

# The ambassadors of the Republic of Venice as agents in the circulation of knowledge

Los embajadores de la República de Venecia  
como agentes en la circulación del conocimiento

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*Abstract:* The dispatches to the Senate from the Venetian ambassador in Rome, Alvise Contarini, recount in 1633 the successful diplomatic career of a Polish student from the University of Padua: Count Jerzy Ossoliński. The diplomatic apparatus of the ancient Italian Republic contributed to the development of the University of Padua in negotiating the recruitment of the best *doctores legentes* to complete the staff of the university. From this perspective, in the early decades of the Seventeenth century, the importance of the embassy in Rome becomes evident, both because of the numerous universities in the Papal States, which were then a good recruitment pool, and to initiate negotiations to ensure a state graduation procedure that took into account

*Resumen:* En 1633, los despachos enviados al Senado por el embajador veneciano en Roma, Alvise Contarini, relatan la exitosa carrera diplomática de un alumno polaco del *Studio* paduano: el conde Jerzy Ossoliński. El aparato diplomático de la antigua República italiana contribuyó al desarrollo del *Studio* de Padua mediante la negociación para la contratación de los mejores *doctores legentes* con el fin de completar el *rotolo* de la institución. Desde este punto de vista, en las primeras décadas del siglo XVII emerge la importancia de la embajada en Roma, tanto por la multiplicidad de centros de estudio en los Estados Pontificios –entonces una buena fuente de reclutamiento– como por el inicio de gestiones para asegurar un procedimiento de titulación

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the composite nature of the Venetian state, with a strong Greek Orthodox component. The reputation of the University of Padua was such that even foreign ambassadors in Venice recognized the importance of recruiting *doctores legentes* in diplomatic relations.

*Key words:* diplomacy, Venice, University, Seventeenth century.

estatal que tuviera en cuenta el carácter compuesto del Estado veneciano, con su fuerte componente griego ortodoxo. La reputación del *Studio* de Padua era tal que incluso los propios embajadores extranjeros en Venecia comprendieron la importancia del reclutamiento de los *doctores legentes* en el marco de las relaciones diplomáticas.

*Palabras clave:* diplomacia, Venecia, Universidad, siglo XVII.

1. *Cuius regio, eius Studio*. An examination of a diplomatic source can facilitate an understanding of the relationship between diplomacy and the history of the University in the Republic of Venice. In December 1633, the Venetian ambassador to Rome, Alvise Contarini (the future negotiator of the Peace of Westphalia), wrote to the Senate to inform them of the intention of the Polish extraordinary ambassador and the King's Grand Treasurer, Count Jerzy Ossoliński (1595-1650), to travel to Venice after his brief mission in Rome to conduct important political negotiations<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, there were similarities in the internal problems facing the two European powers, both of which served as bulwarks of Christendom against the Turks, and both of which were concerned about the role of the Greek Orthodox, who were viewed with disfavour by the Papacy. In the context of the election of Ladislaus IV Vasa, Poland sought papal recognition for the Greek bishops who had provided their support. Meanwhile, in 1616, Venice had obtained the approval of Pope Paul V for the granting of academic degrees by *auctoritate veneta* alone for Greek subjects within the domain of the *Stato da Mar*. This approval was met with significant criticism<sup>2</sup>. The portrait painted by the Venetian diplomat was remarkable. Ossolenski was a politician of considerable acumen, held in high esteem by his king, Ladislaus IV Vasa, and possessed of

<sup>1</sup> Archivio di Stato, Venezia (ASV), Senato, Dispacci, Roma, b. 108, 17 december 1633, G. Benzoni, *Alvise Contarini*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 28, Roma 1983, *ad vocem*, Venezia e la Polonia nei secoli dal XVII al XIX (Venezia, 28 maggio-2 giugno 1963), L. Cini (ed.), Venezia 1968, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> ASV, Senato, Dispacci, Roma, b. 76, cc. 33-35, *dispaccio* from Roma, 15 october 1616, M. Galtarossa, *I Collegi auctoritate veneta: origine, procedure e validità*, in *Examens, grades et diplômes. La validation des compétences par les universités du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours*, sous la direction de T. Kouamé, B. Belhoste, B. Noguès et E. Picard, Paris, Éditiones de la Sorbonne 2023, pp. 379-390, C. Valsecchi, *Sacra collegia doctorum: i giuristi al potere o i giuristi al servizio del potere? Il caso di Padova*, "Annali di storia delle università italiane", 28 (2024), 2, pp. 200-209.

