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# Whatever the cost: Grain trade and the Genoese dominating minority in Sicily and Tabarka (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries)

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## ABSTRACT

This work analyses the activities of Genoese merchant communities in the grain trade in western Mediterranean markets. Our goal is to shed light on their ability to integrate into foreign lands, taking advantage of their privileged position within the Spanish Crown. Our analysis is focussed on two case studies, strictly connected from a theoretical point of view: Sicily and Tabarka. Both Genoese minorities living on these two islands used the port of Genoa as their commercial hub. Regarding Sicily, this study has mostly drawn information from a yet unexploited source: general average procedures drawn up in Genoa. General average (GA) was (and still is nowadays) a legal instrument used in maritime trade to share between all parties involved the expenses which can befall ships and cargoes from the time of their loading aboard until their unloading (due to accidents, jettison, etc.). These documents have been collected in an online database soon to be published as part of the ERC-funded *AveTransRisk* project. They offer valuable insights on shipmasters and merchants, cargo values, ports of destination, wheat prices, etc. All the sources are available on the online database resulting from the *AveTransRisk* project, of which we are members (<http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/avetransrisk>). For the trade in North African wheat, we have mostly used documents related to the Genoese 'colony' of Tabarka, administered by the Lomellini family. These sources are kept in the Genoese archives as well as in the *Archives Nationales* of Paris.

## KEYWORDS

Genoese merchants;  
dominating minority;  
general average (GA);  
Sicily; Tabarka; Lomellini

## 1. Introduction

Some scholars call the early modern period the age of the first globalisation (O'Rourke & Williamson, 2002). This was characterised by significant changes in international trade patterns, brought about by the opening of new trade routes and the entry of new players. At the same time, peripheral or secondary markets became more and more attractive to communities of merchants linked to traditional Mediterranean markets. The new geography of

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Mediterranean commercial routes offered multiple ports of call for the export of hinterland products. These ports were connected with the main hubs and redistribution centres (Blockmans et al., 2017, pp. 8–9). This system, particularly evident for the grain trade, would in turn determine or favour a more or less stable settlement of merchants belonging to foreign minorities. As underlined by F. Braudel, such minorities were characterised whether by nationality or by religion and they had a tendency «to stick together, for mutual aid and self-defence: when abroad, a Genoese merchant would back up his fellow-citizen, an Armenian a fellow-Armenian» (Braudel, 1982, p. 166). They also maintained a network of relations with their home territories, and often showed common and recognisable features (Harlaftis et al., 2012; Jarvis & Lee, 2008).

Scholars often linked the concept of minority to that of ‘diaspora’. Recent studies by Francesca Trivellato, Guillaume Calafat and Wolfgang Kaiser have shed light on the role of diasporic minorities characterised by religious as well as political and cultural alterity (Trivellato, 2009; Calafat & Kaiser, 2014). In general, three key features characterise a diaspora: geographical dispersion, orientation towards a real or imaginary homeland, and specific identity.<sup>1</sup> Genoese merchant communities who settled throughout Europe from the end of the fifteenth century fully correspond to this theoretical framework.<sup>2</sup> These communities became increasingly influential in the early modern period by adding financial activities to their traditional mercantile activities. G. Arrighi, for example, uses the expressions ‘Genoese cosmopolitan business diaspora’ and ‘Genoese capitalist diaspora’ with reference to the financial network of Genoese businessmen stretching across the Mediterranean and Northern Europe in the early modern period (Arrighi, 2005). This process and, more generally, financial activities by Genoese patricians, have long been the subject of numerous studies, which, however, have often ignored parallel mercantile activities carried out by the same businessmen (Felloni, 1999a). Regarding grain trade, in particular, E. Grendi pointed out that the Genoese were always willing to buy grain or accept all kinds of bread substitutes, and that shipmasters from Genoa and its region were the brokers of the Genoese diaspora (Grendi, 1968, p. 609). Statements like this clearly confirm that wheat and its trade on international markets were quite important for the Genoese diasporic minorities settled across the Mediterranean.

As is well known, starting from the severe famine in 1590–1591, the merchants of North-Western Europe entered into Mediterranean trade, slowly gaining a significant share of its overall traffic. They relegated local merchant ships to a secondary role (Perrson, 2004). However, the new grain trade axis between Northern and Southern Europe did not cause the immediate decline of Mediterranean supply centres. During the beginning of the Seventeenth century, for example, Sicily enjoyed new vitality as a traditional wheat export area, also thanks to the presence of a dynamic Genoese community.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Genoese managed to open a new route for wheat from the island of Tabarka, which served as a redistribution centre for the goods arriving from Tunisian coasts. This route, although characterised by small volumes of traffic, played a complementary function on the Genoese market. Large and small Mediterranean islands were important transit points and stopovers on the main merchant routes. In many cases, they provided additional functions that can be included into the ‘widespread portuality’ concept proposed by Biagio Salvemini.<sup>4</sup> Our goal is to compare the two case studies in order to demonstrate the skills of the Genoese merchant minorities in developing different business models according to the political and economic features of the foreign market where they settled.

Grain shipped with the collaboration of Genoese communities living abroad used to supply a large part of the Tyrrhenian area and beyond. Both islands, Sicily and Tabarka, were formally under the rule of the Spanish crown. However, this authority was weak and left a high degree of autonomy to the private initiative of the trading nations, something referred to by M.H. Sanchez as a polycentric model of shared sovereignty (Brilli & Sanchez, 2019). In Sicily, the Genoese accounted for one of the main 'nations', with close connections with the local government and a semi-monopoly on Sicilian wheat exports granted by the Viceroyalty.<sup>5</sup> In 1543, the Lomellini, through their close relations with the Spanish Crown, were entrusted with the coral fishing business in the small estate of Tabarka, in the heart of the North African Regencies, which they would run until 1741. A slow coral reef depletion progressively forced Genoese entrepreneurs to diversify their business into the more consistently profitable wheat trade. They purchased wheat on the local markets and exported it from Tabarka to Genoa. The Governor of the island managed this trade on behalf of the Lomellini family with the help of a small number of intermediaries. The Genoese-Tabarkan community was integrated into the local Muslim society: even though they were an ethnic-religious minority, they were treated as 'simple guests, non-dangerous neighbours', with whom the local authorities could do business and from whom they could collect tributes (Piccinno, 2008, p. 16).

