

Maghribi Muslims in Medieval Genoa

Thank you for taking the time to read this chapter draft from my current book manuscript: *Trade and Religious Boundaries in the Medieval Maghrib: Genoese Merchants, their Products, and Islamic Law*.

Précis: My book explores the relationship between medieval Genoa and the Maghrib (modern-day Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) through the twin lenses of trade practices and religious law, both Islamic and Christian. Intense economic ties linking Genoese and Maghribi merchants, investors, and consumers existed alongside —indeed depended upon— persistent religious-legal norms of separation between these groups and control of religious difference. Genoese across many different social classes invested in or traveled to the Maghrib, where they formed complex, if relatively transient, communities, while a small but persistent trickle of Maghribi merchants found their way to Genoa in the same period. The range of commercial, religious and industrial activities undertaken by the Genoese in these distinct urban quarters and *fondachi* calls into question the description of overseas Genoese as simply “merchants.” Unlike in most other overseas Genoese settlements, particularly in the Latin East, the Genoese who lived and settled in the Maghrib lived in Muslim-majority urban environments, and their presence was highly theorized and controlled in Islamic legal discourse. By placing unpublished Latin notarial cartularies, treaties, letters, and vernacular merchant handbooks alongside legal discourse in Arabic and Latin, I show that commercial activity, far from effacing religious boundaries, in fact relied upon them to function.

The book is divided into three main sections, each offering a synchronic treatment of one *aspect* of the Genoa-Maghrib relationship between 1150 and 1350. Within each section, individual chapters address more specific concerns, related to groups of people, places, and commodities that shaped the relationship between Genoa and the Maghrib, both through commerce and through their reception in Islamic legal discourse.

Introduction: The Relationship between Genoa and the Maghrib in Historiography

Part One: Places

Chapter One: The growth of Genoese communities in the port cities of the Maghrib

Chapter Two: Locating and policing exchange and settlement: the *funduq*, the *diwān*, the church, and the market in Islamic legal discourse

Part Two: People

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Chapter Four: The Maghribi Muslims of Medieval Genoa [included]

Part Three: Things

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Chapter Six: Special Cases: Weapons and Wine in religious-legal discourse

Conclusion: The Embedded Economy and its Discontents

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The current chapter, “The Maghribi Muslims of Medieval Genoa,” explores the lived realities of the diverse Muslim individuals who appear in Genoese notarial documents of the thirteenth century. It is intended, in part, to give a human face to the discussions of Muslim and Christian commerce in Christian and Islamic legal discourse that occur elsewhere in the book, and to intervene in a historiography about the Muslim presence in medieval northern Italian cities—although much of the explicit historiography is engaged elsewhere in the book. For your convenience, I have included two appendices: One includes two tables listing individuals mentioned in the chapter, while Two includes a transcribed and translated notarial act containing a (partial) household inventory of a Muslim merchant, Acigio, who died at Genoa in 1271, the discussion of which closes out the chapter.

The Maghribi Muslims of Medieval Genoa

In July 1271, an enslaved Andalusī woman named Fatima received her freedom in Genoa. She had been born in Murcia to a mother, also named Fatima, but at some point afterwards she was enslaved and taken to Genoa, where she was given the name “Sibilla” and may also have been baptized. Eventually, she passed under the ownership of Jacobino de Castro, who at his death left her to his two minor children, under the care of his brother Conrado. However, Fatima’s mother had not forgotten her daughter, and she got word to a Tunisian man named Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Raḥman, (known in Latin sources as “Asmetus Benaderamen”), who was employed by the Genoese commune as “scribe of Saracen letters” (*scriba littere sarracenicæ comunis Ianue*) and had lived in Genoa for many years. Aḥmad located Fatima, and arranged with Conrado to purchase her freedom for the significant sum of £24, half of which he had to borrow from Conrado himself, promising to re-pay his debt in installments over the next nine months. Nonetheless, Conrado agreed to release Fatima before the full price was paid, and Bergognono da Embriaco, a prominent Genoese merchant with ties to Tunis, backed Aḥmad’s promise to pay.¹

Fatima’s enslavement and emancipation provide vivid testimony both of the presence of Andalusī and Maghribi Muslims in thirteenth-century Genoa, and of the different roles they played within Genoese society.

¹ It was common practice in Genoa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean for owners to rename slaves; this could be associated with Christian baptism, but was not always. See Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 43–45. In this case, the act of emancipation does not state outright that Fatima had been baptized. However, despite referring to her throughout as “Fatima”, there is a marginal note by the notary next to the act, remarking that the woman “is now known as Sibilla” (*nunc dicitur Sibilla*): ASG *Notai Antichi* 70 (Guglielmo di S. Giorgio): 8v-9r.

Many writers on Genoa, both medieval and modern, have remarked upon the importance of Islam and Muslims in the making of the city's history.² In the thirteenth century, Christian proponents of crusade, from Jacques de Vitry to William Adam, alternately praised or blamed the Genoese for their thriving commerce with Egypt and Syria, while in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, virtually every Genoese character has close connections with Muslims, whether as corsairs or merchants.³ This mirrored the city's own self-image: from the twelfth century on, the Genoese were fond of presenting themselves to their neighbors as both the defenders of Christendom at sea and as privileged interlocutors with Muslim markets.⁴ Yet for the most part, observers perceived these relationships as taking place overseas, in *Oltremare* [broadly, the Levant] or actually on the sea: the presence of Muslims within Genoa itself attracted little interest from contemporaries writing before the late fourteenth century. This marks a sharp contrast with Venice and Pisa, where, from the twelfth century onward, visitors noted the physical presence of many non-Christian foreigners, as both free merchants and among the enslaved.⁵ Despite these narrative silences, however, there were many Muslims, above all from the Maghrib and al-Andalus, who lived in Genoa during this period. This chapter

² See discussion in Introduction.

³ See *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry: edition critique*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Brill: 1960), Letter One: 77–78; William of Adam, *De Modo Sarracenos Extirpandi*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades: documents arméniens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1906), 521–555. In Boccaccio, see, among others, the *novelle* or short stories for Day Two, Novella Nine, and Day Five, Novella Seven.

⁴ Giovanna Petti Balbi, "Genova e il Mediterraneo occidentale nei secoli XI -XII" in *Comuni e memoria storica: Alle origini del comune di Genova* (Atti del convegno di studi, Genova 24-26 settembre 2001), (Genova 2002) 503-526.

⁵ See for instance the description, by the classicizing twelfth-century monk Donizo of Sutri, of "maritime monsters, pagans, Turks, Libyans, and hideous Chaldaeans" at Pisa, or the Icelandic monk Nikolás' evocation of Egyptians, Syrians, and Africans in the same city, or Petrarch's racist contempt for the Tatars he claimed filled the streets of Venice in 1367. See discussion by Stefania Gialdrone, "Propter Conversationem Diversarum Gentium: Migrating Words and Merchants in Medieval Pisa" in *Migrating Words, Migrating Merchants, Migrating Law: Trading Routes and the Development of Commercial Law* (Brill, 2019); and Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 57–58.

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explores the various social roles and positions of Muslims, both transient and more settled, among the population of medieval Genoa.

Between Freedom and Slavery

Historians have most often approached the Muslim presence in late medieval Genoa through the lens of slavery, particularly the slave trade in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea. This is understandable and appropriate: most of the Muslims who appear in the notarial evidence of this period are described as slaves, and the Genoese were active in the international slave trade, particularly after the mid-thirteenth century.⁶ Moreover, scholars interested in the presence of free Muslims within Christian-controlled territory in the Western Mediterranean have naturally gravitated to the large populations of subject Muslims who came under Christian rule as a result of military conquest, as in Valencia, the Balearic Islands, Sicily or southern Italy: what Brian Catlos has termed the “static diasporas,” who often maintained some forms of communal identity and autonomy.⁷ By contrast, studies on Muslim populations in regions that were never part of the *Dar al-Islām*, such as Languedoc or Tuscany, tend to stress the experiences of captives and enslaved people, who often appear in the documentary records as isolated and vulnerable individuals, particularly within

⁶ On the Genoese in the eastern slave trade, see Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: the Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019). For a general overview of slavery in Genoese society, see Luigi Tria, *La Schiavitù in Liguria: ricerche e documenti* (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1947), 25-54.

