

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ELITES
IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE
(15TH–18TH CENTURIES)

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Edited by

CRISTIAN LUCA, LAURENȚIU RĂDVAN AND
ALEXANDRU SIMON

With a Foreword by

MARTYN RADY

School of Slavonic and East European Studies
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Foreword

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Contributors	viii
Martyn Rady <i>Foreword</i>	ix
Cristian Luca and Laurențiu Rădvan <i>Introduction</i>	1
Cristian Nicolae Apetrei <i>Elites at home: Romanian aristocratic houses in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries</i>	11
Alexandru Simon <i>Jewish merchants between Cross and Crescent: the Greek rite case of Moldavia</i>	25
Olga Kozubska-Andrusiv <i>Urban elites of Lviv: emergence, development, and self-representation</i>	35
Alexandr Osipian <i>The construction of historical identity among Polish and Armenian patricians in Lviv, 1570s–1670s</i>	65
Laurențiu Rădvan <i>Urban elites in the Romanian Principalities of the later Middle Ages</i>	85
Gerassimos D. Pagratis <i>Entrepreneurship and Social and Political Power in the Ionian Islands from the late sixteenth century to the first decades of the seventeenth: some case studies from Venetian-ruled Corfu</i>	109
Ștefan Aftodor <i>The Caradjas: patterns of influence and integration in the Wallachian elite in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century</i>	121
Szymon Kazusek <i>The municipal elite of Cracow and its role in the economic life of the city in the seventeenth century</i>	137
Cristian Luca <i>The professional elite in mid-seventeenth century Constantinople: the Danish physician Hans Andersen Skovgaard (1604–1656) in the last decade of his life and career</i>	147

Anișoara Ionașcu <i>Moldavian rural elites: the boyar Dumitrașco Ștefan and his residence in Buciulești (Neamț County)</i>	157
Rafael-Dorian Chelaru <i>Catholic elites and Ottomans in the Western Balkans (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries)</i>	165
Gheorghe Lazăr <i>Merchant-moneychangers in Wallachia (from the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century)</i>	181
Marius Paduraru and Claudiu Neagoe <i>Greek merchants in Bucharest during the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu</i>	193
Christina E. Papakosta <i>From armatolos to cavaliere di San Marco: Aggelis Sumillas (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries)</i>	213
Index	222

The professional elite in mid-seventeenth century Constantinople: the Danish physician Hans Andersen Skovgaard (1604–1656) in the last decade of his life and career

Cristian Luca

Hans Andersen Skovgaard was born either in 1600,¹ or in 1604 as more recent research suggests, at Elsinore (Helsingør) on the north-east coast of the Danish island of Zealand, as the son of a local Lutheran curate.² Skovgaard studied under the famous Danish doctor, biologist, philologist and archaeological pioneer Ole Worm (1588–1655), professor at the University of Copenhagen, who had trained at the University of Padua and travelled extensively in Italy, where he had met many significant scholars of the day including the naturalist Ferrante Imperato (1550–1615). Indeed, Imperato's natural science museum in Naples inspired him to found the Museum Wormianum in the Danish capital. In 1620 Hans Andersen Skovgaard was a student at the University of Copenhagen,³ and two years later, in 1622, continued at the University of Wittenberg, which many Nordic students chose for their studies as it was considered the 'Lutheran Rome'.⁴ While at Wittenberg, Skovgaard corresponded with Worm,⁵ telling him that he had begun to study iatrochemistry under the renowned German physician Daniel Sennert (1572–1637).⁶ From 1625 Hans Andersen Skovgaard studied at the University of Padua with the help of a stipend from the Royal House of Oldenburg and grants from the mathematician

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- 1 Fr. J. Billeskov Jansen, *Liv og lærdom. Kapitler af dansk videnskabs historie*, Copenhagen, 1983, p. 20.
 - 2 O. P. Grell, "'Like the bees, who neither suck nor generate their honey from one flower'". The Significance of the peregrinatio academica for Danish Medical Students in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in: *Centres of Medical Excellence? Medical Travel and Education in Europe, 1500–1789*, ed. Grell, A. Cunningham & J. Arrizabalaga, Farnham & Burlington, 2010, p. 180.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 S. Bagge, 'Nordic students at foreign Universities until 1660', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 9 (1984), pp. 20–1.
 - 5 J. Shackelford, 'Unification and the Chemistry of the Reformation', in: *Infinite boundaries: Order, disorder, and reorder in Early Modern German culture* [Sixteenth Century essays & studies, vol. 40], ed. M. Reinhart, Kirskville, MO, 1998, pp. 298, 299, note 20; M. Fink-Jensen, *Fornuften under troens lydighed. Naturfilosofi, medicin og teologi i Danmark, 1536–1636*, Copenhagen, 2004, p. 243, note 27; Grell, "Like the bees", p. 180.
 - 6 O. P. Grell, 'In search of true knowledge: Ole Worm (1588–1654) and the New Philosophy', in: *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects, and Texts, 1400–1800*, eds P. H. Smith & B. Schmidt, Chicago, 2007, p. 220.