a strong determination and proficiency in multiple languages. Furthermore, the Polish ambassador made a significant impression on the Roman populace with his official entry into the capital, accompanied by an opulent entourage of approximately 300 nobles, servants and exotic animals, all attired in traditional and colourful costumes<sup>3</sup>.

Contarini's account constitutes a compelling testimony to the successful career of a former student of the Paduan Academy within the inner workings of the European diplomatic establishment. It is an established fact that, during his formative years in Padua, Jerzy Ossolinski was an attendee of the lectures delivered by the renowned philosopher Cesare Cremonini<sup>4</sup>. On his return from Rome in January 1633, the Polish ambassador once again stopped in the city on the Venetian mainland. Among the principal churches in Padua, he attended Mass at the Santo, most likely at the altar of Saint Stanislaus: the first Polish chapel that Mikolaj Ossolinski, councillor of the nation polona, had helped to fund in 1607. Jerzy's profound dedication to the cult of St Stanislaus was shared by his brother Krzysztof. During his passage through Padua in 1611, Krzysztof made a donation to the altar of the Polish bishop, a gesture that was all the more significant given his own history as a student at the University of Padua<sup>5</sup>. The official receptions organised by the Venetian rectors, on behalf of the Senate, were extraordinary, truly befitting Ossolinski's appointment as papal prince by Urban VIII in 1633. A lavish dinner was prepared in the capitano's palace, attended by the podestà and the captain. Seats were provided at the various tables set up for his large entourage, comprising some 150 servants plus 25 people of noble standing, as

<sup>3</sup> ASV, Senato, Dispacci, *Roma*, b. 108, 26 november, 10 and 17 december 1633, G. Benzioni, *Ritrarre con la penna, ossia gli ambasciatori veneti ritrattisti*, in *Metamorfosi del ritratto*, Firenze 2002, pp. 1000-1023, S. Pifferi, *Magnificenza, sfarzo, stupore, costi e curiosità nella Roma Barocca*, in *Saggi vari*, a cura di M. Jacov *et alia*, Viterbo 2004, pp. 19-66.

<sup>4</sup> H. Barycz, *Padova del Seicento nella vita intellettuale polacca*, in *Venezia e la Polonia. Nei secoli dal XVII al XIX*, L. Cini (ed.), Venezia-Roma 1968, p. 226, M. Galtarossa, *Medicina repubblicana. Scelte politiche e benessere del corpo presso lo Studio di Padova*, Roma 2011, p. 190, V. Feola, *Mobilità confessionale, costituzione e tolleranza. Lo spazio transatlantico inglese in età moderna*, Milano 2021, pp. 179-181, A. Bettoni, *Arnaud du Ferrier e l'alta magistratura gallicana*, in *Intellettuali e uomini di corte. Padova e lo spazio europeo fra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. E. Pietrobon, Roma 2021, pp. 69-74.

<sup>5</sup> ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 29, 10 and 11 january 1634, S. Mossakowski, *I "palazzi in fortezza all'italiana" nella Polonia del Seicento*, "Barocco. Storia - letteratura - arte", 1 (2005), pp. 143-144, M. Lenart, *Altare della nazione polacca (1607-1809)*, in *I polacchi presso la tomba di sant'Antonio a Padova. Memorie materiali, donazioni, testimonianze di culto (secoli XVI-XIX). La Cappella polacca al Santo (1896-2018)*, ed. G. Baldissin Molli, M. Lenart, M. Wrana, Padova 2023, pp. 237, 245.

well as Polish clergy, probably including students from the Studio del Santo, and Polish scholars from the Studio Patavino. The Republic of Venice expended a considerable sum, amounting to approximately 4,000 ducats, to provide accommodation for the large Polish delegation<sup>6</sup>.

