

The translator Michel Angelo Corai as a Tuscan diplomat (1599-1609)¹

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Introduction

On 14 January 1597, as recorded by the archivist in the Archivio di Stato di Mantova on the *carta* 475 of the *Fondo Gonzaga*, Fr Giovan Battista Ruffini wrote directly to Manerbio Aderbale, secretary of Duke Vincenzo I's Chancellery, from Venice. Ruffini rejoices for having arrived in Venice on Christmas day after his journey to the Holy Land; with a tone of satisfaction, he reveals that he has brought a 'special gift' back for the Duke.

With me I brought back a Syrian, who owns beautiful writings, and can make beautiful things with his hands; I would like you to consent for me to take him to meet His Serenissima Highness [...]. He [the Syrian] has three or four very ancient books in Ajjam-Farsi, Caldeic, and Arabic and I hope he will have something to please His Highness; he speaks very well; and he writes Arabic, Persian/Farsi, and Turkish. He is a person that I imagine will not displease His Highness; he was the personal scribe of Cigalah when this was the Sinan Pasha of Babylon, he has father, wife, and children in Aleppo but he came with me because he was persecuted by a fellow Turkish.²

This chapter engages with the social climb of this 'erudite Syrian man of Aleppo' who fled Aleppo and became a diplomat serving both Shah Abbas I of Persia and Ferdinand I Grand Duke of Tuscany. His Christianized name was Michel Angelo Giovanni Corai (1558?-1615?).³ In order to provide a succinct yet effective overview of the context in which Corai operated, the chapter introduces three previously unedited documents (from the Gonzaga archives in Mantua and in the folders of *Mediceo del Principato* in Florence), which clarify Michel Angelo Corai's movements and his transition from erudite translator on the run, to Knight of the Holy Roman Empire, interpreter, and ultimately ambassador with a double brief between 1597 and 1607.

Over this decade, Corai's journeys took him to Italy at least three times. In his first journey, he was awarded the title of Knight of the Holy Roman Empire and met Anthony and Robert Sherley (see Blow 2009: 53-130; Ferrier 1973; Newman 2009: 61-62; Denison Ross 1933; Savory 1967; Stevens 1969) with whom in 1598 he left for Persia. In his second journey, the Knight Corai landed in Venice in 1599 entrusted with the role of assistant ambassador to the Persian noblemen sent as an embassy by Shāh Abbas I; from there he left to return to Persia after visiting the Papal court. In his third journey of 1607, Corai left the Court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I with a passport⁴ and *Istruzioni* signed by Curzio Picchena, personal secretary of the Grand Duke.⁵

Michel Angelo Corai, the polyglot

Born in Aleppo, Fathullah Qurray considered himself Syrian and was introduced as a dragoman (see Salama-Carr 1990; Davis 2006), that is, a translator; this could be because of the services he offered to Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha (c. 1545-1605) when he was his secretary. It is plausible that Corai's career as a mediator started as a secretary of Sinan Pasha, a controversial figure and military strategist of the time. Son of the Viscount Cigala a Christian noble from

Genoa, Sinan Pasha was born in Messina and later captured with his father; he was probably forcefully converted to Islam – he is often called *rinnegato*, renegade, in the documentary evidence surrounding Corai’s life. Quite probably, Corai learnt the Italian language from Sinan Pasha and then, as mentioned in the above-cited letters by Fr Ruffini, they fell out for reasons the documents are yet to provide. The quarrel might have been a consequence of Fathullah Qurray’s conversion to the Christian faith in order to marry the woman he loved. A dangerous and powerful enemy, Sinan Pasha had been an admiral and then a general in the military ranks of the Ottoman Empire guided by Mehmet III (1566-1603). From 1579, Pasha was in charge of a number of *Janisiers*, he then took control over the armies in Persia in 1585 when he was appointed as *vali* (ruler) of Van and Baghdad. The documents in Mantua show that the lives of Corai and Sinan Pasha continuously intertwined at incredibly high cost for Corai, even though, as explained later in this essay, Corai might have benefitted enormously from his role as translator of Pasha’s letters when accompanying the Gonzaga’s envoy in Hungary in 1597.

Michel Angelo Corai was a polyglot; the sources who mention his language skills suggest he mastered between six and twenty-four languages – according to George Manwaring (sd/1825:25), who was one of his fellow travellers on the journey to Persia with the Sherleys in 1598. Accounts of Sir Anthony and Sir Robert Sherley’s journeys to Persia and their resonance in England⁶ are kept in several *reports*: the most significant ones are those of Manwaring, of Anthony Sherley, and the *relation* of the Frenchman Abel Pinçon. In these, Angelo Corai is mentioned as *translator*, *guide*, or *truchement*⁷, that is, a *dragoman*. Manwaring credited Corai with the crucial role of initiating the Sherleys’ adventure to Persia; however this acknowledgment might have been dictated by practical and political considerations – as the chapter will show.

For Corai, it was particularly important to learn the Italian language as it gave him the opportunities of social mobility discussed here.⁸ The Italian language was a point of departure and possibly at the root of the syntax and of much of the lexis of the *lingua franca* used by the merchants active in the Mediterranean Sea over the sixteenth and seventeenth century; it was the fundamental language for all relations with Cyprus, Venice, Zante, and Mantua. Indeed, Corai’s proficiency and mastery of Italian would have made him an invaluable mediator. Corai was certainly conversant in Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi and was an expert in precious stones, a merchant of silk and horses, a collector of books and possibly an artisan (as in Ruffini’s introduction quoted above Corai ‘has beautiful writings and with his hand can do beautiful works’). Indeed, Michel Angelo Corai was a man of both thinking and of doing: his technical and linguistic competences merged with religious and legal knowledge that allowed him to mediate between distant languages and cultures. Crucially, his knowledge of Italian, Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi made him a key player in Anthony Sherley’s expedition to Shāh Abbas I. Corai was the quintessential language broker, who almost embodies the concept of invisibility accorded to interpreters and translators in recent scholarship (see among many Berman 1984; Venuti 1995; Pym 1995; Baker 2006).

In Aleppo, Ruffini explains, Corai had been forced to leave his wife,⁹ who was the Christian woman for whom he had converted and renounced his Islamic faith. This personal reason and his services for Sinan Pasha were probably the causes of Corai’s journey to Italy. From the next section onward, the chapter focuses on the significance of the following ten years of Corai’s life in relation to current discussions on diplomacy.