## 2. The Genoese minority in Sicilian grain trade

Sicilian wheat production in the early modern period exceeded domestic demand. Wheat was the core element of the regional economy: an agricultural monoculture largely aimed at export in exchange for finished products, such as textiles and iron. This scheme of trade, defined by many historians as a 'colonial or semi-colonial economy', would seem to imply the subordination of the Sicilian economy to the one of Northern Italy.<sup>6</sup> However, according to D. Abulafia it does not fit for the early modern period:

To describe this balance of interests as a contrast between a 'developed' North and an 'under-developed' South would be to employ loaded terms; in the Middle Ages, was it more 'underdeveloped' to be lacking in regular famines or to be lacking in large-scale industry? (Abulafia, 1981, p. 388).

Factors such as the increasing role played by foreign merchants and bankers and the absence of a powerful merchant navy between the Middle Ages and the early modern period shaped the internal structure of the regional economy during the Fifteenth century (Aymard & Giarrizzo, 1987). The Spanish Crown, who formally held power after Charles V's ascent to the throne in 1516, controlled a monopoly market. Grain trade kept its primacy throughout the early modern period.<sup>7</sup>

Foreign merchant groups would dominate exports. The Genoese, in particular, not only handled large parts of the wheat trade, but also made significant and relatively secure profits by controlling financial capital and credit.<sup>8</sup> Young sons of leading Genoese patrician families went to Sicily to learn the mercantile and financial profession. The prosperity of this important community depended on its ability to win the favour of local authorities and nobility. The Genoese in Sicily were entrepreneurs and landowners, bankers, wholesalers, insurers, shopkeepers, attorneys; they would lend money, grant funds to the government, and often succeeded in acquiring Sicilian noble titles (Corrao, 1994). In addition to fostering good relations with the local government, this strategy would help create better links with the inhabitants.

Loans were often repaid with the sale of annuities, accounting or financial services, or even with marriage contracts between Sicilian noblewomen and Genoese businessmen's sons.<sup>9</sup> Family lineage and belonging to the same Catholic community were further elements that helped their integration into Sicilian society. This is why it is often difficult to identify the Genoese minority outside their *logge* or churches, namely the traditional spaces of the 'nation'.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the Genoese did not lose their identity nor their bond with Genoa. They maintained consuls in the main cities of the island, Palermo and Messina, appointing them through a complex procedure informed by internal divisions within the patrician class in Genoa, namely between Old and New Nobles.<sup>11</sup> Palermo, the capital of the Viceroyalty, was the main Genoese settlement where they took up a whole neighbourhood. Based on Palermo marriage contracts, this city 'minority' amounted to about 3000 individuals, out of a total population of about 110,000 inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Among them, many were engaged in mercantile activities. For the 1601–1605 five-year period, for example, out of 985 foreign merchants residing in Palermo, 60% were Genoese, 15% Catalans, 11% Florentines, plus 14% of other nationalities (Cancila, 1980, pp. 252–254). The dominant character of the Genoese minority is clear, at least from a quantitative point of view. Taking advantage of the presence of family members and clientele networks in Genoa and the whole Mediterranean, many merchants would specialise in the wheat trade. Palermo was indeed the centre of negotiations for the wheat cultivated in the surrounding region. Here, merchants bought export licences from state authorities and dispatched their agents to load wheat in the peripheral centres.

Their long-term settlement and strong relations with the local community favoured the Genoese minority in dealing with the main obstacles linked to the grain trade such as, for example, significant price fluctuations in the Sicilian market. Their deep local roots also prevented other minorities from joining the market. For example, the Raynolts, German merchants living in Genoa and specialising in the grain trade between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, failed to effectively penetrate into Sicily because of the Genoese presence (Lamberti, 1972, pp. 79, 93–97).

To understand the role of this minority in the grain trade in Sicily and their dominant position, it is necessary to examine the organisational structure that controlled the connection between production and market, as well as the role of the Spanish Crown and its officials. A type of durum wheat, *roccella*, was the most important variety of wheat for export (Macrì, 2010, 93). Wheat harvesting and distribution relied on a system of ports of loading called *caricatori*, that specialised in this trade.<sup>13</sup> These ports, limited in number to favour the centralisation of exports, had large, closely monitored warehouses to avoid smuggling (Blando, 2008). They were either under the direct authority of the Crown, the local nobility, or the Sicilian senate. The main royal ports involved in the grain trade were Sciacca, Girgenti (present-day Agrigento), Licata, and Termini Imerese. They were at the centre of policies on grain and an example of a centralised redistribution economy as theorised by Polanyi (1978). They played a crucial role in influencing the behaviour of merchants, who found the wheat ready for loading on ships without having to worry about its transport from the hinterland. In this way, fewer brokers were involved and merchants had more time to devote to managing their relations and making negotiations with the central authorities in the cities. In ports, wheat was kept separate from other cargos and subjected to specific safeguards. Storage was free for farmers, while the warehouse's owners would make their proceeds from *crescimonia*, the natural process whereby wheat increases in weight in the first year since harvest

(Laudani, 2008, p. 483). If unsold, the owner could still keep it in storage for another year by paying a fee. It was therefore worth selling the harvest within the first year.

From 1338, the Aragonese administration pooled the administration of all royal ports under a single authority, the *Maestro Portolano*. A *prammatica* dated 1604 added the position of *Viceportolano* in charge of the local warehouses in each port (Laudani (2008, p. 478, 484). The *Maestro Portolano* lived in Palermo and was responsible for issuing export permits, called *tratte*, granted by the government against payment of a specific tax, the *jus exiturae*. Leading merchants on the island often managed to achieve this position, thus supporting the state's need to maximise wheat sales and collect as many revenues as possible from the selling of *tratte* (Trasselli, 1977). Prices, just like customs duties and the salary of *Maestro Portolano*, depended on harvests and were calculated on production forecasts, called *mete* (Testa, 1741, pp. 372–373). The price of *tratte* ranged depending on different factors and, over time, new taxes were added.<sup>14</sup> Wheat was therefore a key asset for Sicily and for the Spanish imperial system.