During the 1630s, it is probable that this diplomatic mission served to reinforce the conviction held by the Venetian nobility that there existed students of noble birth and promising careers in Europe. For these students, it was a matter of pride and a 'reason of state' to fund a public scholarship in Padua. The purpose of this scholarship was twofold: firstly, to ensure that academic degrees continued to be awarded by the Senate, and secondly, to foster a privileged forum for the exchange of knowledge<sup>7</sup>. It is evident that perusing these diplomatic dispatches engenders a comprehensive understanding of the historical progression of the University of Padua. International relations represent a non-academic factor with the potential to promote student mobility. Furthermore, the Reformers of the University of Padua, who exercised provisional governance from 1516 and definitive governance from 1528, were based in Venice. In order to ensure the smooth functioning of the city's international university, the Republic's diplomatic apparatus was utilised. This apparatus was established and based in Italian and European capitals, and maintained relations with the world of the courts. The diplomatic service was instrumental in safeguarding the reputation of the University of Padua by advocating its enlightened cultural policies. These policies were able to prevail over competing models of ecclesiastical education, such as that of the Jesuits, and to underscore the significance of a medical school that promoted healthcare centres, including the Hospital of San Francesco and the Aponensi thermal baths. The Venetian ruling class possessed the capacity to draw attention to the Paduan reputation by leveraging the mechanisms of diplomacy at their disposal<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 29, 10 and 11 January 1634, ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 30, 17 October 1634, J.-P. Labatut, *Le nobiltà europee dal XV al XVIII secolo*, Bologna 1982, p. 42, P. Del Negro, *Padova 1616: una tappa verso l'università di Stato*, in *La nascita delle università di Stato tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. P. Del Negro, Bologna 2018, pp. 15-32: 21, G. Florio, *Micropolitica della rappresentanza. Dinamiche del potere a Venezia in età moderna*, Roma 2023, pp. 157-174.

<sup>7</sup> ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 7, 24 August 1610, ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 9, 8 November 1612, ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 10, 26 November 1613, M. Galtarossa, *La Nobiltà degli Studi. Padova fra diplomazia, cultura e religione*, 23, 2023, "Romanica Cracoviensia", p. 279.

<sup>8</sup> G. Alonge, *Ambasciatori. Diplomazia e politica nella Venezia del Rinascimento*, Prefazione di S. Luzzato, Roma 2019, P. Volpini, *Segretari e ambasciatori al crocevia delle notizie. Libri*

## 2. *The contribution of Venetian diplomacy and the University of Padua.*

The primary inquiry to be addressed pertains to the contribution of Venetian diplomats to the dissemination of knowledge among Paduan students. During the 1760s, the Paduan scholar Giuseppe Gennari wrote that it was an 'ancient custom' of the magistracy of the Riformatori of the University of Padua to undertake the responsibility of writing to ambassadors at the courts in the event of a vacancy in the position of 'umane lettere' (humanities) chair. The purpose of this endeavour was twofold: firstly, to select the most suitable candidate available, and secondly, to avoid the hasty local appointments of questionable prestige and merit<sup>9</sup>. In the 1630s, a number of petitions were submitted to the Reformers by Paduan scholars seeking career advancement. Among these petitioners, some were able to cite considerable merits, including having been sought out on multiple occasions for medical treatment from foreign countries, such as Poland. In December 1634, Benedetto Selvatico (1574-1658), a professor at the University, had already treated the Roman cardinal and Bishop of Kraków, Jan Albert Waza, who was staying in the city *incognito*. This treatment took place in Padua in 1632, and it is not known whether the purpose of the visit of the Bishop was to carry out some delicate diplomatic mission or not. Unfortunately, the treatment was unsuccessful in treating the patient's smallpox<sup>10</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that ambassadors play a pivotal role in the recruitment of lecturers, as evidenced by numerous examples from modern history, despite the sporadic nature of this function. There were frequent attempts, such as that of the Burgundian physician Jean Chifflet (1550-1602), who was closely associated with the Neapolitan Gian Vincenzo Pinelli in Padua, but also successful negotiations, such as those involving the Forlì-born anatomist Giambattista Morgagni in the early 18th century. These events provide extensive documentation of the existence of this form of negotiation undertaken by Venetian ambassadors. In this sense, a diplomat's

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*e descrizioni del Mondo Nuovo e della Penisola Iberica (secoli XVI-XVII)* "La Bibliofilia", CXXV (2023), 1, pp. 45-62.