⁷ Brian Catlos, *The Muslims of Medieval Christendom, c. 1050–1614* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 13–16; for Sicily and southern Italy, see Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

domestic slavery even when they proved capable, as they sometimes did, of resisting their enslavement and captivity through flight or legal action.⁸

Studies on Genoa have tended to follow this later pattern, though the presence of transient, free Muslims inside the city has also been noted. Georges Jehel, in a 1995 study of the Muslim and Jewish population of medieval Genoa, focused most of his attention on Muslim captives of various Western Mediterranean origins. However, as he also pointed out, alongside these captives lived a small but persistent community of elite interpreters, some of whom, like Aḥmad, accepted long-term employment by the Genoese commune. These scribes served as liaisons between their co-religionists, often enslaved, and their Genoese hosts.⁹ Yet even Jehel's more nuanced picture neglects the full variety of Muslim experience in thirteenth-century Genoa. In addition to Muslim men of letters, other Maghribi Muslims and Jews traded, settled, and invested in Genoa, sometimes for years at a time.

Much of the challenge in reconstructing the Muslim community in Genoa lies in the available sources, especially the notarial evidence. Typically, Genoese notaries employed the word *sarracenus/a* ("Saracen") to refer to Muslims, but this word had ethnic as well as religious significance; Muslim converts to Christianity were often described as "Saracen" long after their conversions. Moreover, as medieval historians of slavery have pointed out, the imposition of religious or ethnic labels on enslaved people was the prerogative of owners

⁸ See for instance Rebecca Lynn Winer's study of late medieval Perpignan, "Women, wealth, and community in Perpignan, c. 1250-1300: Christians, Jews, and enslaved Muslims in a medieval Mediterranean town" (Routledge,), or Sally McKee (on a later period), "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery and Abolition* 29:3 (2008), 305–326.

⁹ Georges Jehel, "Jews and Muslims in Medieval Genoa: From the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century" *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10:1-2 (1995), 120-132. Dominique Valérian expressed some reservations about whether the free Muslims identified by Jehel were indeed "merchants." Dominique Valérian, "Les marchands musulmans dans les ports chrétiens au Moyen Âge" in *Religious Cohabitation in European Towns* (10–15th century), ed. Stéphane Boissellier and John Tolan (Brepols, 2014), 111.

and legal authorities, and did not always correspond to the enslaved person's self-conception. Slave traders were known to deliberately misrepresent the religious affiliation of slaves when it suited them; especially when it made them easier to sell.¹⁰ Conservatively, the most that can be said of individuals identified as *sarraceni/e* is that Latin-speaking authorities chose to identify them as current or former Muslims.

Slavery and Freedom

This observation is of critical importance because most Muslims who appear in the notarial evidence at Genoa during this period *were* slaves or former slaves. Of the approximately 60 named individuals in this study identified by Latin notaries as current or former Muslims, 44 (73%) are slaves, appearing in 44 separate acts, mostly sales and manumission documents, produced between 1213 and 1289.¹¹ Slavery had deep roots in Liguria, as it did throughout the medieval Mediterranean, but over the course of the thirteenth century, there was a major shift in the demographics of the enslaved population of the city. In the mid-thirteenth century, Maghribi and Andalusī Muslim slaves predominated; however by around 1300 most slaves in Genoa came from the Caucasus, Crimea, and "Romania": a term used to describe the territories currently or formerly subject to the Byzantine Empire, including Greece, Anatolia, and the Balkans.¹² By 1400, these slaves made up 4 to 5 percent of Genoa's total population; figures for the mid-thirteenth century

¹⁰ Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 52–53. In 1234, Genoese merchants in Tunis were accused by the mendicant orders of passing off Jewish or Muslim slaves as Christians in order to sell them to local buyers; see discussion below, and Tolán, *Dubitabilia*, 11.

¹¹ See Tables One and Two in Appendix One.

¹² Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 266 – 267, Domenico Gioffré, *Il mercato degli schiavi a Genova nel Secolo xv* (Genova: Bozzi, 1971), 175. Georges Jehel identified about 100 individuals as Maghribi or Andalusī slaves in Genoa between 1159 and 1280. While this current study does not extend earlier than 1200, in its broad conclusions it generally tracks with his analysis of the demography of the slave population. See Georges Jehel, "Jews and Muslims in Medieval Genoa," 124–125.

are more uncertain, but were likely significantly lower: 1 to 2 percent.¹³ This likely represented several hundred people, perhaps as many as one thousand in 1300.¹⁴ The period covered in this book was thus one of transition in the Genoese slave trade, as traffickers moved from the West to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and as domestic slavery gradually became more widespread.

Slave sales and manumissions contain widely varying amounts of information about the individuals concerned. There was little consistency in what information was deemed legally pertinent. Some acts merely record the slave's price at sale; others specified his or her name, place of origin, age, and included a basic physical description. Nonetheless, the data allow us at least a glimpse at the demographics. As elsewhere in the Western Mediterranean, Genoese slavery was highly gendered, with young women the most frequently targeted by slave traffickers.¹⁵ Female slaves appear more than twice as often as male slaves (thirty-one versus thirteen). Very few households owned more than one or two slaves, and while noble families were well represented among the buyers and sellers, the middle and professional classes also owned slaves, including lawyers, doctors, blacksmiths, cloth merchants, and shoe-makers.¹⁶ Evidence from the fourteenth century and later suggests that the main economic role of enslaved women was in domestic service, where they were coerced into a wide range of roles, including sexual labor for Genoese men, but also as wet-nurses.¹⁷

¹³ Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 64–65.

¹⁴ For an estimate of Genoa's pre-plague population estimates (between 80,000 and 100,000), see Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 213.

¹⁵ Though at 29%, the proportion of male Muslim slaves in Genoa was higher than in most Latin Christian cities of the fourteenth century; see Sally McKee, "The Implications of Slave Women's Sexual Service in Late Medieval Italy," in *Unfreie Arbeit: Ökonomische und Kulturgeschichtliche Perspektiven*, ed. M. Erdem Kabadayi and Tobias Reichardt (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007), 101–14.

¹⁶ ASG *Notai Antichi* 70 157v; 75 137v;

¹⁷ Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen Age dans le monde méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), 144–163; and Sally McKee, "Slavery," in Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and*

Points of origin of the enslaved were not always included in acts of sale; however, those acts that do report this information reveal a preponderance of Andalusī; with Valencia, Murcia, Granada, and other *partes Yspanie* accounting for 25% of the total population, and only two slaves from the Maghrib itself. Many of these people were likely sold into slavery by Iberian Christians: the forty years between 1220 and 1260 saw the Christian conquest of much Muslim territory, conquests which led to the enslavement of thousands of people at a time. Those being sold were most commonly described by gender, name, and often by appearance or skin color: sales mention white (*blanca*), “brown or olive” (*bruna vel olivegna*), and black (*nigra*) as skin colors. Including a “national” description for a slave was, in theory, a requirement of Roman civil law, though it was not always observed.¹⁸ On occasion, individuals whose names or places of origin strongly suggest a non-Christian background (“Ali”, “Mariam of Spain”) go without any religious or physical description at all; in other cases the notaries provide only the names given them by their Christian owners. In addition to Fatima/*Sibilla* mentioned above, a “white Saracen slave named Jacobina” was sold in October 1241, and another “white Saracen named Jacobeto” appeared in 1288.¹⁹ At this point, skin color was still deemed unimportant in determining slave or free status, by comparison to religion, “nation”, and the circumstances of enslavement.²⁰

Gender in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 281-294. See also Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 180-153; Hannah Barker, *Egyptian and Italian Merchants in the Black Sea Slave Trade, 1260-1500* (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2014), 409-416.

