

The Marzocco and the Shir o Khorshid:
The Origin and Decline of Medici Persian Diplomacy (1599–1721)

DAVIDE TRENTACOSTE

University of Teramo - Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3

Introduction

The Mediterranean and Levantine vicissitudes of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany have, in recent years, attracted increased interest from scholars of the Early Modern period, particularly in the light of historiographical trends that place their focus on connected histories and global history. Although given its regional dimension the history of Tuscany can in actual fact be approached (at least in some respects) with a micro-historical lens, it should always be borne in mind that the extremely active policy conducted by the Grand Dukes, at least in the first 20 years of the seventeenth century, is a *unicum* in the Italian scenario of the time. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany was indeed the only one of the pre-unitary states of the peninsula to adopt a global foreign policy on a par with that of major states such as, for instance, England or Spain. This means that the Grand Dukes were the only sovereigns of a pre-unitary state to seek to enter the nascent global trade circuits (dominated by the Iberian countries and later by the English and Dutch), to try to establish colonies in the Americas and Africa, and to establish and maintain relations with distant states, such as Persia, not only for the sake of prestige.¹

* Although generally associated with the lily, one of the most meaningful symbols of the city of Florence was the Marzocco lion, whose best-known image is undoubtedly Donatello's sculpture of a mighty lion with one paw resting on a lily shield. Born in the Republican era, and maintained during the Grand Duchy period, it symbolised the power and independence of Florence, and was such an important symbol of Florentine identity that for the duration of the Medici rule, the Grand Dukes kept a seraglio with lions near Palazzo Vecchio. The Shir o Khorshid is the Persian symbol of the lion and the sun which was used in Persia from the time of the Achaemenid Empire. It was revived under the Safavid dynasty and used as an emblem on banners, armour and even on coins.

¹ For an overview of the 'global' opening of Tuscany in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see GUSTAVO UZIELLI, *Cenni storici sulle imprese scientifiche, marittime e coloniali di Ferdinando I Granduca di Toscana (1587–1609)* (Florence: G. Spinelli, 1901); GIUSEPPE MARCOCCI, 'L'Italia nella prima età globale (ca. 1300–1700)', *Storica* 60 (2014): 7–50, see 33–36; BRIAN BREGE, *The Empire That Wasn't: The Grand Duchy of Tuscany and Empire, 1574–1609* (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2014); BREGE, 'Renaissance Florentines in the Tropics: Brazil, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Limits of Empire,' in *The New World in Early Modern Italy, 1492–1750*, eds Elizabeth Orodowich and Lia Markey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 206–22; BREGE, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021); NICHOLAS SCOTT BAKER and BRIAN JEFFREY MAXSON, eds, *Florence in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2019); FRANCESCO FREDDOLINI and MARCO MUSILLO, eds, *Art, Mobility, and Exchanges in Early Modern Tuscany and Eurasia* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

There is no need to list all the attempts that Tuscany made to go beyond the bounds of the Mediterranean frontiers (such as the attempt to establish colonies in America or Africa, or to create long-range relations with distant states) but it is necessary to remark that of all the roads that the Grand Dukes tried to follow, the only one that brought some concrete results was the one directed towards Persia. The ‘Persian path’ was taken, almost by chance, by Ferdinando I (r. 1587–1609) who came into contact with Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 1587–1629) in the early seventeenth century, and was continued in part by his successor Cosimo II (r. 1609–21). Despite the fact that, after the deaths of Cosimo II and Shāh ‘Abbās, relations between Tuscany and Persia became rarer and more occasional, they lasted until the end of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, that is, until the reign of Cosimo III (r. 1670–1723).

Although we are generally aware, at least in broad outline, of the development of these relations during the first two decades of the seventeenth century, namely the period when Persian diplomacy towards Europe was most active, thanks to the bold and resolute Shāh ‘Abbās I, scholars have never really dealt with their beginning. The same can be said about what happened after Shāh ‘Abbās’s death in 1629 and how relations between Tuscany and Persia evolved following the peace between Persia and the Ottoman Empire in 1639.² There are several reasons for this: first of all, the dearth of sources, which, regarding Tuscan-Persian relations, became increasingly rare in Florence precisely from the end of the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I (a reign whose duration also included those of the two most active Grand Dukes, namely Ferdinando I and Cosimo II).³ Secondly, because of their scarcity, the sources have been studied with a more ‘Orientalist’ approach by scholars more interested in the documents themselves, their cataloguing and publication. This has meant that the documents have only been analysed in the light of the events closest to them, without placing them in the wider context of Mediterranean relations between Italy, Europe and the non-European world.⁴ Thirdly, relations between Tuscany and Persia have usually only been analysed as mere bilateral relations aiming to create an alliance against the Ottomans, without other aspects being taken into account.⁵ Finally, it must be remembered that the history

² The Treaty of Zuhāb (or Qaṣr-e Shīrīn) finally ended the wars between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, at least until the fall of the Safavid dynasty.

³ While Tuscan sources are scarce, Safavid sources are almost non-existent, and not only with regard to relations with Tuscany. On this, see in particular JEAN-LOUIS BACQUE-GRAMMONT, ‘Documents safavides et archives de Turquie,’ in *Études safavides*, ed. JEAN CALMARD (Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1993), 13–16; GIORGIO ROTA, ‘Diplomatic Relations Between Safavid Iran and Europe,’ in *The Safavid World*, ed. Rudi Mathee (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 588–609. Many thanks to Giorgio Rota for providing me with an advance copy of his essay.

⁴ I am thinking, for instance, of the large compilations and catalogues of MICHELE AMARI, *I diplomi arabi del Regio Archivio Fiorentino* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1863); ITALO PIZZI, *Catalogo dei Codici Persiani della Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1886) and ANGELO MICHELE PIEMONTESE, *Catalogo dei manoscritti persiani conservati nelle biblioteche d’Italia* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato Libreria dello Stato, 1989).

⁵ VIRGILIO PONTECORVO, ‘Relazioni tra lo Scià Abbas e i Granduchi di Toscana Ferdinando I e Cosimo II,’ *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Serie 8, no. 4 (34) (1949): 157–82; ANGELO TAMBORRA, *Gli stati italiani, l’Europa e il problema turco dopo Lepanto* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1961), 77.

of both Tuscany and Persia from the 1630s onwards has generally been considered the history of two states in slow but progressive decline, less and less able to act, and react, in a decisive and effective way and unable to maintain important long-distance connections. This reading is only partially true as historians in recent years have tended to reconsider the extent of the decline of both Tuscany and Persia, at least from an economic point of view since it was undeniable in military and political terms.⁶ However, in truth, both states were able not only to maintain relations between themselves and with other states, but in some cases also managed to expand their connections.⁷

This article is not intended to show the whole evolution of relations between Medici Tuscany and Safavid Persia during the seventeenth century but rather to focus on the earlier and later parts of these relations. In this way, it will be possible to identify the moment when these relations arose, clarifying the historical context, and the moment when they ended, thus showing how long they actually lasted.

The twofold aim of this article is therefore to propose both a more precise reframing of the relations between Medici Tuscany and Safavid Persia within the Mediterranean and global framework, and a new chronology, all in the light of new archival evidence. To be clear: when I speak of a ‘global context’, I mean events that took place outside the Mediterranean region, of which Tuscany was part (geographically, politically, diplomatically and economically), but which could have had consequences for the foreign policy of the Grand Duchy.⁸

This analysis will also make it possible to outline new research perspectives, especially with regard to Tuscany’s foreign policy and its relations with the East.

Historical background

Relations between Tuscany and Persia are traditionally traced back to the period when Pope Gregory XIII (r. 1572–85) appointed Cardinal Ferdinando de’ Medici (brother

⁶ Until recently, historiography tended to regard the seventeenth century as a period of crisis in all sectors. However, the Tuscan situation has been re-evaluated, particularly with regard to its economic situation, underlining how actually in seventeenth-century Tuscany there was still a fair amount of wealth and the possibility of economic expansion (perhaps, however, slightly overestimating the role of the port of Livorno). See TIM CARTER and RICHARD A. GOLDTHWAITE, *Orpheus in the Marketplace. Jacopo Peri & the Economy of Late Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 349–58. On Livorno see FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO, *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); COREY TAZZARA, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World, 1574–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). On the Safavid decline, see RUDI MATTHEE, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); MATTHEE, ‘The Decline of Safavid Iran in Comparative Perspective,’ *Journal of Persian Studies*, 8 (2015): 276–308. See also ROTA, ‘Diplomatic Relations,’ 598–99, in particular n. 69.

⁷ This is certainly true for Persia, as Giorgio Rota rightly notes in his very recent essay. See ROTA, ‘Diplomatic Relations,’ 598–99.