From Mantua to Hungary

Despite never naming his Syrian friend who converted to the Christian faith in his letters, Fr Ruffini attributed him language competences and roles with several lords that point directly towards Corai; furthermore, in his Italian exile, Corai promptly exploited his skills as a polyglot

mediator. It is the contention of this chapter that Corai was indeed the man to join Ruffini in his journey back to the court in Mantua. After his arrival in Venice in 1597, Corai quiet plausibly travelled to Mantua, no documentary evidence confirms this with the exception of Ruffini's letters from the campaign in Hungary that took place later in 1597. Fr Ruffini joined Vincenzo I in the Gonzaga's campaign against the Ottomans fought in the territories of the Hapsburgs,¹⁰ taking with him his Syrian friend. Once again, the elusive figure is alluded to in Giovan Battista Ruffini's letters to Manerbio Aderbale, the personal secretary to the Duke:

for having in that day translated some Turkish letters with the help of a Syrian that I brought to the services of Your Highness as a man who writes and reads very well not only Turkish but also Farsi, Caldeic, Arabic and other languages.¹¹

Ruffini worked on translating Ottoman letters (likely to have been messages intercepted) and even though the documents emerged so far do not confirm that Michel Angelo Corai was *the Syrian* in the Imperial battlefield, documentary evidence of later events suggest this hypothesis is realistic. The hypothesis that the Syrian translator in Javarin was Corai is strengthened by what is here considered as the outcome of these linguistic services. Corai had gained the trust of his new masters,¹² as visibly demonstrated by the award of the title of Knight of the Holy Roman Empire by Vincenzo I Gonzaga as a grateful compensation for his services. Dated 3 April 1598, the official decree held in Mantua reads:

Vincentius I cum omnibus titulis rif. cum nobilis Michaelis Angeli Joannis Corai, ex Urbe Hierapolis oriundi animi dotes tales sint, ut eum inter equitum [ho(n)ors] numerum connumerandi dignum censuimus.¹³

In its traditional formulaic structures, the decree does not assist in explaining the reasons why Corai was awarded a knighthood. Even though this was lowest ranking aristocratic title, the Knighthood shows that the complex roles Corai undertook later in his travels might have indeed depended on his climb of the social ladder.¹⁴ Certainly, Corai was not just a scribe. His services as a translator, likely of military plans and letters, together with other works for the Duke of Mantua gained him the title. The ennoblement, after his conversion to the Christian faith, made Corai more respectable and legally better positioned to assume a role as an official or unofficial member of a diplomatic mission. It can be argued from the evidence and the closeness between the ennoblement (3 April 1598) and departure from Venice with the group led by Sir Anthony Sherley (24 May 1598) that there is a link.

In the spring of 1598, as recounted by George Manwaring, Anthony and Robert Sherley were contacted when in Venice by a Persian merchant 'which did traffic in Venice for the King of Persia' (n.d./1825: 25) and by a Turkish traveller. In actual fact, the latter was the Syrian Corai, as Aleppo had recently been reconquered by the Ottomans: 'it was his fortune to hear of a great traveller, newly come to Venice from the Sophi's court, whose name was Angelo, born in Turkey, but a good Christian, who had travelled sixteen years'. Dates confirm that this 'Angelo' was indeed Michel Angelo Corai as he had to leave Aleppo as Sinan Pasha's secretary around 1582. Corai's knowledge of the Safavid's court before meeting the English gentlemen in Venice would have been an asset, but no other document has confirmed this yet. Manwaring and other contemporary sources suggest that Corai was the initiator of the journey in Persia. Corai's narration of the event, already used by Denison Ross (1933: 13-14), transcribed by the secretary of the Collegio dei Savi in Venice adds a detail that is yet to be confirmed from other sources: he knew the Venetian Antonio Padova *stuer* (Berchet 1866: 67) and many other Venetian merchants. The Venetians wanted to re-establish their direct contacts with Persia, including diplomatic ones: from the Carmelites' report it also emerges that the Europeans in

Persia were mainly Venetians; 300 Venetians lived in Isfahan alone.¹⁵ The silk production and trade in Persia were sources of commercial activities which were extremely profitable; especially as Shah Abbas I had rejuvenated them. In fact, a Venetian merchant resided with the Court of Shah Abbas I after 1606 when Corai had become the personal interpreter for the Persian rule. Even Faridany (2006) had entertained the idea that Corai could have been the proposer of the Persian enterprise. Manwaring's account (n.d./1825: 26) suggests that Michel Angelo Corai told the Sherleys of the personality and charisma of the Shah:

This Angelo did likewise acquaint Sir Anthony of the worthiness of the King of Persia, that he was a gallant soldier, very bountiful to strangers, and what entertainment he had at his court; assuring Sir Anthony, that, if he would go thither, it would be greatly for his advancement; and moreover, that he would be his guide and attend on him thither, which Sir Antony did consent unto.

As Elizabeth I was at this stage working towards establishing diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire so as to weaken the Spanish dominance in the Mediterranean, the Sherleys' endeavour in Persia was a risky gamble: had Elizabeth I known, she would have posed obstacles to Anthony Sherley's plans. The Sherleys would have seen such dangers as a source of economic gain, power, and honour; Corai would have done little more than provide the opportunity of engaging a precious resource. Anthony Sherley, as a defence to his position, mentioned the Earl of Essex as the proposer of the travel to Persia. Anthony had every political reason to do so, considering that at the time of writing he was (or had just finished) fighting for his own liberation, he claimed Essex was responsible for the decision:

when I had aduertised the Earle of [Essex]; as he, who neuer had his owne thoughts, limited, within any bounds of honourable and iust ambition; So he also desired, that those whom he had chosen into a neerenesse of affection should also answere both his owne conceipt of them, and satisfie the world in his election of them; wherefore, not willing I should returne, and turne such a voice as was raised of my going to nothing; as unwilling that I should, by a vaine expence of my time, money, and hope, bee made a scorne to his and (through him) to my enemies: Hee proposed unto me (after a small relation, which I made unto him from *Venice*) the voiage of Persia (Sherley 1613/1972: 4).

In the time elapsed between the events of 1598 and the Sherley's personal account of 1613, Essex had (conveniently) died and Anthony Sherley's version became even stronger than the defence offered by Manwaring of having accepted Corai's proposal.

It is clear from all documentary sources, that on 24 May 1598 a Venetian ship, called *Morizell* by the Englishmen, and *Nana e Ruzzina* by Corai when giving his account to the Collegio dei Savi a year later, set sail from Venice toward Persia.¹⁶ In this journey, Corai's linguistic skills rescued the group in Tripoli: after the Venetians on the ship insulted Queen Elizabeth I a scuffle ensued and the Venetians denounced the Englishmen as 'bandits' to the town's governor:

Sir Anthony having some notice of it [of the denunciation], by a Greek which served in the argosy, presently sent Angelo, his guide, unto the governor, to tell him that we were Englishmen going to Constantinople, to the Great Turk's Courte; which message would not be heard, in regard the Venetians did labour so much against us. The governor kept Angelo with him, fast bound in chains.