<sup>9</sup> M. Callegari, *Dal Torchio del Tipografo al Banco del Libraio. Stampatori, Editori e Librai a Padova dal XV al XVIII secolo*, Padova 2002, p. 136, D. Tongiorgi, *L'eloquenza in cattedra. La cultura letteraria nell'Università di Pavia dalle riforme teresiane alla Repubblica italiana (1796-1805)*, Bologna 1997, C. Gibin, *La geometria della natura. Chioggia e l'Europa nella vicenda intellettuale di Giuseppe Olivi naturalista del Settecento*, presentazione di P. Del Negro, Padova 1994, pp. 24-31.

<sup>10</sup> ASV, Riformatori dello Studio, b. 168, *supplica* di Benedetto Selvatico, ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 30, 29 and 31 december 1634, P. Savoia, *Selvatico, Benedetto*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 91, Roma 2018, *ad vocem*.

contribution could be significant; for example, in 1601 the ambassador to Rome, Francesco Vendramini, reassured the Reformers of the genuine intention of the Messina-born jurist Jacopo Gallo (1544-1618) to take up the chair in Padua, despite his delay in arriving there because he was then engaged in negotiations in Rome as ambassador for the city of Messina. It was evident that Gallo had already taken measures to ensure the continuity of his academic endeavours. He had procured residential accommodations in Padua, facilitated the transcontinental shipment of his literary collections, and composed numerous epistles to various destinations. These actions were intended to instill in his students the anticipation of his imminent return to the delivery of his lectures<sup>11</sup>. In essence, the papers provide a glimpse into the history of intellectuals and the opportunities –or lack thereof– for mobility as a factor in the circulation of knowledge<sup>12</sup>.

A review of the correspondence between ambassadors and Venice during the first three decades of the 17th century reveals a rather complex situation. Venetian diplomats were able to intervene in the recruitment process in a number of ways. An ambassador might write in a dispatch to the Senate to inform them of a lecturer's availability to teach at the University of Padua. Indeed, in October 1633, Alvise Contarini wrote from Rome to recommend Pietro Paolo Bombino (1575-1648), a Calabrian and former Jesuit who had long served as a lecturer in philosophy and Sacred Scripture at the Society's Roman College, for a voluntary appointment. Notwithstanding the fact that Bombino had previously been a member of the Society of Jesus, subsequently joining the Somaschi, he was a humanist of considerable repute who was on the verge of publishing his *Breviario di cose ispaniche* in Venice<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, this communication was not given due consideration. In cer-

<sup>11</sup> ASV, Riformatori dello Studio, b. 168, 25 may 1601, R. Sabbatini, *Le identità (e i ruoli) del diplomatico. Qualche considerazione sulla più recente storiografia*, in *Diplomatici en travesti. Letteratura e politica nel 'lungo' Settecento*, ed. V. Gallo e M. Zanardo, Roma 2022, pp. 3-21.

<sup>12</sup> D. Solera, *Un principe per testimone. Gian Vincenzo Pinelli alle lauree padovane*, in *Conoscere il passato per progettare il futuro. Studi per l'Ottavo Centenario dell'Università di Padova*, ed. G.P. Brizzi, M. Donattini, Bologna 2022, pp. 67-69, M. Galtarossa, *Il dibattito sulle Riforme all'Università di Padova e il ruolo di Giambattista Morgagni*, "Archivio veneto", s. VI 146 (2015) pp. 76-79, C. Frova, *Circolazione di docenti nelle sedi universitarie italiane (secoli XIV-XV)*, in *Circolazione di uomini e scambi culturali tra città (secoli XII-XIV)*, *Atti del XXIII Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Pistoia, 13-16 maggio 2011)*, Roma 2013, pp. 39-54.

