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BALAS RUBIES FOR THE KING OF ENGLAND (1413-15)

Maria Pia Pedani

Trade was part of the creation myth of Venice:¹ Bono da Malamocco and Rustico da Torcello, who stole the relic of St. Mark in Alexandria of Egypt, were sailors and merchants. In that period the Venetians traded primarily in slaves, wood and weapons with the Muslim world, with little concern for the Pope's prohibitions and the Byzantine emperor's edicts against this kind of relations with the infidels. In the Middle Ages Venetian supremacy over their European rivals increased; most noblemen were also merchants who travelled in far foreign lands, buying and selling every kind of goods. Family firms were formed by brothers, sons, nephews, cousins; they travelled in different parts of Europe and the Levant, remaining in touch one with the others by means of letters, where the news about trade, prices and goods were combined with news about international politics.

Venetians are known particularly for the trade in spices which were bought in the markets of the Levant and then sold in Europe at very high prices. However, there were also other goods which interested them: particularly precious stones and objects of jewelry. It was a trade for long distances. This kind of goods did not take up much room in a ship and was not perishable; gems could be easily hidden in shoes, boots, and also sewed in clothes. They were easily carried, even in very far lands and the princes, in the East as well as in the West, liked the sparkling stones which gave prestige to their treasures. Marco Polo, the most famous Venetian merchant, traded in gems, as did his father and his uncle: this was the reason for the travels which led them eventually to Katai, the result of a series of wars and other chances. Some jewels sold on the Rialto market became famous and the memory of them remained even when the objects themselves had faded away. This was the case of the famous tiara sold to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent by a company of Venetian merchants, in which the doge's son, Alvise Gritti, had a share.² Alvise was himself a merchant of precious stones

¹ D. Howard, *Venice & the East*, New Haven-London 2000, 15.

² G. Necipoğlu, "Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry", *The Art Bulletin*, 71/3 (sep. 1989), 401-427, published also in *Süleyman the Second and his Time*, ed. by H. İnalcık and C. Kafadar,

and when he was killed, many were found in his boots. The lantern for the sultan's caique was made by Venetian jewellers from drawings sent to Venice by the Ottoman court.³

From time to time news about other Venetian jewels and precious stones comes to light. Two letters, edited here, give new light on a trade of precious stones which took place between the markets of Alexandria of Egypt and London at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Biagio Dolfin, a Venetian merchant

I discovered the two commercial letters among the papers of Biagio Dolfin, a nobleman who was twice Venetian consul in Alexandria of Egypt, and was particularly active in the Egyptian market.⁴ The date of his birth is unknown but it was in the second half of the fourteenth century; his father was Lorenzo and his mother Maria Malipiero. One of his brothers was Antonio with whom he began his commercial career, going to Egypt in 1391. In those years the two brothers spent their time between Venice and the Mamluk country. In 1395 Antonio was in Alexandria and in the following year Biagio followed him to Egypt: The two brothers were then already considered the most important merchants of the colony. In 1397 Antonio was in Bruges while Biagio remained in Venice. The family firm had probably begun to be interested also to the European markets. Antonio died at the beginning of 1399 leaving a son, Lorenzo, who in the following years helped his uncle and then became an important merchant himself. In the meanwhile, Biagio, who had lost his wife Elisabetta in 1401, was married twice: first to Cecilia Querini, who soon died, and then to Pasqualiga Pasqualigo in 1405. She survived her husband and married a member of another Venetian merchant family, the Signolo, in the 1420s. Her brother, Paolo Pasqualigo, was entrusted with Biagio's affairs in London. In 1418 he went to England with the young Lorenzo Dolfin. Between 1408 and 1410 Biagio was appointed consul in Alexandria, then he came back to Venice. In 1416 he was appointed by the Senate as Venetian representative in Sebenico but at the end of 1418 he was again in Egypt as consul. In 1420 his nephew Lorenzo joined him and was vice-consul for a while. Biagio's career ended dramatically in Cairo at the end of April 1420, during a plague that raged over the country. Other merchants died in those days, like his relative Orso Dolfin; some of them recovered, like Pietro

İstanbul 1990, pp. 163-194; E. Concina, *Dell'arabico. A Venezia tra Rinascimento e Oriente*, Venezia 1994, 62-63.