In the end, after the Armenians on the ship negotiated a bail for the Englishmen, Corai too was released and the Morizell could again set sail towards Persia. The Sherleys' entourage and Corai arrived in Isfahan on the 1st of December 1598; Shah Abbas I returned to this town around the 25th of January 1599; nevertheless in less than five months, the Europeans gained the Shah's trust. Corai and Anthony Sherley left Gilan so as to travel back to Europe exactly a year after they had left Venice, on 25 May 1599. They followed two different routes. From the Shah they received instructions for negotiating with several European potentates, from the Emperor Rudolf II, to Elizabeth I, to Henry of Navarre, Philip III of Spain, the Pope, the Venetian Senate, James VI King of Scotland – future James I of England – and the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Anthony Sherley was to follow Hussain Ali Beg on a longer route through mainland Europe, through Russia and via Prague and the Imperial Court, finally arriving in Rome in 1600. Corai was to travel northbound in Persia, through Tabriz, Erzurum, and Trebizond, to reach the Black Sea from which they set sail to Istanbul, thus reaching Venice in November 1599. Penrose, writing in the 1930s and influencing many later historians following the Sherleys' lives, believed that Corai's movements became irrelevant after this separation in Persia; citing no other sources than Denison Ross (Chick's compilation of the Carmelites' reports 1939 would have been sufficient to refute this point), Penrose states that once in Italy in 1599 Corai went:

to his old patron, the Duke of Mantua, and so fades out of the picture. We hear of him but twice again, in a letter from Anthony to the Imperial Ambassador dated June 18, 1604, requesting Angelo's return and in a curious letter (January 10, 1605) from Ferreri, the Papal Nuncio at Prague to Cardinal St. Giorgio, which stated that Angelo had gone back to Persia to look for Robert. (Penrose 1938: 85).

From Hungary to Persia and back to Venice

When the Sherleys met him in Venice in 1598, the Knight Michel Angelo Corai was more than a polyglot working for the Imperial army as a translator and interpreter. He was also an expert of the Persian lands, as he had lived in Aleppo during the Persian occupation and the war for it between the Ottoman and the Persian armies. Even though there are no documents known to me, that ascertain the reasons why Shah Abbas I employed him for his trades, Corai was undoubtedly a merchant and commercial trader – so much so that he became 'Commissioner of all mines in the Persian kingdom'.¹⁷ Shah Abbas I (Newman 2009) radically changed his kingdom, producing what came to be known as a Persian Renaissance; political, social, economic, and religious transformations – with an increased tolerance towards other faiths – were rather similar to those practiced by Ferdinand I in the ports of the Grand Duchy of Florence. Driven by economic interests, such religious tolerance benefitted mainly merchants and traders who were useful to support the Shah's war costs and the reconstruction of a powerful Persian nation, seconding the ruler's ambition who aimed to reconquer all of the lands that his ancestors lost to the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly, Corai was one of the pawns in Shah Abbas I's efforts to accompany and spy on his (un)trustworthy English diplomatic envoys. Corai had both the cultural and linguistic competences to complement their skills to mediate between the Eastern and Western mentalities. His ennoblement by the hands of the Duke Vincenzo I made Corai credible in Europe.

The new laws and customs introduced by Shah Abbas I produced a transformation in art, religion, and state organization. He moved the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan and reignited commerce and relations with the West (see Matthee 1999; Blow 2009). The diplomatic project was strategic part for the Shah of the nation building and conquest of the Persian territories. Shah Abbas I exploited the diplomatic missions of the Sherley brothers and of Hussain Ali Beg

as part of his revolution of the kingdom of Persia, which necessitated also to wage a war to the Ottomans in order to recover previously Persian territories from them.

In this context, it becomes clear that the Sherleys' journey was motivated by both commercial and diplomatic aspirations – the latter prudently attributed to the powerful Earl of Essex who was later to fall into disgrace before the Queen and executed – rather than by Corai. They sought a new route for the silk trade that would avoid the Mediterranean Sea. Ultimately Elizabeth I discovered the details of Anthony's efforts, which led her to negotiate with the Pope and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and enraged her had him arrested as her diplomatic strategy was one of pacification with the Ottomans. Anthony Sherley's endeavour of 1598 took the semblant of a semi-subversive, unofficial, and unaccredited diplomatic envoy; it was simultaneously the quintessential example of the interwoven needs for a new silk route and those for a new crusade against the Ottoman Empire. Shah Abbas I had granted free circulation on his territories to European merchants with explicit aim to increase trade agreements and attract new Venetian buyers for the Persian silk, who then supplied and exported through Florence. Venetian merchants continued to conduct business in Aleppo and resided close to the court of Shah Abbas I. Such Florentine families as the Corsini had also kept open their trades with the isolated Anglican crown of England and sold cloths and silks to English buyers. Whereas the power of the fleet of the Ottoman Empire had grown also under the guidance of admirals such as Sinan Pasha, the fleet of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I continued to be one of the few still active in fighting against Turkish pirates and in damaging the ports held by the Ottomans.

Following a perilous journey per land and sea, Corai landed in Venice in November 1599, where we find what is possibly the only physical description of the man. The report of the Collegio dei Savi describes the arrival of Michel Angelo Corai at their doors and is available on the *Esposizioni Principali veneziane* and in Davies' translation (1933: 128):

This morning there appeared at the door of the most Excellent College a man of small stature with a black beard, of olive complexion, robed in camlet, of about forty years; this man said he was an agent of the King of Persia, and that he wished to enter the most Excellent College in order to present some letters to His Excellency. The Excellent College, having learnt of this, ordered me, the Secretary, Pellegrini, to conduct him with proper respect to the ante-chamber and there to see and find out exactly who he was, whence he came, and what he wanted. I followed these instructions. He told me his name Michael Angelo Corrai [sic] of Aleppo.¹⁸

Corai was at this time in his forties, tallying with Faridany's Farsi sources that suggest 1557 as his date of birth. Furthermore, after the description we learn quite in details of Corai's mission and of his role in the Persian envoy.

That he came from the King of Persia, sent by the Englishman Antonio Sherley, who had lately spent some months in this city, and was now in Persia, held in great esteem by that king; that his letters were in the Italian language and had been given to him for His Excellency by Signor Sherley, with other letters for the High Pontiff, the King of France, of Spain, the Emperor, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cardinal Aldobrandini, and the Queen of England; that the said Signor Sherley was to have left Persia for a few days after him with letters from the King, and with gifts for all these princes; and the said King, intent on his purpose, yet knowing that the journey of the said Antonio to all these princes would necessarily be fraught with great danger or at least much delay, had desired the said Michael Angelo to go privately to Italy by the Constantinople route with letters from Signor Sherley, so that his will be known in any event.¹⁹

The long extract emphasizes how Corai carried credentials and instructions from the Shah: he was expected to inform the Venetians of the arrival of the second mission with Anthony Sherley, who would have been arrested later in Venice exactly because he had pretended to be an English ambassador to Persia. The most significant detail in this presentation of Corai refers to letters from the King of Persia as written in Italian. Recent research is increasingly illustrating how widespread this practice was among unofficial and informal routes of diplomacy. Artists, aristocrats, and acquaintances of powerful people who carried out forms of political mediations tended to use Italian because of the implied prestige of its literary-based form, of the court manners of Italian Renaissance courts that continued to exert their influence in Europe, and because it was not a national language linked to a nation-state due to the fragmentation in small states within the Italian peninsula (see Motolese 2012; Tommasino 2010, 2011).