¹⁸ Justinian, *Digest* 21.1.31.21 “Qui mancipia vendunt, nationem cuiusque in venditione pronuntiare debent: plerumque enim natio servi aut provocat aut deterret emptorem.”

¹⁹ ASG *Notai Antichi* 26/I (Bonvassallo de Cassino): 206v; and 75 (Guglielmo de S. Giorgio): 135v. These could have been simply names of convenience given to the slaves by their owners, and not indicative of actual baptism. However, other individuals, such as “Aldeta who has been baptized” (*que est baptizata*) suggest that some slaves did in fact convert, willingly or unwillingly. ASG *Notai Antichi* 29 (Bartolomeo Fornari): 55r.

²⁰ The relationship between skin color, race, and slavery in medieval Europe is highly complex. As Steven Epstein and Hannah Barker have argued, in late thirteenth-century Italy, there was no firm association between skin color and slavery. Humanity continued to be conceived as divided by religion and by “nation”

In the late medieval Mediterranean, most slaves were born in freedom and became enslaved through warfare, piracy, or kidnapping. In other, desperate cases, people deliberately sold themselves or their children into slavery to avoid death by starvation, as took place on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco during severe famines in the early thirteenth century.²¹ However, while “slavery” was accepted as a fact of life and a feature of the law of nations, “captivity” in the Mediterranean was often seen in terms of religious difference.²² In Iberia, where a long tradition of border warfare and raiding created a common culture of captivity and ransom between Christians and Muslims, legal texts in both Latin and Arabic distinguished between captives (*captivi/asrā*) and slaves (*sclavi/‘abīd*).²³ In Genoa, physically further removed from the contested borderlands between Christianity and Islam, there was no formal legal distinction between Muslim captives and slaves, but some slave traffickers likely hoped for ransoms, rather than permanent enslavement. In 1289, a Genoese ship captain in Tunis warned local officials that they had one day left to ransom the prisoners on his ship, before he took them elsewhere: these unfortunate individuals were probably destined for a slave market.²⁴ Though the Latin sources are silent, one can imagine the anguish and suffering endured by the captives over the months and years, as what they hoped would be temporary captivity became permanent enslavement in a strange country.

(gens), each of which could exhibit a range of physical attributes. However, racial attitudes were beginning to harden, with Italian writers perceiving some groups as more “natural” slaves than others. See Steven Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery* (Cornell University Press, 2001), and Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 39–60.

²¹ See *al-Maqṣad al-Sharīf*, ed. Saʿīd ʿArab (Rabat: 1993), 61; *Les Saints du Rif*, trans. G. S. Colin (Paris: H. Champion, 1926), 35.

²² Of course, Christians frequently targeted each other for capture and ransom; but in theory they were not supposed to enslave one another.

²³ Hussein Fancy, “Captivity, Ransom, and Manumission, 500–1400” *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 53–75.

²⁴ *Pietro Battifoglio* (doc. 82).

If captives could get word to their relatives (and, more importantly, if their relatives could put together a ransom), they stood a reasonable chance of regaining their freedom. One woman named “Asia” (likely a Latinized form of *ʿAīsha*) successfully obtained her freedom through a combination of a ransom paid by others and by her own efforts to collect money. On August 30, 1259, Asia’s owner, Nicolo de Madio, formally emancipated her, invoking a pragmatic combination of spiritual and material motives: “for the health of my soul and for £10 which I have received.”²⁵ Nicolo’s wife Aidelina confirmed the emancipation in a separate act. Asia’s redeemers were two men acting together; “Bonbocherius de Maometo, Saracen of Tunis,” and Bergognono Embriaco, a scion of one of Genoa’s elite families, and probably the same man who would later underwrite the emancipation of Fatima. Bonbocherius was described in the act as staying temporarily at the house of Conrado de Castro, also probably the same individual who later accepted a ransom for Fatima in 1271. However, the total ransom price for Asia was £13, not £10. Asia pledged to make up the difference within six months of her release, a feat that she managed just over two months later, for on November 5, 1259, Nicolo confirmed his receipt of the outstanding £3 from Asia herself.²⁶ This act strongly suggests that Asia spent the months after her emancipation living in Genoa, collecting the rest of the ransom money. Exactly how she managed to collect the money is unclear; however, she may have relied on donations from other Muslims residing in or passing through Genoa.²⁷

²⁵ “pro remedio anime mee et pro libris decem Ianue quas proinde recepi” ASG *Notai Antichi* 34 (Conrado de Capriata): 195r.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 124v.

²⁷ For an example of how ransoms were collected, see Wansharīsī, *al-Mi’yār* II: 211.

In addition to their own efforts to regain their freedom, both Asia and Fatima benefited from the presence of intermediary figures who acted on their behalf to redeem them. In both cases, these involved Muslim men (Asmetus/Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-al-Raḥman and “Bonbocherius de Maometo,”) who worked together with local Genoese Christians to secure the release of their co-religionists; in the former case borrowing the ransom money, and in the latter apparently pooling resources with a Genoese Christian colleague. In this, both men may have acted in the role of an official redeemer, or *fakkāk*, charged with traveling to infidel territory to redeem Muslim captives. This position was well-established in Islamic law, particularly in the Māliki jurisprudence of al-Andalus and the Maghrib, where formal rules of compensation and payment for their services were codified in books of notarial practice.²⁸ In the late twelfth century, the Andalusī jurist and notary al-Jazīrī wrote a series of sample contracts for families wishing to hire a *fakkāk* to redeem their relatives in Christian captivity. Genoese and Tunisian merchants alike participated in what Camilo Gómez-Rivas termed a “ransom industry” in the Western Mediterranean, in which informal rules of redeeming captives developed between Christians and Muslims keen to keep alive the possibility of future exchange and communication.²⁹ Indeed, al-Jazīrī cautioned his readers about possible

²⁸ See P. van Koningsveld, “Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 6:1 (1995), 5–23, see also Kathryn Miller, *Guardians of Islam: Religious Authority and Muslim Communities of Late Medieval Spain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); idem, “Reflections on Reciprocity: A Late Medieval Islamic Perspective on Christian-Muslim Commitment to Captive Exchange,” *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900* ed. Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Cátia Antunes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131-149.

²⁹ Camilo Gomez-Rivas, “The ransom industry and the expectation of refuge on the Western Mediterranean Muslim-Christian frontier, 1085-1350,” *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib, Proceedings of the British Academy* Vol 195 ed. Amira K. Bennison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 217-232. See also Russell Hopley, “The Ransoming of Prisoners in Medieval North Africa and Andalusia: An Analysis of the Legal Framework,” in *Al-Andalus, Sepharad and Medieval Iberia : Cultural Contact and Diffusion* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 179–198.

collusion between a *fakkāk* and his Christian contacts to artificially inflate the ransom of a captive in order to pocket the extra cash.³⁰

Redeeming a Muslim captive was not only a meritorious act for an individual in Islamic law and ethics, but was also considered a positive duty of pious rulers. Political authorities were expected to use public revenues to redeem captives when they could, and to negotiate prisoner exchanges. In July 1274, a Ḥafṣid embassy passed through Genoa on its way to France. While there, Fadal, the ambassador's representative, negotiated the ransom of a woman named Fatima for £15 paid to her owner. At the outset of the transaction, Fadal established his authority by stating to a Latin notary that he was acting "in the name of Cecha Busait [Shaykh Abū Sa'īd?], Saracen of Tunis, the *faqīh*" and two other men, "ambassadors of the king of Tunis to the lord king of France."³¹ After settling the terms of the ransom, Fadal promised that Abu Sa'īd would "liberate and make free the aforementioned Fatima in the city of Tunis at her request" (*dictam Fatimam liberabit et francham faciet in civitate Tunexis ad voluntatem dicte Fatime*).³² The act was witnessed by a large group of people including two other Muslims and several Genoese, one of whom described himself as "Gerardo, banker of Tunis, who was once a slave." (*Girardus bancarius de Tunexis qui fuit sclavus*).³³ Unlike the ransoms of Fatima and Asia above, this act appears to have been the design of the Tunisian ambassador himself; perhaps taking advantage of his travels in Christian territory to perform a work of charity. One must imagine the ambassador returning to Tunis with a small

³⁰ Al-Jazīrī vol. 2, 340–341.