Thomas Fincke (1561–1656),⁷ and took the opportunity to visit many of the Italian cities (Pisa, Rome, Siena, Venice, etc.).⁸ The theoretical and practical courses at the medical school at Padua were among the most advanced in seventeenth-century Europe.⁹ It was at Padua that the celebrated English physician William Harvey (1578–1657) had taken his medical degree in 1602,¹⁰ before finding fame for his revolutionary discovery of the circulation of blood.¹¹ Although Skovgaard would never reach such professional heights as the Englishman, he gave courses in anatomy at the University of Pisa for which he was well paid, even if it seems that in the end he never took a doctorate in medicine from Padua.¹² Nevertheless, he would go on to become a well-regarded doctor in Constantinople and attend to highly-placed Ottoman dignitaries.¹³

Skovgaard appears in the sources of the time Italianised as Giovanni Andrea Scoccardi, under which name he gained fame as a doctor in Constantinople.¹⁴ After 1628, or in 1632 at the latest, he was doctor at the Venetian embassy to the Porte,¹⁵ and later would go on to be an effective agent for the Serenissima's spy network in the Ottoman capital. He hoped that by serving Venetian diplomatic interests he would be able to obtain a medical position in the St. Mark city, and settle there with his family.¹⁶ Probably on the recommendation of Giovanni Antonio Grillo, grand dragoman of the Venetian embassy at Constantinople, the Moldavian prince Vasile Lupu offered Hans Andersen Skovgaard the post of doctor to the princely court in Iași in September 1641,

7 V. Helk, 'Dänische Romreisen von der Reformation bis zum Absolutismus (1536–1660)', *Analecta Romanae Instituti Danici*, 6 (1971), p. 193; Billeskov Jansen, *Liv og lærdom*, p. 22; in October 1627 Hans Andersen Skovgaard was still in Padua; see C. Mordhorst, *Genstandsfortællinger. Fra Museum Wormianum til de moderne museer*, Copenhagen, 2009, p. 220.

8 Helk, 'Dänische Romreisen', p. 193.

9 A. Castiglioni, 'Una pagina di storia dell'insegnamento clinico (da Padova a Leida)', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, 4, no. 40 (1938), pp. 4880–3.

10 R. French, *William Harvey's natural philosophy*, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 59–70.

11 French, 'Harvey, clinical medicine and the College of Physicians', *Clinical Medicine*, 2, no. 6 (2002), pp. 584–90.

12 Grell, "Like the bees", p. 189.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 183 and note 30.

14 For biographical details on Skovgaard, see E. Lozovan, 'Voyageurs nordiques dans les Pays Roumains', *Études Romanes de Lund*, 18 (1970), pp. 112–3; Helk, 'Dänische Romreisen', pp. 154, 193; Lozovan, 'Un médecin danois en Moldavie: Hans Andersen Skovgaard (1600–1656)', *Romanica*, 4 (1971), pp. 81–4; H. D. Schepelern, *Museum Wormianum. Dets Forudsætninger og Tilblivelse*, Copenhagen, 1971, p. 374; N. Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici de curte*, Bucharest, 1972, pp. 139–47; A. Pippidi, 'Quelques drogmanes de Constantinople au XVII^e siècle', in: Pippidi, *Hommes et idées du Sud-Est européen à l'aube de l'âge moderne*, Bucharest & Paris, 1980, pp. 150–1; Helk, 'Hans Andersen Skovgaard, dansk læge i Konstantinopel', *Medicinsk Forum*, 34, no. 4 (1981), pp. 126–8; Helk, *Dansk-norske studierejser fra reformationen til enevælden, 1536–1660. Med en matrikel over studerende i udlandet*, Odense, 1987, pp. 36, 61, 69, 87; P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia*, Milan, 1994, pp. 253, 351; J. Shackelford, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine: The Ideas, Intellectual Context, and Influence of Petrus Severinus (1540/2–1602)*, Copenhagen, 2004, p. 326, note 23.