The Safavid traditionally sent two envoys for negotiations with other rulers; the different protocol was particularly undigested for Anthony Sherley who competed on the protocol precedence over Hussain Ali Beg in Rome, which led to discredit their embassy with Pope Paul V (see Alonso 1996). Announcing the arrival of the second envoy, Corai was not a secondary figure but one to be understood in the diplomatic protocol of the Shah who was also protecting himself from possible betrayals from individuals who had only recently joined his court. Corai's understanding of the two protocols made him particularly versed for the role. Cautiously received from the *Collegio dei Savi*, Corai left Venice having been also instructed by the Venetian authorities to keep the secrecy over his mission; thus confirming they had implicitly accepted the political and commercial potential of his mandate. From this journey in Italy, Corai was granted access to an audience with the Papacy one of the most influential and diplomatically active courts in Italy.²⁰ There he also made first contact with the Carmelites who later met with him during their mission in Persia.

From the Duke of Mantua to the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1599 and 1607

From 1586 the Medici family, especially Ferdinand, had shown significant commercial interest in entrepreneurial ventures in Persia. As a Cardinal in Rome Ferdinand, later to become the Grand Duke, after the death of Pope Gregorio XIII renewed the instructions to the Papal envoy Giovan Battista Vecchiotti, allowing him to continue his journey through Persia. Vecchiotti witnessed and recounted the age of change and of opening to the Western brought about by the then nineteen-year-old Shah Abbas I, who had become King in 1587 and soon showed his intention of changing the role of the Safavid dynasty in Persia. During these years, Shah Abbas I had developed a sense of respect for the Cardinal of the Medici family, as he admired his anti-Ottoman politics.²¹

Vecchiotti's *Relatione* of his journey to Persia has been studied early and is well-known (from Brown 1892²² to Tucci 1955); the significant aspect of the *Relatione* in connection with Corai is that the document was a commercial and political report on the culture and stability of Persia intended to assess whether to consider entertaining diplomatic relations with the new political entity shaped by Shah Abbas I. Ascending to power in the same year, Shah Abbas I and Ferdinand I perceived an affinity in their respective objectives in international politics. Corai represented the opportunity of establishing a privileged channel of communication. Once the port of Leghorn opened to sailors of all faiths, Shah Abbas I recognized in the commercial pragmatism of the Medici what could be exploited as a very useful alliance in order to exert political pressure to other European potentates to consider the Ottoman Empire as a common enemy more in terms of its military power than its religious treat – argument which was tenable as the treat of Shi'a Muslim faith of the distant lands of Persia was much less pressing. The

similarity in the mercantile mind-set of the two rulers focused on Aleppo as the crucial town for the rejuvenation of the Persian trade with the Western European potentates; as soon as his troops conquered Aleppo, Shah Abbas I reactivated its port for the trade in the Mediterranean, which was crucial for the small yet very active Armenian Christian community there (Blow 2009: 79-81). Though maybe only a small opening, such gesture is used as one of the core argument for the alliance:

The conclusion of this [the letter to Pope Gregory XIII] is that he [Shah Abbas I] will never sign a peace with the Turk not only because of the different Religion but also because he has been seriously offended and plans a revenge, which he hopes to obtain when he hears of the good support that the Pope is seeking for him..²³

In this context, on 20 December 1599 Corai's arrival in Florence was announced to the Grand Duke 'The Syrian Dragoman comes from Aleppo, a town in which his father lives and also his wife and children, but because he was in the service of the Duke of Mantua in Hungary he cannot return anymore to the land of the Turk; he is called Angelo Corai'.²⁴ This document substantiates the hypothesis that the Syrian accompanying Fr Ruffini in the Gonzaga's camps of Hungary was in fact Corai. In 1599 the Knight Corai travelled from Venice possibly through Mantua and received a further endorsement to visit Rome and Florence; 'he has decided to reach Rome for this Holy year. He also thinks that many Christians in Syria and in other regions of the Turk have a good quantity of hidden weapons'.²⁵ Just as the Pope and Medici wanted to hear, there was room for a total war against the Ottoman Empire. Despite the letter of endorsement preceding their arrival, Corai and the Persian diplomats nevertheless faced some reservations among the Grand Duke's dignitaries. Ultimately, the 1599 mission did not succeed and Corai returned to Persia empty handed.

Anthony in 1599 and Robert Sherley in 1607 decided to go to Florence, both accompanied by Corai who in the documents often appears more prominently than the English gentlemen. In 1607 visit, Michel Angelo Corai was entrusted by the Grand Duke by the role of official diplomat: he received the equivalent of the passport²⁶ below and, most significantly, a list of duties to carry out on behalf of the Duchy entitled 'Instructions for you, Knight Michel Angelo Corai on the journey you have to undertake in Syria'.

Passport for the Knight Michel Angelo Corai

We have sent in Syria to carry out some of our services, the Knight Michel Angelo Corai, who could also take the opportunity of going to Persia; we have decided to accompany his journey with the present Letter so that all Princes and Lords with whom he will talk, he can be recognized as a man sent by Us. We therefore ask all of those who will read this Letter to support them with any courtesy and favour for those things he might need, we offer to do the same to any man who will come with their recommendations from those lands to Us. We have signed and sealed the present letter ourselves.²⁷

Corai was to be accompanied by the Tuscan knight Ippolito Leoncini, as this was a trusted man with existing expertise in travelling in the territories of the Levant and to safeguard the Duke's interests in case Corai were to prove unreliable. It is clear from the *Istruzioni* and Picchena's later letters to Corai that the Grand Duke had posed Corai in charge. On the contrary, Picchena wrote that Ferdinando 'is astonished that you [Corai] do not write anything about Leoncini and he would like you were to use his services more and also give him chance to learn and practice'.²⁸