³¹ "nomine Scecha Bosait Saraceni tunexis Alfachini et Boadbile et Bonbesise [Ros de mei?miri? emomenin?] nuntii regis tunexis euntis ad dominum regem Francie," *ASG Notai Antichi* 79 (Leonardo de Negrini), 168r.

³² *Ibid*, 168r.

³³ It is unclear whether this individual was a Genoese resident at Tunis who had been enslaved there, or perhaps a freed slave of Tunisian origin.

group of freed captives. Notably, there is no mention of the *scriba comunis Ianue* for Arabic language here: the ambassador intervened directly with Fatima's owners.

Scribes and Interpreters

Genoa's "scribes of Arabic letters" have been the subject of some scholarly interest. Georges Jehel posited the existence of a "professor of Arabic" active at Genoa from 1267 onwards. However, an examination of the notarial records fails to substantiate this claim, which in fact derives from two eighteenth-century histories of medieval Genoa, whose authors took the appearance of individuals described as *scriba comunis Ianue in littera sarracena* to indicate an official teaching role.³⁴ In fact, the acts in which these scribes appear give no clear indication of any teaching or language instruction by the two individuals mentioned, beyond their mere qualification as *scriba comunis Ianue*. While this does not preclude altogether the possibility that some Genoese learned Arabic at the hands of these scribes, it is more likely that they were simply professional notaries retained by the commune to read and write in Arabic.

Aḥmad b. 'Abd-al-Raḥman presents a particularly interesting example of this type of scribe, and he seems to have occupied at least two roles at once. On the one hand, he was a crucial mediator in securing Fatima's release, trusted enough by his Genoese peers to allow him to borrow money from them in order to secure the emancipation. On the other hand, his appointment as "scribe of Saracen letters" indicates his long-term employment, at Genoa, by

³⁴ Georges Jehel, "Jews and Muslims in Medieval Genoa: from the twelfth to the fourteenth century" *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10: 1-2 (1995), 123. Jehel's manuscript source, Biblioteca Universitaria MS BIX.17, was a memorandum composed during the short-lived Ligurian Republic (1797-1805), which itself made reference to an earlier eighteenth-century index known as the *Pandette Richeriane* (ASG Manoscritti 540), 122r and 153v. This index, which contains references to actual medieval material, led me to the original notarial cartulary ASG *Notai Antichi* 79 (Leonardo de Negrini) in which the "scriba comunis Ianue" appears.

the commune itself. In other words, he was neither a passing merchant nor an envoy on a special mission to free captives; but was almost certainly resident at Genoa. Others filled this role before him. In 1244, a Tunisian Jew named Moses appeared in a notarial act, where he was described as having once occupied the same office (*olim scriba communis Ianue littere sarracenis*).³⁵ Three years later, Moses appears again, this time as the purchaser of a Muslim slave named Axia/Āisha; there is no evidence that he chose to liberate her. The act of sale was composed in the palace of the podestà himself (*palacio potestatis Ianue quo ipse tenet curiam*).³⁶

The need for Arabic notaries came from several directions. As indicated in Chapter One, the Genoese commune carried on diplomatic correspondence with several Muslim rulers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This required the production of official letters conforming to the norms of Arabic chancery production, the *‘ilm al-inshā’*. However, there was probably also a demand on the part of Arabic-speaking merchants and sailors trading at Genoa; although they do not often appear in the notarial records, they are present. Muslim and Jewish investors based in the Maghrib regularly formed partnerships with trusted Genoese or other Ligurian merchants, as at Savona in November 1213, where Guasco Gloria delivered £18 13s to an associate; funds that Guasco had originally received from “Bonus Musa de Tunexis.”³⁷ Treaties between Genoa and the Ḥafṣids stipulated that Muslim merchants should be safe and secure in their goods when traveling to Genoa, and such provisions were indeed enforced. In 1251, “Bocherius, Saracen and merchant of Tunis” was in Genoa, where he successfully claimed £25 in damages for cargo he had lost to pirates from

³⁵ ASG *Notai Antichi* 31/I: 18r.

³⁶ ASG *Notai Antichi* 34 (Nicolo de Porta): 27v.

³⁷ Uberto I, 290-291 (doc. 378).

Portovenere. The act of quittance took place “in the presence, by the consent, and with the confirmation of *magister* Abu Faihli Lesedi, Saracen.”³⁸ Abu Faihli’s qualification as *magister* and his intervention in the act suggest some kind of official function, or at least his importance in resolving disputes between his co-religionists and the locals. Several different merchants from Ceuta are attested in Genoa during this period, making contracts and trading with locals.³⁹ There was even at least one free Muslim woman in Genoa, “Marieme, Saracen of Málaga” who in April 1274 invested a significant sum of money in a sea loan for Tunis with a Genoese merchant, Delomeda de Salvo, who had been active in the Maghrib trade for over twenty years. Delomeda pledged to repay her in the amount of 95 white bezants within twenty days of their ship’s arrival in Tunis; their departure was probably imminent. It’s not clear what Marieme’s purpose in Genoa was, but it is highly unlikely that she was a former slave or captive, given her ability to independently invest such a significant sum, nor is she mentioned in conjunction with any male relatives, as would have been expected for Christian women acting before a notary.⁴⁰ She may simply have been passing through the city on her way to Tunis— it’s even possible that she was she was a pilgrim on her way to Mecca from her home in Málaga.⁴¹

As was the case with their Genoese counterparts, Arabic notaries frequently acted as merchants or investors in their own right, forming partnerships with locals in a number of

³⁸ “in presencia et voluntate et confirmante magistro Abul Faihli Lesedi sarraceno” ASG *Notai Antichi* 31/1 (Matteo de Predono): 154r.

³⁹ Dufourcq, “Aperçu sur le commerce entre Gênes et le Maghrib au XIIIe siècle,” *Économies et Sociétés au Moyen Âge: Mélanges offerts à Edouard Perroy* (Paris, 1973) 733, and Halima Ferhat, *Sabta des origines*, 341.

⁴⁰ ASG *Notai Antichi* 79

⁴¹ Other Andalusi pilgrims made frequent use of Genoese ships; the most famous being Ibn Jubayr in 1184–85. Scholarship on female Muslim pilgrims is limited; see Marina Tolmacheva, “Female piety and patronage in the medieval Hajj,” in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World. Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 161–179,

contexts. In April 1274 Asmetus made a tiny, two-month loan of 8s to Giovanni de Valle Viridis, whose debt was guaranteed by another individual, Giovanni de Romania.⁴² In another obscure but fascinating case, Asmetus seems to have formed a partnership with a priest, Guglielmo de Brugnacello, canon of the church at Ottone. On April 13, 1274, a local couple, Ambrogio de Baxano and his wife Sophia, formally promised to give Asmetus and Guglielmo the rights to “one-third of everything that shall be found in a certain hole/cave...on our property...and we will not extract anything unless in your presence and that of lord Opizino Adalardo.”⁴³ A month later, Asmetus appointed Opizino as his procurator, possibly with regard to the same excavation.⁴⁴ Was the Tunisian notary merchant acting as a treasure hunter? A miner or trader in a mineral commodity?⁴⁵ How exactly an Arab Muslim scribe and a Christian cleric came to have rights over this mine or excavation remains unclear; however, the act shows that Asmetus did not limit his activities to the port and the merchants who worked there; he formed partnerships that took him into the mountainous countryside surrounding Genoa. One wonders what the locals would have made of this foreign, Muslim man and his priestly associate walking in the Ligurian hills.