15 Helk, 'Hans Andersen Skovgaard', p. 128.

16 E. de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, vol. VIII, Bucharest, 1894, docs DCCVII–DCCVIII, pp. 500–1; Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 140, 142.

and also guaranteed that he could practise freely in the city.¹⁷ The Dane had already been to Moldavia in 1634 with the uncle of his future bride, the Venetian merchant Francesco Borisi, who was trying to recover a debt from the heirs of the Cretan Constantine Battista Vevelli which had been owed to the late Bernardo Borisi.¹⁸

As court doctor in Moldavia, Skovgaard would receive an annual salary of 1,500–1,600 Spanish reales, in pieces of eight, from September 1641, and an additional one-off payment of 500 thalers, in *leuwendaalders*, to cover expenses.¹⁹ Skovgaard received 900 Spanish reales of the agreed salary in advance, and 300 thalers for the costs of moving from Constantinople to the Moldavian capital.²⁰ Even though he hoped to practise in Venice,²¹ Skovgaard was forced by lack of any positive response from the government of the Serenissima to accept the Moldavian prince's offer, and moved to Iași.²² He stayed there for six or seven years, interrupted by trips back to Constantinople to see his family, whom he had left in the relative safety of the Italian–Levantine community in Pera. His stay in Moldavia was profitable not just because he was practising there as a doctor in a privileged position at the princely court, but also because he was offered occasional payments by the Venetian and Habsburg embassies at the Porte, whom he supplied with political, diplomatic and military secrets garnered from Moldavian courtiers.²³ On 7 December 1646 Jerzy Kutnarski, Lupu's Polish secretary, arrived in Warsaw and visited the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Tiepolo, delivering letters from the prince and from Doctor Hans Andersen Skovgaard. Tiepolo reported in his dispatch to the doge Francesco Molin and the Senate: 'yesterday a secretary of the prince of Moldavia came to me in the morning, with letters from the prince himself and from his doctor, Siccardi [sic!]'²⁴ Thus Skovgaard was still in Moldavia in late 1646, and probably early the next year as well. At some point in 1647 or 1648, Skovgaard resigned his post as doctor to

17 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, vol. IV/1, Bucharest 1882, doc. DXCIV, p. 668, doc. DXCVIII, pp. 671–5; *ibid.*, vol. VIII, doc. DCCVIII, pp. 501–2; Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 140, 142–3; D. Găzdaru, 'Documente', in: *Omagiul Profesorului D. Găzdaru. Miscelanea din studiile sale inedite sau rare*, vol. I (*Studii istorico-filologice*), Freiburg im Breisgau, 1974, doc. VI, p. 49; Helk, 'Hans Andersen Skovgaard', p. 128.

18 Archivio di Stato di Venezia/State Archives of Venice (hereafter ASV), *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Atti protocolli*, b. [=archival envelope] 284, unnumbered doc. (January 1634).

19 Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 140, 142–3.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 142–3.

21 In a letter dated 10th August 1641, Skovgaard asks the former *bailo* Alvise Contarini for help in obtaining a medical position in Venice; see Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, vol. VIII, doc. DCCVII, pp. 500–1.

22 *Ibid.*, vol. IV/1, doc. DXCIV, p. 668; *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, doc. DCCIX, p. 502; Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 140, 142–3; Găzdaru, 'Documente', doc. VI, p. 49.

23 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, vol. IV/2, Bucharest, 1884, doc. DX, p. 515, doc. DCXIII, p. 524, doc. DCXLII, p. 549; Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 143–4, 146; Pippidi, 'Quelques drogman', p. 150; Șt. Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae*, vol. II (*Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1601–1659*), Bucharest, 1989, p. 153; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, p. 253; Cr. Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli nel Seicento', *Annuario dell'Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia*, 5 (2003), pp. 301–3, docs III–V, pp. 309–10.

24 D. Caccamo, *Il carteggio di Giovanni Tiepolo ambasciatore veneto in Polonia (1645–1647)*, Rome, 1984, doc. 204, p. 420; Andreescu, 'Giovanni Tiepolo și românii. Note pe marginea unor documente din Arhivele Venetiei', in: *Românii în istoria universală*, vol. III/3 (*Izvoare străine pentru istoria românilor*), eds I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian & Șt. S. Gorovei, Iași, 1988, pp. 167–8, note 18.

the princely court and left Iași, returning to his family in Constantinople and working to further Venetian interests as their agent. He had an ideal cover as a doctor, being well-regarded and widely known as such in the Ottoman capital.

