

VENICE'S SECRET SERVICE

ORGANISING INTELLIGENCE IN THE RENAISSANCE

[Open access introduction only]

By Ioanna Iordanou

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Foreword	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction	5
The Council of Ten and the Inquisitors of the State	15
Why Venice?	22
Methodology and Sources	27
Archival records	33
Note on dates, currency, translations, and abbreviations	36
Chapter One	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice and Venetian Intelligence in the European Panorama	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Renaissance Venice’s politico-economic landscape	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice as an Information Centre in Early Modern Europe	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Sixteenth-century Europe and the rise of secret services	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Italian City States	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Imperial Spain	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Tudor England	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bourbon France	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Ottoman Empire	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Two	Error! Bookmark not defined.
State Secrecy, a Venetian Virtue	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Ten’s Regulations on Secrecy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Illusion of State Secrecy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Masks, Lions’ Mouths, and Secret Denunciations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Secrecy as an Enabler of Knowledge Exchange	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Three	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Renaissance Venice’s Intelligence Organisation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Organising and Managing Venice’s Secret Service	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Correspondence as a tool of management and organisation of work	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Encrypted correspondence: Cryptography and its regulation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice’s Ducal Chancery and the <i>Cancelleria Secreta</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The secret archive as storehouse of collective memory	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Organisational Secrecy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice’s Central Intelligence Organisation	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Four	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice's Department of Cryptology	Error! Bookmark not defined.
A brief historical overview of cryptology	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Diplomatic Use of Ciphers in the Renaissance	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice's Cryptology Department	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Professional training and development	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Recruitment and promotion in Venice' Cryptology Department ..	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Organisational control and state regulation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Professionalisation of Cryptology in Sixteenth Century Venice	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Five	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice's Secret Agents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Spie, confidenti, esploratori	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice's Secret Agents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venice's professional informants	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Amateur informers: Merchants and tradesmen within and beyond the dominion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bookmark not defined.	
Venice's voluntary informers and mercenary spies	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Spying in early modern Venice: a profession?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Six	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Extraordinary Measures	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Venetian Counterintelligence	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Terrors of the Ten	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Interrogations, Tortures, and Assassinations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chemical Warfare	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Other Tricks and Tactics	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Letter Interceptions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bribes and Gifts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The Normalisation of Extreme Measures	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Epilogue	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Intelligence Organisation in Renaissance Venice: An Evaluation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Intelligence Organisation, Commodification, and the Myth of Venice	Error! Bookmark not defined.
defined.	

[Venice's Secret Service: Key Takeaways](#)..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
[Published Primary Sources](#)..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
[Secondary Sources](#) Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

On the eve of the fourth Ottoman-Venetian War (1570-1573), a man claiming to be a fugitive slave on the run from the Ottomans, travelled to Venice to inform the authorities of some alarming news. He had discovered that the Turkish armada was stocking up on munitions and disgorging large warfare reserves in Anamur, a fortress on the southern coast of Turkey. It was feared that these ostensibly military preparations were intended for an attack on Cyprus, a Venetian colony a short sail away on the opposite shore. Anxious to make ‘appropriate provisions for the defence of the island’, then one of Venice’s most prized possessions in the Mediterranean, the Council of Ten – the governmental committee responsible for the security of Venice and its sprawling dominion – took the following actions: With great urgency, they posted the informant’s written declaration to the governor of Cyprus, ordering him to verify the written claims by sending out spies to confirm the presence of a military build-up in Anamur. They also demanded that the governor report back, in secret, through letters sent by both land and sea.¹ Then, they instructed the Venetian envoy in Constantinople, known as the *bailo*,² to conduct a parallel secret investigation. In particular, they were keen to know whether the informant could be trusted. To ascertain this, they instructed the *bailo* to identify and interview other slaves in the Ottoman capital. Moreover, the *bailo* was entrusted with the sensitive detail that the Venetian ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor had also learned,

¹ ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Segrete*, Reg. 9, c. 33r. (21 Oct. 1569).

² On the Venetian Bailo in Constantinople, see Vincenzo Lazari, ‘Cenni intorno alle legazioni venete alla porta ottomana nel secolo XVI’, in Eugenio Albèri (Ed.), *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Series III, Vol. III (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 1855), pp. xiii-xx; Tommaso Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Costantinopoli a Venezia* (Bologna: Apollo, 1932); Paolo Preto, ‘Le relazioni dei baili a Costantinopoli’, *Il Veltro* 23 (1979), pp. 125-130; Carla Coco and Flora Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani alla Sublime Porta: Storia e caratteristiche dell’ambasciata veneta a Costantinopoli* (Venice: Stamperia di Venezia, 1985); Eric R. Dursteler, ‘The Bailo in Constantinople: Crisis and Career in Venice’s Early Modern Diplomatic Corps’, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, no 2 (2001), pp. 1-30; Stefan Hanss, ‘Baili and Ambassadors’, in Maria Pia Pedani (Ed.), *Il Palazzo di Venezia a Istanbul e i suoi antichi abitanti / İstanbul’daki Venedik Sarayı ve Eski Yaşayanları* (Venice: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2013), pp. 35-52; Emrah Safa Gürkan, ‘Laying Hands on *Arcana Imperii*: Venetian Baili as Spymasters in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul’, in Paul Maddrell, Christopher Moran, Ioanna Iordanou, and Mark Stout (Eds.), *Spy Chiefs Volume II: Intelligence Leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), pp. 67-96.

through his own sources, of an imminent Ottoman invasion of Cyprus.³ As a result of this intricate web of intelligence collection and exchange, the Ten's worst fears were soon corroborated. Shortly after, the *bailo* sent a letter to the Ten confirming the gruesome news that the Ottomans were, indeed, feverishly preparing to invade Cyprus. Now on a war footing, the Ten contacted their ambassador in Spain, to solicit support from the powerful *Re Catholico*, Phillip II.⁴

This episode is redolent of two significant concepts that are central to Renaissance Venice's economic, political, and social conduct – and to this book: intelligence and organisation. In terms of the first concept, it is representative of ways in which sensitive information – primarily of military and political value – was communicated secretly between the Venetian authorities and their formal state representatives stationed overseas. But to what extent is this type of 'sensitive' information and its clandestine communication indicative of *intelligence*, its practice and craft, in the Renaissance? This question encapsulates the fundamental issues associated with the study of early modern intelligence, which are, in fact, more complicated than a scholar of modern intelligence might envisage. As will become apparent throughout this book, defining intelligence as a historical phenomenon is problematic. Indeed, what exactly constitutes intelligence throughout history? Is it a state affair or a private initiative? A professional service or a civic duty? An act of institutional loyalty or of financial need?

In the early modern period, intelligence was a multivalent term, meaning all of the above. For Venetians, the word *intelligentia* meant 'communication' or 'understanding' between a minimum of two people, sometimes in secret. Within the context of state security, it indicated any kind of information of political, economic, social, or even cultural value that was worthy of secrecy, evaluation, and potential covert (at times even overt) action by the government in the name of state security.⁵ In essence, then, there were two aspects to the term 'intelligence'. The first denoted the systematic process of secretly collecting, analysing, and disseminating information. The second related to a "police and security' dimension",

³ ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Segrete*, Reg. 9, c. 33r./v. (21 Oct. 1569).

⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 37r./v. (26 Oct. 1569).

⁵ In his study of the Stuart regime in early modern England, Alan Marshall offers a similar definition. See Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 3.

which could manifest both offensively and defensively'.⁶ These definitions of 'intelligence' will be used throughout this book in an effort to explore the meaning and purpose of this word for different actors in that period. But how was such information disseminated to its intended recipients in the early modern era?

This leads us to the second central concept of this book, organisation. As the Anamur episode demonstrates, in early modern Venice, the systematic organisation of the collection, communication, and evaluation of sensitive information was administered by the Council of Ten, the governmental committee overseeing the security of the Venetian state. As Venice's spy chiefs, in an exemplary display of political and organisational maturity, the Council of Ten developed and administered an elaborate system of information flow with and between their informants and other underlings. To achieve this, they oversaw and managed a far-flung, yet interconnected network of private informants and public servants, whose role was to supply them with vital intelligence for the political and, by extension, economic conduct of the Venetian Republic.⁷ In fact, while in most Italian and European states intelligence operations were organised by powerful individuals in their efforts to secure and consolidate political power and control,⁸ the Venetian Council of Ten created and systematised one of the world's earliest centrally organised state intelligence services. This proto-modern organisation resembled a public sector body that operated with remarkable corporate-like complexity and maturity, serving prominent intelligence functions such as operations (intelligence and covert action), analysis, cryptography and steganography, cryptanalysis, and even the development of lethal substances, such as poison.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ioanna Iordanou, 'The Spy Chiefs of Renaissance Venice: Intelligence Leadership in the Early Modern World', in Maddrell et al., *Spy Chiefs Volume II*, pp 43-66; See also idem, 'What News on the Rialto? The Trade of Information and Early Modern Venice's Centralised Intelligence Organisation', *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no 3 (2016), pp. 305-326.