Opportunities from wheat exports attracted many foreign merchants, especially Italians and Catalans, who in return brought clothes, iron, spices, and other goods. Genoese merchants set up companies to buy *tratte* and share the profits (Trasselli, 1972, p. 61). The Genoese minority in Sicily, closely linked to both the local and Spanish courts, needed state authorities' support to win the competition and get the *tratte*. The Spanish monarchy would favour, or at least did not hinder, Genoese dominance in this trade, which had previously been in the hands of the Catalans (Dauverd, 2006). Genoese attempts to monopolise the position of *Maestro Portolano* reflect their interest in this sector. In 1542, Ottavio Spinola, one of the leading Genoese merchants in Sicily, bought the position of *Maestro Portolano* from Viceroy Ferrante Gonzaga and kept it, together with the roles of *Tesoriere* and *Pretore* of Palermo, until 1571.<sup>15</sup> A few years later, Vincenzo Spinola, senator of the Sicilian parliament and a relative of Ottavio, held the same position several times between 1582 and 1596. He was deprived of it for fraudulent behaviour due to his frequent collusions with other merchants.<sup>16</sup> Another Spinola, Pietro, became *Maestro Portolano* between 1601 and 1608.<sup>17</sup> Spinola's monopoly was probably an incentive for the other Genoese merchants engaged in the Sicilian grain trade. Indeed, by looking at the list of *fideiussori per le esportazioni* between 1544 and 1563, Genoese family names like Pinello, Adorno, Lomellino, De Franchis, Fiesco, De Nigrone, Cibò, Doria, Usodimare, Giustiniani, Costa, Spinola, Centurione, Lercaro, Imperiale, Innardo, and others are frequently included. *Fideiussori* would live in Sicily and were in charge of guaranteeing for fair conduct of exporting merchants with *Maestro Portolano*.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of the Genoese merchant community in Sicily is evident also from an analysis of data extrapolated from GA procedures drawn up in Genoa. GA is a way to share voluntary damages suffered during a shipping expedition, such as jettison or the cutting of the mast, among all participants, for the common safety. Damages are proportionally shared, according to each party's interest in the voyage. The procedure would normally include a shipmaster's report, relevant calculations, and, sometimes, various attached documents, such as bills of lading and estimates. Any shipmaster arriving in Genoa, regardless of his nationality, could submit a GA report. GA sources are relatively reliable. According to preliminary estimates made by G. Felloni based on GA reports submitted between 1599 and 1601, about 60% of the vessels arriving in Genoa with a capacity exceeding 76 tons

submitted a report (Felloni, 1999b, p. 851). For this reason, the data emerging from this source well exemplify maritime traffic trends.

As part of the *AveTransRisk* project, Genoese GA documentation have been entered in an online database.<sup>19</sup> Due to the high volume of available sources, the database is organised by sample years. This in turn has determined the selection of the years examined here. The chosen periods are: 1590–1592, 1598–1601, 1638–1641. During the first one, the famine struck the Mediterranean and favoured the arrival of Northern ships loaded with cereals, a phase which ended around 1597. Between 1598 and 1601 there was a market readjustment, with the restoration of the ‘traditional’ supply routes. The third period is in the midst of the Thirty Years’ War, a period of change for both the international political scenario, and the main traffic routes (Grendi 1971, p. 31). The cases concerning wheat shipments are 209 out of 512 recorded and their frequency is relatively homogeneous over the sample years. They were operated by shipmasters of different nationalities calling at the port of Genoa.

In the long term, Sicily was found to be the first region of origin of ships loaded with wheat and submitting a GA report on their arrival in Genoa, despite the importance that areas such as Northern Europe or other Italian regions would progressively assume in the Seventeenth century. Table 1 shows the origins of vessels calling at Genoa in the examined timeframes. The number of vessels coming from Sicily, although variable, is always relevant. The first period, 1590–1592, is strongly influenced by the aforementioned famine, so that in these years the quantity of vessels from Northern Europe exceeded those from Sicily by 11%. From the years 1598–1601, however, there is a significant increase in arrivals from Sicily, with 72 vessels, accounting for 79% of the total. The years when Pietro Spinola was *Maestro Portolano* (1601–1608) partly coincide with the years with the most frequent arrivals, thus confirming the close connection between institutional and commercial monopolies. More arrivals most likely corresponded with higher quantities of wheat. By comparing the tonnage of vessels from Northern Europe and Sicily between 1590 and 1641, no significant differences were found between Mediterranean and Northern ships, both having extremely wide range of values. The third timeframe includes arrivals between 1638 and 1641, in the middle of the Thirty Years’ War. Genoese merchants took advantage of Genoa’s neutrality to continue trading with different markets, buying wheat from Apulia, Veneto, Lazio, and Calabria (Trasselli, 1972). The emerging trends resulting from further studies of GA reports between the end of the Seventeenth and beginning of the Eighteenth century confirm the importance of the Sicilian market for Genoa. On the other side, imports from Tabarka and Calabria were also growing (Salvemini, 2009).

A clear continuity and preference for royal ports is evident when looking at the ports of loading used by the Genoese in Sicily. These were the most active in wheat exports (Laudani, 2008, p. 486). It further confirms the importance of keeping good relations with *Maestro Portolano* and the role of the Genoese minority residing in Palermo, even after the end of Spinola’s monopoly. Shipments to Genoa usually departed from Sciacca, Girgenti or Termini Imerese, respectively in 34%, 21% and 28% of cases. Shipmasters could also load their ships in more than one port. For example, in 1600, Antonio Maria Germano of Sestri Ponente loaded wheat at Girgenti and then, after a jettison during a storm, loaded more wheat in Trapani.<sup>20</sup> The voyages could also include a call at Palermo or Messina to load more valuable merchandise, such as silk, wine, or sugar.<sup>21</sup> In most cases, however, wheat was carried on vessels exclusively used for this purpose. Since, as already mentioned, it was a highly perishable product, vessels would sail with only few, if any, scheduled stops.



**Table 1.** No. of vessels loaded with wheat reporting a GA in Genoa, 1590–1641.

Origin	1590–1592	1598–1601	1638–1641
<i>Sicily</i>	9	72	21
<i>Northern Europe</i>	12	4	
<i>Apulia</i>		2	19
<i>Veneto</i>			10
<i>Tabarka</i>	1	1	4
<i>Lazio</i>	1	1	6
<i>Calabria</i>			6
<i>Sardinia</i>			4
<i>Unknown</i>			5
<i>Other</i>	3	11	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>92</b>

Source: AveTransRisk database.