Hans Andersen Skovgaard's correspondence of 1642–43 with Francesco Ingoli, Secretary of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*,²⁵ and his close cooperation with the Franciscan missionary Bartholomew Bassetti²⁶ prove that the Danish physician had converted from Lutheranism to Catholicism before his arrival in Moldavia. This probably happened during his studies in Italy, or later in Constantinople before his Catholic wedding to Franceschina Borisi, a devout woman who had received a convent education in Capodistria.²⁷ His letters, written in a ceremonial style and using rhetoric tropes typical of the correspondence of Catholic missionaries in Eastern Europe, show that Skovgaard had an unexpectedly sincere piety and was devoted to the Roman Catholic rite.²⁸ Thus, in the light of these contemporary sources, it can be clearly stated that Skovgaard had converted to Catholicism, and that during his stay in Moldavia he was one of the Catholic residents in the capital of the principality.

Hans Andersen Skovgaard married in Constantinople some time before March 1641,²⁹ his bride being Franceschina Borisi,³⁰ daughter of the late grand dragoman at the Venetian embassy, Marc' Antonio Borisi. Franceschina Borisi had earlier been married to the Venetian merchant Pellegrino Testa, called Fortuna, in 1618 or 1619.³¹ This marriage was annulled sometime after 1623 when their only child Asanina was born,³² after which Pellegrino Testa settled in Moldavia,³³ while Franceschina Borisi remained in Constantinople with her daughter.³⁴ By 1641 Asanina Testa Borisi had already left her mother's home and started her own family. Hans Andersen Skovgaard and Franceschina Borisi had a daughter, who was baptised a Catholic and named Gioia, although she

25 V. Leu, 'Noi informații cu privire la Giovanni Andrea Scoccardi, medicul lui Vasile Lupu', in: Leu, *Studii și documente bănățene*, vol. II, ed. C. Albert, Timișoara, 2011, pp. 13, 16–7, 19–20.

26 *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. VII, ed. M. Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu–Dersca Bulgaru & P. Cernovodeanu, Bucharest, 1980, pp. 8–9, 49, 53; Leu, 'Noi informații cu privire la Giovanni Andrea Scoccardi', pp. 14–22.

27 Luca, 'Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli nel Cinque–Seicento: i dragomanni provenienti dalle famiglie Brutti, Borisi e Grillo', in: Luca, *Dacoromano–Italica. Studi e ricerche sui rapporti italo–romeni nei secoli XVI–XVIII*, Cluj–Napoca, 2008, p. 115.

28 Leu, 'Noi informații cu privire la Giovanni Andrea Scoccardi', pp. 13–5, 17–22.

29 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 317, unnumbered doc. (13 March 1641), unnumbered doc. (7 December 1649).

30 *Ibid.*, fols 13^v–13^v, 34^v–35^r.

31 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Atti protocolli*, b. 279, fols 204^r–205^v, 206^v–208^r; *ibid.*, b. 280, fols 134^r–134^v; Luca, 'Note documentare privitoare la rezidenții străini din orașele din Țările Române în secolele XVI–XVII', *Historia Urbana*, 11, nos 1–2 (2003), p. 100; Luca, 'Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli', p. 118.

32 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Lettere*, b. 110, unnumbered docs (8 March 1636 and 25 November 1636); Luca, 'Note documentare', p. 101; Luca, 'Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli', p. 118.

33 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Lettere*, b. 110, unnumbered docs (8 March 1636 and 25 November 1636); Luca, 'Note documentare', p. 100; Luca, 'Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli', p. 118.

34 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Atti protocolli*, b. 282, unnumbered doc. (30 March 1620).

is also found in sources of the time as Elena Scoccardi.³⁵ Gioia Skovgaard/Scoccardi married in Constantinople the doctor Giovanni Mascellini (1612–75), originally from Pesaro,³⁶ and they had several children, ‘as many sons as daughters,’³⁷ one of these being Laura Mascellini, who would marry the dragoman Giacomo Tarsia.

Francesco Mascellini, one of the two sons of Giovanni Mascellini and Gioia Skovgaard, took an apprenticeship as dragoman, *giovane di lingua*, at the Venetian embassy from 1685 to 1697.³⁸ This Francesco Mascellini was very probably the father of Giovanni II Mascellini, ‘Pubblico Dragomano’ in 1748,³⁹ and Giancesina and Anna ‘di lui sorelle, permanenti qui in Pera di Costantinopoli’.⁴⁰ Giovanni II Mascellini in turn was the father of Giovanni Battista, Paolo and Mario Mascellini, all of whom followed in his footsteps, first as dragoman apprentices and then as the Serenissima’s dragomans at the Porte in the decades leading up to the fall of the Venetian Republic.⁴¹

