, political, and cultural spaces of the early modern Balkans and, simultaneously, moved through its social hierarchies. Within a month, a courier may travel a thousand kilometers between two cities as diverse as Istanbul and Cattaro and also, in the course of the journey, scale the era's entire social edifice. Not long after accompanying the *bailo* on a state visit to the sultan or the grand vizier,<sup>6</sup> the courier may find himself on the road, camping with his group under open skies or sleeping over their sacks of letters in a roadside inn, fearful lest any of the fellow travelers with whom they shared drinks and gossip rob them of their precious burden. Some days later the courier and his group may join the entourage of an Ottoman official traveling to his new post or the caravan of fellow Slavic-speaking traders from Bosnia or Ragusa, and profit from the safety (and the news) their company afforded. Once parted ways with the caravan, the group could easily meet highland or lowland brigands at gun- or knifepoint, who, if they had mercy on their lives, would leave them stripped down to their breeches to seek shelter with some of the couriers' usual protectors, an inland Catholic bishop in Bulgaria or Muslim frontier elites in Peć and Scutari who boasted friendship and kinship with Bucchia. Finally, once arrived in Cattaro, the group's account of their journey would leave them behind in the *lazaretto* and sail across the Adriatic to reach the desks of Zara and Venice. And while, obviously, these documents preserve the subaltern experience only through the literary mediation of their masters, the interrogations which they record nevertheless presuppose on the part of the interrogees certain techniques (at least mental) of organizing and representing such experiences.

These *costituti* indeed *were* the product of a joint, if unequal, "collaboration" between their privileged drafter and the peasant frontiersmen in his service, who, though united by language and personal allegiance, were separated by class and status, political and sanitary boundaries, religious denomination, and, supposedly, a vast cultural gulf between the Republic and the Empire. Consequently, these interrogations point to a shared way of perceiving, representing, and interpreting space and time—and movement therein—on the

Veneto-Ottoman frontier and beyond. What is more, this mental cartography (for want of a better word) employed by the two parties in their “collaboration” to capture space and mobility does not merely indicate a “cross-cultural” practice of coding time and space but also reflects the underlying geographical and sociopolitical realities of early modern travel. Ultimately, this source allows us to reconsider the road itself as an organized, political space of action and thought in which early modern politics happened, so to say, on the run. To that end, let us examine the following *costituto* of 7 October 1723 as one example of this type of primary source and the insights it can provide.<sup>7</sup>

My use of the italics in the reproduction of the *costituto* below mimics somewhat the drafter’s own cues to his original readers. Bucchia’s way of referencing himself throughout the text (“I the undersigned”) is the most obvious example of how he guides his readers through the bureaucratic form of the *costituto* to signal his authorship, to intervene in the answers quoting a letter from the *bailo*, and to convey his merits in securing the smooth transit of the couriers; the copyist here did not even bother to copy Bucchia’s name at the end, so self-evident as it was. The same cue was employed by the Scutarene merchant Hasan Agha in instructing the couriers to keep a piece of information only for the ears of their master (with a view, presumably, to safeguarding its newsworthiness). By stressing all such textual references to locations, persons and offices, template questions, and modes of recording time and space, I want to make visible the constitutive elements not only of Bucchia’s geography of the text but also of the “grid” which the couriers themselves used to map their own journey.<sup>8</sup>

The physical geography which the couriers experienced and reported on is inseparable from the political and administrative realities of their day. Indeed, their very status as couriers was regulated by an official “*firman ò sia passaporto*” and enacted by their presenting it to the Ottoman officials of all ranks on whose good will or physical protection their passage depended; natural impediments such as floods or heavy snow were as common reasons of delay as the decisions of Ottoman pashas or protectors, such as Hasan Agha, to detain the couriers until their safety could be guaranteed. But politics also informed the couriers’ view of the larger world. The geography of their depositions clearly distinguished Istanbul, the seat of the Ottoman government (and of foreign legations) from which the power and decisions emanated, from the road/journey itself, where the fallout of those decisions revealed itself in the movement of relays, troops, and