<sup>13</sup> ASV, Senato, Dispacci, Roma, b. 108, 29 october 1633, G. Mazzucchelli, *Bombino (Pietro Paolo)*, in *Gli scrittori d'Italia*, vol. 2, Brescia, Giambattista Bossini, 1762, cc. 1511-1512, S. De Bernardin, *La politica culturale della Repubblica di Venezia e l'Università di Padova nel XVII secolo*, "Studi veneziani", 16 (1974), pp. 443-502.

tain instances, the diplomat might, alternatively, respond to a particular request from the Reformers. In August 1621, the ambassador to Rome, Marco Zeno, sought candidates for the chair in primo loco of civil law *de sero*, which had become vacant following the death of the Messina-born jurist Jacopo Gallo (1618). Drawing on the experience of the University of Pisa gained by Cardinal Pietro Valier –not coincidentally a Venetian– during his nunciature in Florence, he provided “notes on his qualities” or a “brief account of his past life” regarding Cavalier Antonio Curini da Potremoli, a lecturer in Pisa and auditor of the Rota, who was applying for the Paduan chair. The curriculum emphasises specific qualities such as “clarity and ease of speech”, “persuasiveness in the art of oratory”, “the applause and support of the students”, “the esteem shown in circles among peers”, and “the splendour with which he lives”. In actuality, in contrast to the recommendation proffered by Ambassador Marco Zeno, as conveyed through the self-presentation of the Pisan professor, the Reformers’ response to this offer was, in reality, rather tepid<sup>14</sup>.

3. *The recruitment practices of doctores legentes.* In the course of their research regarding prospective candidates for Paduan professorships, the Reformers would occasionally inquire with ambassadors as to whether the information provided, or the curriculum submitted, had been prepared by them or by other interested parties. Consequently, a rigorous critical examination was also applied to the references. Despite the absence of a codified procedure, an analysis of surviving sources –primarily the surviving brogliacci of the Reformers’ secretary– can offer insights into the recruitment practices of universities during the early decades of the seventeenth century. In the event of a potential failure to complete the registration process for the University in a timely manner, due to protracted delays in appointing replacement lecturers following the departure of existing members of staff (through death, resignation or relocation to another institution of higher education) in the period preceding the commencement of the University’s academic year, the Reformers had the option of selecting a local candidate or accelerating ongoing negotiations by requesting a representative of the lecturer to travel directly to Venice for immediate discussions<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> ASV, Riformatori dello Studio, b. 168, 25 august 1621, *L’Università. Otto secoli di storia*, a cura di P. Del Negro, Padova 2003, F. Ruggiero, Giacomo Antonio Marta, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 71, Roma 2008, *ad vocem*.

<sup>15</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 168, *Soggetti nominati per la prima lettura de sera*, ASV, Riformatori, b. 64, 29 january 1621, ASV, Riformatori, b. 66, 23 march 1624, *informazioni su Caimo da Roma*, ASV, Riformatori, b. 67, *Roma per anatomia con libri a stampa*.

However, it is important to note that the names proposed in the ongoing searches for vacant professorships were provided by a number of individuals, primarily diplomats (ambassadors and resident envoys, Venetians, as well as Venetian extraordinary ambassadors such as the physician Santorio Santorio). During that period, new information was also provided by ducal secretaries in Florence, foreign diplomats (English and French), scholars, and lecturers at the Studio<sup>16</sup>. In order to gain insight into the academic and cultural milieu of potential candidates, it is instructive to examine the case of the Bolognese jurist and Marinist poet Claudio Achillini. In 1622, Achillini served as a lecturer at the Studio in Ferrara, having previously studied under the philosopher Cremonini in Padua. It is probable that the two brothers from Rovigo, the poet Gasparo and the Bishop of Koper Baldassarre Bonifacio, nephews of the renowned councillor and man of letters Giovanni Bonifacio (1547-1635), were responsible for recommending his candidacy. It is apparent that the individual in question was a teacher of ‘clear renown’, and that he would shortly become a member of the Accademia della Crusca. However, it is hypothesised that his aspiration for a curial career, given his close relationship with Pope Gregory XV, was the reason for his refusal to teach in Padua<sup>17</sup>. In the event that the network of informants (comprising ducal secretaries in Florence, eminent professors at the University of Padua, “men of letters”, priors of medical colleges, scholars in the same profession, or Roman cardinals) corroborated the initial reports, further, more precise details were sought. These comprised the candidate’s willingness to relocate to teach in Padua, any family constraints, such as children, age, meaning that the candidate was neither too young nor too old, any additional income, such as serving as a rotator or a physician in convents, physical presence as a public speaker, and whether they had any published works and how highly these were regarded by the public. The correspondence would periodically request particular information, including student approval ratings and attendance figures. However, it was not subject to a rigid template<sup>18</sup>.