Shortly after his marriage to Franceschina Borisi, Skovgaard helped his in-laws in settling some matters of Borisi family property. Thus on 12 August 1641 he signed a contract for his sister-in-law Cecilia Borisi Brutti, who was leasing a house in Pera to the merchant Andrea Bonanini for the sum of 150 Spanish reales a year.⁴² In signing, Skovgaard used the Italianised form of his name, ‘Giovan<nni> Andrea Scogardi’.⁴³ At the end of August he left Constantinople for Iași, as shown in a document notarised for Cecilia Borisi Brutti appointing Paolo Vecchia as ‘the representative for the honourable doctor Scoc<ardi>’,⁴⁴ her brother-in-law, to administer all goods and properties since she could neither read nor write, and did not feel able to manage affairs on her own.⁴⁵

35 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 373/II, fol. 35; *ibid.*, b. 317, unnumbered doc. (13 March 1641); Pippidi, ‘Quelques drogman’, pp. 150–1 and family trees; Luca, ‘Alcuni “confidenti” del bailaggio’, p. 302.

36 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 317, unnumbered docs (12 and 22 August 1660; 2 November 1662; 8 June 1666); *ibid.*, b. 367, unnumbered docs (26 and 28 April, 25 March, 28 June 1674); Vătămanu, ‘Contribution à l’étude de la vie et de l’œuvre de Giovanni Mascellini, médecin et secrétaire princier’, *Revue des études européennes*, 16, no. 2 (1978), pp. 269–87; S. P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey: Paul Rycout at Smyrna, 1667–1678*, London, 1989, pp. 235–7.

37 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 373/II, fol. 35; Pippidi, ‘Quelques drogman’, p. 150 and note 131; Luca, ‘Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli’, p. 118.

38 ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 148, unnumbered doc. (15 September 1685), fols 79–80, 82, 84; *ibid.*, b. 423, doc. 184; ASV, *Miscellanea Gregolin*, b. 12 *quater*, unnumbered doc. (24 June 1697); Luca, ‘Alcuni “confidenti” del bailaggio’, p. 304, note 33; Luca, ‘Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli’, p. 118.

39 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 377, unnumbered doc. (26 July 1748); ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Atti protocolli*, b. 293, reg. 431, unnumbered docs (16 December 1767 *more veneto*; 17 June 1768); ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 349, no. 12 (14 April 1754); M. L. Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734 as revealed in despatches of the Venetian Baili*, Urbana, 1944, p. 119.

40 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Atti protocolli*, b. 293, reg. 431, unnumbered doc. (16 December 1767 *more veneto*).

41 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 320 I, unnumbered doc. (16–17 July 1776); *ibid.*, b. 329, unnumbered docs (1, 3 and 19 June 1797; 4 August 1797; 3 September 1797); Luca, ‘Il bailaggio veneto di Costantinopoli’, p. 119.

42 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 367, unnumbered doc. (12 August 1641).

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*, unnumbered doc. (31 August 1641).

45 *Ibid.*, unnumbered doc. (12 August 1641).

In January 1645 Hans Andersen Skovgaard bought a house in the former Genoese colony of Pera from the brothers Giovanni, Domenico, Antonio and Nicolò Piron, who had inherited it from their father, the Constantinople merchant Stefano Piron. Giovanni Piron, dragoman apprentice at the Venetian embassy,⁴⁶ negotiated the sale with Skovgaard, and the two of them agreed that the Piron brothers would receive 600 Spanish reales for the house in two successive payments of 350 and 250 reales.⁴⁷ A relative of the brothers, Maria Piron, heard of the sale and came forward to say that the sons of Stefano Piron owed him 500 Spanish reales, and straight away asked the *bailo* Giovanni Soranzo to confiscate the 150 reales (!) which Doctor Skovgaard had just paid them.⁴⁸ Even if we add this further 150 reales to the agreed sale price of 600, however, Skovgaard was still making a good purchase here, since 750 reales was a low price for such a house in Constantinople at the time. By buying the Piron family property, the Dane now had a house in Pera where he lived with his wife Franceschina Borisi and their daughter Gioia after his return from Moldavia and until summer 1656.