⁸ For example, the contrasts with the Ottomans in Mesopotamia or the wars against the Uzbeks in Central Asia are events that took place outside the Mediterranean context. However, they then had consequences for Tuscan foreign policy when the Shah was free of threats from the East or when he sought allies to resume hostilities against the Sultan.

of Grand Duke Francesco I and future Grand Duke) as Protector of Eastern Christians. In this role, the cardinal devoted much effort to the evangelisation of the East, also establishing a printing house, known as the *Tipografia Medicea Orientale* ('Medici Oriental Press' or 'Typographia Medicea'), which specialised in publishing Oriental works and printing Bibles and Gospels in Levantine languages (Syriac, Arabic, Persian, etc.), in addition to producing a polyglot Bible.⁹

In 1584 the Pope decided to contact the King of Ethiopia and the Shah of Persia to persuade them to enter an anti-Ottoman alliance and to do so he decided to send two diplomatic missions which were placed under the supervision of Cardinal Ferdinando. The men chosen for this duty were Giovanni Battista Britti (1550s–86?) and Giovanni Battista Vecchietti (1552–1619), both natives of Cosenza even though Vecchietti's family came from Florence.¹⁰ While Britti went to Ethiopia, Vecchietti reached Persia and stayed at the court of Shāh Mohammad Khodābande (r. 1577–87) in Qazvin (Safavid capital from 1555 to 1598 when it was replaced by Isfahan) for about a year. Persia was engaged militarily against the Ottoman Empire and the war (which began in 1578) was not going well for the Shah: in 1586, he was forced to quickly abandon the city of Tabriz, which fell to the Ottomans along with several western provinces of Persia.¹¹ Giovanni Battista Vecchietti left for Europe in 1587 and arrived in Lisbon at the end of 1588 with the reply letter from the Shah, which was presented to Gregory XIII's successor, Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585–90), in 1589. During the same period the Grand Duke Ferdinando I (the Cardinal de' Medici who had taken the place of his brother, Francesco I, after his death in the autumn of 1587) became interested in the possibility of sending Tuscan military engineers to assist the Shah in his war against the Ottomans.¹² Since these men were supposed to reach Persia via the Portuguese sea routes to India, which at that time were controlled by Spain, the Grand Duke instructed his ambassador in Spain to ask the Spanish King Philip II (r. 1556–

⁹ On the Medici Oriental Press, see GUGLIELMO ENRICO SALTINI, 'Della Stamperia Orientale Medicea e di Giovan Battista Raimondi,' *Giornale storico degli Archivi Toscani*, IV (1860): 257–96; BERTA MERACCHI BIAGIARELLI, 'La Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana. Una nuova sala per l'attrezzatura della Stamperia Orientale,' *Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia* 1–21 (1971): 83–99; ALBERTO TINTO, *La Tipografia Medicea Orientale* (Lucca: Fazi, 1987); ROBERT JONES, 'The Medici Oriental Press (Rome 1584–1614) and the Impact of its Arabic Publications on Northern Europe,' in *The 'Arabic' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amsterdam: Brill, 1994), 88–106; SARA FANI and MARGHERITA FARINA, eds, *Le vie delle lettere. La Tipografia Medicea tra Roma e l'Oriente* (Florence: La Mandragora, 2012); ANGELO MICHELE PIEMONTESE, *Persica-Vaticana. Roma e Persia fra codici e testi* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2017), 199–238.

¹⁰ A lot has been written about Giovanni Battista Vecchietti, so here I will just cite the very recent entry by Mario Casari for the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, whose bibliographies include the main works on the two brothers: MARIO CASARI, 'Vecchietti, Giovanni Battista,' *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)*, accessed 25 October 2021, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-vecchietti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. On Britti, see GASPARE DE CARO, 'Britti, Giovanni Battista,' *DBI*, accessed 25 October 2021, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-britti_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-battista-britti_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

¹¹ On the 1578–90 war between the Ottomans and Persians, see RUDI MATTHEE, 'The Ottoman-Safavid War of 986–998/1578–1590: Motives and Causes,' *International Journal of Turkish History*, 20, 1-2 (2014): 1–20.

¹² State Archive of Florence (ASFi), *Mediceo del Principato (MdP)*, 4920, f. 23.

98) for permission. However, the Grand Duke's proposal remained unfulfilled and after that Tuscany made no more serious projections towards Persia for several years.¹³

Although we should not ignore these first contacts between Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici and Safavid Persia during the 1580s, we should not give them undue importance either. In fact, it was only an indirect connection for Tuscany, since it was actually a contact between Persia and the papacy: Vecchietti was an agent of Ferdinando, who at that stage was a cardinal, rather than the later Grand Duke. Indeed, Ferdinando ascended the throne during Giovanni Battista Vecchietti's return journey to Europe, namely after his mission had already been completed. Moreover, the same can be said of the accession to power of Shāh 'Abbās, the most 'pro-European' of the Safavid rulers, who replaced his predecessor after Vecchietti had already left the Persian court and was probably in Hormuz waiting to leave Persia. This is clearly not a secondary aspect of the question since, as already mentioned, it was during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās that relations between Persia and Europe reached their zenith. Furthermore, as far as relations with Tuscany were concerned, everything is usually reduced to the relationship between 'Abbās and Ferdinando I, as if ascending the throne at the same time had created a sort of 'privileged relation' between the two and there had been no other relations apart from those between these two sovereigns.¹⁴ Actually, as we shall see, there was no 'privileged relation' between Tuscany and Persia in the 1580s but only a convergence of interests that gradually led to the first 'encounter' of the two sovereigns between 1599 and 1601, and not before.¹⁵

Converging interests: The origin of Tuscan-Persian diplomacy (1599–1601)

The origin of direct diplomatic relations between Tuscany and Persia is to be found in the geopolitical context of the late 1590s, which saw the Tuscan Grand Duchy heavily involved in the Mediterranean area while Persia was engaged in defending its own both western and eastern borders. Indeed, before the end of the last decade of the sixteenth century, Grand Duke Ferdinando intervened in the civil war in France, supporting Henry IV (r. 1594–1610) both militarily and financially.¹⁶ For his part, Shāh 'Abbās had inherited such a desperate military situation from his predecessor that the only thing he could do was to try to minimise the losses: with the ongoing war against the

¹³ On this issue, see BREGE, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire*, 299–301.

¹⁴ I am referring here in particular to the article of Mahnaz Yousefzadeh which refers several times to a 'privileged relation' between Ferdinando I and Shāh 'Abbās. See MAHNAZ YOUSEFZADEH, 'The Sea of Oman: Ferdinand I, G. B. Vecchietti, and the Armour of Shah 'Abbās I,' *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* XC, 1–4 (2017): 51–74, see 51, 57, 59, 61, 71.

¹⁵ Although the presence of a couple of undated letters, whose seals bear dates much earlier than 1599, suggests that there may have been contact between Ferdinando I and Shāh 'Abbās at least ten years earlier, there is actually no concrete evidence that this took place. Mahnaz Yousefzadeh writes that Virgilio Pontecorvo dates both letters to 1590–91; YOUSEFZADEH, 'The Sea of Oman,' 61 n. 37. However, in his article Pontecorvo states very clearly that despite bearing seals with earlier dates, these two letters definitely arrived in Florence after 1601, that is, after Ferdinando I received the embassy led by Sir Anthony Sherley; PONTECORVO, 'Relazioni,' 159–63.

¹⁶ On relations with Henry IV and Tuscan participation in the civil war in France, see FURIO DIAZ, *Il Granducato di Toscana – I Medici* (Turin: UTET, 1987), 285–87.

Ottomans and the constant Uzbek threat to the eastern provinces, he was forced to make a costly peace with the Sultan in which he officially ceded all the provinces that Persia had already lost. Peace was concluded in 1590 with the Treaty of Constantinople, after which Shāh ‘Abbās devoted himself to restoring order in the East and reorganising the state.¹⁷ In this situation, the Shah does not seem to have been very keen on contacting any Western state, and certainly not the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, whose contribution to the Persian cause, at a time when Persia was in great crisis, would have been negligible.¹⁸

Something changed in 1599, however, when simultaneously the Shah began to plan a Persian ‘resurgence’ and the Grand Duke decided to change his strategy in the Mediterranean: the ambitions of the two sovereigns met and coincided, albeit for different reasons and, one might say, almost by chance.