rumors, which was the couriers' duty to observe and record; their reporting on specific questions of the *costituto* consistently reflects this division. The kind of "press clipping" of the Ottoman high politics the couriers provided in this *costituto*—a mix of capital gossip (*le novità*) and the facts of their own observation—is fairly typical of what one reads in other interrogations. In particular, they were charged with monitoring the Ottoman arsenal situated not far from the embassy in Pera, where they usually reported watching the movement and the construction of ships with their own eyes. Their eyes seemed to have looked back on the city for as long as it was within view; on one occasion they reported seeing ships leave the arsenal when already two days on the road.<sup>9</sup> The gossip from the capital, movement of ships and troops, dismissals and appointments in the government, the treatment of the couriers themselves, the statuses of the *bailo* and other ambassadors—all such information was collected to gauge possibly, but with principal reliance on the *bailo*'s dispatches, the disposition and the intentions of the central government in Istanbul, which, together with the news about the plague, was what chiefly concerned the government in Venice.

The road on which the couriers journeyed when they left Istanbul followed the ancient Via Militaris through the plains of Bulgaria to Plovdiv (Philippopolis), where it turned west to the hillier areas of Macedonia to reach Skopje, winding thence northward to Prizren and Đakovica before again turning southwest to Scutari across the mountains of present-day northern Albania; from Scutari the couriers reached Cattaro typically (in this period) by way of the present-day Montenegrin seaside. This was the *strada ordinaria* they trod, part of the Ottoman *orta kol* (the middle route) corridor, the network of roads from which Edirne branched out towards Belgrade and Sarajevo; however, if the *bailo* deemed the road unsafe, he would instruct couriers to take the *sol kol* (the left route), the corridor roughly following the ancient Via Egnatia through Thessaloniki and Elbasan to Durazzo, from where the local Venetian consul was to procure them a ship for Cattaro.<sup>10</sup> The place names where the couriers report events of note (e.g., Edirne, Đakovica, and Scutari in our *costituto*) coincide with those of the Ottoman halting stops (*menzilhane*) of the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The couriers thus availed themselves of the Ottoman road infrastructure, walking, alongside the couriers of the Ottoman relay system, the day's distance (*giornata*) from one post station or town to the next and picking up news freely circulating in the roadside markets and inns. In such a manner they and their employers also coded the

journey, combining the halting stops with days of travel to record important events, such as where and when they met batches of couriers coming from the opposite direction (which enabled Bucchia to keep some track of the previous dispatches).

This method of recording time and space was widespread in the early modern period, famously exemplified in the Milanese postmaster Ottavio Codogno's postal itineraries which mapped space between major European cities in postal stations, a kind of overland equivalent of portolan charts;<sup>12</sup> in the eighteenth century, such itineraries came to be drawn as maps reminiscent of present-day transit maps.<sup>13</sup> The republic's postal service in the *Terraferma*, run by the *Compagnia dei corrieri*, followed fixed itineraries and timetables along postal stations.<sup>14</sup> On the Ottoman side, the road network "figure[d] as an organizing principle of Ottoman geographical writing," to the point that the influential works of Matrakçı Nasuh (d. 1564) and Katib Çelebi (1609–57) were structured around *menzil* stations, the former in particular resembling "a sophisticated form of *menzilname*, a list of halting places."<sup>15</sup> A travel diary of the Orthodox monk Hierotheus of Rača, who in 1704 made his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, shows that such techniques were in practical use among ordinary people; Hierotheus measured time/space in night rests on the road (*konak*) where the couriers reported *giornate*.<sup>16</sup>