⁴² ASG *Notai Antichi* 79 (Leonardo de Negrini) 104r. Intriguingly, both men named Giovanni are described as having been originally from Tunis (*qui fui de Tunexis*). This raises a number of possibilities: the men might have been Muslim converts from Tunisia, or perhaps Christian natives of Tunis, either from a Genoese background or perhaps even Tunisian Arab-speaking background- the *Aromes* described by the Dominicans in their letter to Ramón de Peñafort; see Tolan, *Dubitabilia*, 13.

⁴³ “tertiam partem de omni eo quod inveniatur in quidam cava que est in terra nostra... non extrahemus...de cava predicta absque presencia vestra et domini Opizini Adalardi” ASG *Notai Antichi* 79 (Leonardo de Negrini), 100r.

⁴⁴ Ibid 143r. The act is left blank in the middle, so it cannot be said for certain what task Asmetus intended Opizino to perform.

⁴⁵ The couple referred to their land as being located in a “territorio ubi dicitur carbonaria”, which could indicate that it included a charcoal furnace—however, this is far from certain; ASG *Notai Antichi* 27, 100r.

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Merchants, Travelers, and Artisans

Unlike their Christian peers in the Maghrib, Muslim merchants who traded at Genoa lacked a formal space dedicated to their use, such as a *fondaco*. This was a critical difference between them and the Genoese who arrived in Maghribi ports. While the Genoa-Tunis treaties guaranteed that Muslim merchants and their belongings would be "kept safe and guarded" (*salventur et custodientur*) in Genoa, they stopped short of offering any kind of institutional support for them; this may reflect the relatively small number of Muslim merchants who traveled to Genoa, at least by comparison with the Genoese in Tunis.⁴⁶ As a result of this, the acts in which Muslim merchants appear were composed in a number of different settings, particularly in the houses of prominent Genoese merchants: Ugo de Fornari hosted Bocherius in 1251, while Bonbocherius de Maometo stayed at the house of Conrado de Castro in 1259.⁴⁷ In the absence of formal institutions to welcome them, Muslim merchants relied on their relationships with individual Genoese who could be trusted to shelter them and their belongings, such as Opizino de Adalardo (for Asmetus) or the Fornari and Castro families.

On occasion, some Muslims appear in the records who cannot easily be categorized as merchants, scribes, or diplomats. One Tunisian man appears to have been a sort of broker or intermediary for other merchants. On September 18, 1238, "Resaomar, Saracen of Tunis" loaded nineteen *pondera* of ceramics onto a ship owned by a Genoese merchant, whereupon he swore that none of the goods belonged to him, and accepted payment of 4s per *pondus*,

⁴⁶ Mas-Latrie (Genoa-Tunis treaty, 1250), 120.

⁴⁷ This was also true of Christian merchants at Genoa and other northern Italian cities in the thirteenth century, who tended to own or rent property in the city itself and did not typically stay together in a *fondaco*. See Olivia Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 311-313.

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for a total of £3 16s, a sum of money that suggests Resaomar was rather more than a common laborer, even if he was not qualified as a *negotiator* in the act in question.⁴⁸

In addition to visiting or resident Muslims, there were converts to Christianity who chose to settle in Genoa. In many cases, these new Christians retained close ties to their former co-religionists. When Aḥmad made his small loan of 8s, his borrower was a man calling himself “Giovanni di Romania, I who was once from Tunis” (*ego qui fui de Tunexis*), and his guarantor was another Tunisian migrant, Giovanni de Valle Viridis. For such a small loan to require a guarantor probably meant that these were two quite humble individuals. Were they former slaves or converts from Islam? Earlier, as we have seen, Gerardo the banker of Tunis also attested to his former slave status when witnessing a manumission. These declarations of past identities and places of origin were not strictly necessary, in a legal sense, but they undoubtedly helped to identify the individuals who were involved in these transactions.

In another case, “Paolo the Saracen” was an oar-maker (*remularius*) from Mallorca, “who used to be called Abdi Alacis, son of Ali,” who in January 1241 sold his claims to £3 4s 6d owed him by three individuals in Murcia to Moses of Tunis, the former scribe of the commune.⁴⁹ Despite his conversion, the Genoese notary still described Paolo as a “Saracen.” Paolo may also have been an emancipated slave, though if so, he was of higher social status than the two Giovannis mentioned above. His sale of rights over the debts owed to him suggest a decision not to return to Mallorca, to Murcia, or to Islam. Conversion to Christianity did not automatically guarantee a slave’s liberty, but would certainly have aided their

⁴⁸ ASG *Notai Ignoti* 3.46 (Bonvassallo de Cassino), 11v.

⁴⁹ ASG *Notai Antichi* 31/I (Matteo de Predono) 18r.

eventual integration into Genoese society. In 1253, two Christian converts, one from Bona and the other from Mallorca, were married in Genoa, with a dowry of £10, a significant sum for a working-class individual. While not explicitly stated, the two may have been former slaves; some masters included their manumitted slaves in their wills, providing money for dowries. The temptation to convert was an ever-present fear for Muslim and Christian theologians contemplating the fate of their co-religionists in “enemy” hands.⁵⁰

The lives of these working class Muslims and converts can only be guessed at; some were more fortunate than others. In April 1274, a Muslim man from Bijāya, Cabi *sarracenus*, entered into a service contract with Giannino de Molo, a butcher (*macellarius*). Cabi pledged to serve Giannino for twenty years, “in your house and outside, on land and sea, in the city of Genoa and in the country.”⁵¹ No salary was mentioned as part of the deal, and the extremely long duration of the contract is highly unusual (most labor contracts lasted only a few years), but Cabi was not a slave. As with the two newlyweds mentioned above, it’s possible that he had been enslaved in the past: in later periods, it was common for owners to emancipate their slaves on condition of a period of continued service, but this cannot be proven here.⁵² The exact nature of the relationship remains unclear, but Cabi’s presence is further evidence of the presence of non-elite, non-slave Maghribi Muslims in Genoa.

⁵⁰ P. van Koningsveld, “Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 6:1 (1995), 5-23; and Tolan, *Dubitalia*, 4-5.

⁵¹ “omnia servicia tua in domo et extra terra et mari in civitate Ianue et in rure, tam in absencia quam in presencia” ASG *Notai Antichi* 79 (Leonardo de Negrini), 100v.

⁵² Denise Bezzina, *Artigiani a Genova*, 50–51.

The Duty to Emigrate: Islamic Law and Travel to Christian Territory

Given that large numbers of Genoese and other Italian Christians traded and lived in the Maghrib for years at a time, the relative scarcity of Muslim merchants in Christian ports in this period has been ascribed to several factors. These have included the commercial hegemony of Italian shipping after 1100, anti-Muslim sentiments on the part of Italian communes, and the supposed taboo on commercial travel to non-Muslim territory.⁵³ However, more recently, scholars of Islamic law have forcefully challenged the idea of a Muslim “ban” on travel to Christian territory. For one thing, Muslim merchants had been active participants in markets controlled by non-Muslims across Afro-Eurasia since the early days of Islam. There was, it is true, a legal and moral tradition, particularly within the Mālikī school of law, that discouraged Muslims from settling permanently outside the *Dār al-Islām*. Mālik b. Anas (d. 797) reportedly discouraged even temporary travel to non-Muslim territory for the purpose of trade. As Khalid Abou el-Fadl pointed out in 1994, Mālikī consensus turned increasingly against travel to trade with Christians in an atmosphere of crisis following the acceleration of Christian conquests on the Iberian peninsula and Sicily in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵⁴ Hence, both the Andalusī Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 1126) and the Ifrīqiyan jurist al-Māzarī (d. 1141) issued *fatwās* against commercial travel to Christian Spain and Sicily, respectively.⁵⁵ Both jurists were concerned with the fact that visiting Muslim merchants would be unable to openly practice Islam, and would be forced to

⁵³ An argument made most controversially by Bernard Lewis in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982). For a corrective, see Daniel König, *Arabic-Islamic views of the Latin West: Tracing the Emergence of Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a broad overview of Muslim travel to Christian-controlled territory (albeit mostly Spain, the Balearic Islands, and Sicily), see Dominique Valérian, “Les Marchands Musulmans dans les ports chrétiens au Moyen Age,” 109–120.