⁸ On the Italian states in general, see the essays in Daniela Frigo (Ed.) *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On examples of European states, see, amongst others, Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*; Carlos J. Carnicer García and Javier Marcos Rivas, *Espías de Felipe II: Los servicios secretos del Imperio Español* (Madrid: La esfera de los libros, 2005); Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean Baptiste Colbert's State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009); John P. D. Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham and the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

To this day, no systematic attempt has been made to analyse the organisation of Venice's secret service. Paolo Preto's work on Venice's spies and secret agents and Jonathan Walker's graphic account of one of her most infamous spymasters are amongst the few scholarly outputs on Venice's intelligence and espionage pursuits.⁹ Comprising a remarkable abundance of archival evidence and anecdotal nuance, Preto's work is composed of a systematic list of case-studies, presented in basic thematic categories. Produced in this format, a thorough analysis and evaluation of Renaissance Venice's intelligence organisation and its role on the Republic's politics, economy, and society seems to be beyond the scope of Preto's work. Walker's study provides a creative account of one of Venice's most infamous spymasters, Gerolamo Vano. In a spirited narrative that earned the book the characterisation of 'the first true work of "punk history"',¹⁰ the author takes the reader on an enthralling journey through Venice's alleyways and circuitous *calli*, relating Vano's garish feats and peccadilloes. Yet, while the book uncovers the surreptitious underworld of espionage in seventeenth-century Venice, larger questions pertaining to the role that systematised intelligence played in the city's internal and external security remain unasked. In short, while impressive in archival detail and narrative richness, both these works expose specific intelligence operations and secret agents but fall short of a broader analysis of Venice's intelligence organisation and its wider impact on the Venetian state's internal and external security. As a result, Renaissance Venice's secret service still lingers in the shadows of historiography.

This is not accidental, considering that, according to conventional wisdom, systematised intelligence and espionage are 'modern' phenomena that span largely from the eve of the Great War to the present.¹¹ This does not mean that historians have not made worthwhile endeavours to explore the largely uncharted territory of the early modern era.¹² Indeed, some significant scholarly effort has been put on the diplomatic and, by extension,

⁹ Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia: Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); Jonathan Walker, *Pistols! Treason! Murder! The Rise and Fall of a Master Spy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Walker, *Pistols! Treason! Murder!*, front cover endorsement by Ian Mc Calman.

¹¹ The bibliography on this topic is vast. For an overview, see Philip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession: Spies and Spying in the Twentieth Century* (London: Deutsch, 1987).

¹² In fact, a fresh scholarly trend has started to explore the development of intelligence from the ancient times. For a sweeping historical overview, see Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (London: Penguin, 2018).

the intelligence operations of early modern states like England (and later Britain),¹³ France,¹⁴ the Dutch Republic,¹⁵ the Ottoman and Austrian Habsburg empires,¹⁶ Portugal,¹⁷ Spain,¹⁸ and several prominent Italian states,¹⁹ even though some of these works are premised on the regurgitation of old myths rather than the reality behind them.²⁰ Nevertheless, limited effort has been placed in expounding on how systematised intelligence influenced an early modern state's security and, by extension, political decision-making, economic vigour, and even social conduct. This is astonishing as, contrary to the methodological impediments to the

¹³ Mildred G. Richings, *The Story of the Secret Service of the English Crown* (London: Hutchinson, 1935); Peter Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State and their Monopoly of Licensed News* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956); Paul S. Fritz, 'The Anti-Jacobite Intelligence System of the English Ministers, 1715–1745', *Historical Journal* 16, no (1973), pp. 265-289; Richard Deacon, *A History of the British Secret Service* (London: Panther Books, 1990), esp. pp. 16-22; Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*; Idem, "'Secret wheeles': Clandestine Information, Espionage, and European Intelligence", in Jeroen F. J. Duindam, Maurits A. Ebben, and Louis Sicking (Eds.), *Beyond Ambassadors: Missionaries, Consuls and Spies in Pre-modern Diplomacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) [In Press].

¹⁴ Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990).

¹⁵ Karl De Leeuw, 'The Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic during the War of the Spanish Succession and its Aftermath, 1707–1715', *Historical Journal* 42, no 1 (1999), pp. 133-156.

¹⁶ Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean: Secrecy, Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-betweens and the Ottoman Habsburg Rivalry', Unpublished Ph.D thesis (Georgetown University, 2012); Idem, *Sultanın Casusları: 16. Yüzyılda İstihbarat, Sabotaj ve Rüşvet Ağları* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017).

¹⁷ Fernando Cortés Cortés, *Espionagem e Contra-Espionagem numa Guerra Peninsular 1640–1668* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1989).

¹⁸ Carnicer García and Marcos Rivas, *Espías de Felipe II*; Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). For an overview of the literature on Spanish intelligence, see Christopher Storrs, 'Intelligence and the Formulation of Policy and Strategy in Early Modern Europe: The Spanish Monarchy in the Reign of Charles II (1665-1700)', *Intelligence and National Security* 21, no 4 (2006), pp. 493-519.

¹⁹ On Venice, see Preto, *I servizi segreti*; Ioanna Iordanou, 'What News on the Rialto? The Trade of Information and Early Modern Venice's Centralized Intelligence Organization', *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no 3 (2016), pp. 305-326. On Venice and Genoa, see Romano Canosa, *Alle origini delle polizie politiche: Gli Inquisitori di Stato a Venezia e a Genova* (Milano: Sugarco, 1989). On Savoy, see Christopher Storrs, *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy, 1690–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On Milan, see Francesco Senatore, *"Uno mundo de carta": forme e strutture della diplomazia sforzesca* (Naples: Liguori, 1998). On the Italian states in general, see the relevant essays in Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy*.

²⁰ See, for example, Deacon, *A History of the British Secret Service*.

access of contemporary sources,²¹ archival records of the early modern period can yield a wealth of evidence about ‘the dark underbelly’ of early modern politics.²²

Aiming to rectify this issue, this book attempts three feats. Firstly, challenging the widely accepted view that systematised intelligence and state-organised security are characteristic of the modern state, developed to serve military-political purposes,²³ the book argues that organised intelligence already existed in the early modern era and, in the case of a commercial power like Venice, it also undergirded economic-commercial interests. Undeniably, early modern intelligence was not as technologically astute as in the twentieth century. Through a systematic analysis of the function and instrumentality of Renaissance Venice’s intelligence pursuits, however, the book reveals the indisputable impact of centrally organised intelligence on an early modern state’s political, economic, and social security and prosperity. For this reason, *Venice’s Secret Service* moves beyond simplistic narrative accounts of secret agents and operations, casting the focus, not on the revelatory value of clandestine communication and missions but on the social processes that generated them. In consequence, Venice’s central intelligence apparatus is explored and analysed as an organisation, rather than as the capricious intelligence enterprise of a group of state dignitaries.

Secondly, the book postulates the core claim that Renaissance Venice was one of the earliest early modern states to have created a centrally organised state intelligence organisation. This comprised specialist expertise on a single site – the imposing Doge’s Palace overlooking the Venetian lagoon – and under the direction of specific governmental committees, primarily the Council of Ten, who oversaw and administered interwoven ways of working within and beyond the Palace’s walls. Just like the Venetian diplomatic corpus, Venice’s intelligence organisation was a ‘branch of the civil service’, a distinct annex of a

²¹ For a detailed discussion on the difficulties imposed by archival sources, or even the alleged claim that secret activities were excluded from historical records, see the essays in Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (Eds.), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

²² Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 2.

²³ See, amongst others, Bernard Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790-1988* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Richard C. Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (London: Wiley, 1994); William O. Walker III, *National Security and Core Values in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

broad and structured bureaucratic apparatus that made part of a rather inglorious area of government within the panorama of international diplomacy.²⁴ To examine how this organisation was structured, the book describes and analyses the various departments that comprised it, as well as the composite system of managerial delegation that was developed to manage its far-reaching grip across Europe, the Near East, and even Northern Africa. Particular emphasis is placed on the two distinct types of workforce engaged by this organisation: the formally appointed diplomats and state servants and the casually and – more often than not – voluntarily appointed recruits.

Thirdly, the book explores the development of systematic intelligence not only through a political lens but also through a socio-economic one. Most intelligence studies to date are conducted with an overwhelming emphasis on military, political, and diplomatic history and international relations. *Venice's Secret Service* particularly focuses on the Venetian Republic's commercial and business acumen and explores the hypothesis that this was one of the main drivers behind its systematic organisation of diplomacy, bureaucracy, and, ultimately, intelligence. For this purpose, the book does not only reveal and analyse Venice's clandestine missions to protect cities of prime economic significance against the predatory proclivities of enemies (especially the Ottomans); it showcases several instances of Venetian merchants stationed in commercial hubs of strategic significance for Venice in the Mediterranean, who undergirded Venice's intelligence operations in order to protect the Republic's, and by extension their own, economic interests. For, as Hans Kissling aptly noted, 'in the eyes of the mercantile state, it was obvious that Venetian subjects felt the need to serve it at all times, especially while abroad'.²⁵ Moreover, the book shows how the Council of Ten commodified intelligence and state security operations. It did so by incentivising ordinary Venetians, who were categorically excluded from political participation, to partake in politicised acts of state surveillance and espionage, as a symbol of dutiful contribution to the Venetian society. Through this lens, early modern intelligence emerges as both a rigid top-down, as well as a variable bottom-up practice.

²⁴ Andrea Zannini, 'Economic and Social Aspects of the Crisis of Venetian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy*, pp. 109-146 (here p. 110).

²⁵ Hans J. Kissling, 'Venezia come centro di informazioni sui Turchi', in Hans G. Beck, Manoussos Manoussakas, and Agostino Pertusi (Eds.), *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (Secoli XV-XVI). Aspetti e problemi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1977), pp. 97-109 (here p. 99).