In this regard, the background of the Reformers’ secretary, who was responsible for drafting correspondence to ambassadors and resident representatives, was of considerable significance. He was a member of the

<sup>16</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 419, 420, 421A.

<sup>17</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 168, 20 august 1622, A. Asor Rosa, *Achillini, Claudio*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 1, Roma 1960, *ad vocem*, G. Benzoni, *Bonifacio, Giovanni*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 12, Roma 1971, *ad vocem*, L. Rossi, *Bonifacio, Baldassarre*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 12, Roma, 1971, *ad vocem*.

<sup>18</sup> ASV, Riformatori dello Studio, b. 419, 13 july 1624 and 24 october 1624.

Ducal Chancellery, and thus possessed a sound humanistic education, not least because the ducal notaries were appointed through open competition. A notable example of this phenomenon is Agostino Dolce, who was closely associated with the cultural milieu of the Morosini patricians and held a close friendship with Fra Paolo Sarpi, a renowned theologian and in iure consultant to the Republic. Furthermore, the ducal secretary Marc'Antonio Ottobon, who was elected whilst residing in Florence, attended ten lectures by the law professor Giacomo Antonio Marta at the University of Pisa, indicating an interest that was not merely instrumental. In 1606, Marcantonio Padavin attended the University of Salamanca to seek legal counsel for the Republic of Venice in its ongoing dispute with Pope Paul V. Furthermore, the search for the appointment of the cavallerizzo, the master of horsemanship, was entrusted to these Venetian diplomats. This search was conducted in Naples, Florence and Vienna. Indeed, the resident in Florence, Giovanni Marioni, proposed Giovanni Battista Palmieri, who was subsequently approved by the Delia Academy. It is notable that equestrian exercises were particularly appreciated by Polish and German princes, from the establishment of the Paduan military academy in 1608 and then at least until the 1630s<sup>19</sup>.

The negotiations were also influenced by the political factions within the patriciate; the dominant groups at that time were, on the one hand, the so-called 'young' faction, who favoured a stance less constrained by political and religious influences and less dominated by Spain, and who looked to the countries of Northern Europe –non-Catholic but economically vibrant– and, on the other hand, the 'old' faction, pro-curial factions, more subservient to the papacy, whose families held rich ecclesiastical benefices and pursued careers in the Curia. These political leanings were of significance to the Reformers and had the capacity to influence the final decisions on cultural policy. For instance, the appointment of the Friulian physician Pompeo Caimo from Rome to replace the pro-Sarpian physician Santorio Santorio was contingent upon the recommendation of the Venetian ambassador to Rome, Pietro Contarini, a pro-Curial figure but also a highly regarded diplomat. The actual negotiations could be undertaken by diplomats by negotiating the terms of the professor's *condotta*, in constant contact with Venice, that is, by seeking to reduce the reader's financial demands, assuring him of career progression

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<sup>19</sup> ASV, Senato, Rettori, *Padova e padovano*, b. 29, 18 april 1633, G. Scarabello, *Dolce, Agostino*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 40, Roma, 1991, *ad vocem*, V. Mandelli, *Padavino, Marcantonio*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 80, Roma, 2014, *ad vocem*.

in the second *condotta*, known as the *di rispetto*, perhaps with the help of an intermediary, or assuring him of assistance in obtaining the necessary authorisation from the Prince of the University where he served. This was the most delicate stage, as demonstrated by the case of the Turin jurist Belloni. Having concluded a private contract of service for Padua with the ambassador in Turin, Belloni was unable to realise his plans, as the prevailing academic protectionism in the ancient Italian states meant that the Duke of Savoy opposed Belloni's departure from Turin for Padua<sup>20</sup>.