During these years in the Ottoman capital, Hans Andersen Skovgaard was able to overcome the proverbial Venetian distrust of foreigners, at least after marrying into the family of the late grand dragoman, Marc' Antonio Borisi.⁴⁹ It was probably in the wake of his marriage to Franceschina Borisi that Skovgaard was officially accepted as a paid informant by the Serenissima's embassy in Constantinople, and his hard work in the service of Venetian interests would be fully acknowledged by the government of the Republic of St. Mark. In 1650 Venice was fighting fiercely with the Porte in the War of Candia, so that Venetian diplomats in Constantinople desperately needed information on enemy troop movements and on the rate at which the shipyards of the Ottoman Arsenal were building warships. The Venetian embassy was of course under close watch and the *bailo* Giovanni Soranzo had been imprisoned by order of the Grand Vizier, while the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary Giovanni Cappello, sent from Venice to sound out the possibilities of ceasefire negotiations with the Porte, had been detained at Adrianople along with his secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino.⁵⁰ Given the difficulties under which their diplomats stood and the impossibility of gathering any intelligence by those means, it became vital for the Republic that they recruit trustworthy informants who could report from Constantinople about military matters and the Porte's foreign policy. To this end the central authorities, the *Inquisitori di Stato* and *Consiglio dei Dieci*, authorized the *bailo*, in November 1650, 'to use the services of doctor Scoccardi [Hans Andersen Skovgaard] and of Balsarini, formerly [Venetian] consul on Chios,

46 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 331 I, unnumbered doc. (10 January 1645).

47 *Ibid*, unnumbered doc. (13 January 1645).

48 *Ibid*.

49 Vătămănu, 'Contribution à l'étude de la vie et de l'œuvre de Giovanni Mascellini', pp. 141–2; Pippidi, 'Quelques drogmans', p. 150 and note 130; Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio', p. 302.

50 M. P. Pedani-Fabris, *Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani*, Venice, 2000, p. 36; L. De Zanche, *Tra Costantinopoli e Venezia. Dispacci di Stato e lettere di mercanti dal Basso Medioevo alla caduta della Serenissima*, Prato, 2000 [= *Quaderni di Storia Postale*, 25 (2000)], p. 75, note 13; Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio', p. 302.

presently in Constantinople, and of one of the [embassy] dragomans to send news from the Porte to the Senate'.⁵¹

Thus it was that, armed with a perfect cover as doctor and belonging, as a Danish subject, to a nation that was neutral in the Ottoman–Venetian war, Skovgaard became a key figure in the Serenissima's spy network. For the correspondence between the ambassador, Giovanni Cappello, and Skovgaard, it seems that the Danish doctor was entrusted with the perilous task of building contacts with the French ambassador, Jean de La Haye, who passed on secret messages from the Venetian authorities.⁵² Skovgaard's services to Venice at a time when the war with the Ottomans made it almost impossible for the Republic's merchants to freely travel anywhere in the empire were much appreciated, and were doubtless well rewarded to reflect the risks he took, putting his own life and the freedom of his family at stake. If exposed he would certainly have been condemned to death and his wife and daughter enslaved, but Hans Andersen Skovgaard was soberly following the goal he had set himself some time ago, that of a position as doctor in the Republic of Venice where he could live, with his family, in the city on the lagoon. Records show that from 1650 until 1656, when he died in the Ottoman capital, the Dane faithfully served Venetian interests, carrying out very dangerous missions in Constantinople to procure political and military secrets, and that he was directly involved in the deaths of renegades in service to the Porte.

The secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino writes clearly in his *dispaccio* of 5th January 1654 that Skovgaard and his son-in-law, the doctor Giovanni Mascellini, were among Venice's best and most trusted informants in Constantinople.⁵³ The Danish doctor was not so well thought of, however, by the French embassy, since he had promised his daughter in marriage to the secretary of ambassador de La Haye before changing his mind and marrying her to Doctor Mascellini instead.⁵⁴ In May 1654, Skovgaard adroitly used the contacts he had built up with highly-placed Ottoman figures in his professional capacity as a doctor to gather intelligence useful to Giovanni Cappello, even trying to obtain support from certain dignitaries at the Porte to plead with the Sultan and Grand Vizier for the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to be allowed to leave Adrianople, where he had been detained, for Constantinople.⁵⁵ The doctor did not balk at taking part in black operations aimed at eliminating renegades who had offered their technical and military expertise to the Ottoman war effort. Thus Skovgaard supplied the Franciscan Giovanni Locatelli, *guardiano* of the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Pera and secretly in service to the secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino, with medicinal preparations containing lethal doses of poison, used to kill three renegades

51 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 44, unnumbered doc.; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, p. 253; Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio', p. 302.

52 Preto, *I servizi segreti*, p. 253; on de La Haye's support to Venetian diplomats in Constantinople, see Pedani-Fabris, *Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani*, p. 36; De Zanche, *Tra Costantinopoli e Venezia*, pp. 77–8; Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio', p. 302.