The book's ultimate purpose is to examine the time-specific meaning and functions of intelligence in a society and for a state that are decisively different from those in which modern intelligence operates. For this reason, intelligence is examined as a flexible activity made up of a conglomeration of social processes that determined what was shared with whom, who was excluded, and how the secret communication of knowledge was controlled and regulated. Consequently, the book focuses on the paradoxical nature of secret communication that, on the one hand, erects barriers between those *in the know* and those *in the dark*,²⁶ and on the other, it demolishes barriers that would otherwise have to exist, if knowledge transfer was not concealed and protected through secrecy. From this perspective, secrecy, as the ongoing practice of intentional concealment, is explored as an enabling knowledge-transfer process contingent upon social interactions that formed identities, alliances, and divisions.

Stemming from the above, *Venice's Secret Service* serves several purposes. Specifically, it is:

A book about early modern intelligence: As it will be made clear in the following pages, the early modern period played a decisive role in the evolution of organised intelligence. Lacking in the technological advances of the twentieth century, Renaissance Venice was emblematic in the creation of a robust, centrally organised state intelligence apparatus that played a pivotal role in the defence of the Venetian empire. Official informants and amateur spies were shipped across Europe, Anatolia, and Northern Africa, conducting Venice's manifold intelligence operations. While revealing a plethora of secrets, their keepers, and their seekers, the book will explore the social and managerial processes that enabled their existence and that furnished the foundation for the creation of one of the world's earliest centrally organised state intelligence services.

A book about preindustrial organisation and managerial practices: Employing a transdisciplinary perspective, the book will show that organisational entities and managerial practices existed long before contemporary terminology was coined to describe them. Combining the narrative construction of theoretical concepts from the disciplines of Sociology, Management, and Organisation Studies with archival records and secondary historical sources, Renaissance Venice's secret service is analysed as a proto-modern

²⁶ On an authoritative sociological theorisation of secrecy, see Georg Simmel, 'The Sociology of Secrecy and Secret Societies', *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no 4 (1906), pp. 441-498, transl. Albion Small.

organisation with distinct managerial structures that enabled the coordination of uniform patterns of working across long distances. As it will become apparent in the following chapters, the Venetian intelligence organisation, made up of geographically dispersed state representatives and their state officials, men of the military and the navy, in-house and expatriate white collar state functionaries, as well as casually salaried spies and informers, all headed by the Council of Ten, were, ultimately, a social structure held together through commonly accepted rules and regulations – the purest form of organisation according to Max Weber,²⁷ the ‘father of organisation science’ and one of the foundational thinkers in management studies.²⁸ More specifically, the commonly accepted patterns of working within this organisation were based on traditional authority – the Council of Ten – and the allocation of human resources through legal-traditional administration – a string of formal decrees that authorised the Ten’s power of command. Consequently, through the lens of early theories of organisation and management, Venice’s secret service emerges as a primordial intelligence organisation whose governance structure does not diverge greatly from contemporary organisational entities.

A book about the Venetian empire in the sixteenth century: Much as the focal point of the book is the central organisation of Renaissance Venice’s secret service, an endeavour is made to abstain from focusing disproportionately on an inward-looking representation of the *Dominante*, which has perpetuated the predominant historiographical interpretation of Venice as ‘a great city’, an ‘enduring republic’, ‘an expansive empire’, and ‘an imposing regional state’.²⁹ Instead, a systematic attempt is made to redress the balance in Venetian historiography by exploring the Ten’s operations both within the city and, importantly, in the

²⁷ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vol. 1, ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 51.

²⁸ Stephen Cummings, Todd Bridgman, John Hassard, Michael Rowlinson, *A New History of Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 119. On a well-rounded review of the significance of Max Weber’s work on organisation and management studies, see Stephen Cummings and Todd Bridgman, ‘The Relevant Past: Why the History of Management Should Be Critical for our Future’, *Academy of Management, Learning and Education* 10, no 1 (2011), pp. 77-93; Cummings, Bridgman, Hassard, and Rowlinson, *A New History of Management*, esp. Chapter 4.

²⁹ John Martin and Dennis Romano, ‘Reconsidering Venice’, in John Martin and Dennis Romano (Eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 1-35 (here p. 1). On a critique of Anglophone historians’ propensity to cast disproportionate attention to Venice compared to its colonies, see Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, pp. xi, 6, 7, 27.

geographically dispersed territories of the *Terraferma* – Venice’s possessions in the Italian mainland – and the *Stato da Mar* – the Venetian overseas empire. On the whole, as Venice’s systematised intelligence pursuits crossed borders, traversing the European continent and the Levant and even the shores of Northern Africa, the book will endeavour a quasi-global history of Venice’s secret service.

A book about the Venetian Council of Ten: As we shall see in the following section, the Council of Ten was an authoritative committee responsible for the security of the Venetian state. As one of the most powerful instruments of government in Renaissance Venice, the Ten have been the object of substantial study within the wider context of Venice’s political history.³⁰ This book broadens and deepens the historical understanding of the Council of Ten by revealing and analysing their concerted efforts to clay-model and spearhead Venice’s secret service as the Republic’s spy chiefs. Casting aside normative representations of the Ten as a fear-inducing governmental committee, the book will present a fresh image of them as a group of intelligence leaders deeply wedded to the security of the Venetian state, its subjects, and its secret operatives.³¹

A book on people’s history: As it will become apparent in the ensuing chapters, Venetian citizens and subjects of all walks of life were invited to contribute to Renaissance Venice’s state security undertakings by participating in risky operations. A variety of incentives were offered for such endeavours, of which monetary sums, the opportunity to reduce political sentences, and income deriving from state services were the most prevalent. Numerous such instances related in this book demonstrate that, in the early modern era, systematised intelligence was not an outcome of a rigid top-down process of authority and control. On the contrary, ‘bottom-up’ contributions of lay individuals are suggestive of intelligence ‘from below’ that is fundamental for our understanding of early modern

³⁰ On the Council of Ten, see Mauro Macchi, *Istoria del Consiglio dei Dieci* (Turin: Fontana, 1848); Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (London: Ernst Benn, 1980).

³¹ On an analysis of the Council of Ten’s leadership endeavours as the heads of Venice’s intelligence and state security operations, see Iordanou, ‘The Spy Chiefs of Renaissance Venice’. On a general overview of the function of leadership in Intelligence, see Paul Maddrell, ‘What is Intelligence Leadership? Three Historical Trends’, in Maddrell et al., *Spy Chiefs Volume II*, pp. 5-42; Christopher Moran, Ioanna Iordanou, and Mark Stout, ‘Introduction: Spy Chiefs: Power, Secrecy and Leadership’, in Christopher Moran, Mark Stout, Ioanna Iordanou, and Paul Maddrell (Eds.), *Spy Chiefs Volume I: Intelligence Leaders in the United States and the United Kingdom* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), pp. 1-20.

intelligence. Seen in this way, the study of early modern intelligence is as much a people's history, as it is a history of elites.

On the whole, *Venice's Secret Service* investigates and evaluates the function of Venice's state intelligence apparatus from a political, socio-economic, and organisational perspective. Accordingly, it is a book of political, economic, and social history, as much as it is a book of intelligence and organisational history. Ultimately, the book offers a fresh vista on systematised intelligence in the long Renaissance, adding the concept of 'organisation' to the study of early modern politics, economy, and society. At the top of this organisation sat the Council of Ten and their subsidiary, the Inquisitors of the State.

The Council of Ten and the Inquisitors of the State

Venice's central intelligence organisation was engineered by the Council of Ten. Established in 1310, at the aftermath of Baiamonte Tiepolo's failed attempt to overthrow the reigning Doge Piero Gradenigo, the Council of Ten was the exclusive committee responsible for the security of the Venetian empire. The Council was actually made up of seventeen men, including ten ordinary members who served annual terms, the Doge's six ducal councillors, who did not have voting rights, and the Doge as the ceremonial figurehead.³² Every month three ordinary members took turns at heading the Ten's operations. They were called *Capi*, the Heads of the Ten.³³ Initially, the Ten were tasked with protecting the government from overthrow or corruption. Progressively, however, their political and judicial powers extended to such a degree that, by the mid-fifteenth century, they encompassed diplomatic and military operations, control over secret affairs, public order, domestic and foreign policy.³⁴ By the first decade of the sixteenth century, the power of the Council of Ten had increased to such a degree that the committee assumed the dimensions of a 'crypto-oligarchy'.³⁵ Crucially, much

³² Gaetano Cozzi, 'Authority and the Law', in John R. Hale (Ed.), *Renaissance Venice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), pp. 293-345 (here p. 308).

³³ Macchi, *Istoria del Consiglio dei Dieci*.

³⁴ Gaetano Cozzi, 'La difesa degli imputati nei processi celebrati col rito del Consiglio dei Dieci', in Luigi Berlinguer and Floriana Colao (Eds.) *Crimine, giustizia e società veneta in età moderna* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1989), pp. 1-87; Idem, 'Venezia nello scenario europeo', in Gaetano Cozzi, Michael Knapton, and Giovanni Scarabello (Eds.), *La Repubblica di Venezia nell'età moderna. Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1992), pp. 3-200.

³⁵ Alfredo Viggiano, 'Politics and Constitution', in Eric R. Dursteler (Ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 47-84 (here p. 56). On the increase of the Council of Ten's

of the Ten's supremacy was premised on their organisation and systematic control of Venice's intelligence apparatus that operated within the city, across, and beyond the Venetian dominion.