³ J. M. Rogers, "Ottoman Religious Cerimonial in Two Late 16th Century *Meremmât Defters* for Süleymaniye, Başbakanlık Arşivi MM/MD 513 and 5832", in *Acta Viennensia Ottomanica*, Wien 1999, 303-309.

⁴ Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), *Procuratori di San Marco, Misti* (hereafter *Misti*), b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, a), 31 January 1414; b) 2 April 1413. Cfr. Documents I and II at the end of this essay.

Bernardo and Giorgio da Milano; and others did not fall ill at all, like Biagio's nephew Lorenzo or Carlo Contarini. A letter from Cairo which gives information about the plague tells us that a mortality-rate of 50/60 persons per day meant that the deaths were decreasing.⁵

The trade in precious stones

When Biagio Dolfin was merely a merchant and had no official responsibility, he could, like other merchants, buy and sell every kind of goods: wheat, spices, olive oil, soap from Gaeta, amber from Flanders, even cheese from Puglia, but when he became consul he and his relatives had to leave aside all this trade since, according to Venetian law, the official representative of the colony could not be in competition with his fellow-citizens. However, sometimes, the central government gave permission to trade in one special item in order to increase the revenue of a consul or a *bailo* who had to stay in a disadvantageous place for a long time, in order to make Venetians more eager to accept the position. For instance, the *bailo* in Armenia could trade in cotton (*bombacio*) (1273); in Tunis the consul had a share in the trade of wood (1279). In contrast, the consuls in Damascus and Alexandria were forbidden to trade in pepper and other spices (1435). However this last one, and his relatives, could deal in precious stones, according to an ancient tradition (1509).⁶

During the period in which he was consul in Alexandria, Biagio Dolfin dealt above all in this kind of goods. His letters are full of details of prices of precious stones in Alexandria, Venice and other markets. He bought above all diamants, spinels (balases), pearls from Hormus, and a few rubies and sapphires. The differences between precious stones were not always clear, in that period. According to some scholars, the red spinel could be called either balas or also ruby according to its color: if it looked like blood it was called ruby, if it was a lighter violet-rose, it was called balas. This name derived from the region of origin for most of them, the Badakhshân (or Balakhshân). Once, all the red stones were also called carbuncle, if they looked like fire. However, there is a great difference between a real ruby and a spinel (ruby-balas). The spinel is an aluminate of magnesium, and its hardness and weight are less than that of the ruby, which is a corundum, like sapphire. If the hardness of a diamond is 10, that of a ruby is 9 and that of a spinel 8. If ordinary people think that a spinel is a ruby and viceversa, a person who knows precious stones - and above all those who cut them - easily recognize the difference.⁷ In Biagio's letters the

⁵ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, d), 1 June 1419; 25 April 1420; Biagio Dolfin's will in *Misti*, b. 180, fasc. perg., 27 April 1420; other information on his life in the two boxes *Misti*, bb. 180-181.

⁶ ASV, *Compilazione leggi*, b. 150, cc. 650-651v, 654, 725-726, 739-739v.

⁷ S. Cavenago-Bignami Moneda, *Gemmologia*, Milano 1959, 316-320, 397-401.

red stones are either balases or rubies and this makes a great difference in their price. A ruby was considered more valuable even than a diamond, at those times. In 1419 in Venice, Biagio wanted to sell a ruby of 3 ½ carats for 500 ducats, even if he would be satisfied with 300; on the other hand in the same letter he told that he had paid in Alexandria 150 ducats for two great diamonds, which in total weighed 7 carats. The price for a good diamond in Venice was about 16-20 ducats per carat; the price for ordinary ones was 12-14 ducats per carat.⁸ In general the price varied from 11 to 24 ducats per carat, but this last price was for exceptionally pure gems.⁹

The profits of the trade of precious stones were very high, more than that of valuable cloths; it was even as high as a hundred percent, because a person who wanted one of them did not look at the price, especially in France or England:

"... le zoie zioé perle de conto, e balasi boni de zoielar e che sia neti e non fa mente se i è foradi perchè el se n'a tanto meo merchado abiando di quelle zoie che sia bone e abia meso ben el so pexo al mio parer taiandole a prexio raxionevole."¹⁰

"... every kind of gems, that is to say precious pearls, balases good for jewels, but they must be pure and no matter if they are pierced; because the best business regards the gems which are beautiful and have a high weight, according to me, if it is possible to cut them without spending too much money."