⁵⁴ Khalid Abou el-Fadl, “Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: The Juristic Discourse on Muslim Minorities from the Second/Eighth to the Eleventh/Seventeenth Centuries,” *Islamic Law and Society* 1: 2 (1994), 141–187.

⁵⁵ Ibn Rushd, *Fatāwa al-Burzulī* I: 595–596.

pay customs and excise duties that would ultimately swell the coffers of hostile Christian princes. Even in the context of a famine in Ifrīqiya, al-Māzarī ruled that mere necessity (*ḍarūra*) was no excuse. However, as Jocelyn Hendrickson has shown, these *fatwās* were tied to specific concerns with Christian rulers; they were rarely interpreted as blanket condemnations of all commercial travel to non-Muslim territory.⁵⁶ Al-Māzarī's *fatwā* emerged as a result of debate between Ifrīqiyān *ʿulamā*, some of whom did permit travel in the case of public need. Moreover, even al-Māzarī, in a separate ruling, accepted several justifications for Muslim residence in Christian territories, including an inability to leave, the desire to minister to other Muslims' spiritual needs, or even the desire to convert Christians to Islam. Although he disapproved of Muslim merchants traveling to Christian territory purely for the purpose of trade, he refused to condemn the integrity (*ʿadāla*) of merchants who did so, on the basis that there was disagreement between jurists about the permissibility.⁵⁷

In the final analysis, although they were influential for later generations of scholars, the two twelfth-century *fatwās* above were simply opinions; others were available. Assuming they knew of the dispute in the first place, the Maghribi merchants and others who lived in Genoa surely held a range of views about the legal discourse, from rejection to creative interpretation. Who was to say what "necessity" really meant? In this regard, they were no different than their Christian counterparts who applied a range of interpretations, sincere or otherwise, to papal embargoes on the weapons trade with Muslims, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Moreover, the continuous presence of Muslim captives in Genoa

⁵⁶ Jocelyn Hendrickson, "Prohibiting the Pilgrimage: Politics and Fiction in Mālikī Fatwās," *Islamic Law and Society* 23: 2 (2016), 161–238.

⁵⁷ Cited in Jocelyn Hendrickson, "The Islamic Obligation to Emigrate," 375.

provided a useful justification for travel to the city: even the most severe of jurists accepted the permissibility of travel to non-Muslim territory to redeem captives.

Even though Muslims did travel to Genoa and remained there for long periods, there is little evidence in this early period for any kind of collective identity for the Muslim community in Liguria; no *fondaco*, no mosque or place for communal worship. Such institutions, in the Maghrib, formed the core of Italian settlement. Much later, in the seventeenth century, the Genoese Republic along with Naples and Livorno would recognize the authority of a community-appointed imam, known in Italian as a *papasso*, who spoke for the Muslim community, both free and enslaved, within the city, and would grant them access to a building for use as a mosque.⁵⁸ However, in the thirteenth century, Muslims trading and living in Genoa faced the commune and their Christian neighbors as isolated individuals. This was the sharpest contrast with the Genoese in the Maghrib, who, as we have seen, insisted on controlling their own physical and conceptual space, and represented themselves as a community through an elected or appointed consul.

Muslim Material Culture in Genoa?

One consequence of the lack of institutional support was that individual Muslim merchants could appear quite socially isolated in Genoa. In 1271, a Muslim man named “Acigio” (‘Azīz?) died at Genoa. It is unclear whether Acigio made a will or named heirs, but for whatever reason, after his death, a local man, Muscardo di San Matteo, acted as custodian

⁵⁸ Salvatore Bono, “Schiavi maghrebini in Italia e cristiani nel Maghreb: proteste e attestazioni per la ‘reciprocità’ di trattamento” *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 49: 3 (1994), 331-351.

of his estate, and made a detailed list of his property.⁵⁹ First noted by Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq in 1973, Acigio's estate inventory has not yet received the attention it deserves as a witness to the material culture of medieval Muslim traders resident abroad.⁶⁰ Under Roman law traditions in Christian ports like Genoa, such inventories were required in cases where the deceased died intestate or insolvent.⁶¹ Muscardo's list indeed refers vaguely to certain objects or things (*quedam res*) that were said to belong to the consuls of the city, though it does not state that Acigio was insolvent.⁶² One possible explanation for this is that no heirs could be found, and that the consul took ownership of the goods of a deceased foreign merchant.

Whatever the circumstances of Acigio's demise, the inventory of his possessions suggests that he was either a merchant, or, at the least, an artisan of some means. He owned several large wooden and ivory chests, trunks, and other containers full of clothes, household implements, and other goods. His possession of a large number of dozens of sword blades, knives, locks, nails, and iron and copper wire led Dufourcq to the plausible conclusion that he was a metal trader, perhaps even a weapons merchant.⁶³ However, Acigio's belongings also suggest an opportunistic streak, not unlike that of his Genoese counterparts investing in the Maghrib trade. In addition to the metal objects, he also owned several small bags of spices and other luxury items, including cinnamon, mastic, cloves, and saffron, several bolts of fine

⁵⁹ ASG *Notai Antichi* 105 193r. See Appendix C for a full transcription and translation of this document.

⁶⁰ Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, "Aperçu sur le commerce entre Gênes et le Maghrib au XIIIe siècle", in *Économies et sociétés au Moyen âge: mélanges offerts à Édouard Perroy* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973), 721–736.

⁶¹ Daniel Smail, *Legal plunder: households and debt collection in late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); David Johnson, "Succession," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, 199–212.

⁶² "In primis namque audivi dici quod in dictis bonis sunt quedam res que funt in consulatu civitatis et burgi." ASG *Notai Antichi* 105 193r.

⁶³ Dufourcq, *Aperçu sur le commerce*, 729.

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cloth, and forty pairs of clogs (*paria patitorum*). These are hardly likely to have been intended for private use, and must have been trade goods of some kind. In terms of household objects, a humbler picture emerges: a series of copper vessels for cooking, eating, drinking, and lighting, a sack of beans, a brazier and some wooden spoons, a mattress and set of blankets and pillows, and several rugs (*fargara*) in different colors.

Most of these objects would have been familiar items in the everyday life of medieval Genoa and represented aspects of a material culture common to the Mediterranean: food preparation, clothing, home lighting, clean sheets and soft blankets to sleep in. However, in describing them, Muscardo occasionally differentiated between different cultural styles. Acigio owned both “Saracen” and “Genoese” trousers, for instance, traded in “Saracen” swords, locks, and keys, and owned “Saracen” clogs. Other items were described only in terms of color, size, or material. One question naturally emerges: how visibly “foreign” would Acigio have appeared to his neighbors? Would his “white mantle with a green lining” or his “white caps” mark him out as a foreign Muslim on the streets of Genoa? Or might *sarracinescha* clothing and material culture be simply a stylistic choice available to anyone in a busy Mediterranean port?