As systematic records of one particular type of early modern mobility, the *costituti* allow us to study on a microlevel the early modern long-distance communication,<sup>17</sup> both the underlying material structures of early modern travel and the attendant mental practices of representing time and space, which stretched in a continuum across the political and "cultural" borders. But more than just revealing the local, microhistorical aspect of the communication networks on which the early modern empires rested, this type of document forces us to consider the road as an organized space of political action and analysis. Indeed, the purpose of maintaining the courier service was to allow the ruling class of Venice to be, as one *bailo* put it in 1641, "padroni di tutto il negozio di Costantinopoli mediante la padronia delle lettere" (the masters of all the business in Constantinople through the control of the letters).<sup>18</sup> The Ottoman relay and the *menzilhane* network likewise served to bring vital intelligence to Istanbul.<sup>19</sup> And as the news and the letters traveled, the road itself provided the context in which they were to be interpreted. The proclamation of orders, presence of troops on the road, tips from other couriers, and public festivities supplied the couriers and their employers with essential additional information to

that captured in the rumors and letters at the journey's starting point in the capital. The couriers' witnessing in real time of the dramatic rotations in the office of Scutari gave the Venetians a timely update on the new commander of the neighboring sanjak. Finding the downfall of the grand vizier hard to believe (rightly so, as it turned out), the couriers sought to verify the rumor on the road; however, they were ultimately misled by the news' wide circulation and Hasan Agha's eagerness to convey exclusive information to his friend. But what mattered more than the veracity of particular news was maintaining a constant flow of information. It was the couriers' physical act of making the journey, and of "mapping" it as they went, which constituted the newsworthiness of the information they brought along. Their bodies, in a sense, were an essential part of the road infrastructure. This instrumentalization was perhaps most unselfconsciously expressed by Bucchia's predecessor, Giovanni Bolizza (who had occupied the office of superintendent since the War of Candia), in a letter to a Venetian extraordinary ambassador in Istanbul:

These couriers suffered greatly on the road on account of harsh winter and excessive snow, to the degree that two of them have been incapacitated for the office, or at the very least shan't be able to serve for a while, which greatly weighs on me with regard to the present scarcity of the couriers.<sup>20</sup>

The *costituti* open one another important question: What was the effect of this particular mobility on the couriers' own home communities? Indeed, the organization and maintenance of this line of communication served the interests of the Venetian Republic, although even Ottoman frontier elites at times solicited the *bailo's* intercession to win appointments from the Porte on account of the protection they provided to the couriers. And if the couriers' horizontal and vertical mobilities made them a peculiar kind of transimperial subjects in the service of the then ruling classes, should we not also assume that the poor, mountain communes of their origin, exposed to the vicissitudes of frontier life, also profited in some way from their involvement in the high politics of their day? The *costituti* on their own cannot answer these questions, but other sources might elucidate the matter in the future. For the time being, I do not think it is far-fetched to assume that these illiterate and polylingual peasants, who spoke, ideally, in addition to their South Slavic dialect and such Venetian as was spoken

in the province, also Albanian and Turkish, who possessed precious political information which could serve local chiefs (whose sons some of them were) in their negotiations with the pashas, and who sometimes managed to amass little fortunes in Istanbul, played an important role of political, economic, and cultural mediators for the frontier communities.



#### PRIMARY SOURCE

Daniel Renier, dispatch 43, 9 October 1723, the *Costituto* of 7 October 1723 (in attachment), busta 476, Senato/Dispacci/Provveditori da terra e da mar e altre cariche, Archivio di stato di Venezia (PTM, ASV). (Translated by Vuk Uskoković<sup>21</sup>)

Copy. 7 October 1723, Cattaro.

The ordinary couriers, three in number, sent by *the most excellent bailo at the Ottoman Porte* Giovanni Emo, have arrived *from Constantinople* with two parcels of public dispatches, and one package addressed to *me the undersigned, as per usual*, including letters for the most excellent lords *the proveditor-general* and *the proveditor extraordinary*. The names of the said couriers are: head courier (“capo”) Raič son of Pero from Njeguši, Ivan son of Vujo from Grbalj, and Vuko son of Jovo from Grbalj [both rural communes in present-day Montenegro].