Intrepid and imperious, from early on the Ten displayed an indomitable political appetite to systematise Venice's intelligence operations, which materialised in a distinct and relatively continuous funding line, and, importantly, in an efficient administrative system that enabled the Venetian state's central intelligence organisation. Such weighty responsibilities, so pivotal to the city's governance, merited a prominent position in the city's topography. The Ten, therefore, were housed in one of the most impressive state intelligence headquarters of the early modern (and admittedly, even the modern) world, the *Palazzo Ducale*, overlooking the Venetian lagoon in Saint Mark's Square. Therein the Ten organised and administered one of the world's earliest centrally organised state intelligence services. As we shall see, this resembled a kind of proto-modern public sector organisation that operated with remarkable complexity and maturity. This service was also supported by several other state institutions, including the Senate – the Venetian government's debating committee and primary legislative organ, especially up until the mid-sixteenth century, the *Collegio* – the Senate's steering committee, and the office of state attorneys (*Avogaria di Comun*), as well as the local authorities of the Venetian territories in Italy, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean.³⁶

An attempt to restrain the Ten's prominent role in the government of the Venetian state took place in 1582, when a reform (*correzione*) imposed by the *Maggior Consiglio* (Great Council) – the assembly of the entire body of Venetian male patricians³⁷ – attempted to reduce their power and make them more accountable to the *Collegio*.³⁸ The autocratic way in

responsibilities and jurisdiction following Venice's territorial expansion, see Michael Knapton, 'Il Consiglio dei X nel governo della Terraferma: Un'ipotesi interpretativa per il secondo Quattrocento', in Amelio Tagliaferri (Ed.), *Atti del Convegno Venezia e la Terraferma attraverso le relazioni dei Rettori* (Milan: A. Giuffrè, 1981), pp. 235-260.

³⁶ On a synthesis of the inner workings of the Venetian political system, especially in the sixteenth century, see Viggiano, 'Politics and Constitution'.

³⁷ On the *Maggior Consiglio*, especially the requirements for admission and its prerogatives, see Giuseppe Maranini, *La costituzione di Venezia dopo la serrata del Maggior Consiglio* (Venice: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1931), esp. pp. 41-46 and 78-102.

³⁸ On differing interpretations of the *correzione* of the Council of Ten, see Aldo Stella, 'La regolazione delle pubbliche entrate e la crisi politica veneziana del 1582', in *Miscellanea in onore di Roberto Cessi*, Vol. II (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958), pp. 157-71; Gaetano Cozzi, *Il doge Nicolò Contarini. Ricerche*

which the Ten wielded their power tarnished their reputation and enveloped them in an aura of fear-inducing authority, at times even tyrannical superciliousness.³⁹ Their infamous eruptions were committed to ink by several contemporaneous chroniclers, such as the inveterate diarist Marino Sanudo (1466-1536).⁴⁰ 'This Council imposes banishment and exile upon nobles, and has others burnt or hanged if they deserve it, and has authority to dismiss the Prince, even to do other things to him if he so deserves', he once wrote in his account of Venice's quotidian existence.⁴¹ The Ten's unbending authority stemmed out of respect for two fundamental Venetian virtues: order that was achieved by secrecy; and maturity that was guaranteed by gerontocracy. Both these virtues were deemed paramount for state security.⁴² It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the Ten's stringent regulations did not exclude the Council's own members. As the governing body responsible for state security, failure to act speedily on issues that imperilled it could render them liable to a 1000-ducat fine,⁴³ a hefty sum, considering that a Venetian patrician serving as an ambassador in the sixteenth century earned 200 to 600 ducats annually.⁴⁴

In a way, the Ten seemed to espouse Machiavelli's maxim that a ruler 'must not worry if he incurs reproach for his cruelty, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal. By

sul patriziato veneziano agli inizi del seicento (Venice and Rome: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1958), pp. 2-51; Martin Lowry, 'The Reform of the Council of Ten in 1582-3: An Unsettled Problem?', *Studi Veneziani* 13 (1971), pp. 275-310; Giacomo Fassina, 'Factiousness, Fractiousness or Unity? The Reform of the Council of Ten in 1582-1583', *Studi veneziani*, n.s. 54 (2007), pp. 89-118.

³⁹ Focusing on Venice's 'anti-myth', nineteenth century historiography, influenced by Pierre Daru's *Histoire de la République de Venise*, presented Venice as a hotbed of moral corruption and unrestrained aristocratic supremacy overseen by the ubiquitous Council of Ten. For a nuanced discussion on the 'anti-myth' and nineteenth century historiography on Venice, see Claudio Povolo, 'The Creation of Venetian Historiography', in Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, pp. 491-519.

⁴⁰ On Venetian diarists and their use of correspondence, see Christiane Neerfeld, «*Historia per forma di diaria*». *La cronachistica veneziana contemporanea a cavallo tra il Quattro e il Cinquecento* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2006); Mario Infelise, 'From Merchants' Letters to Handwritten Political Avvisi: Notes on the Origins of Public Information', in Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond (Eds.), *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, Vol. 3 of *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Robert Muchembled and William Monter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 33-52.

⁴¹ David Chambers and Brian Pullan (Eds.), *Venice: A Documentary History* (London: Blackwell, 1992), p. 55.

⁴² Finlay, *Politics*, p. 189.

⁴³ Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Vol. VI (Venice: Pietro Naratovich, 1857), p. 530.

⁴⁴ Zannini, 'Economic and Social Aspects', p. 127.

making an example or two, he will prove more compassionate than those who, being too compassionate, allow disorders which lead to murder and rapine'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, what emerges from the Ten's secret registers is the image of an unabashed yet dignified committee that, at times, went to great lengths to ensure the safety and welfare of those in their employ and those directly affected by their policies. Such actions included ordering the protection of an imperilled Venetian courier,⁴⁶ providing financial support to the family of a deceased covert operative who fell in service of the Republic,⁴⁷ or releasing erroneously arrested detainees and restoring their confiscated possessions.⁴⁸ In other words, the study of the covert and clandestine operations of the Council of Ten reveals that, while imperious and authoritative, it had a propensity to act in a just and even benevolent manner 'for the dignity of our Signory and the preservation of public trust'.⁴⁹

Despite gradually assuming considerable power over the Venetian government in the sixteenth century, the autocratic proclivities of the Council of Ten were not left uncontrolled. The extraordinary maturity of the Venetian political system endeavoured to contain any potential autocracy, at least in principle. The institution of the *zonta* (the Venetian linguistic variation of *aggiunta* or *addizione*, meaning 'addition') was the mechanism put in place for this purpose. The *zonta* was an adjunct commission of initially twenty men – reduced to fifteen after 1529, even though this number varied depending on the circumstances⁵⁰ – who participated in all important assemblies of the Council of Ten.⁵¹ Either elected or co-opted, they played the role of an impartial referee, whose duty was to recognise and combat occurrences of nepotism and cronyism. It was usually made up of patricians who had not secured election to the other governing bodies. The *zonta*, therefore, was a 'constitutional shortcut' for those noblemen who wished to actively participate in the Venetian oligarchy but had not achieved the necessary backing.⁵²

⁴⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, transl. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 53.

⁴⁶ ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Segrete*, Reg. 14, c. 60v. (21 March 1601).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Reg. 9, c. 198v. (15 Dec. 1571).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Reg. 7, c. 9r. (2 Oct. 1559)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Reg. 9, c. 198v. (15 Dec. 1571).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Reg. 2, c. 5r./v. (18 May 1527).

⁵¹ Canosa, *Alle origini*, p. 23.

⁵² Finlay, *Politics*, pp. 185-190.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, several pivotal state affairs, such as continuous wars with the Ottomans and the spectre of the new Portuguese spice route, rendered the protection of state secrets a matter of urgency. As a result, in 1539, the Council of Ten – with the blessing of the Senate and the Great Council – decided to establish a counterintelligence magistracy.⁵³ This took shape in the institution of the Inquisitors of the State (*Inquisitori di Stato*), a distinct committee that should not be misperceived for the *Santo Ufficio*, the Venetian Inquisition.⁵⁴ Initially entitled ‘Inquisitors against the Disclosures of Secrets’, the *Inquisitori* were a special tribunal made up of three men, two from the ranks of the Ten and one ducal counsellor.⁵⁵ They held an annual tenure, upon completion of which they could seek re-election.⁵⁶ Their role stemmed from a medieval judicial tradition that enabled both the Church and the State to initiate secret investigations and trials *ex officio*, ‘making guilt easier to prove and evidence less open to discussion’.⁵⁷ While the *Inquisitori* were primarily responsible for counterintelligence and the protection of state secrets, gradually their activity encompassed all aspects of state security, including conspiracies, betrayals, public order, and espionage.⁵⁸ All these were expected to be concealed under a thick mantle of secrecy but, unquestionably, ought to be communicated to the Ten.

Beyond organising and managing Venice’s intelligence infrastructure, it is also worth pointing out that the Council of Ten was more broadly responsible for military preparedness

⁵³ Following the tradition charted by eminent historians of early modern intelligence, I took the liberty of using modern terms, such as ‘counterintelligence’, ‘secret service’, and ‘intelligence organisation’. See, Bély, *Espions*; Cortés Cortés, *Espionagem e Contra-Espionagem*; Preto, *I servizi segreti*; Carnicer García and Marcos Rivas, *Espías de Felipe II*; Gürkan, ‘Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean’; Idem, ‘The Efficacy of Ottoman Counter-intelligence in the 16th Century’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 65, no 1 (2012), pp. 1-38.