In comparison with rubies and diamonds, balases were sold at a lower price; for instance, Biagio had two great balases and wanted to sell them at no less than 4 ducats per carat.¹¹ In another letter, his wife Pasqualiga asked him, not for diamonds or rubies, but for two balases in order to make a gift to her new sisters-in-law, and she hints at a price of 3 or 4 ducats for every stone.¹²

We cannot know if Biagio Dolfin knew that balases and rubies were two different stones or if he called them this way according to their colour, but the fact that the price varied so much may hint at the first hypothesis. Also, he had traded in precious stones for many years and knew many others in the same trade. In 1419-20 a cutter of precious stones, Maffeo Spiera, reached him in Egypt in order to buy gems. In Venice jewellers had existed for centuries; the first existing document about their guild dates back to 1231. A law of 1311 obliged them to have their shops only in Rialto, although in later periods they had shops also in the Mercerie. In the mid-

⁸ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, e), 1419.

⁹ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, d), 20 January 1419.

¹⁰ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, d), 29 March 1419.

¹¹ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, e), 1419.

¹² ASV, *Misti*, b. 180, fasc. VII, recordationi e varie comm.

12th century, Suger, abbot of St. Denis, ordered a precious cross made 'according to the fashion of Venice'.¹³ The Spiera family specialized in cutting gems. Members of this family were: Pietro, who had been an ancient commercial partner of Biagio Dolfin, and who died before 1420, and his sons, Francesco and Maffeo, who in that year were still mentioned, not with their Christian names, but as the sons of the '*quondam* Piero'.¹⁴ Some years later, in the 1430s, a grand-nephew of Biagio, Marino Dolfin, also trading in Egypt, was in touch with members of the same family, the brothers Giacomo and Antonio Spiera.¹⁵ A person whose job was to cut precious stones surely knew that rubies are harder than balases and we must remember that the Spieras used to value and cut Biagio's stones in Venice.

London

There is no evidence that Biagio Dolfin had ever been in London, although his brother-in-law, Paolo Pasqualigo, sold some of Biagio's balases in that city together with another Venetian merchant, Nicolò da Molin. Dolfin sent particularly this kind of gem to England and his profits were clearly high. They were usually sold in exchange for money, but sometimes they were also bartered for precious cloths.¹⁶ These stones were usually large. In letters to London Biagio usually speaks of one or two specific gems, well known to his agents; in contrast, when he writes to friends in Venice he speaks of small parcels of paper, with seven, ten, or even twenty-seven gems.

Two of the several balases sent to London must have been exceptional, worthy of a king. The first was sold in 1413. It had been dispatched to Nicolò da Molin, a Venetian merchant there: the owner was not Biagio alone but a company of several Venetian partners. If an item was very precious and a single merchant could not afford the risk of buying it, a number of individuals usually formed a society. This was the case, for instance, of the tiara sold to Süleyman the Magnificent. We do not know the names of Biagio's partners on this occasion, even if we know that Pietro Spiera, before his death, had been one of his business partners and that five years later, some gems, worth 1600 bezants were bought by a society made up of Biagio Dolfin, Lorenzo Bembo and Angelo Michiel.¹⁷

Biagio and his partners hoped to sell the balas for 1800 ducats, but when Nicolò da Molin told them that he had an offer for 1200 ducats, and

¹³ *Dizionario biografico degli orefici, argentieri, gioiellieri, diamantari, peltrai, orologiai, tornitori d'avorio e scultori di nobili materiali*, a cura di P. Pazzi, [Treviso 1998], 31-38; P. Molmenti, *La storia di Venezia nella vita privata dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica*, vol. I, Bergamo 1927, 320-325.

¹⁴ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, d), 29 March 1419.

¹⁵ ASV, *Misti*, b. 205, fasc. III.

¹⁶ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, d), received 21 July.

