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**Alexandre Testanegra:**

**An Ottoman Spy in the New World?**

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**Alexandre Testanegra:**

**An Ottoman Spy in the New World?**

by

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Dedicado a los dos seres más importantes de mi vida:

Abisai y Elena

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**Alexandre Testanegra:**

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Stephannie Coeto Coix, M.A

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

**SUPERVISOR: Jorge Canizares**

In 1580, alcalde mayor of Atucpa Diego Díaz del Castillo took Alexandre Testanegra, a Greek sailor and former Ottoman Janissary, to jail. Diaz del Castillo prosecuted Testanegra for the charges of spying and creating maps and charts of the Spanish dominions for his master Sultan Selim II. The alcalde gathered twenty-one testimonies that helped to put together a composite picture of Testanegra's adventures in Venice, Naples, Spain, America, the Philippines, China, Jerusalem, and Istanbul. Because of the severity of the testimonies, the Royal Audiencia of Mexico, the highest court of justice in the New Spain, took the case. Testanegra posed a significant threat to the crown and to the authorities of New Spain. The Spanish monarchy feared the Ottomans not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Indian Ocean. Now, it appeared that the Ottomans were collecting intelligence to attack America.

When the Audiencia was unable to convict the Testanegra on charges of espionage, it transferred the case to the Inquisition to investigate him for heresy. The main evidence that the Inquisition had to prosecute Testanegra was an apparent circumcision and his suspicious origins –Greece was an Ottoman domain–. After tough interrogations Testanegra confessed that he was a vassal of the Sultan and that he had a Muslim background. Despite his revealing declarations, he successfully eluded conviction. Was Testanegra really a spy? Why would the Ottomans have been interested in Spanish America? How did the Greek sailor overcome the most powerful tribunals of justice in New Spain? This essay argues that Testanegra was indeed a spy and that he was effectively collecting intelligence about America. This essay also analyzes how this man with Muslim and Ottoman ties settled in New Spain and successfully eluded conviction from the charges issued by the most powerful institutions in New Spain.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part I. The American journey of an Ottoman spy.....	5
Growing in an Ottoman landscape.....	5
A new Greek janissary.....	6
Navigating the Mediterranean.....	9
The Venetian captivity.....	10
The escape into a hostile refuge.....	11
A new beginning.....	15
Arriving in a new world.....	17
Greeks in America.....	19
American journey.....	20
A royal expedition to China.....	21
The way back home.....	24
Solloku Mehmed Pasha.....	25
A new Ottoman envoy.....	27
Part II. The prosecution.....	29
Part III. The strategy.....	38
Conclusion.....	44
Bibliography.....	47

## Introduction

In 1580, alcalde mayor of Atucpa Diego Díaz del Castillo took Alexandre Testanegra, a Greek sailor and former Ottoman Janissary,<sup>1</sup> to jail. Diaz del Castillo prosecuted Testanegra for the charges of spying and creating maps and charts of the Spanish dominions for his master Sultan Selim II. The alcalde gathered twenty-one testimonies that helped to put together a composite picture of Testanegra's adventures in Venice, Naples, Spain, America, the Philippines, China, Jerusalem, and Istanbul. Because of the severity of the testimonies, the Royal Audiencia of Mexico, the highest court of justice in the New Spain, took the case. Testanegra posed a significant threat to the crown and to the authorities of New Spain. The Spanish monarchy feared the Ottomans not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Indian Ocean. Now, it appeared that the Ottomans were collecting intelligence to attack America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Yeni-çeri* meaning 'new soldier.' Member of the elite infantry of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Inquisición, Vol. 125, Exp. 95. This is a file that contains three process against Alexandre Testanegra: Alcalde mayor's process for espionage; Royal Audiencia's process for espionage; and Inquisition's process for heresy. It contains the accusation of the process, Testanegra's interrogatories, testimonies of twenty witnesses, two medical exams, the inventory of Testanegra's properties, correspondence between the three institutions, and the final resolutions.



Through the analysis of Testanegra's trial, this essay explores the experience of forbidden migrants in the Americas and some of their strategies to settle in a land that supposedly did not tolerate any religion other than Catholicism. Born in Greece as an Orthodox Christian, trained as a Muslim soldier in the Janissary corp, captivated and baptized by Venetians and finally working in the personal service of the viceroy in New Spain, Testanegra's personal story reveals the mobility of people between the Mediterranean and Spanish America, and how religious identity and imperial loyalties were fluid. This work also explores how Testanegra's activities as a sailor connected the Muslim and the Catholic worlds –Greece, Venice, Spain, America, the Philippines, Jerusalem and Istanbul– by serving as a spy for the Ottoman projects of military expansion and cartographic mapping.

Scholars have shown that the Ottomans confronted Iberian Christendom not only in the Mediterranean and but also in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia. We also know that Ottoman sultans invested heavily in global mappemonde to include information about East Asia, the Maldives, Africa, and particularly America. The Ottomans also commissioned translations of early Spanish chronicles of the Caribbean and Tierra Firme. Yet no one has paid attention to the process of how the Ottomans might have collected the information that went into their sixteenth century global map-making in general and their cartographical charts of America in particular.<sup>3</sup> By analyzing Ottoman espionage in Spanish America this is a pioneer study in the field of Colonial Latin America, Early Modern Europe, Middle Eastern Studies, and Global History.

Recent scholarship about the Muslim presence in Spanish America has only focused on the ideology that the Spanish society constructed of their Muslim enemies. Serafín Fanjul and Antonio Garrido have referred to Testanegra's lawsuit to exemplify the fear that contemporary

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<sup>3</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Abbas Hamdani, "Ottoman Response to the Discovery of America and the New Route to India," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101, no. 3 (1981): 323–30; Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Joshua M. White, *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017).