⁵⁴ On the Inquisitors of the State, see Samuele Romanin, *Gli Inquisitori di Stato di Venezia* (Venice: Pietro Naratovich, 1858); Canosa, *Alle origini*, esp. pp. 19-85; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, pp. 55-74; and Simone Lonardi, ‘L’anima dei governi. Politica, spionaggio e segreto di stato a Venezia nel secondo Seicento (1645-1699)’, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis (University of Padua, 2015). On the relevant founding decrees, see Romanin, *Storia documentata*, Vol. VI, pp. 122-124.

⁵⁵ Romanin, *Gli Inquisitori di Stato*, p. 16; Idem, *Storia documentata*, Vol. VI, pp. 78-80 (Deliberation of 20 Sep. 1539).

⁵⁶ Romanin, *Storia documentata*, Vol. VI, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 34.

⁵⁸ See Lonardi, ‘L’anima dei governi’.

and defence, both within and beyond the city of Saint Mark.⁵⁹ This involved building, reinforcing, and occasionally repairing the dominion's city walls and fortifications in order to render Venice and its possessions impregnable to assault. For example, in 1583, following intelligence on an imminent Ottoman attack, the Ten ordered the construction of a wall around the Venetian town of Novigrad, plus cavalry reinforcements, for the 'maximum security of the inhabitants'.⁶⁰ They were also anxious to ensure that the gates of Venetian strongholds, especially in the *Terraferma*, were constantly guarded, so that the local authorities could monitor those entering and exiting the urban terrain.⁶¹

A particular security concern was the *Arsenale*, the production site for the renowned Venetian galleys that contributed to the Republic's commercial and military might.⁶² As the nucleus of Venetian navigation, the *Arsenale* was of geostrategic significance to Venice. For this reason, the Ten took its maintenance incredibly seriously. When in the run up to the Third Ottoman-Venetian War, for instance, it came to their attention that Venetian merchants were trading hemp – a vital raw material for ship building and navigation, whose production within the Venetian dominion was dwindling⁶³ – they urgently ordered their naval chiefs to bring back to the *Arsenale* any hemp discovered on commercial galleys traversing the Adriatic, even compensating the merchants for their loss.⁶⁴ Periodic inspections of the state

⁵⁹ On the military preparations of the Venetians for the War of Cyprus, see Michael Mallett and John R. Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 233-241.

⁶⁰ ASV, CCX, *Lettere dei Rettori e di Altre Cariche*, b. 284 (2 Feb. 1583).

⁶¹ On city gates as sites of urban power, exclusion and inclusion, see Daniel Jütte, *The Straight Gate: Thresholds and Power in Western History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), esp. Chapter Five.

⁶² The bibliography on the Venetian Arsenal is substantial. Some notable works include Mario Nani Mocenigo, *L'Arsenale di Venezia* (Roma: Arti Grafiche Ugo Pinnarò, 1927); Frederic C. Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1934); Robert C. Davis, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian Arsenal: Workers and Workplace in the Preindustrial City* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Ioanna Iordanou, 'Maritime Communities in Late Renaissance Venice: The Arsenalotti and the Greeks', Unpublished Ph.D Thesis (The University of Warwick, 2008), esp. Chapter 2.

⁶³ On the significance of hemp for the Venetian Republic, see Frederic C. Lane, 'The Rope Factory and Hemp Trade of Venice in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of Economics and Business History* IV, supplement (1932), pp. 830-847; Ruggiero Romano, 'Economic Aspects of the Construction of Warships in Venice in the Sixteenth Century', in Brian Pullan (Ed.), *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Methuen and Co., 1968), pp. 59-87.

⁶⁴ ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Segrete*, Reg. 4, cc. 32v.-33r. (14 July 1534).

shipyards, delegated to the *Provveditori all'Arsenale*, were also part of the measures employed by the Ten to maintain the security of the Venetian state.⁶⁵ Alas, the slew of measures they introduced did not prevent a devastating fire that whipped through the *Arsenale* and obliterated the stockpile of munitions, together with several galleys of the Republic's reserve fleet, on the night of 10 September 1569. Arson or accident, rumours raged for days that the culprit was either Joseph Nasi, an advisor to Sultan Selim II,⁶⁶ or a Turkish saboteur.⁶⁷ Under similarly suspicious circumstances, perhaps in retaliation, two weeks later a fire engulfed the Arsenal in Constantinople, wrecking the Jewish quarter of the Ottoman capital.⁶⁸

Hitherto scholarship has explored the Council of Ten as an oligarchic governmental committee with a composite mixture of exclusive judicial and political prerogatives that intensified in the course of the sixteenth century.⁶⁹ The Ten's subsidiary, the Inquisitors of the State, have received considerably less attention by contemporary scholars, with the exception of a recent study focusing on their activity in the 1600s, primarily due to the surviving documentation, which is scarce for the sixteenth century but plentiful for the seventeenth.⁷⁰ Considering that both committees' jurisdictional authorities were contingent upon their organisation and systematic control of Venice's intelligence apparatus that branched out across Europe, Anatolia, and even of Northern Africa, where Venice had diplomatic and commercial representation, an analysis and evaluation of their intelligence organisation is long overdue. In view of the meteoric rise in the historiography of

⁶⁵ Ibid., Reg. 6, c. 51v. (26 Aug. 1550).

⁶⁶ Gürkan, 'Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean', pp. 287, 378.

⁶⁷ Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, Vol 4: *The Sixteenth Century from Julius III to Pius V* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1976), p. 944; see also Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 55-63. On Joseph Nasi in general, see Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1948); On Nasi as a spymaster and instigator of the 1570-1573 Ottoman-Venetian war, see Gürkan, 'Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean', pp. 377-384.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Macchi, *Istoria del Consiglio dei Dieci*; Cozzi, 'Authority and the Law'; Idem, 'La politica del diritto nella repubblica di Venezia', in Gaetano Cozzi (Ed.), *Stato, società e giustizia nella Repubblica Veneta (sec. XV-XVIII)* (Rome: Jouvence, 1981), pp. 15-151; Idem, *Repubblica di Venezia e stati italiani: Politica e giustizia dal secolo XVI al secolo XVIII* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982).

⁷⁰ Preto, *I servizi segreti*, pp 55-74; Lonardi, 'L' anima dei governi'.

contemporary intelligence and espionage, especially in the Anglosphere, over the last thirty years,⁷¹ such a scholarly endeavour could not be more timely.

Why Venice?

In her pioneering book entitled *Political Economies of Empire*, Maria Fusaro postulated the bold yet apt proposition that ‘it is time to start considering the Venetian state in its entirety – *terra* and *mar* – blending together different historiographical strands and traditions, aiming at a holistic approach to the topic of statecraft and political economy.’⁷² Fusaro’s call to scholarly arms holds great merit, especially in relation to the study of early modern diplomacy and, by extension, intelligence activities that linked inextricably Venice with early modern Europe, the Near East, and Africa. Such a link was the consequence of the high level bureaucratisation and institutionalisation – even in Weberian terms, as we shall see in Chapter Three – that led to the ‘rise of information-fed bureaucracies’ in the early modern era.⁷³ This information-fed bureaucratisation of Renaissance Venice spawned both its intelligence organisation and the vast paper trail that enabled the conception and materialisation of this book. Accordingly, the surviving documentation furnishes an abundance of information on the intelligence organisation of both the Venetian motherland and its periphery, rendering Venice an appealing case study through which we can explore the *Dominante*, its dominion, and the former’s diplomatic reach beyond the latter.

The relationship between Venice and its dominion in the *Terraferma* and the *Stato da Mar* was quite diverse with overarching similarities in the way territories were governed but also important differences.⁷⁴ Venice was the ruling power, responsible for the defence of its

⁷¹ For Britain, see Christopher R. Moran, ‘The Pursuit of Intelligence History: Methods, Sources, and Trajectories in the United Kingdom’, *Studies in Intelligence* 55, no 2 (2011), pp. 33-55. For the USA, see Kaeten Mistry, ‘Narrating Covert Action: The CIA, Historiography, and the Cold War’, in Christopher R. Moran and Christopher J. Murphy (Eds.), *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US: Historiography since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 111-128.

⁷² Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 22.

⁷³ Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), p. 10.

⁷⁴ On the *Terraferma* and its main urban governorships, see Michael Knapton, ‘Venice and the *Terraferma*’, in Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini (Eds.), *The Italian Renaissance State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 132-155; on smaller cities of the *Terraferma*, see Anna Bellavitis, ‘Quasi-città e terre murane in area veneta. Un bilancio per l’età moderna’, in Elena Svalduz (Ed.), *L’ambizione di essere città*.

provinces and its subjects. As part of the Venetian defence organisation, members of the patriciate were sent to govern territories of both the mainland and overseas Venetian holdings and were expected to co-operate with local elites and institutions in order to fulfil their duties.⁷⁵ In the Ionian Islands, in particular, local elites, whose grasp of the native Greek language proffered a considerable advantage, played the role of the intermediary between the motherland and the local populations.⁷⁶ These elites were, thus, responsible for the overall governance of those territories and they reported to the Senate and to the Heads of the Council of Ten, who, from the 1480s onwards, increasingly assumed a growing influence over the affairs of Venice's maritime dominion.⁷⁷

Venice's mainland and maritime possessions were governed in a rather 'light touch' manner, through the appointment of Venetian officials occupying key posts in the Venetian *cursus honorum*.⁷⁸ These included one or two civil governors (called *rettori* or even *podestà*); a military governor (called *capitano*); and, more often than not, one or two treasurers or financial administrators (*camerlenghi*).⁷⁹ As we shall see in the following pages, Venetian elites overseeing the Republic's territorial possessions were expected to perform a variety of public services, from administering the recruitment of servicemen to orchestrating daring espionage missions. Tenure was brief, usually two years in duration, a time period that was deemed sufficient enough to establish one's authority without being entrenched in local affairs and interests to such a degree that could lead to corruption.⁸⁰ Yet, such temporal restrictions could not guarantee the elimination of debauchery, and critics of the system voiced concerns that two years was not an adequate time-frame to enable a governor to gain a thorough understanding of local idiosyncrasies and needs.⁸¹ While local legislation was

Piccoli, grandi centri nell' Italia rinascimentale (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004), pp. 97-114; on the military structure of the Terraferma, see Giulio Ongaro, *Peasants and Soldiers: The Management of the Venetian Military Structure in the Mainland Dominion between the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); on the Venetian colonies of the *Stato da Mar*, see Benjamin Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period', in Dursteler, *A Companion to Venetian History*, pp. 125-253.