¹⁷ ASV, *Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, e), 1419.

that it was impossible to sell it for more in London, they agreed to sell. If we consider a price of at least 4 ducats per carat, and the possibility of gaining a profit of one hundred percent, we may imagine a stone which weighed about between 150 and 225 carats.¹⁸ We do not know the name of the person who made the offer in London: "me pare sia uno che ha la zecha de là" ("I think he is a person who has the mint there") wrote Biagio to his brother-in-law, giving him the order to sell it. That is to say, the buyer was an important person involved with the English government, if not the state treasury itself.

This letter was written and given to Paolo Pasqualigo on 2 April 1413 in Venice. Nine months later another letter was written from London by Nicolò da Molin to Biagio Dolfìn. It dealt with another balas and this time the king Henry V himself was involved and had seen the stone at least twice. We do not know if he bought it at last or not, but at that time he was eager to have it to adorn his new crown where two balases had to be set.

"Ben vedemo la voia d'aver quella e per,ne ha fato dar questa longola e per mi esser zerto che bixognando a la corona nuova del dito re 2 balassi ch'el non pu, far cum mancho de tuor questo e più a hora che mai perchè al tuto la vuol comper e questo per haverla presta al suo mariazo che senza fallo de brieve serà concluso in la fiuola del re de Franza."

"We see very well how (the king) desires the stone and for this reason he made the business take a long time and, according to me, I am sure that he cannot fail to buy it since the new crown of the king needs two balases and he cannot do without this one and now he wants to buy it more than ever, and this because he wants to have the crown ready for his marriage with the daughter of the king of France."

The problem was represented by the price. The Venetians started by asking 240 lire and came down to 200; the king's treasurer and chancellor offered 120, 150 and later 160 lire. Nicolò would have accepted 180 lire, but he preferred to ask in advance what he should do. We do not have evidence if the stone was then sold or not but the king was so interested that he ordered that the balas not leave London. This gem, too, had to be a big stone, even if not as large as the first one. At the end of the century a Venetian ducat was worth 4 soldi and 4 denari in London (1 lira = 20 soldi ; 1 soldo = 12 denari). If we consider this rate accurate, that means that 240 lire in London were worth about 1108 ducats and 180 lire were 830 ducats. According to the prices given in ducats in other letters, we should think of a gem of between 138 and 207 carats.¹⁹

¹⁸ 1800 ducats meant 225 carats (if the price was 8 ducats per carat), 180 carats (if the price was 10 ducats per carat); 1200 ducats meant 300 carats (if the price was 4 ducats per carat), 150 carats (if the price was 8 ducats per carat).

¹⁹ P. Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange*, London 1986, 206. The lire were English and not Venetian which had another value.

BALAS RUBIES FOR THE KING OF ENGLAND (1413-15)

In reality, Henry V did not marry the daughter of Charles VI, Catherine, so soon, even if his ambassadors had already seen the girl, dressed and naked ("a tuta maniera, nuda e vestida") and he had fallen in love with her ("el par el re sia sì inamorado de quella che al tuto la vuol haver"). The marriage only took place on 2 June 1420. In the meantime, there was the break-off of the agreement with France and a war with the famous battle of Agincourt (25 October 1415). On the battlefield, Henry V wore a helmet with a famous balas, which narrowly escaped destruction. According to a tradition it was the so-called Black Prince's ruby, now on the British imperial state crown.²⁰ (**Figure 1, Figure 2**) Notwithstanding its name, it is in reality a red spinel as large as a hen's egg, weighing approximately 170 carats, pierced and partly filled with a small ruby. According to the same tradition, it had belonged to a Moorish prince of Granada, Abû Sa'îd. Pedro the Cruel, king of Castille, then acquired it and gave the stone to Edward, the Black Prince, at the victory of Nájera in 1367, to reward him for military help.²¹ This stone may, or may not, have been given to the English prince by this king. How it came to England is unknown, but people say that it made its next historical appearance on the Henry V's helmet at the battle of Agincourt. We have no evidence that one of the two balases, mentioned in Biagio Dolfin's letters was put on Henry's helmet but we know that they are surely among the biggest spinels ever known.²² Moreover, there would have been a sharp irony in setting on the helmet of the war against France a stone which had been bought to adorn the crown of the marriage with the king of France's daughter.

Document I

In Christi nomine 1413 in Venezia adi 2 avril.