Aware of the economic damage that the lack of trade with the Ottoman East represented for Tuscany, Ferdinando tried to re-establish trade relations with the Ottoman Sultan (as his predecessors had already done in the late 1570s) by sending a diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1598. However, it failed miserably in its purpose and confirmed the Ottoman Empire’s refusal to collaborate with Tuscany.¹⁹ Officially, the main reason for the Ottoman resolution was that the Grand Duke was not inclined to stop the raids against the Ottomans by the ships of the Knights of St Stephen who, despite supposedly constituting an autonomous chivalric order, depended directly on the Grand Duke of Tuscany (the St Stephen Grand Master) and were an integral part of the Grand Duchy’s maritime forces.²⁰ So, the Ottoman Empire could not be the commercial partner that Ferdinando had hoped for up to that moment and thus became the Grand Duke’s number one enemy. This obviously does not mean that before the failure of the Grand Duchy’s diplomatic mission relations between Tuscany and the Ottoman Empire had been good: in fact, the Sultan was always regarded as the greatest threat to Catholic Europe, but it was still possible to

¹⁷ COLIN P. MITCHELL, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran. Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 176–82.

¹⁸ On Shāh ‘Abbās’s lack of interest in Europe in the last decade of the sixteenth century, see AURELIE CHABRIER-SALESSE, ‘Les Européens à la cour de Shah ‘Abbas Ier: stratégies et enjeux de l’implantation européenne pour la monarchie safavide,’ *Dix-septième siècle* 1, 278 (2018): 9–24, see 14; ROTA, ‘Diplomatic Relations,’ 595–96.

¹⁹ Although Tuscan merchants had various ways of trading indirectly with the Ottoman Empire, the total ban imposed by the Sultan on the presence of Tuscans in his empire was an extremely serious problem for the Tuscan economy. In fact, being able to trade with the Ottomans through foreign merchants (English and Dutch) or through other states (such as Ragusa) could in no way replace the possibility of direct access to Ottoman ports. The situation only gradually changed during the seventeenth century, particularly in the second half. On relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the failure of diplomatic negotiations, see ÖZDEN MERCAN, ‘Medici-Ottoman Relations (1574–1578): What Went Wrong?’, in *The Grand Ducal Medici and the Levant*, eds Marta Caroscio and Maurizio Arfaïoli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 19–31; MERCAN, ‘A Diplomacy Woven with Textiles: Medici-Ottoman Relations During the Late Renaissance,’ *Mediterranean Historical Review* 35, 2 (2020): 169–88.

²⁰ On this aspect, see NICCOLÒ CAPPONI, ‘Sul ponte sventola bandiera rossocrociata: L’altra faccia della marina medicea nel Levante,’ in *The Grand Ducal Medici and the Levant*, eds Marta Caroscio and Maurizio Arfaïoli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 55–64.

trade with him, as the Venetians did. However, up to this stage the anti-Ottoman military activities of the Medici Grand Duchy had been limited to piracy, both because the Grand Duke hoped to reopen trade with the Ottomans and because of his military involvement in France.

The Ottoman refusal convinced the Grand Duke that the only way to achieve what he wanted in the East (i.e., to at least succeed in undermining the Venetian monopoly in trade with the Levant) was to try by force. To do so, Ferdinando would present himself as the model of the crusading prince, committed to the front line against the infidel, thereby giving his ambitions a noble end. Thus, on 1 May 1599 the Tuscan fleet attacked the Greek island of Chios, an Ottoman possession since 1566. However, it was a somewhat different attack to usual, because instead of merely looting, the Grand Duke's forces attempted to occupy some strategic points, perhaps with the aim of conquering the island. Although the Tuscans were eventually repelled, the attack was a sort of message to the Sultan: the Grand Duke was warning him that he had gone from being a potential trading partner to his worst enemy.²¹

While Ferdinando was waging his 'permanent war' against the Ottomans in the Mediterranean Sea, Shāh 'Abbās was beginning to plan his war of revenge against the Ottoman Empire. The peace he had to make with the Sultan in 1590 gave him the opportunity to reform the state, restore his power and repel the Uzbek threat to the East.²² It seems that in the spring of 1599, the Shah was planning to send an ambassador to Hormuz, a Portuguese territory controlled by the Spanish, from where he would then travel to Spain with the probable aim of negotiating a military alliance against the Ottomans before starting hostilities.²³ Right at that moment, some European adventurers led by the English brothers Anthony and Robert Sherley reached the Shah in Persia.²⁴ Anthony Sherley managed to gain the favour of the Shah,

²¹ On the attack on the island of Chios, see PHILIP PANDEY ARGENTI, *The Expedition of the Florentines to Chios (1599): Described in Contemporary Diplomatic Reports and Military Dispatches* (London: John Lane, 1934); JACOB LEVEEN, 'An Eye-Witness Account of the Expedition of the Florentines against Chios in 1599,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12, 3-4 (1948): 542–54; CESARE CIANO, *I primi Medici e il mare. Note sulla politica marinara toscana da Cosimo I a Ferdinando I* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1980), 94–95; MIKAIL ACIPINAR, 'Anti-Ottoman Activities of the Order of the Knights of St. Stephen During the Second Half of the 16th Century,' in *Sea Power, Technology and Trade. Studies in Turkish Maritime History*, eds Dejanirah Couto, Feza Gunergun and Maria Pia Pedani (Istanbul: Piri Reis University Publications/Denizler Kitabevi, 2014): 165–72.

²² Shāh 'Abbās reorganised the state, the bureaucracy and the army, creating a new armed corps that allowed him to break away from the power of the military caste, which had created serious problems for his predecessors. On the administrative and military reforms see, respectively, MITCHELL, *The Practice of Politics*, 176 ff.; SUSSAN BABAIE et al., *Slaves of the Shah. New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

²³ This information is reported by Uruch Beg, one of the four secretaries of the Persian delegation that left for Europe in July 1599 together with Anthony Sherley. See GUY LE STRANGE, ed., *Don Juan of Persia. A Shi'ah Catholic 1560–1604* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), 232–33.

²⁴ There is a large and still growing bibliography on the Sherley brothers, particularly on the figure of Anthony. Here I will just mention EVELYN PHILIP SHERLEY, *The Sherley Brothers, an Historical Memoir of the Lives of Sir Thomas Sherley, Sir Anthony Sherley, and Sir Robert Sherley, Knights. By One of the Same House* (Chiswick: From the Press of Charles Whittingham, 1848); BOIES PENROSE, *The Sherleian Odyssey. Being*

who changed his mind about sending an ambassador to Spain via the Portuguese routes and decided to appoint the Englishman as his ambassador and send him to Europe through Muscovy.

So, while the Persian mission was on its way to Europe, the Grand Duke was looking for a way to strike the Ottoman Empire as hard as possible and, in so doing, achieve something concrete for himself other than military glory. In December 1599, a Syrian dragoman named Michelangelo Corai (Italianised name of Fathullah Qurray) arrived in Florence, claiming to have been sent to Europe by Shāh ‘Abbās with the task of preparing the terrain for the arrival of a wider diplomatic mission.²⁵ Ferdinando, who, as already mentioned, was embarking on a particularly aggressive and ambitious Mediterranean policy, immediately took an interest in the dragoman’s words: the Shah had sent his ambassadors in the hope of establishing an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Catholic states; in return he offered free access to European merchants who were the subjects of his allies, religious freedom for Catholics and protection for Europeans who came to his dominions. Considering that he was already waging his own personal war against the Ottomans, the Grand Duke immediately acted and instructed his agents in Venice (where the embassy was expected to arrive soon) to secretly contact the ambassadors upon their arrival.²⁶

a Record of the Travels and Adventures of Three Famous Brothers During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I (London: Wessex Press, 1938); DAVID W. DAVIES, *Elizabethans Errant. The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and His Three Sons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); LUIS GIL FERNÁNDEZ, *El Imperio luso-español y la Persia safavida* (Madrid: Fundacion Universitaria Espanola, 2007–9, 2 vols.), *passim*; GIL FERNÁNDEZ, *De pirata inglés a repúblico español: vida e industrias de Antonio Sherley (1565–1633)* (Madrid: Ediciones Complutense, 2018); SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM, *Three Ways to Be Alien. Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 88–132; GIORGIO ROTA, ‘Real, Fake or Megalomaniacs? Three Suspicious Ambassadors, 1450–1600,’ in *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, eds Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzig (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 168–73; KUROSH MESHKAT, *Preserving the Memory of So Memorable an Action: Narrative, Example, and Politics in Sir Anthony Sherley’s Relation of His Travels into Persia (1613)* (PhD dissertation, Queen Mary University of London, 2015); DAVIDE TRENTACOSTE, *Granducato di Toscana e Persia Safavide. Informazione, politica e diplomazia mediterranea e levantina nel XVII secolo* (PhD dissertation, Università degli Studi di Teramo/Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3, 2021), 226–65; TRENTACOSTE, ‘Information and Propaganda. A Brief Relation of Shāh ‘Abbās’ Victories, by Robert Sherley,’ *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (forthcoming).