Spaniards felt about the Muslim and the Ottoman presence in these domains.<sup>4</sup> However, they only analyze the accusation and the resolution of the case concluding that Testanegra's process was a consequence of a personal revenge and that Testanegra was not Muslim. Sharing the same concern about stereotypes, Karoline Cook analyzes the origins and social consequences of the legal category of *morisco*, which the authorities used to refer former Muslims converted to Catholicism. As the Spanish crown attempted to consolidate Catholic orthodoxy in the New World, Cook argues individuals labeled as *moriscos* had to negotiate their public reputation as good Christians in order to be fully integrated into the society.<sup>5</sup> But as Fanjul and Garrido, Cook is not interested in reconstructing individual cases.

On the other hand, from a comparative perspective, Hernán Taboada has analyzed the preexistent relations between Spain and the Ottoman empire before the encounter of the New World. He has highlighted the interconnections of the Spanish occupation of America and the simultaneous war between the Catholic and Muslim civilizations. According to his research, although Muslim presence in Spanish America was larger than scholars supposed, the isolation of Muslims encouraged the dissolution of Islamic practices.<sup>6</sup> In sum, the historiography about the presence of people with a Muslim background and Ottoman networks had not analyzed individual cases. However, in order to understand the Muslim presence in Spanish America, the reconstruction of personal stories prove crucial, as the Testanegra's case demonstrates.

This essay analyzes an entire judicial process to demonstrate how a person with Muslim and Ottoman ties settled in New Spain and successfully eluded conviction from the charges

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<sup>4</sup> Serafin Fanjul, *La Quimera de Al-Andalus* (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores Espana, 2002). and Antonio Garrido Aranda, "El morisco y la inquisición novohispana. (Actitudes antiislámicas en la sociedad colonial)," in *Andalucía y America en el siglo XVI: Actas de las II Jornadas de Andalucía y América* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos, 1983), 501–34.

<sup>5</sup> Karoline P. Cook, *Forbidden Passages: Muslims and Moriscos in Colonial Spanish America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). Louis Cardillac made the first study about Moriscos in America. He focuses on laws that forbade Muslim presence in Spanish America and refers to some inquisitorial processes in Peru and New Spain. Louis Cardillac, "Le problème morisque en Amérique," *Mélanges de La Casa de Velázquez* 12, no. 1 (1976): 283–306.

<sup>6</sup> Hernán G. H. Taboada, *La Sombra del islam en la conquista de América* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004).

issued by the most powerful institutions in New Spain. The essay is divided in three parts. The first reconstructs the journey of Testanegra as a Greek sailor who served in royal spheres in the Muslim and the Catholic worlds in order to explain the connections between the Ottoman empire and Spanish America through espionage networks. The second part describes the three different lawsuits that Testanegra faced at the municipal government, the Royal Audiencia, and the Inquisition to understand why those authorities prosecuted him initially for espionage but later accused him of heresy. In the third part, the essay tracks the evolution of the three judicial processes to identify what strategies Testanegra developed to overcome the charges, taking advantage of his social networks and his reputation as a good Christian.

This study contributes to our understanding of the role that Spanish America had in the imperial disputes between Christian and Muslim powers in the sixteenth century. This essay sheds light on how the experience of foreign sailors from the Mediterranean, like Testanegra, connected the Ottoman empire and Spanish America by establishing espionage networks. This study also reveals the limitations of the Spanish crown's ability to control the immigration of Mediterranean Muslims to its American domains. Testanegra's case is an important precedent for further research on the Greek diaspora and their ties with the Ottoman empire. Looking in the future for more cases of Greek sailors settled in the Spanish dominions, it would be possible to find unexpected clues on how the Ottoman empire reached the Americas through those travelers, a topic that awaits to be explored.

## **PART I. The American Journey of an Ottoman Spy**

### ***Growing in an Ottoman landscape***

According to the Inquisition interrogatory that Alexandre Testanegra faced in Mexico City in 1580, he was born in 1534 in Patras, Greece, a region in northern Peloponnese, west Athens. His family was Christian and—like many other Greek people—his relatives worked as sailors on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>7</sup> Decades before he was born, Venice gained political control of Greece. Under the Catholic Venetian rule, Greeks suffered religious persecution and had to pay up to fifty percent of their agricultural production to their foreign governors. However, although Latins—Venetians and Genoese—had a strong political presence throughout the Balkans, the Ottomans started to expand into this territory. Many Greeks saw in the Muslim empire as a strategy to repel the Venetian exploitation and made pacts to support the Ottoman expansion project. The Muslim empire successfully took advantage of these internal conflicts by supporting the Greek dissidents. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Greece was a full domain of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

When Sultan Mehmed II took control of Greece along the fifteenth century, many cities had been devastated by the Black Death and Latin exploitation. Many Orthodox Christians had emigrated so only a small community still remained. To remedy the problem of underpopulation, the Sultan established a standard program of colonization designed to help reactivate the demography and economy of the new territories. The Sultan's program included an offer of ten-years of tax exemptions to anyone willing to settle in Greece. Numerous Turks and Jewish communities took advantage of this offer and moved to the new Ottoman cities. Greece was quickly revitalized. From mid-fifteenth century to mid-sixteenth century, the

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<sup>7</sup> Exp. 95, 426.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 103.

population had increased by 400%.<sup>9</sup> The Greek had also recovered their role as maritime intermediaries between the Western and Eastern Mediterranean.