During the first three decades of the 17th century, the Venetian embassy in Rome assumed a pivotal role in the cultural policy decisions of the Reformers of the Studio. A request for information regarding the 'qualities and conditions' of the law professor Carbonchio dei Carbonchi from the Papal University of Perugia was sent to Rome; he subsequently arrived in Padua in 1623 and, following a period in Messina, returned to the city in 1638, receiving a high salary from the city council. Indeed, the case demonstrates the protracted and intricate nature of the negotiations, which were conducted concurrently for multiple teaching posts. Nevertheless, these were not arbitrary choices. In the case of this particular candidate, for instance, a broad consensus of positive information had emerged from several informants, coordinated by the Friulian jurist and Padua lecturer Marc'Antonio Ottelio<sup>21</sup>. The *Studia Generalia* of the Papal States, most notably "La Sapienza di Roma", have the potential to serve as a valuable source of prospective recruits for Padua. For instance, the humanities chair was awarded to the former Jesuit and Greek scholar Paolo Beni (1600), while the theoretical medicine chair was attributed to the strict Friulian physician Pompeo Caimo (1624). Furthermore, the mathematician Giovanni Argoli (1632) arrived, and it is notable that he was employed as a librarian to Cardinal Lelio Biscia, who had been hired as an alternative to some "pupil of Galileo"<sup>22</sup>. Notwithstanding the religious tolerance that prevailed at the University of Padua, it was from the heart of Christendom that negotiations regarding new lecturers intensi-

<sup>20</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 66, 3 may 1625, G. Benzoni, *Contarini, Piero*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 28, Roma 1983, *ad vocem*, G. Ongaro, *La controversia tra Pompeo Caimo e Cesare Cremonini sul calore innato*, in *Cesare Cremonini aspretti del pensiero e scritti*, Atti del Convegno di Studio (Padova, 26-27 febbraio 1999), 1, *Il pensiero*, a cura di E. Riondato e A. Poppi, Padova 2000, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 168, 24 may 1622 and 10 september 1622, E.M. Spolverini, *Ottelio, Marcantonio*, in *Dizionario biografico dei friulani*, Udine 2016, *ad vocem*, ASV, Senato, Rettori, Padova e Padovano, b. 29 18 april 1633.

<sup>22</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 168, 24 may 1622, *Per la lettura del Marta*, 10 settembre 1622 "amantissimo da moltitudine de' scolari", 24 may 1622, ASV, Riformatori, b. 66, 2 november 1623.

fied in the early 17th century. As reiterated in a directive of 1637 sent to the Venetian ambassador in The Hague, the university sought candidates who were Catholic<sup>23</sup>.

4. *The oath of the doctores legentes and the diplomacy of the Republic.* During the first three decades of the 17th century, the embassy in Rome negotiate the appointment as professors at Padua of figures who were not all of the utmost importance on the international scene: Paolo Beni, a former Jesuit from Gubbio, was appointed in place of the renowned Belgian humanist Giusto Lipsio; the Friulian physician Pompeo Caimo was called to Padua rather than Werner Rolfink, a student at the Studio who later became an anatomist at the University of Jena; and the mathematician Giovanni Argoli was selected instead of a student of Galileo Galilei – it is unclear whether this was Benedetto Castelli, who was a Venetian subject. Nevertheless, during the course of its negotiations with the court in Rome, the embassy played a pivotal role in ensuring that the freedom of the Studio's professors was not compromised by new political oaths that would have restricted their autonomy. Consequently, this ensured the unimpeded transmission of culture<sup>24</sup>.