²⁵ Michelangelo Corai had arrived in Persia together with the Sherley brothers (with whom he had left Venice in May 1598) and like Anthony he was probably able to make himself well liked by the Shah. On Corai, see EDWARD K. FARIDANY, ‘Signal Defeat: the Portuguese Loss of Comorao in 1614 and its Political and Commercial Consequences,’ in *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Jorge Flores (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 119–41 (125, 127–29, 131); FEDERICO M. FEDERICI, ‘A Servant of Two Masters: The Translator Michel Angelo Corai as a Tuscan Diplomat (1599–1609),’ in *Translators, Interpreters, and Cultural Negotiators Mediating and Communicating Power from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era*, eds Dario Tessicini and Federico M. Federici (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 81–104. For archival documents concerning the arrival of Michelangelo Corai in Florence, see ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, ff. 3–5. On Corai as Tuscan ambassador in Syria, see BRIAN BREGE, ‘Making a New Prince: Tuscany, the Pasha of Aleppo, and the Dream of a New Levant,’ in Freddolini and Musillo, *Art, Mobility, and Exchanges*, 19–32.

²⁶ On the wait in Tuscany for the Persian embassy, see DAVIDE TRENTACOSTE, ‘Incontri “quasi” casuali: l’ambasciata persiana a Firenze nel 1601,’ in *Attraverso la Storia. Nuove ricerche sull’età moderna in Italia*, ed. Egidio Ivetic (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 2020), 475–87.

One of the things Corai told Ferdinando was that his name was well known in Persia, and this was probably due to the mission Vecchietti had carried out at the time of his cardinalate.²⁷ This should not make us think that Ferdinando was a name familiar to the Shah since, as already mentioned, Giovanni Battista Vecchietti dealt with Shāh Mohammad Khodābande and left before Shāh ‘Abbās took power. Instead, it means that there was a memory in Persia of the diplomatic missions sent from Rome more than a decade earlier and nothing more. Moreover, considering that Corai later entered the service of the Grand Duke, we can imagine that when he arrived in Florence he ‘embellished’ the truth to win Ferdinando’s sympathy.

The Persian ambassadors arrived in Florence in March 1601 and, after two weeks of negotiations, proceeded to Rome to deal with the Pope. Ferdinando gladly accepted the Shah’s offers and expressed his willingness to continue the war against the Ottomans and to work to ensure that the other Catholic States also participated.²⁸ It is necessary to dwell on this point briefly in order to better analyse the diplomatic context: Shāh ‘Abbās was not yet at war with the Ottoman Empire (he would declare war in September 1603), but it is clear that he was preparing to break the peace made in 1590. Although Persia under his leadership had entered a period of modernisation, a century of virtually uninterrupted wars against the Ottomans had taught the Shah that the Ottomans were generally stronger and had more means than the Persians (or at least a better military capacity). As a result, the Shah was prepared to offer a great deal in return for Catholic participation in the war, so that it might relieve Ottoman pressure in the East. From the Grand Duke’s point of view, Persia was offering a lot in compensation for something which he was already doing (waging war against the Ottomans) and which he would have done even without Persian friendship. Ferdinando, therefore, could only gain from good relations with Persia: diplomatically, since the alliance with the Shah would sanction the importance of his role in the Mediterranean; economically, because if Persia defeated the Ottomans then he could succeed in carving out his own space in the Levant, which would allow him direct access to trade from the East; politically, since any success in the Levant and the Mediterranean would certainly strengthen the Grand Duke’s position within his state, in Italy and in Europe.²⁹ And if the war was disastrous for the Shah and he was defeated

²⁷ ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, f. 3.

²⁸ Although there are currently no specific studies on the negotiations between Ferdinando I and the Persian ambassadors, the following works can be cited on the permanence of the latter in Tuscany: Le Strange, *Don Juan of Persia*, 281–83; FRANZ BABINGER, *Sherleiana* (Berlin: Gedruckt in Reichsdruckerei, 1932), 24–26; PENROSE, *The Sherleian Odyssey*, 104–5; DAVIES, *Elizabethans Errant*, 132; GIL FERNÁNDEZ, *El Imperio luso-español*, I, 115; GIORGIO ROTA, ‘Real, Fake or Megalomaniacs?’, 165–83. Several copies of the report of the Tuscan Chancellery on the reception of the Persian delegation are kept in the State Archives of Florence: ASFi, *Guardaroba Medicea, Diari di Etichetta*, 1, f. 127; 2, ff. 121–22; 3, ff. 163–64; *Manoscritti*, 131, ‘Diario Fiorentino, VI,’ ff. 237–38. Extracts from this report have been published in Babinger, *Sherleiana*, 24–26; ANNA MARIA CRINÒ, *Fatti e figure del Seicento Anglo-Toscano* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1957), 12–13.

²⁹ Just to give one particularly significant example, the conquest of Cyprus would have brought the Grand Duke not only the possession of a strategic territory in the Levant, but also the title of King of the island (since it was a kingdom) and this would have consequently raised his rank from ‘grand ducal’ to ‘royal.’

by the Sultan, then the situation for the Grand Duchy of Tuscany would be the same as before the alliance.

It is no coincidence that in the months immediately following the embassy of March 1601, the Grand Duke and the Pope began to seriously consider the idea of undertaking military action, perhaps together with the Knights of Malta (and anyone else who wished to participate), against the Ottoman territories: in particular, they harboured the idea of attempting to conquer some Greek islands (Cyprus *in primis*, but also Rhodes or some smaller islands) in order to make them a base for further enterprises.³⁰ Probably, the belief that he had a powerful ally like Persia behind him made the Grand Duke more audacious in the Levant: the activity of his fleet increased considerably and when the Ottoman Empire was struck by numerous revolts during the first decade of the seventeenth century, the Grand Duke immediately tried to take advantage of the situation by supporting some rebellious pashas and emirs who were supposed to repay his help with commercial privileges and exclusive access for Tuscans to certain ports.³¹ In this context, Persia remained an essential element for the success of the Tuscan plans. In 1606, Ferdinando sent one of his agents to Syria to personally assess whether there was a real possibility that the Pasha of Aleppo might be victorious in his confrontation with the Ottomans and that it was therefore worthwhile to help him. When the agent returned to Florence, he produced a report which very clearly stated that without the support of a Christian prince (i.e., the Grand Duke) and above all the King of Persia, there was no hope that the Pasha's revolt would succeed.³² In the summer of the following year, 1607, encouraged by the military successes that Shāh 'Abbās was achieving against the Ottomans, Ferdinando attempted the conquest of

³⁰ ASFi, *Mdp*, 3317, ff. 464–65.

³¹ The scholar William Griswold even raises the possibility that Ferdinand I supported the rebellion of 'Alī Jānbulād with the aim of creating a puppet state of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in Syria. Although fascinating, this possibility is somewhat exaggerated, both in view of actual Tuscan capabilities and recent studies, notably those by Brian Brege. See WILLIAM GRISWOLD, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion, 1000–1020/1591–1611* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), 84–85; BREGE, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire*, 247–51. On the anti-Ottoman revolts in the first decade of the seventeenth century, see Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion*; KAREN BARKEY, *Bandits and Bureaucrats. The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), *passim*; SURAIYA N. FAROQHI, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 3. The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 91, 191–92; SAM WHITE, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163–86; OKTAY ÖZEL, 'The Reign of Violence: The Celalis c. 1550–1700,' in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2011), 184–202.

³² '... la Soria non si può reggere, né stabilire meglio; che col mezzo delli aiuti del Re di Persia essendo convicino, con numeroso esercito di sua sudditi, et disciplinati soldati; la quale potenza è sommaria in tali parti à quella del Gran Turcho: sì che con tale mezzo si manterria tali ribelli con potente rigore; al Gran Turcho sarà difficile di ricuperare la Soria per havere a condurre una unita forza competente, o maggiore cominciando a raquistare il persio, dove è necessario che ci sia intervallo di tempo con molto suo disavvantaggio per havere a raquistare il tutto, con la lontananza in che si trova; accompagnato dalle molte necessità che à di dovere militare in molte partj.' See ASFi, *Mdp*, 4275, ff. 14–15. These considerations have been erroneously attributed to Michelangelo Corai by Federico Federici, whereas they should be more correctly attributed to Giovanni Altoni, a military engineer and Tuscan captain who carried out the mission to Syria by order of the Grand Duke. The documentation relating to his mission, and showing that the report was written by him, is as follows: ASFi, *Mdp*, 4275, ff. 11–13 (and ff. 14–15). Federici's point can be found in FEDERICI, 'A Servant of Two Masters,' 93–94.