Greece became central in the Ottoman project of expansion and Greeks became fully integrated into the new society. As a consequence, they had a common system of rights and obligations. By law, Greek population were free to practice any religion and could establish a local semi-autonomous government. In exchange, non-Muslims paid lower taxes compared to the previous Venetian tax regime and provided men to the Sultan's army. Greece and the Balkans soon became the main sources of military manpower for the empire.<sup>10</sup> In a few years, Testanegra would personally serve in the Ottoman army during the rule of Suleiman II, a period that historians consider the Golden Age of the empire.

### ***A new Greek Janissary***

According to Testanegra's testimony, the Sultan's commission for collecting the military levy arrived in Patras around 1545.<sup>11</sup> Testanegra was eleven years old and Ottoman officials chose him to be part of the *Janissary's* forces. The life of this Greek boy was about to change by entering this elite service. The military group was very prestigious throughout the world since it had proved central in the rise and consolidation of the Ottoman Empire.

During the fourteenth century, Sultan Murad I created this armed force as a way to avoid his dependency on the military services of warrior lords. Initially this corp was the bodyguard of the Sultan that he gathered from his prisoners of war. However, by the fifteenth century, they became the standing army of the realm with a more sophisticated system of recruitment and instruction.<sup>12</sup> One century later, Janissaries were one of the most powerful military forces in the world that numbered more than 12,000 soldiers. Because of their loyalty

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<sup>9</sup> Molly Greene, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1453 to 1768: The Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 153.

<sup>11</sup> Exp. 95, 427.

<sup>12</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 47-49.

and advanced military training, they were the right hand of the Sultan in the conquest of Constantinople, Egypt, and Syria.

As the Janissary corp consolidated its status in the military forces, the Ottoman government established a levy system known as *devsirme* to recruit the new members. According to this process, officials selected non-Muslim children from the Ottoman domains, taking one boy from every Christian family. Ethnic origin was decisive in the youths' selection process. The commander of the Janissary Corp selected Greek, Albanian, Croatian, and other Balkan children. Officials were forbidden by law to pick Turks.<sup>13</sup> There were three reasons for this strict system: first, Quranic law forbade the Sultan to enslave Muslims; second, by randomly selecting non-Muslim children, the government avoided the emergence of a Muslim aristocratic military force that could challenge the power of the Sultan;<sup>14</sup> and third, the Janissaries' mandatory conversion to Islam was an effective way to Islamize the non-Muslim population.<sup>15</sup>

The child recruits of the Janissary Corp were taken to Istanbul, the capital of the empire. Testanegra left his family very early, but he found a promising new life in the barracks of the Sultan's palace.<sup>16</sup> There, he and the rest of the children received Quranic formation and converted to Islam. They also received training in Turkish language and culture.<sup>17</sup> Most importantly, they received a very strict military education consistent of training on the use of firearms including matchlock muskets and recurved bow. Once they finished their training, these young soldiers were employed in administrative or military fields, based on their strengths.

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<sup>13</sup> Evgeni Radushev, "Peasant' Janissaries?," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 2 (2008): 450.

<sup>14</sup> Agoston, Gabor. "Janissaries." In Agoston, Gabor, and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, 296-297.

<sup>15</sup> Radushev, "Peasant' Janissaries?," 447.

<sup>16</sup> Exp. 95, 426.

<sup>17</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 65.

The Janissaries' military formation lasted between eight to twelve years. After their training, some Janissaries stayed in Istanbul in the personal service of the Sultan. Most traveled to the frontiers and major provincial capitals of the empire as military police and firefighters. Others moved to central ports as naval Janissaries who supported Ottoman ships. This was the case of Testanegra and many other Greek soldiers, since the Ottoman empire valued the maritime tradition in Greece.<sup>18</sup> He was around twenty years old when he left the Sultan's palace to continue his family's work navigating in the Mediterranean Sea. More than five witnesses in the municipal process of Atucpa referred to Testanegra as a former corsair who navigated in an Ottoman galleon.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of Janissaries' legal status as slaves and their mandatory conversion to Islam, they had a privileged economic, social, and political status in the empire. The slave status of these powerful men ensured the supremacy of the Sultan over them. Their mandatory conversion reinforced the religious character of the Ottoman project of expansion. However, Janissaries, as the elite infantry of the Sultan, were the upper class in the society. They received a salary from the central treasury. As new Muslims, they stopped paying the *Cizye* or tax directed to non-Muslim population.<sup>20</sup> In addition, they had the opportunity to enter the military class that included numerous economic and social privileges and important political positions, such as *Grand Vizier*, the prime minister of the empire.

The experience of Janissaries showed a very complex picture of the integration of the Greek and Balkan societies into the Muslim empire. This system was not only very sophisticated but effective. By taking and forming the right-hand men of the Sultan from childhood, Ottomans ensured that they embodied the imperial values. Through conversion, Ottomans ensured the supremacy of Islam over Christianity and Judaism without religious

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<sup>18</sup> Goffman, 85.

<sup>19</sup> Exp. 95, 359.

<sup>20</sup> Radushev, "Peasant' Janissaries?," 448.

persecution that could segment the growing society. Through their military formation, service and further opportunities, these soldiers earned a good living and consolidated their social status affirming his loyalty to the empire. However, they were not the only beneficiaries of the Janissary's privileges.

Christian families also benefited from their children's belonging to the Ottoman army. Daniel Goffman refers to cases where Greek parents tried to suborn officials for them to select their children during the *devsirme*.<sup>21</sup> Evgeni Radushev has also claimed that the willingness to belong to the Janissary's forces encouraged a massive voluntary conversion to Islam in the Balkan societies.<sup>22</sup> In this way, families expected to show the Sultan that they were trustworthy and were ideal candidates to be part of this military elite.