53 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 45, unnumbered doc. (letter from Skovgaard to Ballarino, showing that he and his son-in-law Mascellini, were informants for the Venetian embassy at Constantinople); for part of what follows, see also Luca, 'Alcuni "confidenti" del bailaggio', p. 302–4.

54 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 45, unnumbered doc.

55 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 44, unnumbered doc.

who were considered especially dangerous.⁵⁶ Secretary Ballarino, who had initiated the assassination, reported its success in a ciphered dispatch to the *Inquisitori di Stato* sent from Adrianople on 13th April 1655: ‘the death [killing] of Navagiero and the demise of the signori Arbanosovich and Grillo, altogether cost 60 reales more than the sum of 500 which Your Excellencies had approved’.⁵⁷ Following this successful elimination, the *Consiglio dei Dieci* received a secret report from Constantinople in August 1655 that ‘Scoccardi [Skovgaard] was awaiting’⁵⁸ new orders from Venice. His son-in-law, Giovanni Mascellini, who had been doctor to the Wallachian princes since 1648, first to Matthew Basarab (1632–54) and then to Constantine Șerban Basarab (1654–8),⁵⁹ regularly supplied the Venetian authorities with intelligence gathered in Wallachia that he considered useful to the Serenissima’s interests.

In 1656 intelligence from the Ottoman Empire was still sparse, and hard to send to Venice, so that when the *Consiglio dei Dieci* learnt in December that ‘secretary Ballarino has been forced to leave Constantinople’ they tried to get news from the Empire, sending to the Porte a certain Cesare Balbi with the mission ‘with the help of the dragomans, under the cover of a merchant or some other cover, to remain there and to send accurate news about Turkish preparations and movements’.⁶⁰ Given the Venetians’ difficulties in sending intelligence to their capital on Ottoman military and political developments, the value of informants such as the two doctors, Skovgaard and Mascellini, is evident.

After the sudden death of his father-in-law, Hans Andersen Skovgaard, sometime in the second half of 1656,⁶¹ Giovanni Mascellini continued to serve Venetian diplomacy, particularly after his return to Constantinople,⁶² and in 1661 carried letters from Venice via the Habsburg ambassador to the grand chancellor Ballarino, in Adrianople.⁶³ His professionalism and excellent reputation won Mascellini the privileged position of doctor to the Sultan and other Ottoman high officials.⁶⁴ Although well-paid as a doctor in Constantinople, Giovanni Mascellini continued sporadically as a Venetian informant,

56 Preto, *I servizi segreti*, p. 351; Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, 2nd edition, Rome, 2013, p. 125.

57 ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 418, unnumbered doc. (13 April 1655).

58 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 45, unnumbered doc. (August 1655).

59 Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 150–8; Pippidi, ‘Quelques drogmans’, p. 151.

60 ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 45, unnumbered doc.

61 Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 147, 158; Helk, ‘Hans Andersen Skovgaard’, p. 128; Helk, *Dansk-norske studierejser*, p. 69.

62 In spring 1661 Giovanni Mascellini returned from his native town of Pesaro, where he had most likely been attending to family matters, to Constantinople (Archivio della Sacra Congregazione ‘De Propaganda Fide’/Historical Archive of Congregation ‘De Propaganda Fide’ at Rome, *Scritture originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali*, vol. 277, fol. 156^v).

63 ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 418, unnumbered doc. (27 June 1661).

64 Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, pp. 160–1; Pippidi, ‘Quelques drogmans’, p. 151; Giovanni Mascellini corresponded with the grand dragoman of the Porte, Panayotis Nicoussios (ASV, *Consiglio dei X. Parti Segrete*, fz. 46, no. 2), who wrote to him from Candia on 25 February 1667 and 10 March 1668 (ibid, unnumbered docs).

and in 1668 asked the secretary Giovanni Pietro Cavalli to be accepted officially as a regularly-paid ‘trusted agent’.⁶⁵

Hans Andersen Skovgaard’s unexpected death in unknown circumstances at the age of only 52, at the height of his career, has long required further clarification by historians studying his life and works. The late Romanian doctor and historian of medicine, Nicolae Vătămanu, concludes, in the absence of more exact information from the sources, that ‘news from April 1657 shows that the doctor [Skovgaard] had died some time before this date. Earlier news about his successor from 28th February 1656, suggests that Scoccardi [i. e. Skovgaard] was dead’.⁶⁶ Vello Helk, the distinguish Danish historian of Estonian origin, writes in a short article published in the early 1980s in a medical journal in Copenhagen that ‘[Skovgaard] returned [from Moldavia] to Constantinople where he died, probably in 1656’.⁶⁷