Cyprus (which failed for a variety of reasons related to Venetian hostility to Tuscan ambitions).³³ Then, in the autumn he established a military alliance with the Pasha of Aleppo, ‘Ali Jānbulād, and instructed his ambassador (who incidentally was the dragoman Michelangelo Corai) to endeavour to put the Pasha in touch with the Shah so as to coordinate their actions.³⁴ Unfortunately for the Grand Duke, less than a month after the alliance was signed, the Pasha of Aleppo was defeated by the Ottomans and forced to flee (maybe to Persia). In this situation, the dragoman Michelangelo Corai thought that instead of returning to Tuscany he would serve the Grand Duke better by going to Persia to attempt to convince the Shah to support the Pasha of Aleppo militarily.³⁵ Corai then went to Persia where he remained until about 1612/1613, when he was forced to flee because of the growing tension with Shāh ‘Abbās.³⁶ However, during his time at the Safavid court he did much to keep relations between Tuscany and Persia alive, although the Grand Dukes (first Ferdinando and then Cosimo II) never really appreciated the dragoman’s free decision-making and the fact that he had presented himself in Persia as the official Tuscan ambassador when this role had never really been formalised (this is clear from a copy of a letter addressed to him in 1612 by the Secretary of State, Curzio Picchena, in which Corai was literally ‘dismissed’ by the grand ducal government).³⁷

It is therefore in this context that we can find the actual moment when the Grand Duchy of Tuscany’s Persian diplomacy began.

This sort of pro-Persian Mediterranean policy was also pursued by Ferdinando I’s successor, Cosimo II, although with less determination. He likewise received a Persian embassy in 1609, this time led by Robert Sherley, Anthony’s younger brother, thus confirming the good relations existing between the Grand Duke and Persia.³⁸ This

³³ On the Tuscan raid on Cyprus, see MARIOS HADJANASTASIS, ‘Corsair Tactics and Lofty Ideals: the 1607 Tuscan Raid on Cyprus,’ in *City of Empires: Ottoman and British Famagusta*, ed. Michael J. K. Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 22–36; MIKAIL ACIPINAR, ‘Ferdinand I’s Eastern Mediterranean Policy and the 1607 Attack of the Tuscan Navy on Famagusta,’ *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XXX / 2 (2015): 357–84; DAVIDE TRENTACOSTE, ‘Grand Ducal Ambitions and Venetian Counter-intelligence. The Tuscan Failure in the 1607 Attack on Cyprus,’ *Revista Historia Autònoma* 18 (2021): 59–74.

³⁴ ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, ff. 51–52. There is also a draft of a passport to allow Michelangelo Corai to travel to Persia should the need have arisen: ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, f. 57.

³⁵ On his flight to Persia, see BREGE, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire*, 288–91; TRENTACOSTE, *Granducato di Toscana e Persia Safavide*, 270–86.

³⁶ On his flight, see FARIDANY, ‘Signal Defeat,’ 127–29; TRENTACOSTE, *Granducato di Toscana e Persia Safavide*, 284–85.

³⁷ ‘... l’andare in Persia senza ordine ò commessione fu errore non piccolo. Et se pure ella ci voleva andare per suo particolare comodo, non doveva spacciare il nome del Gran Duca, né presentare al Re la sua lettera, la quale non era scritta se non con intenzione e fine diverso, et il Gran Duca allora l’ebbe molto per male [...]. Vostra Signoria sa che non ha in questa corte il più vero né il più costante amico di me, e può credere ancora che io non habbia mancato di fare ogni buono officio per lei; ma in effetto la materia era troppo repugnante; sì che la prego à scusarmi, e dal Signore Iddio le desidero ogni prosperità.’ ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, f. 308.

³⁸ Robert Sherley arrived in Florence in August 1609 and stayed with Cosimo II for almost a month during which the negotiations were largely conducted by the secretaries of state Belisario Vinta and

depiction of the Grand Dukes as great friends of the Shah remained stable throughout the century, even as the Grand Duchy (like much of Mediterranean Europe) entered into a general decline that gradually led it to become less and less important. In this context, Tuscany's attention to the East also gradually dwindled. What is more, in the decades following Robert Sherley's embassy, interest in Persia also decreased until, in 1639, Persia and the Ottoman Empire established lasting peace with the Treaty of Zuhāb. This put an end to the role that Persia had until then played as a potential ally of Catholic Europe (and therefore of Tuscany) against the Ottomans, but it did not put an end to relations with Europe, which continued for commercial reasons in particular and for reasons related to the presence of Catholics in the East.³⁹

At least from a diplomatic point of view, the Grand Dukes still had some credit to spend at the Persian court: a credit built up during the reigns of Ferdinando I and Cosimo II.⁴⁰ Indeed, as we shall see, almost every time some Catholic state needed to contact the Shah, it did so by requesting a letter of credence from the Grand Duke as well: I am thinking, for instance, of the different missions sent by Venice during the war of Candia (1645–69) and the war of Morea (1684–99) to ask for support from Persia.⁴¹

Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: A new chronology for Tuscan-Safavid relations

I concluded the previous section, devoted entirely to the origin of diplomatic relations between Tuscany and Persia, with a brief overview on how the two states continued to interact in one way or another in the decades following the Sherley brothers' embassies, without going into detail. This is essentially for two reasons: first, because after 1610 and until at least the years of the Candian War relations between the two states were negligible. Secondly, because, as specified in the introduction, the aim of the article is not to deal with relations between Tuscany and Persia throughout the seventeenth century but to focus specifically on the beginning and the end. This part is, therefore, devoted to the analysis of the last decades of the seventeenth century and

Curzio Picchena, assisted by Giovanni Battista Vecchietti. The various meetings between the Persian ambassador and the grand ducal government were mainly to confirm the friendship between the two states and, on the Tuscan side, to reiterate the engagement of the grand ducal fleet against the Ottomans and Cosimo's efforts to form an anti-Turkish alliance with the other Catholic states and the Pope. Since there are no specific studies on Robert Sherley's embassy to Florence in 1609, I refer to TRENTACOSTE, *Granducato di Toscana e Persia Safavide*, 258–65.

³⁹ Giorgio Rota states that, apart from the missions concerning Catholic matters in Persia, the last Safavid Shāhs were able to establish and maintain a wide network of international relations. See ROTA, 'Diplomatic Relations,' 598–99.

⁴⁰ For instance, Michelangelo Corai, who remained at Shāh 'Abbās's court for a few years (1608–13), wrote more than once of the Shah's great interest in Tuscan anti-Ottoman naval operations and his frequent statements that the Grand Duke of Tuscany alone did more against the Ottomans than all the other Catholic powers together. See ASFi, *MdP*, 4275, ff. 248, 250.

⁴¹ Some examples of these joint missions are given in GIORGIO ROTA, 'Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice. An Overview,' in *The Turks 2*, eds Hasan Celal Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz and Osman Karatay (Ankara, 2002): 580–87, see 582, 583.

the first two of the next, showing the nature of the relations and especially how long they lasted, thus proposing a new chronology for the diplomatic ties.

A reliable chronology has probably never been proposed for the diplomatic relations between Medici Tuscany and Safavid Persia: indeed, while their origin can generally be traced back to the time of Giovanni Battista Vecchietti's mission, no precise moment has ever been identified for their end. Some letters dating back to the 1660s concerning the situation of Catholic missionaries in Nakhchivan could be considered the last exchange of correspondence between the two courts. These documents are also mentioned in the essay by Virgilio Pontecorvo (1949), who was mainly concerned with the publication and translation of the Persian letters of the time of Shāh 'Abbās. Nevertheless, he points out in the concluding part of his essay that in addition to these letters there was at least one other, dating from the end of the reign of Ferdinando II (r. 1621–70) and relating to the Dominicans in Armenia.⁴² These can also be found in the catalogue of Persian manuscripts compiled by Angelo Michele Piemontese in 1989.⁴³ However, new documents now make it possible to extend by a few decades the period during which the Medici Grand Dukes maintained correspondence with the Safavid Shahs.

Assuming that real official relations between Tuscany and Persia began at the end of 1599 with the arrival in Florence of Michelangelo Corai (although we could move this moment to the arrival of Anthony Sherley's embassy in 1601), we can now focus on the latter part of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth.

As already mentioned, starting from the period following the deaths of Cosimo II (d. 1621) and Shāh 'Abbās I (d. 1629), relations between the two courts became less intense, or at least so it would seem from the available documentation. With the help of material in other archives (some of which was published in the second half of the nineteenth century) it is possible, even in the absence of Tuscan documentation, to trace some of the Grand Duchy's relations with Persia after 1639 (the 1630s are very poorly documented from a diplomatic point of view). This is precisely the case of some missions sent jointly during the Candian War which I have already mentioned. The first one left Venice immediately after the outbreak of the war and was entrusted to a certain Domenico De Santis, who carried letters from the Pope, the King of Poland, the Republic of Venice, the Emperor and the Grand Duke of Tuscany.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, at least apparently, no traces of this mission are left in the records of

⁴² PONTECORVO, 'Relazioni,' 174.

⁴³ PIEMONTESE, *Catalogo dei manoscritti*, 129.