On the other hand, Ottomans were not interested in breaking the familiar bonds of Janissaries. In contrast, they took advantage of their position as intermediaries between the Christian and the Muslim worlds.<sup>23</sup> In certain ways, they were the evidence of the benefits of conversion for the newly integrated societies. Janissaries also became the ties between the Sultan and his subjects throughout soldier's social networks. If many people benefited from and supported Ottoman geo-political dominion, this power could ensure their imperial control. In fact, Testanegra was an example of this successful project of integration. Some years before he became a Janissary, some members of his family had already converted.<sup>24</sup> Also, in spite of his job as sailor that took him far from Patras, he found the way to return home many times and gave economic support to his family, as he later declared before the Inquisition.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Navigating the Mediterranean***

According to Testanegra's interrogatory in Atucpa, around 1555, Testanegra became a naval Janissary after completing his education and participated in the naval campaigns against

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<sup>21</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 67–68.

<sup>22</sup> Radushev, "'Peasant' Janissaries?," 453.

<sup>23</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 68.

<sup>24</sup> Exp. 95, 433.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.



the Venetian forces in the Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> At this time, Venice and the Ottomans were fighting for central positions in the Aegean and the Ionian Seas. This constant war had a long history. By 1470, Venetians had lost some of their most valuable positions in the Peloponnese to the Ottomans, including Negroponte, Coron, and Moron. In 1466 and 1475, Venetians tried to stop the Ottoman advance by offering peace. However, the Sultan, sure of his future victory, asked them for the return of the Turkish islands of Imbros and Lemnos in the Aegean Sea, in addition to an annual tribute. The Venetians refused. It was only years later, after they faced the loss of their remaining core possessions in the region, that Venetians forcedly accepted the Ottoman conditions.<sup>27</sup> The peace was short-lived. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire and Venice were at war again. At the end of this encounter, Venetians had definitely failed to recover its privileged position in the Peloponnese and Aegean Seas. In contrast, the Ottoman empire had consolidated as a major naval power with total control of the maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>28</sup>

Through the alliance between Venice, Spain, and the papacy –the Holy League–, Venetians tried to stop the advance of the Ottomans in Italy. However, by the mid-sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman attention had reoriented towards the Spanish empire in North Africa. At this moment, the period when Testanegra was navigating into the Mediterranean Sea, relations between Venice and the Muslim power had cooled somewhat. Yet, the Ottoman empire was missing only two Venetian locations to conquer: Cyprus and Crete. If they succeeded, they would take total control over the Aegean Sea.<sup>29</sup> Testanegra was no longer with the Ottoman forces to enjoy the future victory of his lord.

### ***The Venetian captivity***

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>27</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 144–45.

<sup>28</sup> Kate Fleet, “Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 152–53.

<sup>29</sup> Fleet, 166.

The daily reality of Ottoman-Latin maritime encounters were dozens of army casualties and war captives. In fact, the Ottoman conquest of Chios over Genova saw Testanegra captured by a Venetian ship, according to the testimonies in the Inquisition record. Around 1565, Testanegra's vessel was navigating throughout the Adriatic Sea when they ran into battle with a Venetian galleon. The Latin winner of the encounter captured all the Ottomans in the vessel. The Venetian captain, named Alexandre, gave the order to kill the crew except the young janissary, who the Captain took into in his service and baptized him with his own name. The captain forced his new captive "Alexandre" to work in the ship for years. Testanegra was about to experience a completely different system of slavery to what he experienced in the Ottoman world. The captain took advantage of his naval abilities but also took him as his sexual slave.<sup>30</sup>

The enslavement of Testanegra in these circumstances was not exceptional. In fact, it was a common practice in the trans-imperial confrontations in the Mediterranean. Any Muslim or Christian involved in imperial disputes were susceptible to enslavement by rival powers. Both groups could profit by capturing their enemies, as well. In general terms, most of the prisoners of war were forced to work as galley slaves. Captives sometimes sent request for help to their relatives who were expected to pay the ransom for their freedom. Captives could also petition the Sultan for their freedom. However, if the Ottoman government failed to make an agreement, captives remained prisoners. Another possibility was that captors exchanged Muslim prisoners for Christian captives. In sum, the system of prisoners of war was a lucrative business for anyone who participated on it. Unfortunately, Testanegra was not able to negotiate his liberation. However, very soon he found the way to escape of captivity.

### ***The escape into hostile refuge***

According to Spanish witnesses of Testanegra's process, the Venetian galleon where Testanegra forcedly worked crossed the Mediterranean multiple times. In his two years of

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<sup>30</sup> Exp. 95, 359-360.

captivity, he went to Genova, Naples, France, North Africa and Spain. In 1567, Testanegra successfully escaped in the coast of Cadiz.<sup>31</sup> He moved across Seville and Castile, trying to hide and earn a living. But the runaway realized that staying in Spain could be dangerous. Venice was close enough to Spain politically and geographically, and there was a risk that any traveler could recognize and take him to captivity again. Moreover, Spain environment was extremely hostile to people with a Muslim background and, even more, for people with Ottoman networks.

From the late-fifteenth century, Spain was very debilitated by its struggle to reinforce the Castilian frontier with the Muslim world and resist the advance of the Ottomans against the Aragonese kingdom.<sup>32</sup> The conflict between the Ottoman and the Spanish empires started officially when Charles V took control of Tunis in 1535. Their enmity was motivated the alliance between the Sultan and France in 1536. This pact guaranteed Ottomans the French ports to attack Spanish locations in the Mediterranean. In exchange, France benefited from the Ottoman control in the sea to continue their campaign against Italy. On the other hand, Spain made agreements with Venice and the Pope to join forces against the Ottomans.<sup>33</sup> The Muslim empire made a push into the North-African coasts and the tension increased as the proximity arose. When Ottomans advanced over Italy in 1547, Spaniards asked for peace. Paradoxically, they renewed their attacks against Ottomans years later and took control of Mahdia and Monastir, in Tunisia. Spaniards refused to negotiate the return of these domains. Ottomans responded taking Tripoli, the ideal location in the Maghreb for the Sultan to build an army. Around 1560, both Spaniards and Ottomans were looking to reinforce their coastal guards. However, Ottomans kept their advance over North Africa and took Jerba.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>32</sup> Taboada, *La sombra del islam en la conquista de América*, 83.