⁷⁵ Knapton, 'Venice and the Terraferma', p. 152.

⁷⁶ Fusaro, *Political Economies*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁷ Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire', p. 154.

⁷⁸ See Angelo Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del Quattrocento e Cinquecento* (Milan: Unicopli, 1993).

⁷⁹ Knapton, 'Venice and the Terraferma', pp. 150-151.

⁸⁰ Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire', pp. 146-151.

⁸¹ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, p. 927.

respected and preserved, in a territorial state like Venice the administration of justice was left to the motherland as ‘the principal expression of the *Dominante*’s dominion’.⁸² As a result, all judicial appeals of the *Stato da Mar* were sent to Venice.⁸³

This imperial-like organisation of the colonies, alongside her economic and political rise and fall on the international scene between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, induced Venice to create a vast and robust diplomatic network. By the second half of the sixteenth century, Venice’s diplomatic structures had assumed such gargantuan proportions that historians such as Stefano Andretta referred to an ‘elephantiasis of its diplomatic apparatus’.⁸⁴ This exponential growth in Venice’s diplomatic activities coincided with an era when her foreign policy focused on the ‘outright defence of her domains’.⁸⁵ This period culminated to a thunderous confrontation with the Ottomans in 1571, that cost the Venetians the island of Cyprus, a Venetian stronghold of immense economic and geopolitical significance in the Mediterranean,⁸⁶ as we saw at the start of this Introduction. It was during that period that the Republic’s intelligence pursuits, subtly but steadily undergirding her diplomatic regime, intensified to such a degree, that the authorities were willing to risk placing the most unexceptional men to the most exceptional circumstances, in an effort to achieve the defence of the Republic at any cost.

These unexceptional men were Venice’s amateur spies and informers.⁸⁷ According to Tommaso Garzoni’s late sixteenth century treatise on ‘all professions in the world’, spies in

⁸² Arbel, ‘Venice’s Maritime Empire’, p. 139.

⁸³ On the policy of imposing Venetian criminal law as a symbol of sovereignty over the Venetian dominion, see Cozzi, *Stato, società e giustizia*. On the contrary, in the *Terraferma*, criminal justice remained in the hands of local judges, undermining Venetian authority. See Ventura, *Nobiltà e popolo*, pp. 440-446; Arbel, ‘Venice’s Maritime Empire’, p. 156.

⁸⁴ Stefano Andretta, “Rivoluzioni e commotioni”, “cabale e arcani”. La crisi della “simmetria d’Europa” nei resoconti diplomatici veneti in Francia durante la fronda parlamentare’, *Dimensioni e Problemi della Ricerca Storica* 1 (1989), pp 263-311 (here p. 265).

⁸⁵ Zannini, ‘Economic and Social Aspects’, p. 111.

⁸⁶ On the loss of Cyprus, see Michael Knapton, ‘Tra dominante e dominio (1517-1630)’, in Cozzi, Knapton, and Scarabello, *La Repubblica di Venezia nell’età moderna*, pp. 201-549 (here pp. 222-223).

⁸⁷ In the early modern period, due to lack of professionalisation, the distinction between a spy – an individual actively recruited, authorised, and instructed to obtain information for intelligence purposes – and an informer (or intelligencer) – someone who voluntarily initiated information gathering process, aspiring to a reward and, potentially, to a formal appointment by the government – is blurred. Similarly hazy is the term ‘informant’, that denotes someone who reports to the authorities information they are privy to, primarily due to a sense of duty.

that period were ‘the sort of people that, in secret, follow armies and enter cities, exploring the affairs of enemies, and reporting them back to their own people.’⁸⁸ This definition differs from sociological conceptualisations of a professional service as the outcome of ‘cognitive specialization’,⁸⁹ which is premised upon a common educational process, a shared professional identity, and even an emerging professional ethos and philosophy.⁹⁰ In short, contrary to established professions such as those of the chancery secretary or the cryptologist, as we shall see in the following chapters, the *métier* of the spy had still not transmogrified into a standalone, valid profession in the early modern era. Consequently, Renaissance Venice deployed spying, rather than spies.⁹¹

It is rather surprising that a territorial state like Venice, that braved the creation of a vast and systematic intelligence apparatus, did not make provisions for the professional development of specialist spies. Epochal political events in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, namely four disastrous Ottoman-Venetian wars between 1463 and 1573, rife with lacerating polemics and the devastating defeat of the Venetians by the League of Cambrai at Agnadello in 1509, led to an aggressive ‘realpolitik policy of neutrality, a balancing act between the French, the Habsburgs, and most importantly, the Ottomans’.⁹² As a result, Venice focused its attentions on the art of defence, in order to preserve its gradually

These are the definitions used in this book to refer to these terms. For the semantic challenges posed by these terms in the early modern period, see Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁸ Tommaso Garzoni, *La piazza universal di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice: Gio. Battista Somasco 1587), c. 705.

⁸⁹ Magali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), p. 3.

⁹⁰ This definition is more akin to early modern ‘learned’ professions. Generally on ‘learned professions’ and professionalisation in the early modern period, see Rosemary O’Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000); On ‘learned’ professions in Renaissance Italy, see Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁹¹ See also Peter Burke, ‘Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication’, Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, pp. 389-419.

⁹² Eric C. Dursteler, ‘Power and Information: The Venetian Postal System in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean’, in Diogo R. Curt, Eric C. Dursteler, Julius Kirshner, and Francesca Trivellato (Eds.), *From Florence to the Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of Anthony Molho* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2009), pp. 601-623 (here p. 616).

dwindling maritime possessions, resorting to military action only when necessary.⁹³ For the Venetian outposts in the eastern Mediterranean this entailed maintaining a robust network of fortifications and garrisons to protect them.⁹⁴ In consequence, Venice's foreign policy became increasingly concerned with 'disarming' her enemies by keeping up appearances, while maintaining secrecy and, eventually, even manipulating information.⁹⁵

To maintain this stance of neutrality, sending bona fide spies in foreign territories, especially those of perennial enemies such as the Ottomans, could prove provocative and, ultimately, counterproductive. Sending amateur ones, in the hope that they would pass unnoticed, was deemed more prudent. As it will become evident in Chapter Five, this is the strategy the Council of Ten employed. Accordingly, Venice's defensive stance led to an increase in the number of amateur spies, in addition to a proliferation of formal legates and their entourage sent overseas, especially those dispatched in the Ottoman capital.⁹⁶ Venetian ambassadors and governors were expected to collect and disseminate information as part of their diplomatic repertoire, while the stealthy business of espionage was left to unabashed dilettantes who were willing to risk their life for a moderate compensation. Through their espionage activities, these individuals were granted a certain degree of political agency and contributed to an emerging political culture of information gathering that still lurks in the margins of historical scholarship.

Overall, then, Venice furnishes a rich case study for the exploration and analysis of intelligence organisation in the long Renaissance. This is due to three reasons. Firstly, the vast paper trail stemming from the intense bureaucratisation process that the Venetian government underwent in that period has left a surplus of extant documents that include the correspondence between the Ten, the State Inquisitors and their delegates; registers and notes of secret deliberations and decrees stemming from them; Venetian citizens' and subjects' anonymous denunciations; as well as several other enciphered and deciphered documents pertaining to Venice's intelligence pursuits; a scholar's feast, indeed. Secondly, Venice's territorial expansion as a vast maritime empire with diverse geopolitical, cultural, linguistic,

⁹³ Arbel, 'Venice's Maritime Empire', p. 142.

⁹⁴ Mallet and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 429-460.

⁹⁵ The strategic manipulation of information intensified after the Thirty Years' War. See Richard Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd?' Myth, Legend and the "Spanish" Conspiracy against Venice in 1618", in Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, pp. 185-216.

⁹⁶ Specifically for Constantinople, see Dursteler, 'The Bailo in Constantinople'.

and even religious traits advanced the need for the systematisation of the *Dominante*'s central intelligence organisation. And thirdly, Venice's stance of defence and neutrality, as part of its broader foreign policy, produced a mixture of professional informants and amateur spies whose feats and peccadilloes make part of the wider social interactions between the government and the governed that merit further scholarly exploration and analysis.