⁴⁴ GUGLIEMO BERCHE, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Turin: Tipografia G. B. Paravia, 1865), 215, doc. XLVI. See also ROTA, 'Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice,' 583–84; GIORGIO ROTA, 'Safavid Persia and Its Diplomatic Relations with Venice,' in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, eds Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 149–60, see 151, 155–56.

the Florence State Archives,⁴⁵ and De Santis himself is ambiguous about it: while in a letter he sent to the Venetian Senate he wrote that he also had a letter from the Grand Duke with him, when he found himself journeying to Persia with the well-known traveller Jean Baptiste Tavernier and the Capuchin father Raphaël du Mans, he did not mention the Tuscan letter, but instead listed the names of the other senders.⁴⁶

About 20 years later, another mission was sent, this time apparently on the initiative of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had also advocated the appointment of the envoy, the Dominican father Antonio Tani, as Vicar of the East.⁴⁷ While there are not many traces left of this diplomatic mission, unlike the case of De Santis, something has remained. The State Archive of Florence has a copy of a credential letter produced by the Venetian Senate for the envoy Tani, who appears to have been a Tuscan and papal envoy:⁴⁸ in fact, the mission did not only concern the Candian War (which was still going on) but, above all, some religious issues related to the Catholic missions in Nakhchivan. The envoy was very well received, in 1665, by Shāh ‘Abbās II (r. 1642–66), as can be seen from the report in the National Central Library of Florence.⁴⁹ Most of the report concerns the reception of Tani and his companions in Isfahan and specifies that although the Shah had been asked for a private audience, he instead decided to welcome the European delegation with the most possible pomp.⁵⁰ In this regard, Tani writes that the Shah expressed to him his much greater appreciation of the European delegation, composed of a few people with a few gifts, to that of the ambassador of the Mughal Emperor, also present in Isfahan at that time, who had instead arrived with an enormous entourage and rich gifts.⁵¹ This leads one to think that the pompous welcome reserved by the Shah for the Europeans was almost a way of humiliating the ambassador from India, with which Persia, at that time, was in dispute over certain Afghan cities. Concerning the subjects to be negotiated, Tani wrote that, in his opinion, the Shah would certainly accept the demands concerning

⁴⁵ A report by Domenico De Santi is kept in the State Archives of Venice: ASVe, *Collegio*, Relazioni, 25, fasc. Q, n. 1, f. 4a.

⁴⁶ JEAN-BAPTISTE TAVERNIER, *Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, ... : qu'il a fait en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes...* (Paris: Clouzier-Barbin, 1676, 2 vols.), I, 181.

⁴⁷ BERCHET, *La Repubblica*, 55, 243 (doc. LXII); ROTA, 'Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice,' 583–84.

⁴⁸ On Tani's mission, see ROTA, 'Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice,' 583 (where Tani is mistakenly referred to as 'Tassi'); ROTA, 'Safavid Persia,' 151, 155–56. Some mention of Tani, as Antonino Tani, can also be found in CHRISTIAN WINDLER, *Missionare in Persien. Kulturelle Diversität und Normenkonkurrenz im globalen Katholizismus (17.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2018), 165–66, 217. For the letter produced by the Venetian Senate, see ASFi, *MdP*, 3032, f. 828. Documentation relating to Antonio Tani's mission is kept in the Propaganda Fide Archives (Archivio de Propaganda Fide, SOCG, 443). There is also a text written in Latin by Tani himself, and printed twice in Rome and Florence, which unfortunately I was not able to see. It should contain some news about the situation in Persia and what Tani did during his mission. See ANTONINO TANI, *Brevis narratio eorum, quae gesta sunt in Persia a R.P.F. Antonino Tani magistro domicano ex provincia Romana post secundum ex Persia in Italiam regressum, summo pontifici bonae memoriae Clementi XI oblata, Latine ex italico sermone translata, ad commodiorem usum RR.A.PP. in comitis generalibus congregatorum* (Rome: 1670, repr. Florence: 1672, sub signo Stellae).

⁴⁹ Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF), *Panciatichiano*, 219, ff. 139–53.

⁵⁰ BNCF, *Panciatichiano*, 219, f. 143.

⁵¹ BNCF, *Panciatichiano*, 219, ff. 152–53.

the Catholic missions, but that he would definitely refuse to join the war against the Ottomans.⁵²

From this time onwards, Tuscan diplomacy towards Persia was increasingly linked to issues related to the protection and recommendation of Catholic missionaries, as suggested by the copies of Italian translations of some Persian letters addressed from the Shah to Pope Clement IX (r.1667–69) held in Florence.⁵³ These letters were probably brought to Rome in 1673 by some Dominican friars and received by Clement X (r. 1670–76).⁵⁴ Together with the letters to the Pope, the friars also brought a reply from the Shah to a letter sent earlier by Grand Duke Ferdinando II (which has not yet been found). The Grand Duke had died in 1670 and was succeeded by his son Cosimo III (r. 1670–1723), who immediately prepared a very courteous reply for the Shah confirming Tuscany's friendship with Persia.⁵⁵

Cosimo III was very active diplomatically towards Persia and maintained fairly regular correspondence with the last Safavid Shahs. While little is known of this aspect of his foreign policy, his great interest in the East and the world, more generally, is well documented.⁵⁶ However, unlike his predecessors, the complicated domestic and international situation he inherited in Tuscany meant that he was unable to achieve much concrete action, unlike Ferdinando I, Cosimo II and, to a certain extent, Ferdinando II. Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from being very active in relations with the East, presenting himself as one of the protectors of Eastern Christians and imagining great military and commercial ventures with Persia.⁵⁷

Still in the 1680s, the Grand Duke had two other letters prepared for the Shah: one thanking him for the protection granted to all foreigners and Christians who travelled to and settled in Persia,⁵⁸ and another referring to the envoy of the Dominican *magistro* Guglielmo Felle to Persia to negotiate stronger protection for the Christians

⁵² BNCF, *Panciatichiano*, 219, f. 152.

⁵³ ASFi, *MdP*, 4274a, ins. VI, ff. 298–99, 299v–300, 300v–301v; *Miscellanea Medicea*, 326, ins. 91, ff. 1–2, 2v3, 4–5; *Carte Strozziiane*, I, 239, ff. 63–67.

⁵⁴ See ANGELO MICHELE PIEMONTESE, 'La corrispondenza epistolare tra i papi e i re di Persia (1263–1936),' in *Incorrupta Monumenta Ecclesiam Defendunt. Studi offerti a mons. Sergio Pagano, prefetto dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano. III, Inquisizione romana, Indice, Diplomazia pontificia*, eds Andreas Gottsmann, Pierantonio Piatti and Andreas E. Rehberg (Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2018), 455–74 (458–59, n. 17).

⁵⁵ ASFi, *MdP*, 1027, ff. 838.

⁵⁶ For a brief overview of Cosimo III's interest in the Orient (and the 'exotic'), see LORENZO MAGALOTTI, *Scritti di corte e di mondo, a cura di Enrico Falqui* (Rome: Colombo Editore, 1945), 225–28; Carla Sodini, *I Medici e le Indie orientali. Il diario di viaggio di Placido Ramponi emissario in India per conto di Cosimo III* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1996); FRANCESCO MORENA, 'Cosimo III de' Medici e Pietro il Grande, una passione comune: l'Oriente,' in *The Grand Ducal Medici and the Levant*, ed. Marta Carosio and Maurizio Arfaio (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 137–47; ANGELO CATTANEO and SABRINA CORBELLINI, *The Global Eye: Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese Maps in the Collection of the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici* (Florence: La Mandragora, 2020).

⁵⁷ ERIC COCHRANE, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973, repr. 2013), 269.

⁵⁸ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, f. 609.

and Dominicans in the Shah's territories.⁵⁹ Previously, as reported in an *avviso* to the Grand Duke, Felle had only been allowed to travel to Persia because of the Grand Duke's recommendations.⁶⁰

At the outbreak of the Morean War (1684–99), Cosimo III was willing to send military aid to the Venetians, who were fighting against the Ottoman Empire. In addition, he tried to find out whether Persia still had the capacity to fight against the Ottomans. The clearest answer to this issue came from the French traveller Jean Chardin (1643–1713), his great friend and correspondent for many years, who wrote to him that the Persians were no longer able to fight because of the idleness and luxuries to which they had fallen prey in recent decades.⁶¹ Indeed, between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, like Tuscany, Persia experienced a gradual decline, which may have been more limited economically than previously thought, but was certainly significant from a political and military point of view.

In the last decade of the seventeenth century, Cosimo III sent several more missives to Persia, again in favour of the Catholic missions and the religious travellers who had to journey through or to those lands. Shāh Sultān Hosein (r. 1694–1722), the last Safavid sovereign, usually replied gladly to the Tuscan letters, once again demonstrating how, even in a historical moment considered to be one of general crisis, Tuscany and Persia maintained diplomatic ties.