<sup>33</sup> Fleet, "Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean," 159.

<sup>34</sup> Fleet, 160–64.

The Muslim empire was everyday closer to the Spanish frontier. These geo-political battles had severely drained the economic and moral resources of the Iberian crowns. However, the Muslim empire was only one of the geopolitical concerns of the Catholic Spanish realm. By unifying the Spanish kingdoms and colonizing America, Christianity had become the basis of the imperial project of expansion. As a consequence, it implied expelling the non-Catholic population of the domains. In 1492, the Spanish crown expelled the Sephardi communities, and consolidated the conquest of the kingdom of Granada, the last bastion of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>35</sup>

By assuming the politic control of Granada, the Catholic kings issued a regulation, *Decreto de la Alhambra*, that allowed people with a Muslim background to stay and maintain their cultural practices. They were invited to convert, and the religious authorities made programs to adapt the Christian dogmas into the Granadan culture. The main goal of these arrangements was to achieve authentic conversions into Catholicism over many hundreds of Iberian Muslims. However, after an unexpected massive process of forced conversion, Muslims and new converts felt betrayed and rebelled against the Spanish crown. As a consequence of the revolts, they suffered the partial processes of relocation within the Spanish kingdoms.

After their forced removal, Moriscos and Iberian Muslims found themselves fighting against constant abuses and prohibitions in their personal and cultural practices. During the rule of Charles V, some laws reverted essential dispositions in the Granadan decree. They were forbidden to speak or have books in Arabic, to hear or play Arabic Music, women were not allowed to wear hijab, and they were not allowed to use Arabic names and genealogies. Prominent figures in the Granadan society tried to stop the new laws by writing to the king.

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<sup>35</sup> Taboada, *La sombra del islam en la conquista de América*, 83.

However, religious persecution against them did not stop. As a consequence, in 1567, the rebellion of the Alpujarras broke out.<sup>36</sup> It was this exact year when Testanegra arrived in Spain.

At this point, Spanish royal and religious authorities feared that information networks existed between Granadan people and the Ottomans because of their common faith and their geographic proximity. In fact, Garcia-Arenal and Andrew Hess have argued that there existed a correlation between the Muslim internal and external conflicts in Spain.<sup>37</sup> At the end, the Ottoman empire was the major beneficiary of these inner conflicts. They offered moral support and promised military backing to the Moriscos, who wrote to the Sultan asking for help before the Alpujarras' rebellion.<sup>38</sup> Ottomans were once again establishing alliances with the dissidents of their antagonistic empires, based on their policy of divide and rule.

It is not possible to know if the Ottomans were genuinely interested in helping Moriscos. Simultaneously to the Morisco rebellion, Tunes and Larache, major points of interest for Spain and the Ottomans, were still in dispute. The Ottomans took advantage of these internal distractions for the Spanish crown.<sup>39</sup> The crown was forced to negotiate with the Moroccan kingdom to protect its influence in North Africa, but the Ottomans also reinforced their strategic position in Tunes. In the Spanish mentality, the Muslim empire could revert the conquest of Granada and the expulsion of Islam from the Iberian Peninsula at any moment. Naturally, the Spanish society saw Ottoman travelers and settlers as domestic weapons, and Testanegra was no exception.

This political context in Spain threatened Testanegra. His practices and background could be noticed by the authorities and the society, for whom Ottoman culture and Islam were the expression of everything they were fighting against. With a simple denouncement he could

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<sup>36</sup> Mercedes García-Arenal, *Los Moriscos* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1996), 54–55.

<sup>37</sup> Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, *Un Oriente español: Los moriscos y el Sacromonte en tiempos de Contrarreforma* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2010), 122.

<sup>38</sup> Fleet, Kate. "Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean." Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, edited by Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, 160. Cambridge History of Turkey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *Un Oriente español*, 147.

face prison or death. He was stranger in a foreign land, a runaway, and vassal of the major enemy of the Catholic monarchy. Testanegra needed to leave but traveling to the Ottoman empire would imply crossing into antagonistic territories. Through the Mediterranean, he would need to travel across Latin dominions. Through North Africa, he would need to cross Spanish and Moroccan territories. Paradoxically, even though he refused to stay in the Catholic Peninsula, he found the only solution was to travel to America, the new overseas dominion of the Hispanic world.<sup>40</sup>

### ***A new beginning***

Testanegra sailed from Seville to New Spain around May 1567.<sup>41</sup> However, the process of traveling was not easy. Before entering the ship, every person who wanted to travel to America needed to obtain a special permission from the Casa de Contratación in Seville. The King of Spain founded this institution in 1503. In this way authorities could avoid the migration of forbidden people such as Muslims and Jews, while protecting their Spanish commercial monopoly in America.

The Casa de Contratación's procedure was a very strict process in which people must prove that they and their families were Old-Christians without criminal or inquisitorial records. However, sometimes the king made exceptions to this regulation. In some cases, the official declaration of the vessels' captain was enough to affirm that there were no forbidden people in the ship. This fact of trusting the commander's word created the perfect opportunity for travelers who had a suspicious background.<sup>42</sup> This was the case of Testanegra. He traveled to New Spain without a license because he could not fulfill the necessary requirements, as he later declared before the Inquisition.<sup>43</sup> However, because he had naval experience he could secretly enroll as part of the crew in the annual fleet that sailed to new Spanish America.