An unpublished Venetian source allows us here to clarify and narrow down the time of the death of Doctor Skovgaard. The source is a submission of 7 April 1656 from Matteo Piron⁶⁸ to the chancery of the Venetian embassy in Constantinople, addressed to the secretary Giovanni Battista Ballarino and asking him to sequester the sum of 433 Spanish reales in pieces of eight, and 70 Ottoman aspers, from the sale in October 1655 of the dragoman Pasquale II Navon’s⁶⁹ house in Pera.⁷⁰ Let us allow the source to speak for itself:

‘Io Matteo Perone [Piron], devotissimo servo di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima, vengo supplichevolmente suplicarLa mi faccia gratia di far sequestrar a nome mio in mano del Signore Andrea Scoccardi [Skovgaard] per la summa di reali effettivi da otto numero quattrocentotrentatre, aspri 70, della vendita della casa del Signor Pasqua(«) Navon, come Vostra Signoria Illustrissima «ha» visto dal sequestro antecedente fatto da me sotto li 17 otubrio [October] 1655, havendo fatto Vostra Signoria Illustrissima termine di giorni trenta che mi debba dar satisfacione, e già sono dui mesi e mi va menando con parole senza effetto, et assicuro che non restarà vano da dovuto effetto, et fine Li bacio reverentemente le vesti. Di Pera, adi 7 aprile 1656.’⁷¹

65 ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 418, unnumbered doc.; in 1672, Giovanni Mascellini secretly informed the *bailo* Giacomo Querini of political matters of interest to the Republic of St. Mark (ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 148, fol. 62).

66 Vătămanu, *Voievozi și medici*, p. 147.

67 Helk, ‘Hans Andersen Skovgaard’, p. 128; see also Helk, *Dansk–norske studierejser*, p. 69; I offer here my warm thanks to Dr. Vello Helk and the staff of the Royal Library of Copenhagen, who were uncommonly helpful in preparing a Danish bibliography on the life and works of Hans Andersen Skovgaard, and sent excerpts from specialist publications that would otherwise have been inaccessible to me.

68 Luca, ‘Some families of dragomans from the Italian–Levantine community of Beyoğlu (Pera in Constantinople) employees of the Venetian embassy at the Porte during the 16th–17th centuries’, in: *Italy and Europe’s Eastern Border, 1204–1669* [Eastern and Central European Studies, I], ed. I. M. Damian, I.-A. Pop, M. St. Popović & Al. Simon, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern etc., 2012, pp. 205–6.

69 For details on the Levantine family of Navon, see Luca, ‘Some families of dragomans’, pp. 206–9; R. Marmara, *La communauté levantine de Constantinople. De l’Empire byzantin a la République turque* [Les Cahiers du Bosphore, LXIX], Istanbul, 2012, p. 96.

70 ASV, *Bailo a Costantinopoli. Cancelleria*, b. 317, fols 18^r–18^v.

71 *Ibid.*

A note added in the secretary's own hand at the end of the text confirms that in early July 1656 Skovgaard was still alive and working in Constantinople: '3 July 1656, delivered personally to Doctor Scoccardi [Skovgaard]'.⁷² We do not know how Skovgaard was involved in the sale of the dragoman Pasquale II Navon's house in Pera, but it seems that the sum to be sequestrated may have passed through his hands. At some point after 3 July 1656 he died unexpectedly, a sudden end to a rising career that had brought him much success, despite the fact he had never completed the doctorate in medicine at the University of Padua.⁷³

Hans Andersen Skovgaard was a representative figure of the professional elite which gradually took shape in Western and Central–Eastern Europe in the late sixteenth century and in the century that followed. Doctors, apothecaries, tutors, scribes and scholars, jewellers, moneychangers etc., formed a professional elite aware of their value on the marketplace, who set out in search either of well-placed posts or of ways to exercise their particular skills freely and profitably. The Danish doctor chose to settle in Constantinople, drawn there by the chance to earn good money in a market where there was considerably less competition than in the great cities of Western Europe, where doctors were more numerous and indeed where most of them had completed their studies. Skovgaard was also attracted to the life of a citizen of the Italian towns, which he had got to know whilst studying at Padua and travelling in Venice, Siena, Pisa and Rome. He hoped to obtain a position as doctor in Venice itself and to bring his wife and daughter to live there. Although he did not succeed in this goal, his work as doctor to the princely court in Moldavia and as a spy in Venetian and Habsburg service shows us a man who had an open eye for opportunity and was ambitious, professional, tenacious and capable.

72 Ibid.

73 Grell, "Like the bees", p. 189.