Interrogated *how many days* have passed since they departed from *that place* [Istanbul], they responded: *Today it is precisely twenty-five days* since we were dispatched by lord *bailo*.

Interrogated on *what news* they were bringing, they responded: *In Constantinople*, there are no rumors (*nulla si discorre*), but having arrived *in Edirne* we ourselves *have heard the publication of the orders* that all the cavalrymen (*sipahi*) and the infantrymen (*seimeni*)<sup>22</sup> are to assemble, and *having asked around* to what end we were not able to find out.



Interrogated on *other news*, they responded: *At three days' distance from Constantinople*, we heard the news of the decapitation of *the grand vizier*, and having asked of the Turks the reason thereof, many confided to us that this was on account of his failure to settle the differences with *the Muscovite* while there was still time. Finding it hard to believe the death of the said vizier, we continued to ask around for *the rest of our journey*, and at every step the news has been confirmed to us. Likewise, having arrived in *Scutari* [present-day Shkodër, Albania, then the capital of the Ottoman frontier sanjak of İskenderiye], and having been received with courtesy by *Hasan Agha Kopilić in his house*, we asked him the same question, and he too responded that it was true, but that we should not mention it to anyone with the sole exception of *cavalier Bucchia*.

Interrogated on *the differences with the Muscovite*, they responded: This one plundered eight galleys of the Turks, and seized other fourteen, *of which we also heard from the Turks*.

Interrogated on *other news*, they responded: *the beylerbey of Niš* had many Christians murdered, among whom a number of Imperial [Austrian] subjects, at which *the Caesar's [holy Roman emperor] ambassador* taking offence brought his complaints to *the Divan*. For this two *kapıcıbaşı*s were sent to bring the said beylerbey to give account *before the Porte*; but he, enraged thereat, had the two *kapıcıbaşı*s murdered. Then he was again ordered to surrender by the *Porte*, but he instead of his own person sent two captains, who were put in chains. In the meantime, the Ottoman government offered money to *the Caesar's ambassador* so as to hush the affair; but he disdaining the offer decided to *await the orders of his sovereign*.

Interrogated *where at present are situated Ottoman maritime forces*, they responded: They are ready *now* to depart from *the Arsenal*, with the orders to go to *the Black Sea*; which they have attempted to do on several occasions, but ever was their departure prevented by *the contrariety of the weather*.

Interrogated on *other news*, they responded that *the Muscovite resident* at the *Porte* had been arrested; but having pleaded *before the Divan* the most excellent *bailo* and the ambassador of France for the reason that

they have spent a large sum of money on his maintenance for some time already, he was given to them in liberty.

Interrogated whether *in Constantinople* there were any news on the whereabouts of *the new most excellent bailo Gritti*, they responded that he was known to have reached *Tenedos*; so the most excellent *bailo Emo* deigned to inform *me the undersigned*, and to have sent the ships (*le bailere*) accordingly [to fetch him at Tenedos].

Interrogated whether during their journey they encountered *any troops on the move*, they responded: In *the area of Edirne*, we have seen many parties, some hundred some hundred and fifty strong, but *without their banners*, who, as we understood, were heading to *that place* to request their salaries and then to stay *in their winter quarters*.

Interrogated whether on the road they experienced *any harassment*, they responded: We have travelled ever with ease; *in Đakovica*, moreover, *the commander* [sc. of the place], out of suspicion that some misfortune might befall us, kept us back *for a day*; thence he gave us *escort to Scutari* with regard to *the friendship which he professes to me the undersigned*.

Interrogated whether it was true that the pasha of Scutari has been deposed, they responded that it was true, and that the previous pasha Mehmed had again been appointed to the office, and that he had already sent his *kethüda* in his stead until he should come. But *at three days' length away from Constantinople*, we were joined by *the [Ottoman] relay (la staffetta) who was carrying the news* that the said pasha was removed and Arslan Pasha appointed, who had been pasha before him. And this was confirmed to us *in Scutari by Hasan Agha Kopilić, during our stay at his home*; having also ourselves seen the celebrations thrown there on that account.