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<sup>40</sup> Exp. 95, 400.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> María del Carmen Mena García, *Sevilla y las flotas de Indias: La Gran Armada de Castilla Del Oro (1513-1514)*, Serie Historia Y Geografía 37 (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla; Fundación El Monte, 1998), 71.

<sup>43</sup> Exp. 95, 362.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, crossing the Atlantic was very complicated. American land and sea were a matter of dispute between Spain, Portugal, England, France, and Holland. After the Treaty of Tordesillas, in which the Pope divided America's political control between Spain and Portugal, the rest of the European imperial forces refused to recognize the Iberian monopoly. As a consequence, they took control of some islands in the Caribbean and attacked Spanish and Portuguese ships from these positions.

Because of the enormous risks in the ocean, Spain organized the journey to America by fleets. From 1520, navies sailed surrounded by armed galleons. Testanegra traveled in the fleet toward San Juan de Ulúa which, according to his testimony, also transported the imperial ministers Luis Carrillo and Alonso Muñoz.<sup>44</sup> They were envoys of King Phillip II in charge of auditing the New Spain viceroyalty as a result of the failing project of the Viceroy Gastón de Peralta. Soon, the presence of these two officers would prove relevant in the life of the former janissary.<sup>45</sup>

Testanegra's fleet sailed around May, as usual for the ships sent to New Spain. By traveling in spring, they avoided storms and hurricanes that many times were more lethal than corsairs.<sup>46</sup> The fleet left the port and ten days later it arrived in the Canary Islands. There, they repaired the damaged vessels and found the necessary supplies before entering the ocean. Being in the sea was quotidian for Testanegra. He had crossed the Mediterranean Sea dozens of times. However, he had never crossed an ocean. One month later, the fleet arrived in Dominica and weeks later to Puerto Rico. Testanegra's fleet survived to all the possible threats: epidemics, corsairs, and hurricanes. One month later, October 1567, they arrived in the main port of New Spain, San Juan de Ulúa.<sup>47</sup> Testanegra had literally arrived in a new world.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 425

<sup>45</sup> Raymond L. Lee and El Rey, "The Viceregal Instructions of Martín Enríquez de Almanza," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 31 (1951): 97.

<sup>46</sup> Pablo Emilio Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Carla Rahn Phillips (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>47</sup> Exp. 95, 362.

### *Arriving in a new world*

By the mid-sixteenth century, New Spain was the most important American domain of the Spanish crown. However, decades before, this territory was under the rule of the Mexica Empire. This power had subjugated many nations under an excessive tributary system and the empire had constant internal wars. Spaniards took advantage of the internal conflicts of the empire by making pacts with the dissidents. Many nations from Central and South Mexico saw in the European travelers a solid support to topple Mexica rule and recover their self-government. As a consequence, they supported the Spanish project of expansion and succeeded in their campaign. In 1521, American nations and Spaniards conquistadors defeated the Mexica, who finally surrendered in the siege of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the empire.

When Spaniards took control of the former Mexica Empire on behalf of the Spanish crown, they established a new political, social and economic system. They progressively integrated more and more American nations into their Spanish model. According to this imperial system, the society was organized in two republics that included Spaniards, the vast diversity of American nations integrated into the category of Indian, and enslaved people who arrived from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The rest of the travelers who came looking for new economic opportunities, as Spaniards did, did not have an established legal status because in theory they could not travel in Spanish America as the crown forbade it.<sup>48</sup> The foreigners that eluded the royal surveillance, like Testanegra, formed a diverse and numerous group possessing backgrounds opposing the ideal Spanish-Catholic model.

Trying to avoid the immigration of non-Catholics into the New World, the Spanish crown issued multiple royal decrees that forbade Muslims, Jews and their descendants from traveling to Hispanic America. Royal authorities were trying to build up the Spanish unification model that established Christianity and loyalty to the king as the central values of social and

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<sup>48</sup> See Richard Konezke, *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1810* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953).



political life. However, the fast growth of immigration to America, corruption, and piracy<sup>49</sup> encouraged the legal and illegal arrival of individuals with diverse non-Catholic backgrounds.<sup>50</sup> As a consequence, the Spanish crown founded the Royal Audience and the Inquisition in America. Both institutions were in charge of reinforcing the model of Catholic orthodoxy and loyalty to the Spanish king while preventing and punishing heresy and political treason.<sup>51</sup>

For people with a Muslim background, such as Testanegra, the crown issued multiple laws that forbade them from entering in America in a progressive way. Until 1578, Spaniards had authorization to travel with their Muslim slaves or servants through special permissions. Based on a similar process, other Muslims arrived as translators, merchants and sailors. But very often, slave traders refused to declare the Muslims origin of their slaves, while other falsely declared to be merchants or sailors. Many royal authorities allowed these non-Catholic travelers to stay in spite of their forbidden origins because of the critical need for a workforce following the massive death of native populations.<sup>52</sup>

By the mid-sixteenth century, people with a Muslim background had reconstructed their life based on the Catholic Hispanic parameters, as Testanegra did. At some point, royal authorities found it complicated to make a division between old and new Christians. In spite of the widespread stereotypes of Muslims, it was not easy to distinguish between Christians and Muslims for ordinary people either. As a consequence, it was difficult for royal authorities to

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<sup>49</sup> Antonio Garrido Aranda, "El morisco y la Inquisición novohispana (Actitudes antiislámicas en la sociedad colonial)," 1983, 506–7.