Chugnado, io ve arechordo che mo' in questi dy i compagni et nuy si rezevesemo letera da Londra da ser Nichol da Molin per la qual el dito ne avixa chomo del nostro balasio hel si à posudo aver ducati 1200 d'oro in contanti et dixè da chy, che me pare sia uno che ha la zecha de là, e che'l ha fato gran esperienza per tiore plui che'l po', et che'l non v'è sta el muodo a posta averlo tirado plui suso et si conclude in la dita so letera che se nuy deliberamo de mandar proposito, zoé in darlo per mancho de ducati 1800, che nui li mandemo libertade, et se non devisemo mancho de i diti ducati 1800, che'l ne conforta el trarlo de là, perché el non spiera de vegnir may a sì fato prexio. Onde che nuy li avemo scritto et dadoly libertà sperando in luy

²⁰ *Garrards Crown Jewels*, London 1998, vol. 2, 55-62. I should like to thank Lady Frances Clarke for her help in finding news about the Black Prince's ruby.

²¹ L. Suárez Fernández, *Historia de España Edad Media*, Madrid 1978, 445-446.

²² In 1862 in the Exhibition of London, two spinels were shown, one of 102 and 1/4 carats, the other of 197. Other monster-spinels are the Timur-ruby, 361 carats, which the British state treasure got in 1851 and a stone of 400 carats which is in Russia and belonged to Catherine II. Cavenago-Bignami Moneda, *Gemmologia*, 400-401.

che'l ve avantazirà in tuto quello che'l pote, che fin a la dita quantitate de ducati 1200 el vada delivrando, e che, non possendo far meio, che lo debia dar per lo dito prexio de ducati 1200. Et sì li averamo dato ordene de la investida. Et per tanto charissimamente ve priego per mio amor che, quando Dio ve averà conduto a Londra, sì debie esser col dito ser Nichol, e prochurare e solizite con luy che'l ge meta far secondo l'ordene a luy dato, et eziandio faza l'investida. E pregave che vuy faze sy che, se Dio ne dà grazia, che lo trata fin che'l sia tuta la dita investida charegada in galie, sì che niente de là remanga. Altro non ho a dirve, salvo che prego Christo che ve porta et torné con salvamento.

per Blasio Dolfin fo de missier Lorenzo copia de recordacion a ser Bernardo Pasqualigo.

verso

Copia de recordacion fate per my a ser Bernardo Pasqualigo adi 2 avril del 1413.

(ASV, *Procuratori di San Marco, Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, a), 31 January 1414).

Document II

+ In Christi nomine 1414 die 8 zener. In Londra per ser Biagio e ser Zuane Dolfino.

Chari fradi a 4 Otubrio ve scrivessemo l'ultima nostra e per quella ve disessemo abastanza perchè non habrando a responder ad alguna vostra se passeremo su brevitade solo tochandone a quanto farà mestier.

Ve havemo dito del vostro balasio, più volte haverlo mostrado al re e ch'a quello ne ha dito che se achordemo col suo tesorier ch'è el vescovo di Norlize e che i fassimo bon marchado ch'el voleva quello per meter su una suo corona e che havemo al dito resposo che quella zoia non iera nostra e convegnemo obedir quanto per colui di chi la ne vegniva comesso ma che ne fassimo quel ben possemo e che el dito re ne respose che andassemo pur dal suo tesorier che li faria ben. E sozonsio che da quel thesorier fui, el qual havé la dita zoia ne la man, e conseiasse con l'orese del re per voler saver da lui quel i pareva la valesse et à mi dimandà quel el voleva d'essa; dissili lire 240 e da 240 vini fina 220, fin 200 che ne sostegnissemo; el qual ne promesse prima lire 120 e puo da 120 vene fin 150 e li quel remase, con questa me partì da lui. E dissevi più che habrando visto lo re del conseio de l'orese masi a quel e con bone parole el pregai perchè iera mio amigo el me dovesse esser favorevol in vender questa zoia a lore e promise che seco 'l feva che faria ne valeria de meio. E questo fesio perchè cognosco costoro manzadori e per denari faria ogni chatività. El qual ne respose d'avitarne e che infin puochi di el faria mandar per nui e in quello el podesse el ne