Corai's role had not been attributed without considerable friction. Ippolito Leoncini's plea to be put in charge of the expedition is documented in ff.14-15 of the same folder 4275 of Mediceo del Principato. 'Considering that Mr Michelangelo Corai is Syrian and was neither sent from those lands in order to negotiate with Princes nor he has letters of recommendation [*lettere di credenza*] to prove his role, he is here just to promote himself verbally with his speeches without any trustworthy support.' Leoncini does not know of the letters in Farsi that Shah Abbas I had used, with accompanying translations, in order to introduce Corai as part of his diplomatic envoy (also in the Mediceo del Principato). The Tuscan nobleman's attack continues implicitly confirming that Corai was also pursuing trading agreements: 'It is evident that only the greed of grabbing and making profit with his many words; because of this will of profit he could be very little trusted.' There were other reasons though, which could rest on Anthony Sherley's performances over precedence in Rome, as Corai is defined as a 'wanderer' who as such 'must be doubted; even more he must be suspected because Fr Piero speaks ill of him', showing that the Carmelites in Rome had already taken side against the upcoming interpreter-cum-diplomatic envoy. Ennobled and in possession of the *Istruzioni* Corai was legally a diplomat from Persia going back with the mandate to serve also as diplomat for the Grand Duke of Tuscany. At this stage, Corai was in charge of the negotiations for the final, decisive crusade against the Ottoman Empire. And the *Istruzioni* make it clear that Corai had the right to represent the voice of the Medici family before the Pasha of Aleppo and Shah Abbas I.²⁹ The documentation indicates that Corai was in charge of the diplomatic envoy; Leoncini tried to play the cards that he could be the main player with the support of a linguist to work as interpreter and translator. However, Ferdinand I's decision is clear: Corai the translator becomes the diplomatic envoy of the Medici family to the Pasha of Aleppo, the rebels associated with him, and Shah Abbas I in Persia.

Letters to Shah Abbas I and the Pasha of Aleppo signed by the hand of the Duke³⁰ leave very little space for interpretation: the diplomatic mission was ambitious. To Shah Abbas I, Ferdinand I reminds the family ties (possibly established with Vecchietti):

The name of Your Majesty is so glorious among the Christian Princes because of your successful progress against the tyranny of the Turk that everybody, celebrating your endeavours and actions, believes that You were born as the scourge of the Ottoman family and wishes that you have continuous victories and the complete destruction of your enemy. Among others, I have a double reason to congratulate with you: both for my affection and the esteem that I have for the supreme valour of Your Majesty, and for my personal and long-standing respect for you, which began at the time of the glorious memory of my Father's majesty, and increased for the favour that some years ago Your Majesty did to me by sending such a noble embassy.³¹

Ferdinand's words speak for themselves: there is an existing respect for the Shah but also a memory of the first 1599 envoy that although left an imprint was not possible to follow through at the time. Corai's presence and mediation in the two events, especially with his competence in Italian and the language of Hussain Ali Beg would have given him unique access to the Grand Duke over the two missions.

Ferdinand's words were not to outlive him. Despite the explicit *Istruzione*, his son Cosimo II were to refuse Corai his support when five years into the mission the political landscape in Europe had significantly changed. It is also likely that the last clause of the *Istruzioni*, in the long extract quoted above, whereby if the Pasha of Aleppo had a relationship good enough to continue the negotiation with Shah Abbas I himself there was no need for further negotiations, might have been used as the get-out clause. Corai's requests for economic support whilst being the personal interpreter of the Shah and the envoy of the Grand

Duke grew due to the expectations of the role; Cosimo II preferred to refute Corai's position rather than withdraw his support directly as the agreement with the Pasha was enough and there had been no need to go to Persia.

This clause was also time-bound and not to be respected in case of a defeat in Aleppo against the Ottoman army. The friendship with the King of Persia had to be renewed, as Ferdinand I explicitly said in his letter in which he even apologized for the delay in replying to the first embassy. Furthermore, the *Instruzioni* have an aside for Corai, 'as you know well' they start:

When you have finished your negotiations in Syria and you see that the Pasha of Aleppo is inclined to tighten the friendship with Persia, you will go to meet that King, and you will give him Our letter and in agreement with what you will have negotiated and agreed in Syria, you will negotiate again with the Persian King so as to exhort him further to grab the opportunity, now that so many valiant men are alienated from the Turk, and he should give them his help and favour; together they should share information. You will also apologize that, after the Embassy that he sent, we did not answer to his letters, because, as you know very well, we waited for the opportunity to send the men that he wanted. Finding a way to do this has not been possible yet because of the distance and of the so difficult journeys. If We are prompted on how We can offer services to him from here, we will always do it readily.³²

Corai the converted translator and interpreter had been given the right to *decide* on the basis of his stay in Aleppo, which could last a flexible amount of time, whether to carry on his diplomatic mission on behalf of the Grand Duke of Tuscany towards the court of the Shah. The second part of the mission had been planned; the document specifies that Corai had the tasks to forge the alliance with Shah Abbas I, for that special channel of communication that had been partially damaged after the Grand Duke's silence of 1599. In any case, the mission was successful: the Pasha of Aleppo signed the agreement on 19 September 1607, bearing the signatures of Ippolito Leoncini and Corai, and written by the witness and Corai's man-in-waiting Giorgio Criger; the agreement was expected to be extended to the King of Persia. The events took a different direction when the siege of Aleppo was won by the Ottoman troops, the city conquered, and Corai imprisoned.

Corai became able to resume his duties only in the year 1609, after the correspondence with the Grand Duke had become rarer and replies to his letters even more so, as he asked for renewed *Instruzioni* in a ciphered letter:

I humbly beg Your Serene Highness that you wished send me new order so that I know how to behave [...] You will be able to keep alive the friendship with the King of Persia, if it is convenient for us to complete our task, and ultimately Tuscany will have news from this region before any other kingdom, without having to pay me any of your money; I leave you to your judgment and advice whether you want me to come back to Florence and you will replace me with another person in Persia. I look forward to receiving a very forthcoming letter from you as soon as possible as I trust your generous grace in not leaving me inconsolable.³³

The fact that this letter was ciphered (one sample among several letters) attests to planning in the Florentine chancellery: the mission was not to be taken lightly, as they had agreed a simple cipher for encoding and decoding the letters during Corai's mission in Aleppo and Persia. Cosimo II's rejection of the agreement was not really based on formal clauses, as he let Curzio Picchena suggest in his reply of 31 August 1612 to Corai, but on a change of political vision

and alliances in Europe, which ultimately caused Shah Abbas I to lose his patience with the Florentine state and almost directly the death of Corai.