<sup>50</sup> Concerning the presence of people from the Mediterranean in America, Hernan Taboada suggests that the laws that forbade non-Christians in America, as the Spanish commercial monopoly in the colonies were constantly ignored. However, concerning commerce and trade, it is common that academics emphasize the presence of European networks, in spite of the existent evidence of merchandise of the Mediterranean Levant and the Eastern Asia. Hernán Taboada, "Extrañas presencias en las Indias: acerca de los otros Mediterráneos," *Revista de Historia de América* 44 (2011): 67.

<sup>51</sup> As Alberro has mentioned, the nature of the Inquisition in America, acquired a different character compared to the Iberian Peninsula. This is due to the different distribution of society that was mainly composed by novice in the Christians faith, Natives nations whom were not under inquisitorial jurisdiction. Alberro Solange, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571-1700* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> Hernán Taboada, "El Moro en las Indias," *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 39 (2004): 118–20.

obey orders that called for Muslim expulsion.<sup>53</sup> Testanegra as many other succeeded in integrating into the new American society. He had an Ottoman-Muslim identity that neither authorities nor the society could perceive. As a consequence, he could successfully travel throughout the viceroyalty and reconstruct his life without suspicions.

### ***Greeks in America***

As the time went on, Testanegra realized that he was not the only Greek in America. When the Spanish crown took the political control of vast territories in the new continent, its dominions became part of global commercial networks. People from the Mediterranean traveled to America and connected these commercial circuits.<sup>54</sup> Greeks, in particular, came from Crete, Rhodes, Corfu, and Morea. In America, Greeks were merchants with trade networks throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic Ocean. Others participated as artilleryman and sailors, as the case of Testanegra. They also participated in many other areas, such as peasantry and guilds, and successfully integrated into the Hispanic society. However, it is important not forget that by the sixteenth century, all of Greece was an Ottoman domain.

Alexander Kitroeff mentioned that by the sixteenth century, there were around fifty-two Greeks in Spanish America. According to his study, most of them lived in Peru. However, it is important to consider that not all the colonial records registered the origin of the travelers. In addition, there was a tendency to Hispanize Greek names; for example: Kyriakos Kostas for Domingo Costas.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to identify Greeks by reference to geographic areas in their last names, as historian Hernán Taboada has done.<sup>56</sup> By doing this, it is possible to trace more than seventy Greeks living in New Spain by the end of the sixteenth century. This

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<sup>53</sup> Taboada, 118.

<sup>54</sup> Alexander Kitroeff, *Griegos en America* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Kitroeff, 45-49. In the Testanegra's file, it is possible to find an example of the Hispanization of Greek names. In the process of Atucpa Testanegra referred to his mother as Isabel. Exp. 95, 361. In the Inquisition records, he referred to her as Sabeta. Ibid., 426.

<sup>56</sup> See Taboada, "Extrañas presencias en las Indias: acerca de los otros mediterráneos."

presence offers more evidence of the impossibility of royal authorities to prohibit the arrival of people with Ottoman and Muslim backgrounds in America.

### *American journey*

According to his declaration in the Atucpa municipality, after Testanegra arrived in San Juan de Ulúa, he stayed in Veracruz for some months and then moved to Puebla. In this city he worked as shepherd in the service of Juan de Caballos. One year later, he moved to Mexico City, then to Zacatecas with Antonio de Ordaz, and then he met Alonso de Villaseca, considered by many historians as the richest man in New Spain.<sup>57</sup> He worked as the barber of Villaseca's slaves for a couple of years practicing his knowledge in surgery that he probably learned in his previous formation as janissary.<sup>58</sup> However, although his economic and social circumstances improved, he felt stuck. He was a former Ottoman janissary specialist in naval affairs and an adventurous soldier; he did not belong in rural life.

Soon Testanegra's life took a decisive turn. The royal officers Luis Carrillo and Alonso Muñoz, who had traveled in the same fleet that Testanegra, removed the viceroy Gaston de Peralta from his charge. As a consequence, New Spain experienced a turbulent political period. Therefore, King Phillippe II sent a new viceroy, Martin Enriquez de Almanza, who arrived in New Spain in 1568. As the fourth viceroy of this domain, he became the president of the Royal Audience, the *capitán-general* or the supreme military head of the viceroyalty, and governor of this domain "who exercised unquestioned executive and administrative power in that region."<sup>59</sup>

Because of the political crisis in the New Spain, Martin Enriquez created the *Compañía de Alabarderos de la Guardia del Excelentísimo Señor Virrey* in Mexico City. This military group was one of the first armed forces in New Spain. It was a prestigious military body formed

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<sup>57</sup> Exp. 95, 370.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>59</sup> Lee, "The Viceregal Instructions of Martín Enríquez de Almanza," 100.

by twenty-four soldiers. They were in charge of the personal security of the viceroy in both public and private spaces.<sup>60</sup> According to the requirements of the Spanish army, alabarderos should be disciplined, obedient, loyal, and maintain a good reputation. In addition, they should have a military training. Testanegra successfully enrolled in this service in spite of his background.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the viceroy had the license to name their servants without any investigation of their origin. However, Testanegra's work in Alonso de Villaseca's service probably helped his cause.

Testanegra's job as the personal guard of the viceroy provided him a notable economic and social status. He earned three hundred pesos per year, enough money necessary to buy a big house in the province of central Mexico. He was not only one of the trusted men of the viceroy, but also attended the most exclusive events and places with the ruler.<sup>62</sup> This position, undoubtedly, allowed him to meet the most prominent people in New Spain. Testanegra worked once again as a soldier in a royal guard, as he did in Istanbul for the Sultan. However, this time he served the major enemy of the Ottoman empire, the Habsburg power. In a few years, Testanegra reconstructed a solid reputation and built important social networks. In the future, both elements would help him navigate legal issues.