Furthermore, the pivotal function of the University of Padua was formally acknowledged by the international diplomatic community. Foreign diplomats frequently intervened with the Reformers regarding the appointment or career advancement of lecturers from Padua. In 1611, the papal nuncio Berlinghiero Cessi initially supported the candidacy of the Roman Giacomo Antonio Marta for the principal chair of canon law. Marta had upheld the Pope's authority and offered assurances regarding jurisdictional matters between Venice and Rome. Meanwhile, the English ambassador to Venice, Dudley Charlenton, having stated that he had "always maintained good conversation and correspondence with certain professors of science in Padua", recommended the Swiss physician Jean Prévost to the Reformers of the University once more for promotion within the hierarchy of lectureships. In 1621, the King of England's ambassador, together with the nation of English students, propo-

<sup>23</sup> ASV, Riformatori, b. 67, 28 april 1637, M. Gliozzi, *Andrea, Argoli*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 4, Roma, 1962, *ad vocem*, G. Mazzacurati, *Beni, Paolo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 8, Roma, 1966, *ad vocem*.

<sup>24</sup> L. Rossetti, *Werner Rolfink e lo Studio di Padova. Nuovi documenti inediti*, "Quaderni per la Storia dell'Università di Padova", 9-10 (1976-1977), pp. 231-233, P. Prodi, *Il sacramento del potere. Il giuramento politico nella storia costituzionale dell'Occidente*, Bologna 2017, M. Valente, D. Solera, *La Patavina libertas nell'età della Controriforma*, in *Libertas. Tra religione, politica e saperi*, ed. A. Caracausi, P. Molino, D. Solera, Roma 2022, pp. 167-184: 169.

sed the Paduan physician of English origin, Tommaso Turnis –a Catholic of irreproachable character– to replace Giovan Pietro Pellegrino. In 1622, the French ambassador recommended Antonio Maria Narducci, a scholar of civil law who also had an interest in poetry, to the Reformers. Narducci had been teaching at the universities of Macerata and Perugia<sup>25</sup>.

It is therefore notable that the papal nuncio at the University of Padua also made recommendations for lecturers, in addition to overseeing doctrinal orthodoxy at the institution. Following the abolition of the Palatine counts in Padua in 1612, the nuncio in Venice informed Rome that the Republic intended to award degrees in the Sacred College without requiring the profession of the Tridentine faith. Negotiations were undertaken to ensure that the disparity in the awarding of degrees to students from different nations did not hinder the development of the University of Padua. These negotiations involved the Venetian ambassador in Rome during that period. The ambassador assured the Pope that the preservation of the University of Padua was a matter of “reason of state”. Until 1612, the Palatine counts conferred doctorates on students in a private yet rigorous manner and were not obliged to require the profession of the Tridentine faith. However, for the Republic of Venice, which had replaced this procedure with a new College in 1616, it was absolutely essential to ensure that the *dottori legenti* ‘foreigners’ –who would form the backbone of the Venetian College of Arts– were themselves obliged to take an oath of Catholic faith. This was, in essence, the crux of the negotiations with Rome in 1616, which resulted in the establishment of the Venetian College of Arts, as evidenced by a private letter by the *in iure* consultant Servilio Treo. The discourse surrounding the necessity of conferring doctoral degrees upon students from the East, specifically the Greeks, can be traced back to a specific demand expressed by the subjects of the *Stato da Mar*, who were regarded as schismatics by Rome. This demand, in essence, represented a pragmatic realism that was driven by political considerations. The city’s diplomatic network could not guarantee that the teaching staff would be the best available on the market; however, it could ensure that they were the most loyal to the Republic. In addition, it could guarantee that they upheld the very modern idea that academic degrees should be conferred by a teaching body selected primarily by the State.

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<sup>25</sup> ASV, Collegio, *Esposizioni Principi*, reg. 23, 28 november 1614, ASV, Collegio, *Esposizioni Principi*, reg. 27, c. 62v. 15 october 1615, ASV, Riformatori dello Studio, b. 168, G. Cozzi, *Venezia barocca. Conflitti di uomini e idee nella crisi del Seicento veneziano*, Venezia 1995, pp. 106-108.

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