Concluding remarks

At the end of the 1609 siege of Aleppo, after his arrest and imprisonment, Corai's role as a negotiator had been discovered by the winning side, the Ottoman officials forced him to pay his own bail of 500 florins and, with his Florentine credentials, he decided to reach Persia so as to complete the mission assigned to him by Ferdinando I. In the meantime, the Grand Duke his sponsor had died and Corai had celebrated his memory and congratulated his heir to the Duchy. In Persia Corai gradually assumed a prominent role of mediator, negotiator, and personal interpreter of all the European envoys to the Shah – he even translated briefs and letters from the Pope from Latin into Farsi for the Shah, creating additional friction with the Carmelites resident in Isfahan. The correspondence with Florence slowly died out and nobody was paying the costs of his formal position at the court of Shah Abbas I that necessitated of a level of dignity had to be justified in Corai's role as interpreter and diplomat of the European courts. Cosimo II refused to acknowledge the legal status of Corai the diplomatic envoy of Tuscany and accused him of acting illegally in taking his diplomatic mission to Persia.

Documents in the *Fondo Borghese* of the Archivium Secretum Vaticanum collect the diplomatic missions between the Pope and Persia, and in particular the Carmelites missions in Persia (Alonso 1996; Chick 1939). Corai's role clearly emerges from these documents whereby the Carmelites call him an 'agent of the Grand Duke of Tuscany'. They also attest to the Carmelites' use of Corai's services as an interpreter and show how dangerously close Corai had become to the inner circle of the shah. Around 1612, Corai was made superintended of the mines of Persia; this role sounds as a further climb in the social climb for the translator. However, there was a catch: he had to convert (back) to Islam. This request can be interpreted in the social and institutional view of the Persian state offered by Matthee (1999: 8-9); it is possible to recognize that

the "state" centred on the shah and his entourage regardless of location, and institutions, though they existed, were fluid and flexible inasmuch as circumstance and royal disposition directly influenced their composition, function, and effectiveness. Rather than forming a fixed set of hierarchical relationships, the state acquired and dispensed power and profit through a process of bargaining whose main characteristics were inclusion and manipulation.

Through his ennoblement that lead to the formal diplomatic mission, Corai had become part of this fluid society in a very flexible role of interpreter, mediator of the political mind-set and orientations of the European visitors. Indeed, he would have acquired some level of influence on the shah, as polemically pointed out the Carmelites.³⁴

It has to be emphasized that the Sherley brothers in their return journeys from Europe with Corai brought back new military strategies and technologies (harquebuses) that led to a reorganization of the Persian army, which were fierce and successful in their last decades of campaigns under the command of Shah Abbas I. Early studies, such as those of Lockart (1959), underlined the European influence; Corai added (or could have added) the power of the Florentine fleet. Newman (2009: 61) suggests

Abbas [...] left few stones unturned in an effort to establish a variety of links – economic, political and cultural – by which to strengthen ties to the West, welcoming merchant delegations, political envoys, travellers and even missionaries. He sent the

Englishman Anthony Sherley, who had arrived in Qazvin in 1598 with a request from England for an anti-Ottoman alliance, back to Europe with an Iranian Envoy. From 1607 Abbas attempted to divert the silk trade to Portuguese-controlled Goa in India from which silk might be shipped direct to Europe. In an atmosphere of renewed tensions with the Ottomans c. 1615, Abbas sent Sherley back to Europe to explore further possibilities for alliances.

The role of Corai, ignored for instance in Newman's work on the Kingdom of Shah Abbas I, depicted in the documents allows the re-interpretation of his tasks in terms of official and unofficial diplomacy (see Osborne 2012). Anthony Sherley's mission of 1599-1601 was not successful, because of the discontent in the collaborating with Hussain Ali Beg, so much so that from 1605 Corai was alone in Prague ready to go back to Persia, as the Emperor Rudolf II had sent Anthony Sherley to Morocco (Denison Ross 1933: 60). In 1613, Anthony Sherley considered his embassy over; he left a report for Robert, who already in 1607 had become the diplomatic voice of Persia with Corai – and later on alone in 1622. Corai the translator and interpreter became a front-line player for the Persian diplomacy, thus exposing himself far more. Financially abandoned by the Grand Duke, demanded to abjure by the Shah, Corai had not option than to escape once more. He run away possibly finding asylum in Gombrun, the Portuguese fortress (Faridany 2006). From 1614, Corai's trail in the documents becomes far more blurred; the elusive polyglot disappeared in the background once again, in need of hiding because as quickly as he had obtained the dual status of diplomatic agent, he had deprived of it.

Corai seems to personify the observation that 'whether they chose the profession or were chosen by it, interpreters have helped shape history' (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012: 249). The events in the life of Fatullah Qurray-Corai are part of the micro-history of a translator and interpreter who operated in the fluid diplomatic context of the sixteenth and seventeenth century in which formal and informal diplomacy at high level were complex, difficult to define, and ultimately fairly interchangeable. The reasons why the Duke of Mantua made Corai into a Knight are likely to remain unknown, but they led the erudite translator to become a political negotiator, interpreter, and a diplomat. This chapter did not intend to reconstruct the details of Corai's embassies but to focus on the documents that illustrate how his language skills and cultural competence allowed him to climb the social ladder rapidly. From a personal achievement, in the ennoblement by the Duke of Mantua, Corai found himself in the midst of a complex diplomatic mission and became the first and leading ambassador from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany to Persia. The archival documents as diverse in nature and credibility as they are leave many questions open. The main one is whether Corai's career would have been a unicum for a translator or quite common. If common, it would be important to study the spread of the phenomenon in order to understand whether Corai was part of a typology of diplomats. Faridany (2006) had a clear interpretation for the role of Corai, which was not dismissive at all:

Corai was the supreme facilitator and fixer – highly able and trusted, multi-lingual, travelling largely unobserved, apparently equally at ease whether in Isfahan or Florence, Aleppo, Qazvin or Prague, and while at these cities discreetly and efficiently executing his diplomatic responsibilities.

However, this chapter suggests that Corai was given more powers to manage and use in his role with the Grand Duke of Tuscany; Corai had become a formal interpreter *because of his linguistic competences*. These were not enough, the knighthood and the knowledge of a lingua franca in the relationship between European aristocrats and the Eastern and Western courts

made Corai extremely valuable at the time when Rome was becoming the European centre for a renewed interest in Persia. Yet the rapid climb left Corai exposed to an equally sudden fall that corresponded with the real end to any European call for a total crusade against the Ottoman Empire.

* Without the research of historian Edward Faridany on Anthony and Robert Sherley, this chapter may never have been written. His research led him to recover documents mentioning Michelangelo Corai and his own journeys. I had the pleasure and satisfaction to collaborate with Faridany between 2004 and 2009, firstly as his translator for Italian manuscripts and gradually as a researcher in several Italian archives, so as to collect documents detailing Michelangelo Corai's movements. In Mantua, the generous and passionate help of Daniela Ferrari, director, and her team of archivists allowed my wife and I to uncover the letters by Giovan Battista Ruffini, the decree, and several other documents confirming the history of Corai as depicted in this contribution. Sermidi's rigorous compilation of the correspondences with Venice opened up a redefinition of the status of Corai and led to a series of contributions to the debates on official and unofficial diplomacy to which this chapter belongs. Sadly Faridany passed away too early and our decision to co-author a paper on Corai did not materialize; this contribution is dedicated to his memory.