avantazeria. El qual de li a 10 zorni fese ch'el dito chanzelier mand, per nui. El re vete una fiada la zoia. Et infine stando mi su le 200 lire ne promesse lire 160 e da quello mai non se parti. Vedendo lui non voler alzar più stete fermo su le lire 200, non habiando da voi di doverlo dar a tal prexio e non voiando smachar la zoia. Perchè ben vedeva quanto avesse ch'el d'aver lire 10 over 20 che quello thesorier non haveria avanzado 1 soldo plui di quel ne promesse che, vedendo la suo opinione, ne tolessemo el balasio. E presi da quel lizenzia, digandoi ch'el s'avisasse che sel non la releva de li a uno mese, che, voiandola, pu, haver el non la poria avere e con questa me ne veni via. Da poi è seguito che nel mese de novembrio a dì 28 di quello alvene a nui l'orese sopradito e disene: «Nichol, tu stai pur duro su quella zoia che seria tuo meio delivrarla e tuor denari» et io li risposi che i era più duri lor e che me meraviava che una sì fata zoia bexognando a quella real, chome la feva ch'el guardasse a una fusaria de 30 in 40 lire che a lui iera nulla. E conclusi che s'el non la toleva fina dì 15 dito e la manderia via per le gallie. Or quello me respose che m'avisasse che iera meio haver i danari che la zoia e cum questa se parti mi. E passando zorni 8 el thesorier sudito mandà per mi e disseme che l'aveva sentido che io voleva mandar quella zoia via e ch'el me feva uno commandamento che soto pena de perder la valuta di quella, io non la dovesse mandar fuora di qui fin ch'el non parlasse col re e quel iera lontan de qui mia 100 e ch'el non doveva tornar fin a la festa de Nadal e che dovesse atender quello. Che zerto udendo tal parolle me ne dolse assai e quanto graziosamente puti, perché con costoro non bisogna andar altamente, el pregai el me lassasse mandar a colui di chi el iera perchè per lui più fiade me iera scritto che i la mandasse. E quel, udendo tuto, disseme che al tuto el voleva la retegnisse fin che lo re vegniva. Che constreti chussi fessimo, perchè contra sti signori non bixogna rechalzitrare. Or el re è venuto qui a le feste. E più fiade nui con alcuni nostri amisi semo sta al thesorier per dir el ne desse lizenzia podessemo far de la nostra zoia quel volevemo. Quello de zorno in zorno ne paseva de parolle digando delivrarne di doman in doman. E non ha manchado che ogni zorno fin a hora per nui e per nostri non sia sta strachado di zi. E pur fin qui non ne ha dado lizenzia e passene de parolle. A hora quel è andato al suo luogo mia 40 lontan de qui e disse ritornerà de qui fin zorni 15 e che al tuto el faria uno bon fin cum lui de quello. E a Vielmo Vriti ch'è molto suo, e de lo re, apresso più fiade l' fato pregar ne voia dar lizenzia de quella zoia, né ha dito quando. El n'ha visto di mala voia, ch'el sa che lo re ha gran voluntade di haver la dita, e che l'aveva parlato cum lui, e ch'el faria ch'el dito Vriti s'acorderia cum nui, e ch'el daria pani in pagamento bastardi e lorfè. Che cognoscemo sierto che questo partido ha messo Vriti davanti a lore e che l'averà dito «Munsignor, lassa far a mi, questo lombardo ha bixogno di pani spesso nui i averemo a buon priexio et a tempo longo e daremo i a pagamento i diti pani a quello», che cognosceva ben questo volessemo far di bona voia. Non ne baraterà ma se vedremo se iera e che la vostra zoia sia venduda da lire 180 in su la lassaremo col nome