Methodology and Sources

In terms of chronology, the book deals with the timespan between 1500 and 1630, a period when the Council of Ten played a pivotal role in creating and consolidating Venice's secret service. This is the primary reason for the choice of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the book's main chronological focus. Moreover, this is an era of some momentous events in the history of both Venice and Europe, which coincided with the economic and political rise and fall of the Venetian Republic, in addition to its geographical expansion and contraction. The book explores how such events contributed to the Republic's economic and political security and prosperity, both domestically and internationally. From a more practical perspective, as the principal unit of historical analysis is the Council of Ten, their 'secret' deliberations and letters were of primary significance. Dating from 1525, these archival records exist in abundance and offer a wealth of information on Venice's central intelligence organisation. It was, therefore, deemed prudent to avail of these sources, some of which remain untapped to this day. By the close of the sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth, the Ten's administrative power slowly started to diminish, as the onus for issues of state security gradually befell upon the Senate and the *Collegio*,⁹⁷ and the State Inquisitors took over the role of administering Venice's intelligence and espionage activities. This gradual deterioration of the Ten's authority coincided with the progressive decline of Venice's supremacy on the international scene. Consequently, the 1630s were considered an apt ending point for the book.

A large proportion of the archival material used in this book was produced in the early modern period, especially in the years between 1550 and 1630, with great emphasis cast on the last thirty years of the sixteenth century, when the imminent threat of the loss of Cyprus intensified the use of intelligence and espionage. The time span between 1550 and 1630, in

⁹⁷ See, for example, documents stored in ASV, *Materie Miste Notabili*, bb. 66-67, where both the Senate and the *Collegio* order Venetian men of power in the Venetian colonies to report to those institutions, rather than to the Ten, on several issues of state security in the area of their jurisdiction.

particular, is a period that historian William Bouwsma has styled the ‘waning of the Renaissance’.⁹⁸ In this book, the word ‘Renaissance’ is deliberately used to bridge Chabod’s 1950s model of the ‘Renaissance state’, made up of late medieval and early modern officials and institutions that produced an ‘Italian way’ of ‘modern’ statecraft,⁹⁹ with Mattingly’s pioneering, yet outdated representation of Renaissance diplomacy, premised upon the grand narrative of the birth of resident embassies, which were pioneered primarily by Italian city states.¹⁰⁰ More importantly, Renaissance intelligence organisation here is coterminous with the revisionist representation of Renaissance diplomacy, stripped of the classic dichotomy between medieval and early modern, as a flexible, ‘all-consuming’ political activity based on negotiation, information-gathering, and representation.¹⁰¹ In consequence, systematised intelligence is discussed and examined as an essential component of the broader landscape of early modern diplomacy, as it evolved in the period of the long Renaissance to entail a European-wide ‘common language of interaction’ with diverse ‘traditions and styles’.¹⁰² It is for this reason that the terms ‘early modern’ and ‘Renaissance’ are used interchangeably in this book.

In terms of conceptual framing, this is a book about intelligence organisation. More specifically, the book ventures one of the first scholarly attempts to explore a complex proto-modern organisation that, as it will become more evident in Chapter Three, was premised

⁹⁸ William J. Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance 1550-1640* (New Heaven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁹⁹ Federico Chabod, ‘Y a-t-il un État de la Renaissance?’ (1956), in Federico Chabod, *Scritti sul Rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), pp. 603-623. This debate was developed further by Giorgio Chittolini, Anthony Mohlo, and Pierangelo Schiera (Eds.), *Origini dello stato: Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra Medioevo ed Età Moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955); See also Vincent Illardi, *Studies in Italian Renaissance Diplomatic History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986). Partially revising this grand narrative, Queller highlighted the medieval roots of this process. See Donald E. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors* (Geneva: Droz, 1966). On the development of the ambassadorial practice in late Renaissance Italy, see also Riccardo Fubini, ‘La figura politica dell’ ambasciatore negli sviluppi dei regimini oligarchici quattrocenteschi’, in *Forme e tecniche del potere della città (secoli 14-17)* (Perugia: Annali della facoltà di scienze politiche, Materiali di Storia 4, 1979-80), pp. 33-59.

¹⁰¹ See, primarily, Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 6; and the essays in Gamberini and Lazzarini, *The Italian Renaissance State*.

¹⁰² Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, p. 47.

upon structured managerial practices. Accordingly, Venice's secret service is presented as an exemplar primordial organisation in the two senses of the word, organisation as an entity and organisation as a process.¹⁰³ The book argues that the phenomenon of organisation – perceived here as a network of people sharing interwoven ways of working and common professional values, knowledge, even technology extending beyond the legal boundary of a firm ¹⁰⁴ – was conceived and given meaning in the era of the long Renaissance, which hosted the gradual systemisation of diplomatic practices that went hand in hand with the development of state bureaucracies. This argument contests conventional wisdom that has traditionally presented organisation as a natural by-product of the rationality, industrialisation, and technological advancements that emanated from the Industrial Revolution.¹⁰⁵ Based on the quintessential modern corporation as it emerged in the United States,¹⁰⁶ this established view stemmed from a misleading scholarly association of the

¹⁰³ On organization both as an entity and a process, see Karl E. Weick, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, 2nd edn. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979); Torre Bakken and Tor Hernes, 'Organizing is both a Verb and a Noun: Weick meets Whitehead', *Organization Studies* 27, no 11 (2006), pp. 1599-1616.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Lipartito, 'Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism', *American Historical Review* 121, no. 1 (February 2016), pp. 101-139 (here 137).

¹⁰⁵ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Idem, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Louis Galambos, 'The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History', *Business History Review* 44, no 3 (1970), pp. 279–290; Idem, 'Technology, Political Economy and Professionalization: Central Themes of the Organizational Synthesis', *Business History Review* 57, no 4 (1983), pp. 471-493; Idem, 'Recasting the Organizational Synthesis: Structure and Process in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', *Business History Review* 79, no 1 (2005), pp. 1-38.

¹⁰⁶ The bibliography on this topic is vast and premised in a scholarly tradition that presented the US corporation as the normative model of managerial enterprise. For emblematic works, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, transl. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1930); Chandler, *Strategy and Structure*; Idem, 'The Railroads: Pioneers in Modern Corporate Management' *Business History Review* 39, no 1 (1965), pp. 16-40; Idem, *The Visible Hand*; Galambos, 'The Emerging Organizational Synthesis'. On a revisionist view of these debates, see Jose Bento da Silva and Ioanna Iordanou, 'The Origins of Organising in the Sixteenth Century', in Tuomo Peltonen, Hugo Gaggiotti, and Peter Case (Eds.), *Origins of Organizing* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), pp. 127-146.

progressive mechanisation of production in the post-industrial era with increased productivity and, by extension, national wealth.¹⁰⁷

The normative depiction of organisation as the modern corporation inevitably excludes early modern administrative bodies from systematic historical analyses of organisational entities. Early modern organisations such as Venice's secret service, however, were premised on a form of governance that is not widely dissimilar to contemporary managerial structures. As this book unfolds, it will become apparent that this distortion is not simply due to the lack of industrialisation, the primitive form of technology, and the relatively less complex market conditions in which pre-industrial organisations operated, and which, allegedly, make for a rather 'thin' conceptual contribution.¹⁰⁸ Instead, there are other, more practical reasons why both historians and organisation studies scholars who engage in historical study overwhelmingly overlook pre-industrial organisations in their scholarship. These reasons are linguistic, methodological, and epistemological in nature.¹⁰⁹ The main linguistic impediment in the (historical) study of organisational and managerial practices is the necessity to borrow terms from the discipline of Organisational Analysis that had neither been conceived nor used

¹⁰⁷ Eric L. Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Alfred D. Chandler Jr., Franco Amatori, and Takashi Hikino (Eds.), *Big Business and the Wealth of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William Lazonick, *Business Organization and the Myth of the Market Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Ann Langley, 'Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data', *Academy of Management Review* 24, no 4 (1999), pp. 691-710 (here 697).

¹⁰⁹ On methodological and epistemological issues that sociologists and organizational theorists have raised with regard to historical data collection and analysis, see, Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Presentation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Michael Rowlinson and John Hassard, 'The Invention of Corporate Culture: A History of the Histories of Cadbury', *Human Relations* 46, no 3 (1993), pp. 299-326; Langley, 'Strategies for Theorizing'; Antonio Strati, *Theory and Method in Organization Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000); Simon Down, 'The Use of History in Business and Management, and Some Implications for Management Learning', *Management Learning* 32, no 3 (2001), pp. 393-410; Peter Clark and Michael Rowlinson, 'The Treatment of History in Organization Studies: Towards an 'historic turn'?', *Business History* 46, no 3 (2004), pp. 331-352; Fabio Rojas, 'Power through Institutional Work: Acquiring Academic Authority in the 1968 Third World Strike', *Academy of Management Journal* 53, no 6 (2010), pp. 1263-1280; Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard, and Stephanie Decker, 'Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue between Historical Theory and Organization Theory', *Academy of Management Review* 39, no 3 (2014), pp. 250-274.

by actors in the distant past. Such terms are either unknown or irrelevant to historians.¹¹⁰ From a methodological perspective, the further back we go into the past, the more we rely on archival records that, more often than not, are incomplete or partial towards organisational elites rather than other actors.¹¹¹ Consequently, the historian has to rely heavily on reconstruction and what philosophers of history have termed ‘impositionalist’ objection, the distorted sense of structure that the reconstruction and narration of facts imposes.¹¹² This leads to the main epistemological hindrance in the historical examination of primordial organisations: an abiding disagreement between historians and social scientists in relation to the value of archival records. While for the historian archives offer evidence that is regarded as primary data, organisation theorists perceive the archive as a repository for ‘anecdote and chronology’ that can only provide ‘background information’ on the history of organisations.¹¹³ In other words, according to organisational theorists, archival sources alone cannot confer a genuine contribution on our historical understanding of organisations in the early modern era.¹¹⁴

In an effort to rectify these issues, adding to Maria Fusaro’s call for a ‘holistic approach to the topic of statecraft and political economy’ through ‘different historiographical strands and traditions’,¹¹⁵ this book makes a case for the need to employ a transdisciplinary perspective to historical analysis. Adopting this approach, the book combines the narrative construction of established theoretical concepts deriving from the disciplines of Sociology, Organisation Studies, and Management – such as ‘secrecy’, ‘organisational secrecy’,

¹¹⁰ Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker, ‘Research Strategies’, p. 2

¹¹¹ Rojas, ‘Power through Institutional Work’, p. 1268; Stephanie Decker, ‘The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Postcolonialism and Archival Ethnography’, *Management & Organization History* 8, no 2 (2013), pp. 155-173.