² Archivio di Stato di Mantova (henceforth ASMn), *Archivio Gonzaga*, b. 1529, f. VIII, cc. 475-476. The Italian letters and documents have been transcribed respecting as faithfully as possible the text. I have kept the separation of compound articles and abbreviations (for instance, a la, de la, et cetera) and the use of capital letters for places, people, and honorifics. Punctuation and accents have been normalized *pero'* into *però*, and the colons of the *copialelettere* substituted with commas or semi-colons. The translations in the main text are mine and I include the Italian originals in the endnotes.

³ ASMn, *Archivio Gonzaga, Libri dei decreti*, 52, c. 66 refers the full name. In Chick (1939) and Faridany (2006) his name is given as Fathullah Qurray. Documents and secondary sources refer to him in various ways Angelo Corai, Angelo Corrai, Angelo Corray, Michelangelo Corrai, Michelangelo Coray, and Michelangelo Giovanni Corai. He signed himself as Michelangelo Corai which is the preferred spelling here.

⁴ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (henceforth ASF), *Mediceo del Principato*, 4275, f. 57.

⁵ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4275, ff. 49-55. Curzio Picchena (1553/4-1626), with a degree in law was initially a diplomat as an envoy for several diplomatic missions of the Grand Duchy, until he attained the role of Personal Secretary of Ferdinand I, and then Councillor of State and First Secretary of State in 1613 under Cosimo II and Ferdinand II until 1626. Curzio Picchena looked after only the most urgent and significant affairs of the Grand Duke and it can be argued that his direct correspondence with Corai confirms the initial significance given to Corai's mission.

⁶ See Burton's discussion (2009) of the Sherleys' adventures in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean theatre. The arrivals of Persian embassies in Italy were equally memorable and these are detailed in Piemontese 2005, 2006, and 2007.

⁷ The Frenchman Pinçon (1651) writes 'Auge qui estoit notre truchement', interpreted as a variation on *turjumân* (ترجمان), *turcomanno*; Pinçon was another fellow traveller on the ship of the Sherleys going to Shah Abbas I in 1598.

⁸ There is growing literature on the role of the Italian language as a lingua franca in the Mediterranean, its discussion is relevant in terms of its use to Corai but its full analysis is beyond the scope of this contribution. See Tommasino 2010, 2011; Motolesse 2012.

⁹ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4275, f. 4, this letter of presentation introduces Corai to the Ferdinand I, dated 20 December 1599.

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- ¹⁰ ASMn, *Fondo Gonzaga*, b. 388, f. X, cc. 395-407, ‘Relazioni al S.mo Sig. Duca Vincenzo di Mantoua del Secondo viaggio che fece in Ungheria l’anno 1597 et di quello che seguì in quella Guerra mentre SA si fermò in campo’.
- ¹¹ ASMn, *Archivio Gonzaga*, b. 480, c. 66 f-r. ‘per hauere in quel giorno tradotte alcune lettere turchesche con l’aiuto di uno mio soriano da me menato alla servitù di S.A.S. huomo che scriue et legge benissimo turchesco non solo ma et persiano et caldeo et Arabo come altri lingue.’
- ¹² See also Faridany 2006. I translated most of original Italian manuscripts used by Faridany in his 2006 paper, with other excellent translations completed by Andrea Del Corno’, who generously commented on the present contribution. Faridany sent me his paper and the following quotations come from his paper that is hopefully going to be published posthumously.
- ¹³ Only found in 2008 during archival research I conducted with my wife Theresa Federici, who found the decree in ASMn, *Libri dei decreti*, 52, c. 66, solving one of the puzzles that had held back this research for 3 years.
- ¹⁴ I thank my joint editor Dario Tessicini who in early conversations on my paper brought me back to re-consider the Florentine documents, especially those coded in ASF, *Mediceo del Principato* 4275, and helped me find the documents that substantiate the hypothesis that the agent of the Duke of Mantua had to be the Syrian who went with Fr Ruffini in Hungary.
- ¹⁵ ASV, *Fondo Borghese* II, vol. 20, ff. 130-142.
- ¹⁶ Sherley, Anthony, *His Relation of His Travels into Persia. The Dangers and Distresses which befell him in his passage both by sea and land, and his strange and unexpected deliverances* (Londra: Nathaniell Butter and Ioseph Bagset, 1613). Rist. anastatica (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants: Gregg, 1972), p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Letter by Giorgio Criger, Tuscan aid of Corai in Persia, sd, ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, f. 298.
- ¹⁸ Interestingly, this passage is quoted in the English translation included in the *Calendars of State Papers* (pp. 128-29) and in Davies 1933: 128. Essendo comparso questa mattina alle porte dell’Eccellentissimo Collegio, un uomo di statura piccola con barba nera, e di color olivastro, vestito di cammelloto nero, d’anni 40 in circa, fece dire che era agente del re di Persia, e che desiderava essere introdotto nell’Ecc. Coll. per presentare alcune lettere a Sua Serenità; quest’inteso dall’Ecc. Collegio fece dire e commesse a me segretario Pellegrini, che per convenienti rispetti lo conducessi nell’antisegeta, che vedessi ed intendessi bene chi fosse, donde venisse, e quello ricercasse; il che avendo io eseguito: egli mi disse nominarsi Michiel [sic] Angelo Corrai d’Aleppo’.
- ¹⁹ Berchet 1866: 7-14: ‘che veniva di Persia mandato dal signor Antonio Sherley inglese che fu già alquanti mesi in questa città ed era allora Persia in grandissima grazia di quel re che le sue lettere erano in lingua italiana datele per Sua Serenità dal signor con altre lettere per il Sommo Pontefice i re di di Spagna l’imperatore il granduca di Toscana ed l’Aldobrandini e per la regina d’Inghilterra che il sig Sherley doveva partire di Persia pochissimi giorni di lui con lettere del re e con donativi a tutti questi principi e che conoscendo il medesimo re che l’arrivo del detto a tutti questi principi conveniva essere grandemente od almeno molto tardo aveva voluto ad ogni buon fine che venisse detto Michiel Angelo privatamente per la via Costantinopoli in Italia con lettere del detto signor Antonio ciò in ogni evento si sapesse parte del suo desiderio’.
- ²⁰ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, f. 4.
- ²¹ ASF, *Fondo Mediceo del Principato*, 4275, f. 3 r-v, letter by the Shah. Also ASF, *Fondo Mediceo del Principato*, 4275, ff. 264-265v, letter from Corai to the Grand Duke dated 3 March 1610, which might be further coloured by Corai’ pressing economic needs and requests for his mission in Persia.