de Dio chome da vui havemo ordine. E vendendo l'oposito sostegneremo l'opinione nostra, avisandove non dubitade che largo podemo parlar cum la razione che questo re non ne fara torto. Ben vedemo la voia d'aver quella e per, ne ha fato dar questa longola e per mi esser zerto che bixognando a la corona nuova del dito re 2 balassi ch'el non pu, far cum mancho de tuor questo e più a hora che mai perchè al tuto la vuol comper e questo per haverla presta al suo mariazo che senza fallo de brieve serà concluso in la fiuola del re de Franza. E' sta i ambadori de qui là, se ha visto la dona a tuta maniera, nuda e vestida, e ha reportado al re al suo retorno le suo belleze, zentileze di quella, perchè el par el re sia sì innamorado de quella che al tuto la vuol haver. El re ha mandado la dita ambasiada a dreto con libertade apien de confirmazione de marimonio. La qual ambasiada è partida zìa boni zorni e per fortuna de vento contrario par non sia anchora zonta a la banda de Franza. El re ha mandato di nuovo sentendo questo a quella ambasiada a dir che al tuto la se ne vada più presto la puole e faza fin, sì che concluso per questo mariazo non pu, fallir se finirà la corona. Or devene bona voia ch d'essa ne faremo al spazamento chomo la fosse mille fiade nostra permetendove per Dio metando fine ne haveramo sì gran consolazione chomo se fosse de nui medemi havemone habudo assai travaie per quella che Dio el sa, ma pur che faza a questa bon delivro, ch'è desider assai, ogni cossa starà bene metando per lo meio quanto è seguido. Chome più avanti passerà, per nostre el saprete.

Ve havemo scritto puocho per lo passato per cadone non sia sta gran nezessità. E più cum speranza di poderve scriver a la zornata quella zoia haver fine che v'imprometemo per 2 in 4 fiade havemo creduto vender quella che per, havemo dito tra noi «Io non scriver, fin che non ge meto fine». Ma vedendo chome la chossa passa ne ha preso non poder far con mancho de farve questa. E de qui avanti chome tuto passeràve raviseremo.

Perchè pensemo sete desideroso haver questa zoia podetene dar libertade in quanto la non se vendesse, che non l' credo, la dassimo a qualche di questi nostri che spesso parte de qui o se volete a una de le 2 carachie veniziane se trova de qui che ser Polo Pasqualigo e ser Marin de Michiel che a uno di loro la dagamo scrivandonelo faremo el vostro commandamento che priego Idio ne dia chasione la non se habia a mandar e che adempia el desiderio mio ch'è de meterli bon fine per vostro destro.

Pensemo per el gran dilivrar é fato de spezie de qui, e a Bruzia, per più gnnatione achatade, che quante v'erano de qui, per quest'altra muda, averà perfeta ventura perchè non zi é de quelle da far conto, né per altra gnnatione pu, esser metudi ch'a per nostra. Et ha gran dimanda che Dio amaistra tuti a far il suo meio.

De panine se haverà bone drete quest'ano. Haveravesse lorse a soldi 17, bastardi fini a soldi 45, mezani soldi 51, bastardi de gelforte soldi 28 el pano, bianca de gelforte ad 7 bala, pani de sete streti tanti da soldi 10 in 15 la dozzina. Soantona soldi 8 la dozina, cotisgualdo da soldi 20 in 24 la

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dozina, pani de sete bianchi largi soldi 4 de 6 balla per tenzer in grana, pani da Londra per lo simele da nails 16 infin 20 el pano secondo bontade.

Le lane haveravesse ai contadi per nails 12 fine stagno in pezi da soldi 20 el circa, siene avisadi.

Fin in qui è chopia, de una mandaratave a 8 del presentte e avendove detto al bexogno e non aver a responder ad alguna vostra nulla me achade plui salvo replicarvi questa real troverse qui in Londra perchè io solizito al poder mio de far fin hel a suditta zoia e ho daver lizenzia da quela ne possa fare d'essa quel volemo

E in conclusion fin questo zorno niente podemo far perchè questa real par sia hocupada sul fato de questo mariazo e per i suo n'è detto: «Tariamo fin al ritorno de l'ambasada sua», la qual s'aspetta a la zornada. E che posa poremo più largo parlari e la dige de conforti uxadi, che non dubitemo averemo nostra intenzion, che a concluder tutto saremo soleziti al spazo de quella al poder. E quantto ne schriviremo sapereli non ch'e achaduto per ahora altro ch'à ofrirse sempre a piaxeri vostri, che conservave Idio.

Per Andrea et Nicholo da Molin salute adi 31 zener.

verso

Nobilibus et sapienttibus dominis Biaxio et Johanne Dolfino detti in Viniexia

de la raxion de ser Nichollo da Molin da Londra

(seal)

(ASV, *Procuratori di San Marco, Misti*, b. 181, fasc. XV, lettere, b), 2 April 1413).



Figure 1

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Figure 2