The almost perpetual state of war between Catholic Europe and the Ottoman Empire, however, did not prevent the Church from continuing to send missionaries to the East. For their journeys, the missionaries needed many credentials. These credentials were an integral part of diplomatic practices in the modern era: the issue of being able to identify with certainty the person one was dealing with or who claimed to be the envoy of some sovereign was of primary importance. The secretariats of the various states were extremely concerned about this issue and credentials were essential.⁶² Moreover, besides proving that the person carrying them was an official representative of a ruler, they were the main feature of the ceremonies in which the

⁵⁹ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, ff. 610–11. According to information reported by the scholar Ettore Rossi, Guglielmo Felle entered the Dominican order in 1655 and travelled extensively between Europe and the East. See ETTORE ROSSI, 'Relazioni tra la Persia e l'Ordine di San Giovanni a Rodi e a Malta,' *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 13, 4 (1933): 351–61, see 357, n. 1.

⁶⁰ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, f. 611.

⁶¹ 'A l'égard des Persiens, s'ils sont capables de faire la guerre au Turc, je dirais à Votre Altesse Sérénissime qu'ils sont aujourd'hui fort amollis par le luxe et par l'oisiveté : ils n'ont point fait la guerre depuis près de cinquante ans, si ce n'est en quelque coin de leur empire à de petites occasions, et il n'y a nul seigneur à cette Cour qui en entende l'art.' See ANNE KROELL, 'Douze lettres de Jean Chardin,' *Journal Asiatique* 170, 3 (1982): 295–338 (329). On the liaison between Chardin and Cosimo III, see DIRK VAN DER CRUYSE, *Chardin le persan* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), *passim*.

⁶² NICK WILDING, *Galileo's Idol. Gianfrancesco Sagredo and the Politics of Knowledge* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 120.

ruler, in this case the Shah, would welcome the ambassador.⁶³ This kind of letter was regularly provided by all Catholic rulers, but those of the Grand Duke of Tuscany were in great demand, particularly for those journeying to Persia. For instance, already in 1684, the French monk Louis Marie Pidou de Saint-Olon (Bishop of Baghdad from 1687 to 1717) had travelled to Persia thanks to a grand ducal recommendation,⁶⁴ and in 1691 (c.) the same Saint-Olon requested a letter from Cosimo III allowing him to travel to Isfahan to deal with some matters with Shāh Sultān Hosein, saying that grand ducal letters were always well received at the Persian court.⁶⁵

In 1693, the above-mentioned Guglielmo Felle was again authorised by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide to go to the East,⁶⁶ and once again he asked for the support of the Grand Duke, who had a new letter of recommendation drawn up for him.⁶⁷ As with Pidou de Saint-Olon's request, it was emphasised that grand ducal credentials were particularly appreciated in Persia.⁶⁸

In 1694, Cosimo III wrote a letter to the Shah requesting that the Discalced Carmelites be allowed to return to their houses in New Julfa, from which they had been expelled. In this message, the Grand Duke emphasised that he appreciated the fact that his 'intercessions' were always welcomed by the Persian court and that he hoped that this request would also be granted.⁶⁹

Other documents relating to Persia prove the diplomatic support the Grand Duke continued to give the missionaries, also through foreign ambassadors: in a missive written by the Discalced Carmelite Friar Elia of St Albert we find thanks for a letter that the Grand Duke had written to the Shah in favour of the Catholics, which had been presented to the Persian ruler by the Portuguese ambassador Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo on his mission between 1696 and 1697.⁷⁰

In 1697 Pietro Paolo Palma, Archbishop of Ankara, asked the Grand Duke to write letters in favour of the Catholic missions throughout the East. For this, Cosimo provided him with a letter for the Shah and the Mughal emperor.⁷¹

One of the last contacts between Medici Tuscany and Safavid Persia concerned the mission of the Capuchin Felice Maria da Sellano (1656–1720), who was sent as

⁶³ I mentioned earlier the embassy led by the Dominican Antonio Tani, and a report he sent to Grand Duke Ferdinando II in which he described the great ceremony with which he had been received by the Shah and the reading of the letters of credence he had brought.

⁶⁴ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, f. 704.

⁶⁵ For the request to the Grand Duke, see ASFi, *MM*, 368, ins. II, f. 1147. For Cosimo's letter of recommendation, see ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, ff. 1119–24.

⁶⁶ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, f. 1248; ROSSI, 'Relazioni,' 357, n. 1.

⁶⁷ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, ff. 1246–47.

⁶⁸ ASFi, *MdP*, 1028, f. 1248.

⁶⁹ ASFi, *MdP*, 1029, ff. 289–91.

⁷⁰ On the embassy of Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo, see JEAN AUBIN, *L'ambassade de Gregório Pereira Fidalgo à la cour de Châh Soltân-Hosseyn: 1696–1697* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1971). The letter of Friar Elias of St Albert can be found in ASFi, *MdP*, 1078, f. 259.

⁷¹ ASFi, *MdP*, 1029, ff. 449–50. Pietro Palma had also requested the same credentials from Innocent XII and the Venetian Senate, see BERCHET, *La Repubblica*, 56, 247.

ambassador by the Pope to the Shah of Persia after a mission in Georgia from 1693 to 1698.⁷² The embassy in Persia was motivated by the problems encountered by the Catholic missionaries in the region of Georgia stemming from the bad relations with the Orthodox community there: since the Georgian kingdoms were vassals of the Shah of Persia, his protection would be essential for the maintenance of the Capuchin mission in the region.⁷³ Felice Maria da Sellano himself wrote the story of his journey, his mission and an account of the embassy in *Relazione dell'Ambasciata fatta al Re di Persia, dal Padre Felice Maria da Sellano, Missionario Cappuccino della Provincia dell'Umbria, dall'Anno 1699 sino all'Anno 1702*, kept in the State Archives of Vienna and published first by Charles Schefer and later by Francesco da Vicenza.⁷⁴ In 1699, armed with a papal letter for the Shah, the Capuchin reached Florence and obtained a letter of recommendation from Cosimo III, who 'wrote to the King of Persia a very effective letter, in accordance with the wishes of His Holiness, written in golden ink and enclosed in a very fine purse.'⁷⁵ Felice Maria da Sellano returned to Europe in 1702 and, after a stop-off in Rome to report on his mission to the Pope, he went on to Florence to deliver in person the reply letter from the Shah to the Grand Duke. In his edition of Felice Maria da Sellano's report, Father Francesco da Vicenza claims to have conducted, either personally or through others, research in the archives of the Vatican, Venice and Florence in search of the Shah's letters of reply to the European rulers. He was, however, unable to find any copies or traces of them.⁷⁶ The letters of reply to Venice and Rome were identified, respectively, by Lajos Fekete and Angelo Michele Piemontese,⁷⁷ while the one to the Grand Duke was found during my research in the State Archives of Florence, together with the contemporary Italian translation.⁷⁸

⁷² For a biography of Felice Maria da Sellano, see FRANCESCO DA VICENZA, *Francesco da Vicenza (1880–1956) archivista dei cappuccini Umbri. Miscellanea delle sue ricerche* (Vicenza: G. Rumor, 1930, repr., 'P. Felice Maria da Sellano Ambasciatore del Papa al Re di Persia,' in *Francesco da Vicenza (1880–1956) archivista dei cappuccini Umbri. Miscellanea delle sue ricerche*, Assisi: Curia Provinciale Frati Minori Cappuccini Umbri, 1997), 405–40. For an overview of the Capuchin missions, see GIOVANNI PIZZORUSSO, 'I cappuccini della provincia dell'Umbria nelle missioni *ad gentes* tra XVII e XVIII secolo,' in *I cappuccini nell'Umbria tra Sei e Settecento. Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Todi 24–26 giugno 2004*, ed. Gabriele Ingegneri (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 2005), 145–69. On his diplomatic mission to Persia in 1699–1702, in addition to the texts already mentioned, see HERBERT CHICK, ed., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939, 2 vols.), I, 487–89, 498–99; GIORGIO ROTA, 'Persia 1700–1800: Some Views from Central Europe,' in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History & Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 183–213 (184).

⁷³ PIZZORUSSO, 'I cappuccini,' 159–62; ROTA, 'Persia 1700–1800,' 184.

⁷⁴ CHARLES HENRI AUGUSTE SCHEFER, *Estat de la Perse en 1660 par le P. Raphaël du Mans, supérieur de la mission de capuchins d'Ispahan. Publié avec notes et appendice par Ch. Schefer, membre de l'Institut* (Paris: Ernest Leroux Editeur, 1890), 376–97; FRANCESCO DA VICENZA, *Francesco da Vicenza (1880–1956)*, 414–40.

⁷⁵ SCHEFER, *Estat de la Perse*, 378; FRANCESCO DA VICENZA, *Francesco da Vicenza (1880–1956)*, 417. The news is also reported in the Chronicle of the Carmelites: CHICK, *A Chronicle*, I, 498. The draft of the letter Cosimo had prepared can be found in ASFi, MdP, 1606, f. 1rv.