- ²² Brown (1892) offers the complete transcription of Vecchietti's *Relatione* that Hieronimo Lippomano, Venetian ambassador in Madrid, posted to Venice on 16 January 1588.
- ²³ Brown 1892: 315; 'La conclusione della quale [lettera al Papa Gregorio XIII] è ch'egli [Shāh Abbas] non farà mai pace co 'l Turco, perche oltre alla diversion di Religione, ne è stato gravemente offeso, et dissegna altamente di vendicarsi, et tanto più spera poterlo fare, quanto intende questi buoni aiuti, che 'l papa gli va procacciando'.
- ²⁴ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, ff. 4-5.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Though the document *Mediceo del Principato* 4275, f.57 is entitled 'Passaporto per il Cau.re Michelang.lo Corai', it is very difficult to decipher whether the term 'passaporto' name was added by a later archivist or was contemporary to the content; the handwriting seems to match, and the fact that it referred to the use of Florentine ships and men sailing from Leghorn, the usage of the term 'passaporto' would not be an anachronism from a lexicographic perspective; however the first record of the term being used for individuals rather than group of mariners or ships is in the 4th edition of the *Dizionario dell'Accademica della Crusca* of 1729-38, which indeed does not preclude its usage in oral and written contexts prior to its formalization in the dictionary entry. Letters written to support the Corsini's trades between Florence and Elizabeth I also use the term 'passaporto'.
- ²⁷ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, f. 57. 'Passaporto per il Cau.re Michelang.lo Corai. Mandato Noi in Soria per alcuni N.ri seruizij il Cau.re Michela'g.lo Corai, al q.li potrà farsi anch'occasione di passari in Persia, habbiamo uoluto accompagnarlo con la presente lettera aperta, acciò che da tutti i Principi et Signori con i quali egli haurà occ.ne di parlare, possa esser conosciuto per huomo mandato da Noi. Et perciò preghiamo tutti quelli che uedranno questa Nostra lettera, che si adoprino di fargli nei lor paesi ogni cortesia et fauore in quelle cose che gli potessero bisognare, offrendoci Noi di far l'istesso a quelli che uenissero di quelle parti ed loro raccomandazioni. In fede che habbiamo sottoscritto la presente di Nostra mano et sigillato col Nosro sigillo.'
- ²⁸ Letter to Michel Angelo Corai, dated 5 October 1607, ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275 f. 145. 'Si merauiglia anche che VS. non scriua nulla del Leoncini, et uorrebbe che ella si seruisse di lui, et gli desse occasione di imparare et di esercitarsi.'
- ²⁹ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, ff. 51r-52. 'Gli direte ancora, che per seruizio suo, et de' suoi collegati, ci parrebbe necessario che egli facesse il principal fondamento sopra l'amicizia et buona intelligenza del Re di Persia, il quale hauendo tante forze, et facendo continuamente la guerra al Turco, con tanta maggior sicurezza [51r] potrà seguitare di indebolirlo et dar fomento a questi della Soria, di poter fare gran.mo acquisto di prouincie et di Stati et assicurate pure il detto Bascia et ogni altro di quei capi, che i Principi Christiani non haueranno mai audità di guadagnar paesi nè terre in Asia ma che la principale intenzione loro è per ognuno [riuscirsi] à finir di distruggere il detto Impero Ottomano # <# et ciascuno di detti capi resterà padrone delle sue prouincie e di quelle che acquisteranno> et che in queste [chiare] congiunture [□] non habbino speranza, che chiederansi ben presto le differenze et si haurà senso tra il Papa et i Ueneziani; debbino tutti principi della Christianità uoltarsi contro al Turco, con aiutar principalmente il detto [52] Bascià d'Aleppo, et quelli che saranno seco uniti et collegati. Potrete anche comunicargli, che Noi ui habbiam dato u.a lettera per il Re di Persia, et commessioni e che doppo che harete eseguito in Soria quello che ui habbiamo ordinato, uoi andrete à trouare il detto Re, per inanimare lui ancora a questa unione et mostrargli la prontezza de Principi Christiani in loro aiuto et fauori et che poi, si il detto Bascià uolesse anch'egli mandar un huomo suo con esso uoi, Noi lo giudicaremmo utilissimo per suo seruizio Ø <Ø ma se uoi trouerete che egli habbia già buona intelligenza col Persiano, non sarà bis.no che andiate ultimamente in Persia, ma starete appresso di lui, o anderete col consiglio suo a trattar con altri capi>.'

³⁰ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, ff. 56-56v, and ff. 22-23 respectively.

³¹ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, ff. 22-23.

³² Ibid, ff. 53r-54. ‘Quando harete finito la u.ra negoziazione in Soria et che uediate inclinato il Bascià di Aleppo a restringnere l’amicizia in Persia, ne si anderete a trouare quel Re, presentandogli la lettera N.a et in [54] conformità di quello che harete trattato et disegnato in Soria, tratterete anch’in Persia con il detto Re, per inanimarlo maggiorm.te a ualersi dell’occasione di tanti ualorosi huomini che si sono alienati dal Turco, et à dar loro aiuto et fauori, et hauer buona intelligenza insieme. Farete anche nostre scuse, se doppo l’Ambascieria ch’egli ci mandò [1599], Noi non risponderemo alle sue lettere, poiché come uoi sapete benissimo, aspettammo occasione di poter mandare quelli huomini che desideraua, anche perché non è stato possibile trouar modo, rispetto alla lontananza et ai uiaggi così pericolosi; et assicuratelo che se ci sarà accennato in che cosa possiamo seruirlo di qua, lo faremo sempre con molta prontezza’.

³³ ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 4275, ff. 264-265v, letter from Corai dated 3 March 1610. ‘Si che io supplico 122114 [di S.A.] humilissimamente che la si degni mandarmi qualch’ordine perch’io sappia come m’habbia a governare [...], egli conseruarà sempre uiuamente 156610231573103263 [l’amico del re di Persia] si come per ragione del nostro negozio conuien a fare, e finalmente 151427292124302540 [la Toscana] haurà sempre tutte le nuoue di queste parti inanzi di ogni altro regno: che sopra tutte la potrà far senza sborsare del suo cosa nessuna, il che io lascio al suo buon giudizio e ottimo consiglio e se la uorrà che io venga 15 [costà] e lasciarla altra persona in cambio mio 252315431463 [nella Persia] gliene sono ancora contentissimo, purchè habbia il modo che bisogna, e di tutti spetto risposta quanto prima, com’io mi confido alla sua generosissima grazia che non ci lasciaua sconsolato.’

³⁴ Archivium Secretum Vaticanum, *Fondo Borghese II*, vol. 20, ff. 130-142.