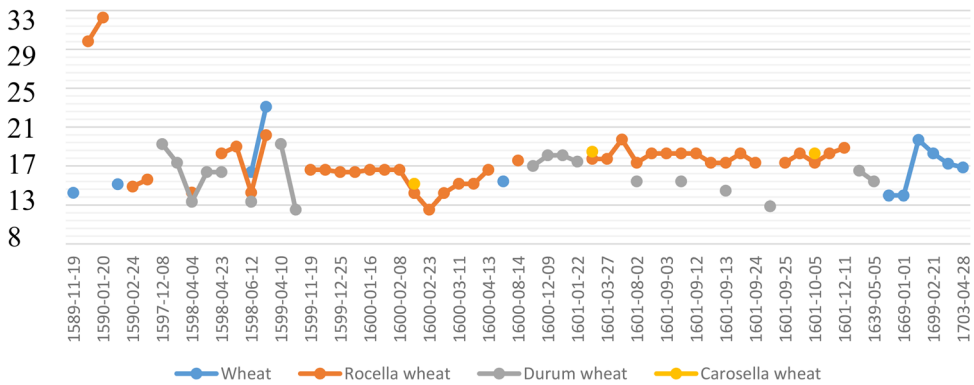
Grain trade does not seem to have been affected by the seasons, although the data examined show that departures were more concentrated between September and May. This was probably because harvest season started in June and shipments were ready starting from September. However, GA calculations often indicate that the wheat on board came «from the old harvest», so dependence on seasonal variables must have been negligible.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, concentrated arrivals of ships would have raised some problems, as, for example, was the case with the ships travelling in convoy from Northern Europe: i.e. price drops at the place of sale, due to supply surplus, and difficulties in finding return cargo due to increased traffic.

Genoese merchants in Sicily would probably employ any shipmaster who offered cheap freights, regardless of his nationality. GA reports include this information for 62 voyages from Sicily, more than 50% of the total. The results regarding shipmasters' nationalities are interesting. For example, from GA reports concerning wheat shipments from Sicily between 1590 and the early 1600s, shipmasters from the Republic of Ragusa prevailed, while Northern or French shipmasters clearly replaced them during the Seventeenth century (Kuncevic, 2017). C. Trasselli reports that in the 1601–1635 period most of the foreign ships calling at Sicilian ports were French (39%), followed by Dutch (9%), while in the 1640s there was an increase in the presence of Dutch (23%) and English (9%) vessels (Trasselli, 1965). Data on GA shipmasters show that many of them came from Provence and Liguria. Eight Provençal shipmasters came from the villages of Saint-Tropez and Six-Fours-les-Plages, while ten Ligurian shipmasters came from Cogoleto and Arenzano.

We have compared the prices that Genoese merchants paid for wheat in Sicily, frequently reported in GA calculations. These calculations took into account the worth of each cargo item, plus that of the ship and freights. The tax on wheat paid in Genoa and the cost of freight amounted to about 2 *lire* and 1.5 *lire* per *mina*, respectively. Figure 1 brings together the prices in Genoese *lire* for the purchase of one *mina* of the main types of Sicilian wheat.<sup>23</sup> As confirmed by G. Macri's studies, reliance on different types of wheat, like *rocella* or *carosella*, two types of durum wheat, was an effective risk reduction strategy, successfully adopted by the Genoese. Should there be a poor harvest of *rocella* wheat in a certain year, it was still possible to purchase another type of wheat or vice versa (Macri, 2010, p. 93).

Two phases can be identified in price trends. In the first period, between approximately 1589 and early 1599, prices were sharply fluctuating. The price of *rocella* wheat in 1590, for example, was more than 30 Genoese *lire* per *mina*. This period coincided with the famine and the subsequent 'Northern invasion', which helped to overcome the crisis by ensuring





**Figure 1.** Purchase price for 1 *mina* of Sicilian wheat in Genoese *lire*, 1589–1703. Source: *AveTransRisk* database.

regular imports (Grendi, 1970, 117–120). This did not prevent strong price fluctuations in the short term, in Genoa as well as in Sicily, with similar trends.<sup>24</sup> Based on the data provided by G. Felloni, the price of wheat in Genoa in 1591 almost doubled, compared to the one of the previous year. Prices returned to pre-crisis levels only within four years, with a price of 16 Genoese *lire* per *mina* (Felloni & Pesce, 1975, p. 293). Further fluctuations, although less significant, marked the following years, with an average price of 18 *lire* per *mina*. In the second phase, starting from the end of 1599, prices in Sicily stabilised around an average of 16 *lire* until the beginning of the Eighteenth century, when the trend began to show again marked fluctuations. Standard deviation, i.e. the statistical dispersion index, was about 1.8 *lire*. Hence, using average prices should be sufficiently reliable. It also confirms that the Genoese minority could buy wheat at ‘stable’ prices.<sup>25</sup> Even in this phase, the prices in Genoa follow a regular trend: after a peak between 1640s and 1650s, they stabilised at 23 *lire* from 1670 (Felloni & Pesce, 1975, p. 293).

When the GA documentation includes the bill of lading and/or the damage apportionment calculation, and therefore the list of merchants involved in grain trade, as sellers or buyers, it is possible to identify the dominant presence of the Genoese. Some names are recurrent, especially in the 1598–1601 timeframe, when there were 42 calculations. Some specialisation degree can be observed among those who shipped goods from Sicily, with recurring names such as Spinola, Cigala, De Ferrari, Di Negro, Rogali, Roccatagliata, De Franchi, Interiano, Groppo, Squarciafico, Fieschi, Pallavicino, Mainardo, Cavanna, Brignone. Based on GA calculations, the Cavanna were the most active with six voyages.<sup>26</sup> These voyages show the *modus operandi* of a Genoese family whose core business was grain trade in Sicily. Niccolò and Paolo Battista Cavanna, in Palermo, usually traded with Giulio Cavanna and brothers in Genoa.<sup>27</sup> Each voyage involved different shipmasters and vessels, sailing from the north and south-west coast of the island, the so-called ‘Sicily of wheat’ (Blando, 2003). Ships departed throughout the whole year and sailed straight to Genoa, although GA events encountered along the route would force them to make unplanned calls at other ports. In two cases, the Cavanna operated alone, renting a vessel to carry *rocella* wheat to Genoa. They resorted to the brokers Luigi di Negro and Gio Batta Porta. Several branches of the aristocratic Di Negro family were involved in the Sicilian trade (Avallone et al., 2016). The Cavanna of Palermo would even deal in and sell *rocella* wheat «from the old harvest»

directly to the *Ufficio dell'Abbondanza*, Genoa's authority in charge of the *Annona*.<sup>28</sup> The Cavanna cooperated with Genoese merchants in Palermo for the shipment of *San Giovanni Battista Buonaventura*. Among them was Gio. Girolamo Interiano, Genoese consul in Palermo. They would also act as middlemen for other merchants of their 'nation'. This was the case, for example, for the shipment of *rocella* wheat ordered by Marco Antonio Sestri and Vincenzo Pini from Giorgenti to Genoa. A long-term presence, close contacts with institutions and with other members of the minority, a preference for certain ports and their ability to obtain 'stable' prices are some of the reasons behind the success of the Genoese minority in Sicilian grain trade, and the Cavanna family exemplifies all these characteristics.