¹¹² See, for example, David Carr, ‘Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity’, *History and Theory* 25, no 2 (1986), pp. 117-131; Andrew P. Norman, ‘Telling it Like it Was: Historical Narratives on their Own Terms’, *History and Theory* 30, no 20 (1991), pp. 119-135; Alex Callinikos, *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹³ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 1; Strati, *Theory and Method*, p, 158.

¹¹⁴ Rojas, ‘Power through Institutional Work’; Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker, ‘Research Strategies’; Paul C. Godfrey, John Hassard, Ellen O’ Connor, Michael Rowlinson, and Martin Ruef, ‘What is Organizational History? Toward a Creative Synthesis of History and Organization Studies’, *Academy of Management Review* 4, no 4 (2016), pp. 590-608 (here 593).

¹¹⁵ Fusaro, *Political Economies*, p. 22.

‘professionalisation’, ‘professional identity’, ‘management’, and ‘accounting’ – with the critical examination of an exhaustive body of pertinent archival material and relevant literature. This approach enables a methodological plurality, which allows for more holistic historical explorations and analyses. It also provides the groundwork for a conceptual framework which, based on the foundational work of towering figures in the discipline of Sociology, such as Max Webber and Georg Simmel, furnishes the book with a solid theoretical underpinning. In consequence, while this is first and foremost a book of historical scholarship, methodologically it strays from well-trodden paths in historiography, in the sense that the study of archival records – some freshly discovered, others freshly interpreted – is complemented with concepts and theories stemming from a constellation of adjacent disciplines.¹¹⁶ The aim is to produce new questions that might generate fresh, yet plausible accounts and interpretations of the social processes that brought about intelligence organisation and management in the pre-industrial world.

On the whole, it is hoped that a tried and tested approach of transdisciplinarity, here combining the historian’s narrative construction with the social scientist’s predilection for theoretical constructs, generates both factual richness and methodological rigour, which can alleviate some of the linguistic, methodological, and even epistemological challenges

¹¹⁶ Actually, a transdisciplinary approach to the historical study of phenomena is not new. In the early 1970s, the emergence of economic history as one of the most stimulating fields in the historical profession was premised on the amalgamation of historical analysis with constructs from economic theory. Some of the most notable works of this scholarly tradition are: Simon Kuznets, *Modern Economic Growth: Rate, Structure, and Spread* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Robert W. Fogel, Enid M. Fogel, Nathaniel Grotte, and Mark Guglielmo, *Political Arithmetic: Simon Kuznets and the Empirical Tradition in Economics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Jeremy Adelman, *Worldly Philosopher: The Odyssey of Albert O. Hirschman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy, 1–2030 AD: Essays in Macro-economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Moreover, consorting with sociology, anthropology, and geography, the work of economic historians such as Fernand Braudel in Europe, Erik Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson and others in Britain, investigated the history of society and capitalism, in what paved the way for the advancement of social history. See, Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, 3 vols., transl. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982-1984); Jonathan Dewald, ‘Crisis, Chronology, and the Shape of European Social History’, *American Historical Review* 113, no 4 (October 2008), pp. 1031-1052; E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1962); Idem, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (New York: Basic Books, 1965); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

involved in the historical study of pre-industrial organisational entities, such as Venice's secret service. As such, this approach purports to enable a balanced and situated analysis of pre-industrial organisational life that moves beyond the conventional, overly-empiricist narrative approaches to (business) history, while discarding the overly-technicist and abstract discussions of organisational theories that favour methodological rigour at the expense of historical reconstruction. Instead, this study will endeavour to retain the epistemological status of historical events by interpreting evidence stemming from the archive through sociological and organisational theories, attempting, thus, to restore the 'qualities of evidential and interpretative fidelity' in the historical study of organisations.¹¹⁷ In this respect, archival records have played the leading role in the book's narrative construction, supplemented by some simple sociological theorisations.

Archival records

As *Venice's Secret Service* aims to explore the way Venice's intelligence organisation, originating in the Doge's palace, expanded across Europe, the Mediterranean, Anatolia and even Northern Africa, the paper-chase for this book has been cross-national and multilingual. The bulk of the research was conducted in the Venetian state archives, focusing on the voluminous repository of the Council of Ten's and State Inquisitor's 'secret' documents. These included the exhaustive correspondence between these two institutions and their formal diplomatic representatives, such as Venetian ambassadors, governors, consuls, as well as men – alas, in nearly all cases, they were men – in positions of power, whose responsibilities were intrinsically interlinked with the security of the Venetian state (*lettere secrete, lettere dei rettori e di altre cariche; dispacci ambasciatori*) and the Ten's 'secret' deliberations (*deliberazioni secrete*). Since it was imperative to understand how other key players in the political and diplomatic scene of early modern Europe saw Venice's intelligence pursuits, archival research in Venice was supplemented with documentary explorations conducted in Spain's imperial archives (Simancas), particularly focusing on the archival series *papeles de estado*, that contain the communication between the ambassadors of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire to Venice and their monarchs, especially Charles V and Philip II. Similarly, consultation of the archival series *segreteria di stato* in the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano* in Rome, which comprises the correspondence between the papal

¹¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 14; Christopher Grey, *Decoding Organization: Bletchley Park, Codebreaking and Organization Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 6.

representative in Venice (the *nuncio*) and the Holy See, provided a fresh vista on how the Catholic Church perceived the systematic organisation of Venice's secret service. The repository of *State Papers* relating to Venice, stored in London's National Archives (Kew), also furnished meaningful supplementary material on Venice's intelligence pursuits. Importantly, documentation from non-Italian archives not only shed light on how Venice's intelligence operations were viewed by key players in the Venetian diplomacy, it also offered invaluable descriptions of the wider political, economic, and diplomatic landscape in which Venice's intelligence operations evolved in the sixteenth century, at a time of political, economic, and religious turbulence in Europe. For this reason, documents from different European archives are utilised in a comparative manner, rather than in isolation, as hitherto historiography has tended to do. The book analyses Venice's systematic pursuits in her effort to maintain her commercial-maritime and technological-industrial primacy within this competitive international context.

The archival series consulted for this book are the following:

Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Rome

Segreteria di Stato, Venezia

Archivio General, Simancas

Papeles de Estado

Archivio di Stato, Florence

Pratica Segreta

Archivio di Stato, Venice

Archivio Grimani Barbarigo, buste

Capi del Consiglio di Dieci:

Dispacci Ambasciatori

Lettere dei Rettori e di Altre Cariche

Lettere Secrete

Licenze per visitare ambasciatori e personaggi esteri

Miscellanea

Racordi

Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Nuova Serie, buste

Consiglio di Dieci

Deliberazioni Comuni, Registri

Deliberazioni Criminali, Registri

Deliberazioni Miste, Registri

Deliberazioni Secrete, Filze

Deliberazioni Secrete, Registri

Deliberazioni Secretissime, Registri

Inquisitori di Stato

Materie Miste e Notabili

Notarile Atti

Quarantia Criminal

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

Manoscritti Italiani (Classe VII)

Biblioteca Museo Correr, Venice

Manoscritti Donà delle Rose

National Archives, London

State Papers (TNA, SP) 9 (Williamson Collection)

State Papers (TNA, SP) 97 (Turkey)

State Papers (TNA, SP) 99 (Venice)

National Maritime Museum, London

Admiralty Collection, Navy Board, In-letters and orders

Note on dates, currency, translations, and abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, all the dates used in this book have been modified to follow the Gregorian calendar, with the calendar year commencing on 1 January, rather than on 1 March, as it was customary for Renaissance Venice (the Venetian dating system is known as *more veneto*). In this respect, a document dated 1st February 1580 has been adjusted to the Gregorian calendar as 1st February 1581. Unless specified, all ‘ducats’ mentioned are those of ‘account’, made up of 6 *lire* and 4 *soldi*. Each *lira* was equal to 20 *soldi*. Hence, one ducat was equivalent to 124 *soldi*. Similarly, unless indicated, all translations are mine. In the footnotes and bibliography, the following abbreviations have been used:

ASF	Archivio di Stato, Florence
AGS	Archivo General, Simancas
ASV	Archivio di Stato, Venice
CCX	Capi del Consiglio di Dieci
CX	Consiglio di Dieci
IS	Inquisitori di Stato
ASVat	Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Rome
BMV	Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice
Mss. It	Manoscritti Italiani
cl.	Classe
CSPVen	Calendar of State Papers, Venetian
BMCV	Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice
NMM	National Maritime Museum, London
TNA	The National Archives, London
SP	State Papers
B.	Busta
bb.	Buste
c.	Carta
cc.	Carte
f.	Filza
Fasc.	Fascicolo
Reg.	Registro
fol.	Folio
fols.	Folios
Ms.	Manuscript
m.v.	more Veneto
n.d.	non-dated
n.s.	new series