There is, of course, much we cannot know about Acigio’s life, because it was not deemed important by the author of the inventory. Was he, in fact, a metals trader? If so, what exactly was he trading? On the one hand, his possession of many dozen “Saracen swords” would suggest he had brought his wares with him from the Maghrib to sell to local buyers. On the other hand, his ownership of spices, cloth, and mastic show his interest in other trade goods, possibly purchased locally: had he intended to return to the Maghrib with these? Sell them on? How long had he lived in Genoa: was he simply passing through, or had he made

his home there for some time? As Elizabeth Lambourn has pointed out in her analysis of material culture in the twelfth-century Indian Ocean trade, merchants frequently traveled with a large amount of what modern people would consider “furniture”: beds, tables, rugs, etc: Acigio’s possessions may represent a “travel culture” rather than a stationary one.⁶⁴ Certainly none of the objects mentioned would have posed a serious challenge to load into a ship. Perhaps the relatively humble nature of his personal household goods — the broken copper bowls, the wooden spoons — suggest that he was merely staying in Genoa for a season, to sell his goods, before returning home. If we assume the opposite, other questions arise about Acigio’s place in local society: did he have a family, or local friends? Where was he living in town? Was he actively practicing Islam, or was the “Saracen” label imposed upon him by the notary to designate his linguistic or ethnic origins?

It is not clear what happened to Acigio’s possessions after his death, but it’s worth noting that Genoese and other Italian commercial treaties with Muslim rulers usually sought to avoid exactly this scenario: insisting that only communally-appointed authorities, particularly the consul, had the right to dispose of the property of their fellow citizens who died intestate overseas.⁶⁵ To die alone or isolated, and have strangers pore over one’s earthly possessions, was a fate that almost every merchant would have dreaded and sought to avoid.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Lambourn, *Abraham’s luggage a social life of things in the medieval Indian ocean world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 21–24.

⁶⁵ See for instance Mas-Latrie, *Traités de paix et de commerce*(Venice– Tunis Treaty, 1305), 214.

Conclusion: Seen and Unseen Histories

Geo Pistarino's observation about Genoa's "unseen history" is particularly aptly applied to Genoa's Muslim population. The biases of a Latin-speaking notariate, combined with the lack of an equivalent source base on the Maghribi side, can make these individuals hard to see clearly. Nonetheless, they were present. Although many—most—were slaves taken to the city against their will, some were educated men: scribes or translators who freely sought employment with the communal government. Still others were merchants, tradespeople, or visiting ambassadors. They had complex relationships with each other, depending on their free or unfree status, their religious commitments, and their stated purpose for being in Genoa. It would be going too far to describe these Muslims—and former Muslims—as constituting a "community", in the sense that larger Muslim populations of Western Mediterranean cities did. They appear to have lacked communal representation or a common sense of identity, despite the hierarchy suggested, perhaps, by the *magistri* who appear in certain notarial acts. Nonetheless, the importance of these foreign, transient, or captive Muslims within the city's urban fabric should not be underestimated. Their influence on the broader society in which they found themselves may be difficult to measure, but for many Genoese, these Muslim slaves, migrants, and merchants were far more present and part of their lives than the distant "Saracens" of *Oltremare* or Egypt. While many of the most visible relationships between Christians and Muslims were mediated by slavery, captivity, or business ties, other possibilities suggest themselves in passing. Indeed, it may be that the lack of institutional organization or collective identity available for free Muslims in Genoa fostered deeper, more individual connections with local Christians than the Genoese

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experienced in Tunis, Bijāya, or Ceuta, more confined, as they were, to their well-established *fondacos*.

Appendix One: Muslims in Medieval Genoese Notarial Acts, 1200–1300.**Table 1a: Muslim Slaves and Captives in Notarial Acts, 1213–1289.**

| YEAR | NAME OF THE SLAVE | PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION | PLACE OF ORIGIN |
|------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1213 | Salome | -- | -- |
| 1236 | Fatima | -- | Cuenca |
| 1240 | Bocherius | white | Tunis |
| 1240 | Axia | white | -- |
| 1240 | Axia | brown | -- |
| 1240 | Sophia | white | -- |
| 1240 | Axia | brown | Valencia |
| 1241 | Fatima | -- | Granada |
| 1241 | Fatima | brown | -- |
| 1241 | Fatima | brown | -- |
| 1241 | Axia | brown | "Augesina"? |
| 1241 | Sofla | black | Ceuta |
| 1241 | Jacobina | white | -- |
| 1241 | Ali | white | Valencia |
| 1244 | Sayt | brown | -- |
| 1246 | "Axeta, called Benvenuta" | -- | -- |
| 1247 | Axia | -- | -- |
| 1248 | Asmetus | -- | -- |
| 1248 | Mayimonus | brown | Valencia |
| 1251 | Fatima | olive | -- |
| 1252 | Asmecus | brown, "between two colors" | -- |
| 1252 | Fatima | white | -- |

| YEAR | NAME OF THE SLAVE | PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION | PLACE OF ORIGIN |
|------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1252 | Axia | white | -- |
| 1252 | Bolaria | -- | -- |
| 1253 | Aldeta, who is baptized | white | -- |
| 1253 | Fatima | white | -- |
| 1253 | Sibillina, who is baptized | white | -- |
| 1259 | Asia | -- | -- |
| 1259 | Mariame | -- | Xàtiva |
| 1263 | Asmetus | white | -- |
| 1263 | Macomet | -- | <i>partes Yspaniae</i> |
| 1263 | Açona | -- | <i>partes Yspaniae</i> |
| 1266 | Fatima | -- | Murcia |
| 1266 | Aly | -- | -- |
| 1266 | Asmetus | -- | -- |
| 1266 | Fatima | olive | -- |
| 1267 | Marieme | -- | Spain |
| 1267 | Axia | black | Murcia |
| 1271 | Fatima | -- | Murcia |
| 1274 | Axona | -- | -- |
| 1274 | Fatima | -- | -- |
| 1288 | Jacobeto | -- | Plana |
| 1289 | Asia | olive | Mallorca |
| 1289 | Ali | olive | Zebis |

Table 1b: Free Muslims and Former Muslims in Medieval Genoese Documents, 1221–1290.

| Year | Name | ORIGIN | PROFESSION | ACT AND NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS |
|-------------|--|---------------|-------------------|---|
| 1221 | Ibn al-Mahalem | Ceuta | merchant | Sells goods in Genoa |
| 1238 | Resaomar | Tunis | -- | Resaomar loads 19 loads (<i>pondera</i>) of ceramics on board a ship and receives payment |
| 1244 | Paolo | Mallorca | oar-maker | Sells rights to debt of 3 L 4s 6d to Moyse of Tunis, scribe of the commune |
| 1247 | Moyse | Tunis | scribe | Moyse purchases a slave, Axia |
| 1251 | Bocherius | Tunis | merchant | Receives compensation from Conrado de Paxanno (as proxy for men of Portovenere) |
| 1251 | Abu Faihli Lesedi | -- | "master" | confirms payment of compensation to Bocherius |
| 1253 | Giovanna <i>baptizata</i> | Mallorca | -- | marries Guglielmo de Grillis <i>baptizatus</i> |
| 1253 | Guglielmo de Grillis <i>baptizatus</i> | Bona | -- | marries Giovanna <i>baptizata</i> of Mallorca |
| 1271 | Acigio | Ceuta | merchant | died at Genoa, commune disposed of his belongings |

| Year | Name | ORIGIN | PROFESSION | ACT AND NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS |
|-------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| 1271 | Asmetus Benaderamen | Tunis | scribe | acknowledges debt for emancipation of slave woman, Fatima |
| " | " | " | " | Local couple confirm his right to one-third of excavated goods at property |
| " | " | " | " | Makes 8s loan to two individuals from Tunis |
| 1274 | Fadal | Tunis | diplomat/envoy | ransoms a Muslim slave woman prior to returning to Tunis |
| 1274 | Ali ben Abdela | Tunis | diplomat/envoy | Witnesses ransom paid by Fadal |
| 1274 | Yben Mechin Rami | Tunis | diplomat/envoy | Witnesses ransom paid by Fadal |
| 1274 | Scecha Bosait | Tunis | Ambassador | Pays ransom [through Fadal] |
| 1274 | Cabi | Bijāya | domestic servant | pledges to serve a butcher, Giannino de Molo, for 20 years |

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| Year | Name | ORIGIN | PROFESSION | ACT AND NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---|
| 1274 | Marieme | Mallorca | -- | makes a sea loan for Tunis for 95 bezants <i>migliaresi</i> |

Appendix Two: Transcription and English Translation of a deceased merchant's belongings, 1271.