### 3. The Genoese 'colony' of Tabarka: Business strategies of the Lomellini's firm

Since the end of the Sixteenth century, Genoese merchants involved in the grain trade in the Mediterranean sailed along less important and subsidiary routes than those followed by Northern European shippers. However, these routes were essential for the sustenance of the population which, during the early modern period, was slowly growing. In addition to resuming exports from Sicily, a new 'grain route' was opened up from the Tunisian island of Tabarka thanks to the entrepreneurial initiative of the Lomellini.

Located a few hundred metres off the Tunisian coast, from the second half of the Sixteenth century this island became a hub in the European grain trade network. Genoese businessmen created a cohesive and stable community on this small land, which was a natural meeting point between Christianity and the Muslim world. Our aim here is to analyse the strategic and operational solutions of a firm which, as shown later, voluntarily moved its core business from coral fishing and marketing to trading in Barbary wheat.

First, it is necessary to look at the context where the firm had been operating for about two centuries. The island's location, the economy of the surrounding area and its unique political-administrative features are key. Tabarka is a very small island, 800 metres long, 500 metres wide, with an almost 4 kilometres long coastline. It is located within a gulf bordered to the west by *Capo Rosso*, near the border with Algeria, and to the east by *Capo Negro*, in a stretch of sea renowned, already in the Middle Ages, for its rich red coral shoals. There are two natural moorings. Due to its mountainous and rough terrain it is unsuitable for agriculture. Conversely, the Krumiria region in the mainland opposite Tabarka is relatively rich in water and, therefore, suitable for growing cereals (Mantran, 1977).

Until the Eighteenth century, the Spanish Crown maintained formal ownership of Tabarka: the fortress on the island was part of the defensive network of watchtowers and outposts scattered along the North African coasts, originally established by Charles V. These bases served to prevent Algerian pirates from attacking Christian ships, while controlling their French enemy and its relations with the Ottoman Empire. Tabarka's strategic importance is confirmed by France's interest in it. France already controlled strongholds a few kilometres away (the so-called *Bastion de France*, near La Calle, and *Capo Negro*), but even England tried to get possession of the island.<sup>29</sup>

In the years since Genoa had entered into the sphere of influence of the Habsburg monarchy, during the Sixteenth century, the foundations were laid for the establishment of what would in fact become a Genoese 'colony' in Tabarka. Admiral Andrea Doria, appointed captain of the Catholic King's fleet, obtained the independence for Genoa and military protection

from the imperial troops in case of enemy attack. Despite its undeniable military weakness, the Republic of Genoa rallied resources that derived from the many economic activities privately conducted by the powerful city oligarchy: from the organisation and management of a complex financial and credit system, to shipping and to multiple merchant activities (Braudel, 1984). From 1543, the Spanish Crown formally granted the Lomellini – one of the most important patrician families in Genoa – the right to establish a stable settlement for coral fishing in Tabarka. They would later be known as Lomellini-Tabarchini because of their link with the island. Beyond them, also some members of the Grimaldi family were involved, who, however, left the enterprise around 1570. Under the *asiento* contract, the Lomellini were required to pay a ‘rent’ to the Spanish Crown in exchange for this concession. Such rent was proportional to the amount of harvested red coral, and to the expenses incurred to keep the fortress and the military garrison running. In the following decades, the Crown would several times renew the initially five-year contract, although never with a fixed schedule. Tacit renewals were frequent. The key clauses in the contract were never significantly amended. The last one was signed in 1695. The firm survived until 1741, when the Tunisian Bey ordered the invasion of the island.<sup>30</sup>

In the early modern Mediterranean, the Lomellini’s firm had unique features for several reasons: an atypical political context underlying its very existence, its exceptionally long existence – about two centuries – but also its business structure and evolution. Following the finalisation of the *asiento*, the Lomellini promoted the settlement on the island of about 300 fishermen, most of them coming from Pegli, a small village near Genoa where they had vast estates.<sup>31</sup> The Genoese community grew over time and gave rise to a real settlement which, at the beginning of the Eighteenth century, had about 1200–1300 inhabitants: in addition to the fortress and other fortifications, there was a parish church, a hospital, a square tower, the arsenal and a few windmills (Vallacca, 1769–1787, pp. 1–7).

A Governor, generally another Genoese nobleman, directly appointed by the Lomellini, was in charge of running both the settlement and the firm. He had to swear allegiance to the Spanish ambassador in Genoa, but he followed directives received from Genoa, where the Lomellini resided. He controlled seven officers and their subordinates, for a total of about twenty people, and periodically sent the firm’s accounting books to Genoa. He provided the necessary tools for coral harvesting, distributed free wine and oil to the inhabitants – whose sustenance fell entirely on the firm – and presided over the activity of local ovens and bread distribution. The Governor was in charge of managing the relations with the Beys of Algiers and Tunis and paying tributes to them. With the help of intermediaries, he bought Barbary products to ship to Genoa both by trading with the merchants who reached the island and by personally going to Tunis and the nearby villages (Vallacca, pp. 17).

In order to trade and fish without risks, keeping friendly relations with the nearby Muslim population was essential. For this reason, apart from taxes levied by the regencies of Algiers and Tunis, the Lomellini would also pay duties to the chiefs of the four tribes settled on the mainland near the island. In return, they agreed to keep peace with the Genoese and sell them their goods at attractive prices. Through these agreements, the *Tabarchini* were allowed to move to the neighbouring regions to carry out their trade, while Muslims and Ottomans were allowed on the island. During its first decades, red coral fishing and its sale in Genoa was the almost exclusive highly profitable business of the firm. Over time, it began to exploit the island’s strategic position to trade with neighbouring regions, which produced wheat and other types of cereals, broad beans, oil, wax, wool, and leather. As a matter of fact,

Maghrebian ports were at the centre of a commercial network targeting the European market, which the Lomellini penetrated successfully. As discussed by S. Boubaker, «au début du XVIIe siècle la caravane qui reliait périodiquement Tabarka à Tunis était devenue un événement commercial dans le Nord tunisien».<sup>32</sup> Especially from the second half of the Seventeenth century, the grain trade began to play a primary role, because it was a highly profitable business and also due to a progressive depletion of coral reefs.