Interrogated whether there were any news concerning the outcome of *the army which went against Himara* [region in present-day southern Albania] to destroy *the rebels there or, possibly, brigands*, they responded that, not having been able to overcome them by force of arms, they captured their leader through treachery, together with ten principal culprits, and decapitated them all; and their flayed skins were sent to the Porte stuffed with hay.

Interrogated about *the contagious disease [the plague]*, they responded: Thanks be to God in Constantinople and in every other place on the road there is freedom from this illness.

Interrogated about *the state of the most excellent bailo*, they responded: He enjoys perfect health, and is well considered and respected, and is *awaiting the arrival of his successor*.

Interrogated on other news, they responded: nothing more than we have already said.

[Gerolimo Bucchia]

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The province in this period comprised the thin coastal strip of the winding, mountain-encircled Bay of Cattaro, with the cities of Cattaro and Castel Nuovo (Herceg Novi) within it, and, to the east of the Bay, the adjacent coast of the province's third fortified place Budua (Budva, all three in present-day Montenegro). The countryside around the three cities was carved up between numerous rural or urban communities, from which, together with those of the Ottoman-ruled Montenegro in the mountains above Cattaro and Budua, the couriers were almost entirely recruited during the eighteenth century. Each city had a resident Venetian governor from the patrician class while Cattaro also housed the *provveditor* extraordinary, another patrician who served as the province's supreme military and civil authority, subordinate to the *provveditor*-general of Zara.

<sup>2</sup> The *costituti* were appended in copy to the dispatches of the *provveditori straordinari* of Cattaro (PTM, ASV). The *costituti* from the seventeenth century can also be found among the joint dispatches of *provveditor straordinario* and *rettor e provveditor* of Cattaro; see Senato/Dispacci/Dispacci dei rettori, Dalmazia, ASV. Some are also to be found among the dispatches of the *provveditor*-generals written during their official visits to the province; see also PTM, ASV. The originals of the *costituti* can be found in the Historical Archive of Cattaro, an archive within the State Archive of Montenegro (Istorijски arhiv Kotor, Državni arhiv Crne Gore), strewn randomly through the many-volumed fond "The Administrative and Political Acts of the Venetian *Provveditor* Extraordinary" ("Upravno politički spisi vanrednog providura Mletačke republike") (UPM, IAK, DACG).

<sup>3</sup> For the organization and evolution of the route in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see Luciano De Zanche, *Tra Costantinopoli e Venezia: Dispacci di Stato e lettere di mercanti dal Basso Medioevo alla caduta della Serenissima* (Prato: Istituto di studi storici postali, 2000), 25–26, 33–40, 49–60.

<sup>4</sup> Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 26, 39–40; Dursteler, “Power and Information: The Venetian Postal System in the Mediterranean, 1573–1645,” in *From Florence to the Mediterranean: Studies in Honor of Anthony Molho*, eds. Diogo Ramada Curto, Eric R. Dursteler, Julius Kirschner, and Francesca Trivelato (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 612.

<sup>5</sup> De Zanche, *Tra Costantinopoli e Venezia*, 39–40; Dursteler, “Power and Information,” 613.

<sup>6</sup> Two contemporary depictions of the couriers in *bailo*'s entourage during formal functions, one from the mid-seventeenth and the other from the eighteenth century, are reproduced in Tommaso Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie: Ricerche storiche con documenti inediti e 185 illustrazioni* (Bologna: Apollo, 1932), 158, 161. I was able to find an instance in which Bucchia's predecessor Giovanni Bolizza suggested to the then *bailo* to take three or four of the couriers before the vizier and have them complain, as subjects of the empire, against the depredations of a neighboring commune back home in Montenegro, with a view to predisposing the Porte to punish the rebellious commune, which was pillaging both Venetian and Ottoman territories. Bailo a Costantinopoli, busta 123 I, 20 December 1699, ASV.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Renier, dispatch 43, 9 October 1723, the *Costituto* of 7 October 1723 (in attachment), busta 476, PTM, ASV.