⁷⁶ FRANCESCO DA VICENZA, *Francesco da Vicenza (1880–1956)*, 439–40.

⁷⁷ LAJOS FEKETE, *Einführung in die persische Paläographie: 101 persische Dokumente* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 549–51; PIEMONTESE, *Persica-Vaticana*, 468.

⁷⁸ ASFi, MdP, 1078, ff. 278–79, 436.

Another letter, dated 1698, arrived in Florence from the Shah assuring that the Grand Duke's request for permission for the Discalced Carmelites' return to New Julfa to restore their church had been granted.⁷⁹ It is probably a reply to the letter sent in 1694, perhaps through Elia of St Albert or the Portuguese ambassador Pereira Fidalgo. Indeed, according to the Latin translation provided to the Grand Duke, the Shah had ordered the text to be drafted in 1698, a date that would coincide with the years of the aforementioned Portuguese mission.⁸⁰ Cosimo's reply was prepared on 15 August 1705, which confirms the hypothesis that the Persian letter, albeit dated 1698, reached Florence in the early years of the following century. It is interesting to see how Cosimo III both expressed his satisfaction with the Shah's decision and reminded him of his devotion to his friendship with Persia, which had endured since the time of the heroic Shāh 'Abbās the Great ('[...] da tempi antichi, nominatamente dal di eroica memoria CIAH ABBAS MAGNO').⁸¹

A draft of a letter to the Shah dated 19 September 1714 contains a very curious request from the Grand Duke: Cosimo III asked Shāh Sultān Hosein to send a young boy of about 12 years old from one of the most remote regions of the empire to Tuscany, and as a gift he sent the Shah a white handkerchief made of a fireproof material ('un fazzoletto bianco composto di tali materie, che a porlo sulla fiamma del fuoco non brucia, ma resiste').⁸² This request was joined by another in which Cosimo asked the Persian ruler to intervene in favour of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia.⁸³

A few years later, in 1718, another letter was written requesting protection for the Catholic missionaries in Georgia:⁸⁴ both this and the earlier letters from the start of the eighteenth century have no Persian replies (or at least they have not yet been found).

The situation in Georgia did not improve much, as in February 1719 Cosimo III again requested the 'strong patronage' of the Shah, without which the Catholics in the Persian territories could not live in safety.⁸⁵ News from the same period informed the Grand Duke that the Orthodox Patriarch of Tiflis, who had persecuted the Catholic mission in Georgia to a considerable extent, had been brought to trial before the governor of Yerevan by order of the Shah. This suggests that, even though no Persian letters have been found on the subject, Shāh Sultān Hosein had agreed to the requests received from the Pope and Cosimo III.⁸⁶

What is probably the last letter addressed from the Grand Duke to the Shah is dated 1721 and was written on behalf of Clement XI (r. 1700–21), who had expressly

⁷⁹ ASFi, *MdP*, 1030, f. 200.

⁸⁰ ASFi, *MdP*, 1030, f. 202.

⁸¹ ASFi, *MdP*, 1030, ff. 203–4.

⁸² ASFi, *MdP*, 1032, f. 176. Unfortunately, I cannot say whether this exchange ever took place.

⁸³ ASFi, *MdP*, 1032, ff. 177–80.

⁸⁴ ASFi, *MdP*, 1032, ff. 381–83.

⁸⁵ ASFi, *MdP*, 1033, f. 126.

⁸⁶ ASFi, *MdP*, 1033, ff. 127–28.

requested one of the Grand Duke's convincing letters about Persian matters.⁸⁷ The issue this time concerned the appointment of the Dominican Angelo Ferri (or Arcangelo Ferri) as Archbishop of Nakhchivan after the death of his predecessor.⁸⁸ It is possible that the Shah never replied to these letters since, exactly one year later, Persia was invaded by an Afghan army which besieged and conquered Isfahan, thus causing the end of the Safavid dynasty and therefore also cutting off relations between the Safavids and the Medicis.

Final remarks and research perspectives

The Medici dynasty ended just over a decade after the Safavid dynasty, during the reign of Gian Gastone (r. 1723–37), putting a definitive stop to the relations between Tuscany and Persia that had begun more than a century before.

It is evident, however, that just as the last Grand Dukes of Tuscany were able to maintain contact with Safavid Persia until the end, the Hapsburg-Lorraine dynasty could have done the same with the dynasties that came to rule Persia thereafter. In this sense, one possible direction of research could be to analyse any relations there may have been between the Grand Duchy of Tuscany after the change of the ruling dynasty and Persia following the fall of the Safavids.

Rereading Tuscan-Persian diplomacy by placing it in the broad context in which Grand Duke Ferdinando I sought to operate has clarified both how and why these relations were born and developed, as well as who the main actors were. The figure of the dragoman Michelangelo Corai in particular, although increasingly the focus of historians' attention, still deserves to be explored in greater depth.

On the other hand, in the light of the new and more extensive chronology proposed from new archival evidence regarding relations between the Medicis and the Safavids, it is certainly useful to rediscover Tuscan foreign policy, particularly from the reign of Cosimo III (but also of Ferdinando II). Cosimo's reign has indeed always been considered a mere period of decline, aggravated by his wasteful expenditure to obtain the royal treaty. Yet, as we have seen, it was also a moment when Tuscany was still extremely vital and 'deeply immersed' in the global world of the time. Cosimo III was a person with many interests and, above all, a ruler with a high conception of his role. These personality characteristics need to be rediscovered since this is what led him to engage in a great deal of diplomacy, maintaining an extensive exchange of correspondence with agents, travellers, missionaries and sovereigns, even from very distant kingdoms such as those of the Shah or the Mughal emperor. Moreover, the continuous diplomatic participation in favour of the religious missions in Armenia and Georgia also opens up prospects for research into the relations between Tuscany, the papacy, the religious representatives in those regions and their rulers.

⁸⁷ ASFi, *MdP*, 1033, f. 231. See also PIEMONTESE, *Persica-Vaticana*, 469.

⁸⁸ ASFi, *MdP*, 1033, f. 230.

It is also possible to reassess the diplomacy conducted by the last Shahs like Shāh Soleimān (r. 1666–94) and Shāh Sultān Hosein, whose reigns have always been depicted as mere periods of decline, despite the expansion of their diplomatic networks.

Moreover, I think it is necessary to once again emphasise the great importance of research on Italian sources regarding Safavid matters, as pointed out by Jean Aubin in the past.⁸⁹ The Italian documentation demonstrates the importance of the role played by Persia in the global strategy of a small European power like Tuscany, and provides new elements to understand the political and cultural attitude of Safavid Persia towards Europe: information that we would hardly find in Persian sources. A rediscovery of Italian sources, mainly from archival research, is therefore also essential in order to ‘correct’ the historiographic perception of relations between Safavid Persia and Europe, which is inevitably dominated by the study of relations between the Safavids and the great powers. Indeed, they can show that in the seventeenth century, and even a little beyond, there were still small and medium-sized states capable of pursuing their own more or less ambitious policies.

The time when Ferdinando I came into contact with Persia was particularly favourable for a dynamic ruler like him. The alliance with Persia was only one of the many paths the ambitious Grand Duke tried to take, and perhaps the only one that was not a dead end. In a time when there seemed to be plenty of opportunities to achieve something concrete in the Levant, Persia seemed to be the perfect ally to rely on. However, even after the failure of these ambitions and the beginning of a period of less intense contacts, and right until the brutal end of the Safavid dynasty, relations remained cordial as is also shown by the curious exchange of ‘gifts’ in 1714 (a fireproof handkerchief in exchange for a Tatar boy).⁹⁰

Both the Mediterranean and global contexts of the period remain of fundamental importance in framing the Persian affairs of the Tuscan Grand Duchy. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between the late seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth, which can also be reflected in the way Tuscan-Safavid relations are analysed. With regard to the beginning of the seventeenth century and the development of these relations, it is unthinkable that their nature can be understood without considering the broader framework of international relations. With regard to the reign of Cosimo III, on the other hand, it is perhaps possible to conduct a somewhat more circumscribed and less ‘global’ analysis, given that between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth these relations were also of more limited.

⁸⁹ JEAN AUBIN, ‘Chroniques persanes et relations italiennes. Notes sur les sources narratives du règne de Šāh Esmā’il Ier,’ *Studia Iranica* 24, 2 (1995): 247–59. Although Jean Aubin’s article focuses on travel accounts and chronicles concerning the period of Shāh ‘Ismā’il’s reign, his discussion about the relevance of Italian sources regarding Safavid history can be extended to the entire duration of the Safavid dynasty as well as to archival sources.

⁹⁰ ASFi, *MdP*, 1032, f. 176.