Since Spain was not interested in Tabarka, the Lomellini were allowed to control it as if it were a Genoese 'colony': it was no coincidence that the flag of the Republic of Genoa was flying on the fortress. However, the growth in grain trade attracted the Crown's attention. Between the end of the 1660s and the early 1670s, the Spanish Governor of Milan and other royal officials in Italy would send reports to Madrid complaining that their businesses and trade with their colonies were suffering from Lomellini's competition in Tabarka. For this reason, in 1672 the Spanish King Charles II charged the *Supremo Consiglio d'Italia*<sup>33</sup> with the following task: to collect information on the activities run by the Lomellini, their firm's profitability and the status of contractual relations in place between the Crown and the Genoese. About two years later, the *Consiglio* sent a report to the King. All leading representatives of the Crown in Italy, including the Governor of Milan and the Spanish Ambassador in Genoa, gave their opinion on this matter. The Viceroy of Sicily and the Viceroy of Sardinia accused the Lomellini family of illegally trading in Barbary wheat, an activity which in their opinion was not covered by the royal contracts. This trade was clearly in competition with the regions under their jurisdiction. The Governor of Milan suggested to enfeoff the island, namely to assign it permanently to new subjects; others suggested to amend the contractual clauses by adding an extra fee for their grain trading. However, as was already the case in previous disputes, the central government ignored all these requests, and the Lomellini went on doing their business undisturbed.<sup>34</sup>

From Genoa, the Lomellini sent many letters to the Governor of the island, from whom they received detailed information on the progress of the harvests and new business opportunities. By examining these letters between Governor Aurelio Spinola and Stefano and Pier Francesco Lomellini in the years 1683–1687, interesting information about the operational organisation of this business can be gathered.<sup>35</sup> Other letters relating to the 1719–1729 period provide further information.<sup>36</sup> In these years, new business partners belonging to the Genoese patriciate temporarily joined the Lomellini.<sup>37</sup>

As already pointed out, the owners of the firm had a monopoly on all the activities that took place on the island, including both local and export trade: native inhabitants were not allowed to trade on their own. From their headquarters in Genoa, the Lomellini family relied on the Consul of the Republic in Tunis or employed trusted merchants to act as brokers. They would regularly send to the Governor of the island large sums of money – usually in pieces of eight *reali* and silver *scudi* – to purchase shipments of wheat whenever they thought prices to be attractive. In general, although depending on the harvest, Barbary wheat used to cost half the price of wheat in Italy (Braudel, 1976, p. 452, 613). Grains were stored in the island's warehouses before being shipped to Genoa, where they were sold again or stored in the free port, waiting for buyers (Piccinno & Zanini, 2019). When the island's warehouses were full and there were good profit opportunities, the Lomellini authorised the Governor to sell wheat directly to passing ships. As a matter of fact, English, French, Dutch and Spanish ships looking for good deals were often calling at the small port.<sup>38</sup> In this case, due to lower local sale prices than in Genoa, profit margins

were still good. Further, there were no transport costs, nor taxes levied by the Genoese authorities;<sup>39</sup> plus, any business risks associated with sea transport were completely eliminated.

On the Genoa – Tabarka – Genoa route, the Lomellini always relied on the same shipmasters, probably because of trusting relationships consolidated over time. The ships – *pinchi*, *tartane*, *barche* – with an approximate capacity of 1,000 *mine*, or 90 tons. each, were chartered in Genoa, generally for round trips. When warehouses were full, they would hire other shipmasters for the Tabarka – Genoa route: these shipmasters were known as *venturieri*. The volume of goods directed to Genoa was almost always greater than the one in the opposite direction. This gap grew with the progressive shift of the company's core business from coral to grain. From transporting red coral – a small and high added value item whose shipments to Genoa were regularly planned (generally four in a year) – the Lomellini moved to shipping bulky, low added value wheat. The latter was more easily perishable in case of bad weather. Also, the amount of wheat in the island's warehouses waiting to be shipped depended on external factors. For example, in the period between October 1683 and April 1686, 56,087 *mine* of wheat were loaded in the port of Tabarka, of which about 32,000 in 1684 and only half in the following year (Gourdin, 2008, p. 290). The cargo was usually insured in Genoa, and only for the Tabarka – Genoa trip; the insurance premium depended both on the capacity of the vessel and, above all, on the number of coral boxes to be shipped, this being the most valuable good on board.<sup>40</sup> The insured sum never covered the entire value of the cargo, but usually only 50%–60%; in some cases this percentage was even lower, probably based on voyage risk assessments by the entrepreneurs and their profit margin expectations.<sup>41</sup>

Although the number of registered cases in the *AveTransRisk* database is just a small percentage of the total (15 cases out of 512), we can use GA data to collect further information on the route connecting Genoa and Tabarka. Of the abovementioned cases, five of them regard accidents that occurred during the voyage from Genoa (or other ports in Liguria) to the island, and 10 to return voyages. Focussing on the latter voyages, i.e. the ones involved in wheat shipping, the accidents due to bad weather followed by jettison or damage to the cargo were frequent, on average one per year. Voyages were scattered throughout the year, but most accidents concerned shipments leaving Tabarka in October and December, when sea conditions were worse. Shipmasters' nationalities vary significantly, depending on the years. While at the end of the Sixteenth century they were mainly Genoese and Provençal, in the 1639–1641 period they were all Flemish or in any case from Northern Europe. Conversely, more Ligurian shipmasters were being employed at the end of the century.<sup>42</sup> As indicated also in other sources, mostly kept in private family archives, in the first decades of the Eighteenth century, the Genoese patricians began to rely more frequently on French shipmasters to limit attacks by Algerian pirates. Their ships, however, often had a lower capacity than Ligurian ships and, according to Genoese merchants, they asked for higher freights.<sup>43</sup>

As an example, let us look at the GA report dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 1696 submitted by Antonio Decotto from Prá, Genoese shipmaster of the ship *La Madonna del Carmine*, with 128 tons capacity. This source contains useful information about the value of loaded cargo and the risks that the entrepreneurs had to face. It is a 'standard' voyage. The value of the cargo amounted to about 50,000 Genoese *lire*: 300 *mine* of wheat accounted for 22,100 *lire* of the cargo – thus making an estimated price of 17 *lire* per *mina* – while the remainder comprised 12 boxes of red coral, as well as small quantities of couscous and other foodstuff, such as broad beans and lentils. The freight paid for the shipment was 5,390 *lire*, that is, for what concerns

wheat, 3 *lire* for each *mina*. Due to bad weather during the journey, the captain threw 148 *mine* of wheat overboard, for a value of 2,515 *lire*. According to calculations, the total amount of damages suffered by the Lomellini firm was 7,000 *lire*, of which 3,094 *lire* related to wheat.<sup>44</sup>

Further information to assess the profitability of the grain trade can be gathered from a report drawn up by Spanish officials before the last contract was signed in 1695.<sup>45</sup> The main expenses incurred by the Lomellini were operating costs for coral harvesting and the cost of ensuring military protection to the island, respectively 18,000 silver *scudi* and 11,000 *scudi* per year, including 1,000 *scudi* for the Governor's salary. Revenues from the sale of red coral were estimated at about 100,000 *scudi*, with on average about 88,000 *scudi* annual profit. According to this report, in the best years, the Lomellini could buy about 100,000 *mine* of wheat. In their opinion, the profit the Lomellini were making amounted to one *scudo* per *mina* when the wheat was sold in Tabarka, and between one and a half and two *scudi* when sold in Genoa. This led to profits ranging between 100,000 and 200,000 *scudi* per year, or, taking into account the exchange rate between silver *scudo* and Genoese *lira*, between 700,000 and 1,400,000 *lire*.