<sup>8</sup> In one *costituto* from 1712, the couriers stated that they did not remember the exact day of the journey on which they crossed road with their colleagues, which suggests that they relied entirely on their memory and kept no written record. Nicolò Contarini, dispatch 4, 7 November 1712, the *Costituto* of 6 November 1712 (in attachment), busta 475, PTM, ASV.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Bembo, dispatch 20, 28 September 1729, the *Costituto* of 24 September 1729 (in attachment), busta 477, PTM, ASV.

<sup>10</sup> For a brief note on the organization of the Ottoman road infrastructure and its three corridors in both Europe and Asia, see Colin Heywood, “Ulağ,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 10:800–801; and Florian Riedler, “The Istanbul-Belgrade Route in the Ottoman Empire: Continuity and Discontinuity of an Imperial Mobility Space,” in *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. Riedler and Nenad Stefanov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 107. For a more detailed treatment, see Heywood,

“The Ottoman Menzilhane and Ulak System in Rumeli in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” chap. 10 in *Writing Ottoman History: Documents and Interpretations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); and Heywood, “The Via Egnatia in the Ottoman Period: The Menzilhānes of the Şol Kōl in the Late 17<sup>th</sup>/Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” chap. 11 in *Writing Ottoman History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Rıza Bozkurt, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Kollar, Ulak ve İaşe Menzilleri* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Ottavio Codogno, *Nuovo itinerario delle poste per tutto il mondo* (Milan: Girolamo Bordononi, 1608); Ottavio Cottogno, *Compendio delle poste* (Milan: Giovanni Battista Bidelli, 1623). Already in Codogno’s time, the courier connection between Cattaro and Istanbul was well-established: “Ogni mese una volta parte di Venetia l’Ordinario per Costantinopoli per Mare, e di queste lettere se ne fà raccolta all’Ufficio del Bollo di San Marco, e partono per Fregata a posta con mercantie, per insino a Cattaro, e poi d’indi vanno pedoni con esse sino a Costantinopoli” (Once a month the ordinary [post] departs from Venice for Constantinople by sea, of which letters the collection is made at the *Ufficio del Bollo di San Marco*, and they travel by merchant frigates all the way to Cattaro, and then from there go foot-travelers to Constantinople) (my translation). Codogno, *Nuovo itinerario delle poste per tutto il mondo*, 386.

<sup>13</sup> Carlo Barbieri, *Direzione pe’ viaggiatori in Italia colla notizia di tutte le poste e loro prezzi* (Bologna: Giovanni Battista Sassi, 1775).

<sup>14</sup> Luigi Weiss, *I corrieri della Serenissima: Pagine e documenti di storia veneta* (Padova: Elzeviro, 2001), 71–76.

<sup>15</sup> Riedler, “The Istanbul-Belgrade Route in the Ottoman Empire,” 108–9.

<sup>16</sup> Stojan Novaković, “Prilozi k istoriji srpske književnosti: VI. Jerotija Račanina put u Jerusalim 1704. godine,” *Glasnik Srpskoga učenog društva* 31 (1871): 292–310.

<sup>17</sup> Filippo de Vivo, “Microhistories of Long-Distance Information: Space, Movement and Agency in the Early Modern News,” in “Global History and Microhistory,” supplement, *Past & Present* 242, no. S14 (2019): S179–214.

<sup>18</sup> Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli*, 143 (my translation).

<sup>19</sup> Gábor Ágoston, “Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91–92.

<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Bolizza to Lorenzo Soranzo, 1 April 1700, busta 123 I, Bailo Costantinopoli, ASV.

<sup>21</sup> In the translation which follows, I have italicized the spatial, temporal, and

political points of references employed by the drafter of the document and the couriers in organizing and reporting on space and the events therein; in square brackets I have put my own interventions.

<sup>22</sup> This translation is tentative.