Cartulary 105 193r

Notary: Enrico Guglielmo Rosso

Latin:

1 In nomine domini Amen. Ego Muscardus de sancto matheo curator bonorum quondam Açigii sarraceni volens evitare

2 penas imminentes tutoribus et curatoribus non facientibus inventarium, in presencia decreto et auctoritate domini ugonis {Altevir?}

3 de Flor[entia]. Consulibus Ianue de iustitia civium cum {font?} et publicarum pr{esencia?} vid{elicet} {un?} notarii infrascripti et stabilis {octaviani?}

4 publicum tabelionum ac se subscribentium et testium infrascriptorum nulla fraude vel malicia cura hoc adhibita pre-

5 – misso a me venerabili signo crucis. Inventarium de hiis quem inveni in dictis bonis facio disposui et facio

6 in hunc modum. In primis namque audivi dici quod in dictis bonis sunt quedam res que funt in consulatu civita-

7 tis et burgi. Quas {nundum?} habeo. Item die xvi Jan[uarii] invenisse me dico in dictis bonis res infrascriptas que erant in

8 dicto consulatu. Vid[elicet] corbem unam in qua erant res infrascripte vid[elicet] concha rami. tefanie .ii. rami. copercium rami. bacileti . iii. rami fracti.

9 baciletus rotundus. Candelerius rami magnus in peciis tribus. Item alter candelerius in duabus peciis. Mortarii .ii. {culuri?} cum pistillis duobus. Ramarolii .ii.

10 parvi rami. Balancie .ii. rami. Pecie .cxii. açarii. Açole {pecie?} .lxxii. fili subtili. Canne .v. et brachium .i. {?} canabacii. Fogolarium rami. pa-

11 -ria tria galopodarum ferratarum. Paria .viii. pacitorum/patitorum ligni sarracinorum. Strumancium in quo erant res infrascripte. Boia una pilosa. Matalafus {pervis?}. Bo-

12 -neta corii. Media torta lini. Spate .xxiiii. sine manicis. Ferrum album. Caprisium? albaxii foratus barracamine viridis. fargara viridis

13 Oregerii .ii. cannae .x. canabacii vel circa. Linteamina .ii. {perua?} façolus unus vergatus. Acie .iii. magne filii auri. tascheta sive sachus unus.

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14 canabacius in quo erant res infrascripte ~~pe~~-videlicet pec[ias] .xii. veraminis. Veram in peciis .viii. pecia vermili. Lumexelli .v. fili pro {vel?}. {Açete?} .xviii.

15 fili pro vel. Sporta una. Axia una. Cultellesa una. {Speminetus?} cofinus unus cum fabis?. Sachetus corii in quo erant res minute. Arbusotus? corii. Mar—

16 -ratii .x. sportini in quo erant res infrascripte. Sachetus plenus stanchetis. {surtuli?} sive macii .xii. fili ferri. Capscia una in quo erant res infrascripte. Videlicet.

17- duod[ena] .ii. cocleariorum ligni. Bursa recamata. Vetera fracta spata .i. sarrachinesca. Penatus .i. sarrachinescus. Falçoni .ii. spata .i. cultelletus .i. [per?] forficam. Spate

18- .xii. sine manicis. Clavatura sarracinesca. Ferrum latoni. Paurum viridis cum paucobarracaminis. Berrette .vii. albe. Arbasetus {?} cum çucharo. Lumexellus fili. Cami-

19 -xia .i. linteamina .ii. fargara .i. alba. Fargara barracaminis [moleti?] façonus façonus albus tele. Sarrabule .ii. sarracinesche. Alia sarrabula ian[uensis] capscieta elephantis. II.

20 spacium vero superius relictum est ut si quid aliud forte mee memorie occureret id pariter conscribatur

21 Actum Ianue in palacio consulatus foritanum ubi curia regitur presentibus testibus Guillelmo de Murtedo. Symone Bonaventura

22 iudicibus et vivaldo de porta not[arius]. Anno dominice nativitatis MCC septuagesimo primo. Die XVIII madii inter primam et terciam.

23 indictione XIII.

II

1 paria XXXII patitorum sarr[acinorum]. Sachetus corii cum mastico. Sachetus cum canela et gingibere. Macii .iiii. fili rami et macium unum fili ferri.

2 Item alia capsietia elephantis in qua erant res infrascripte videlicet duodena una birretorum lane piscium {?} papirus cum safrano. Papirus cum gario-

3 -folo. Stache .xii. sete nigre.

English Translation:

In the name of God, Amen. I, Muscardo di San Matteo, custodian/guardian/caretaker of the goods of the late *Açigio* the Saracen, desiring to avoid the penalties incumbent on those executors and custodians who fail to make an inventory [of the goods of the deceased], in the presence and by the decree and authority of lord Ugone *Altamira* of Florence, consul of Genoa for citizens and foreigners, and in the presence of public figures; that is, the notary who has

authored this act, and Stabile Ottaviani, notary, both subscribed below, and in the presence of witnesses, also recorded below, committing no fraud or malice, and placing upon myself the venerable sign of the cross, do hereby make an inventory of the items that I have found among those goods, in the following manner.

First of all, I have heard it said that among the goods listed here, some remain that were the rightful property of the consulate of the city and *burgus*, which I do not yet have. On June 16th, I declare that found among these goods the following things that belonged to the consulate.

Item: one large basket/ container which held the following items: a copper vessel, two copper platters, one copper lid, three broken copper bowls. A round copper bowl. A large copper candelabra in three pieces. Two mortars for colors [*culuri*] with two pestles. Two small copper pails. Two balances of copper. One hundred and twelve pieces of steel. Seventy-two *açole* of fine thread. Five *canne* and one *bracchio* of hemp. One copper brazier. Three pairs of iron *galopodarum*. Eight pairs of wooden Saracen clogs.

One large container which held the following items: One fur rug/ hide rug. A small mattress. A leather bag. Half a load of linen [*media torta lini*]. Twenty-four swords without the handles. One white iron [ingot?]. One heavy woolen overcoat (*djellaba*?) lined with green goatskin. One green [rug? See Pisan sermon use.] *fargara*. Two pillows. Ten *cannae* of hemp, or thereabouts. Two small blankets. One striped handkerchief (*fazoletto*). Three skeins of spun thread. One sack, or bag.

One canvas bag which held the following items: twelve pieces of *veraminis*. In 8 pieces. One piece of red cloth. Five balls of thread [for sails? *Pro velis*? Eighteen pieces of *Açete* [for sailing?]. One basket. One axe. One knife. *Speminutus*. One basket of beans.

One leather bag in which there were small items.

Arbusotus of leather. *Marratii*.

Ten bags, containing the following: One bag full of nails. Twelve balls of iron wire.

One chest, which held the following items. Two dozen wooden spoons. An embroidered leather bag. One broken Saracen sword. One Saracen dagger. Two knives. One blade of a scissors. Twelve swords without hilts. Saracen-style locks/ keys [*clavatura*]. One brass blade. A *paurum viridis* with a little goatskin? An *arbasetus* with sugar. One ball of thread. One shirt. Two sheets. One white *fargara*. One *fargara* of goatskin *moleti*. One white cloth container. Two Saracen-style undergarments (Sarrabule). One Genoese-style undergarment. One ivory chest.

II.

Thirty-two pairs of Saracen style clogs (*patitorum sarracinorum*). One bag of mastic. One bag of ginger and cinnamon. Four spools of copper wire and one spool of iron wire.

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Also another ivory chest containing the following: one dozen caps of *lana piscium*. One paper with saffron, One paper with cloves, Twelve bolts/bags of black silk.