The report highlighted the firm's high profitability, but also the shift of the core business from red coral to wheat. In these data, however, some elements are missing. By cross-referencing it with other sources, the traded quantities of wheat seem on average overestimated. Indeed, even if sometimes up to 200–300 *mine* a day of wheat were fed into the warehouses with a steady stock of approximately 16,000 *mine* – almost 1,500 tons –, at other times, in particular during famines or local wars, purchased supplies were barely sufficient to feed the local population. Moreover, the report failed to take into account the profits deriving from the sale of other more marginal goods and to include some cost items, the greatest being taxes paid to local authorities to guarantee a peaceful existence for the community and therefore the firm itself. They tended to grow over time up to about 30,000 Genoese *lire* per year at the end of the Seventeenth century. Even net of these charges, however, the business profitability as a whole remains high and such as to explain why the Lomellini would run it for over two centuries.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

Foreign minorities have played a crucial role in international trade. Merchants, while easy to identify with a specific 'nation', often adopted flexible strategies and moved easily in different scenarios, weaving networks of relations that went beyond their own group (Crespo Solana, 2010; Antunes, 2004). The Genoese merchants analysed in the two case studies fully reflect this interpretation: a dominating minority in Sicily and a religious minority in Tabarka operating under a 'corporate' strategy in a 'colonial' enclave.

Widespread Genoese presence in all major European cities and their ability to diversify into multi-sectoral businesses, such as trade, finance and land ownership, points to the existence of a common model, defined by Giorgio Doria as the 'Genoa system' (Doria, 1995, p. 109). It was based on the ability of a compact and relatively small group of patricians to develop different business strategies to seize market opportunities. The Genoese were probably the mercantile and financial community best equipped to operate in a polycentric political structure like the Spanish monarchy (Grafe, 2017). They were able to take advantage of cultural and institutional factors, which often placed them in a privileged position with respect to the other minorities and local businessmen. The Spanish administrative structure



made it difficult to apply mercantilist policies as incisive as those adopted by England and France (Brilli & Sanchez, 2019, pp. 2–3). This favoured the development of foreign merchants' networks. The Genoese, in particular, established what has been called a 'merchant empire', which expanded simultaneously and symbiotically within the Spanish empire (Dauverd, 2014, pp. 2–3). The Genoese funded Spain's expansionist policies and in return they obtained formal or informal privileges that allowed them to set up operational bases from which they could profitably carry out their business. As underlined by R. Lopez, and as we have seen in this study, their expansion into the Spanish dominions did not lead to the foundation of colonies that were politically under the control of the Republic of Genoa. The Spanish Crown intended to preserve the integrity of the Empire while the Genoese were interested in a colonisation based only on economic power (Lopez, 1938). It was a «discreet and sophisticated rule» (Braudel, 1984, p. 157).

Grain trade was a primary sector in Genoese business strategies, a sector in which they could take advantage of their financial relations with the Court of Spain to achieve significant privileges. From the Sicilian ports, they were able to manage high volume of exports to Genoa in almost total monopoly. In Tabarka, under Spanish protection, they were cross-cultural brokers skilled at doing business in Muslim markets and under Muslim rules. They were 'wanted migrants'; the local authorities tolerated the activity of Lomellini's firm, while in Sicily Genoese merchants established a dominant position under the Spanish rule also thanks to their ability to integrate into local communities (Dauverd, 2015, pp. 95–101). Although not comparable from a quantitative point of view, the two cases have many points of contact. Both in Tabarka, where they were an ethnic and religious minority, and in Sicily, where they were a dominating minority, the elements underlying their activity and the profitable management of the grain trade are the same. The military weakness of the Republic of Genoa made the Genoese unharmed 'guests'. At the same time, Genoese patriciate's financial power allowed them to assert their interests with the Spanish Crown. «I will let the snake sleep until I destroy the dragon»: this phrase, pronounced by the Sultan Mehemed II on the eve of 1453 before seizing Constantinople,<sup>47</sup> where the snake refers to the Genoese and the dragon to Rome, can in general be applied to the attitude of foreign powers towards communities of Genoese merchants in their territories.

## Notes

1. Other scholars believe that even 'violence' is a key element in the making of a diaspora. See Luconi (2011, pp. 150–151).
2. On the Genoese diaspora, see also Lo Basso (2015), Dauverd (2006), and Doria (1995).
3. The Seventeenth century was, however, a century of drop in exports, see Morreale, *Capitalismo in Sicilia*, 80–83, 207–216, Appendix I, 'Esportazioni annuali extra e infra regno 1401-1700'.
4. Carrino and Salvemini (2006). On the economic role played by the islands in maritime trade, see Barciela Lopez et al. (2007). On grain routes from North Africa in the Sixteenth century and the role played by the Genoese see Masi (2014, pp. 275–276).
5. Camillo Pallavicini, the 'king of the grain trade', is a case in point for the Genoese minority in Sicily in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For many years he lived in Palermo and was Consul of the Republic of Genoa, see Lo Basso (2007, p. 83).
6. O. Cancila was one of the first scholars that defined Sicily as a colonial economy because of its dependence on foreign capitals (Cancila, 1980), while local nobleman preferred to invest in state income (Romeo, 1978). Epstein (1992), challenged this perspective. See also Petralia (1994).
7. On the different products subject to imports and exports from Sicily, see Ligresti (2006, p. 313).
8. Ligresti (2006, p. 304). See also Basile (2007, pp. 1–130, I-XLVII) and Calabrese (2018).



9. The Groppo, for example, who settled in Palermo since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, obtained the land of Mezzoiuso and the title of Barons in 1613. The Oneto became Barons of San Bartolomeo in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Visconte Cigala, a Genoese resident of Messina, in 1626 redeemed the town of Castrolifippo from a Genoese commercial company (*societas*) who had bought it from Madrid, and then resold it together with the ducal title. See Laudani (1996, p. 55).
10. In Palermo, since the Normans time, there was a Genoese *loggia*, plus the churches of Saint Luke and Saint George. Ligresti (2006, p. 315).
11. Laudani (1996, p. 120). On the division between Old and New Nobles in Genoa, see Kirk (2005, pp. 22–28).
12. Ligresti (2006, p. 316, 334). Palermo had 114,131 inhabitants in 1591 and 104,983 in 1606. Macri (2010, p. 94).
13. On the definition of ports scattered along the coasts of southern Italy, see Carrino and Salvemini (2006).
14. Giuffrida (1999, p. 21). According to Giuffrida's calculations, the three export taxes, i.e. *tratta ordinaria*, *nuovo importo* and *ragione dei minuti*, accounted for around 51% of a merchant's profit margins in 1530.
15. Sciuti Russi (1983, pp. 49–50). He was *Maestro Portolano* in 1542, 1558–1559, 1563–1564, 1567–1568 and 1570–1571, see Soprintendenza Archivistica della Sicilia, Archivio di Stato di Palermo (ASP), *L'archivio del Maestro Portolano del Regno di Sicilia*, 8.
16. Ligresti (2006, p. 337). Emanuele Gaetani (1759, pp. 62, 68). He was *Maestro Portolano* in 1582–1583, 1584–1585, 1591–1592 and 1595–1596, see ASP, *L'archivio del Maestro Portolano del Regno di Sicilia*, 8.
17. He was *Maestro Portolano* in 1601–1602, 1602–1603 and 1607–1607, see ASP, *L'archivio del Maestro Portolano del Regno di Sicilia*, 8.
18. The survey on guarantors was conducted by Federico Martino on the first five books of the series of *fideiussori per le esportazioni*, see ASP, *L'archivio del Maestro Portolano del Regno di Sicilia*, 5.
19. URL: <http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/avetransrisk>.
20. Archivio di Stato di Genova (ASG), *Notai Giudiziari* 636, 23/08/1600.
21. On the silk industry, see Guenzi et al. (1998).
22. The price paid for wheat of the old harvest was generally lower compared to the average price of the current harvest. ASG, *Notai Giudiziari* 637, 04/09/1601.
23. 1 *mina* equalled 90.985 kg. The Genoese *lira* was the accounting currency used in Genoa. It was equal to 8,176 grams of silver between 1590 and 1629, and it went down to 4,841 grams in 1703. See Felloni and Pesce (1975, p. 210).
24. In 1591, for example, prices peaked in Genoa and Catania. See Felloni (1999c, p. 1239).
25. For a specific analysis on the Sicilian grain market in the eighteenth century, see Fazio (1993).
26. The businesses of the Cavanna family will be the subject of forthcoming research.
27. In only one voyage, there was also a L. Cavanna from Palermo, see ASG, NG 637, 15/05/1601.
28. ASG, *Notai Giudiziari* 637, 25/10/1601.
29. On the French presence in Capo Negro and in the Bastion and on their relations with the Genoese in Tabarka, see Piccinno (2008, pp. 96–106).
30. Ferrante Gonzaga, Viceroy of Sicily, signed the first *asiento* in Messina on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1542 through the broker Francesco Grimaldi, with Francesco Lomellini and brothers, but it never came into effect. It was replaced by a new agreement signed the following year. On the contracts finalized from 1543 to 1695, see Piccinno (2008, pp. 56–83) and Gourdin (2008, p. 158).
31. Battilana (1833). On the Genoese from Pegli see Bruna (1899, pp. 8–9).
32. «At the beginning of the 17th century, the caravan that periodically linked Tabarka to Tunis had become a commercial event in the North of Tunisia », in Boubaker (1992, p. 287).
33. Philip II in Madrid created it in 1562 to manage Spanish possessions in Italy (the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia), see Di Blasi (1842, pp. XXXIII–XXXVIII).
34. Archives Nationale de Paris (ANP), *Marine*, B/7/471, *Extrait des papiers et memoires concernant l'Isle de Tabarca ...*, cc. 660–662.

35. Biblioteca Civica Berio di Genova (BGG), *Sezione Conservazione*, ms. XV 3 3, *Registro delle lettere scritte à Genova d'Aurelio Spinola*.
36. Archivio Durazzo Giustiniani Genova (ADGG), reg. 938, *Lettere di Tabarca*, 1719–1725.
37. Between 1719 and 1729, the Lomellini family partially left the firm. They subcontracted it to a new company where only Agostino Maria Lomellini had a share. The other members were Giacomo Filippo Durazzo, Costantino Balbi, Francesco Maria Balbi and Giovanni Battista Cambiaso, see Piccinno (2008, pp. 109–256).
38. BGG, *Sezione Conservazione*, ms. XV 3 3, *Registro delle lettere scritte à Genova d'Aurelio Spinola*, c. 49, 30/05/1684. In some cases, the Governor bartered wheat with the masters of foreign ships calling at Tabarka with other goods, BGG, *Sezione Conservazione*, ms. XV 3 3, *Registro delle lettere scritte à Genova d'Aurelio Spinola*, c. 164, 21/04/1686.
39. As already mentioned, the duty on imported grain was 2 Genoese *lire* for *mina*.
40. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, insurance premium ranged between 15,000 and 35,000 Genoese *lire*.
41. ADGG, reg. 938, *Lettere di Tabarca*. 1719–1725; reg. 941, *Manuale di Tabarca*. 1726–1731, *Calcoli di avaria*. On assessment of shipping risks from Tabarka, see Piccinno (2008, pp. 177–185). On insurance premiums on the Genoese market in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Iodice and Piccinno (2021).
42. These cases have been found via the *AveTransRisk* advanced search by selecting 'Tabarka' in the 'Port visited' research function. URL: <http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/avetransrisk>.
43. ADGG, reg. 938, *Lettere di Tabarca*. 1719–1725, c. 182v, 28/12/1724.
44. ASG, *Conservatori del Mare* 377, 30/04/1696, recorded in the *AveTransRisk* db as the ID50349.
45. ANP, *Marine*, B/7/471, *Renouvellement du traité pour la ferme et la garde de l'isle de Tabarca fait avec les Lomelins le 31 May (6 Août) 1695*. On this contract, see Piccinno (2019).
46. ANP, *Marine*, B/7/471, *Extrait des papiers et memoires concernant l'Isle de Tabarca . . .*, cc. 679–682.
47. Doukas, M., *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans Turks. An annotated Translation of "Historia Turca Byzantina" by Harry J. Magoulias*, Detroit, 1975 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1834), p. 212, cited in Dauverd (2015, p. 99).

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