### ***A royal expedition to China***

After two years in the service of the viceroy, Testanegra traveled to the Philippines by joining a royal expedition, as he declared in Atucpa's municipality.<sup>63</sup> By 1560's, the Spanish crown started a project of expansion toward the Indian ocean. Spaniards knew that Portuguese campaigns had succeeded in establishing commercial networks in the area. However, when

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<sup>60</sup> Juan de Solorzano-Pereira, *Politica Indiana, sacada en lengua Castellana de los dos tomos del derecho y gobierno municipal de las Indias occidentales que mas copiosamente escribio en la latina el mesmo autor dividida en seis libros etc. Anadidus muchas cosas quens estan en los tomos latinicos etc* (Diego Diaz de la Carrera, 1648), 494.

<sup>61</sup> Exp. 95, 370.

<sup>62</sup> Manuel Romero de Terreros, *Bocetos de la vida social en la Nueva España* (México, D. F: Editorial Porrúa, s.a, 1944), 96–98.

<sup>63</sup> Exp. 95, 370.

they arrived in the Philippines in 1565, they found a different space from what they expected. The Philippines had an agricultural system based on small-scale rice production. There was no sustainability for the new colonizers who expected to exploit natural sources more intensively. In addition, there was increased migration of Chinese people to these islands that reinforced the scarcity of resources.<sup>64</sup> However, Spaniards soon realized that there was a budding commercial network with the Chinese empire in this territory.

China soon became part of the Spanish project of expansion. Controlling the commerce of silk, tea, fine pottery, and spices would provide a solution to the scarcity of these resources in the Iberian Peninsula. However, this new objective was part of a broad project of expansion. At this moment, Spaniards felt very confident about their conquering abilities. On the one hand, they had started an invasion campaign against England. For those purposes, Phillippe II made an enormous investment in what he called the Invincible Army. On the other, Don Juan de Austrias had succeeded in the battle of Lepanto against the Ottomans in 1571. In the same year, Spaniards founded Manila.<sup>65</sup> In their mind, China was only the next step in their project of a universal monarchy.

The first step in the Spanish program was to build a naval army in the Philippines that gave them access to China and Japan. As a consequence, they started a new program of exploration along the Chinese coasts. At the beginning, the explorers recruited information only from the Native societies and later from Muslim traders and Chinese immigrants. The testimonies increased the Spanish interest in these territories. The plan to conquer China grew stronger and required a solid blueprint of attack.

In 1571, Phillippe II sent instructions to New Spain for a new expedition to China. The viceroy Martin Enriquez put Juan de la Isla in charge of the project. He recruited three vessels

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<sup>64</sup> Manel Ollé, *La empresa de China: De la Armada Invencible al Galeón de Manila* (Barcelona: Acantilado, 2002), 27–29.

<sup>65</sup> Ollé, 39–41.

and sailed to the Philippines in 1572.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that Testanegra, as a trusted man of the viceroy, had essay access to enroll in this campaign. It is also possible that the viceroy knew part of his past as a Greek sailor and because he also spoke Greek --the language of commerce in the Mediterranean--, the viceroy decided to take advantage of Testanegra's experience. Sailors, soldiers, and interpreters were always useful, and Testanegra could be used in a variety of ways. The Spanish expeditions sailed from Acapulco in the same year. This campaign had the main goal to explore China and gather scouting information. But most importantly, explorers had the goal of finding a new route between America and China across the mythic Strait of Anian.<sup>67</sup>

During some months of exploration, Testanegra established networks with locals and foreign traders. He also went across different islands in the Philippines, along with the Chinese and Japanese coasts, to make maps.<sup>68</sup> After the expedition fulfilled the first section of the task, they sailed with two vessels from Luzon to New Spain. At this moment, Testanegra's plan was to return to the service of Martin Enriquez. However, the ships were almost destroyed because of a storm when they were trying to discover the new route, as he later declared to the Inquisition. Luckily, no one in the crew died and they went back to Luzon. There, he and the rest of the sailors took more than a year making repairs to the vessel and exploring the surrounding sea.<sup>69</sup>

In July 1574, Testanegra's vessel returned to New Spain but he was not part of the crew. Guido de Lavezares, the new governor of Manila, sent another ship to Spain with two maps: one of Luzon and its closest Chinese coast; the other, a map and detailed description of the different islands in the Philippines, Japan, and the extension of the Chinese coasts.<sup>70</sup> However,

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<sup>66</sup> Ollé, 49.

<sup>67</sup> Ollé, 49–50.

<sup>68</sup> Exp. 95, 370.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>70</sup> Ollé, *La empresa de China: De la Armada Invencible al Galeón de Manila*, 51.

Testanegra was not on that mission. Instead, he was on his way to the Ottoman Empire. His plans to go back to America had changed.

### ***The way back home***

When Iberians started exploring the Indian ocean in earnest, people in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East had long developed systems of commerce and trade. Arabs, Indians, Chinese and East Africans were, in fact, masters of the Indian Ocean. When Iberians arrived, they had little to offer to the Asian traders in exchange for tea, porcelain, silk, and species. It was the extraction of American silver what allowed them to participate in the Asian commerce, some decades later.<sup>71</sup>

As mentioned, Muslim presence in the Indian Ocean was widely extended. Ottomans were, at the moment, expanding their political alliances with these coastal kingdoms. In this context, it was easy for Testanegra to find his way back home. He fled from the Spanish expedition, navigated the Indian Ocean through the Arabian and Red Seas, and arrived in Jerusalem some months later.<sup>72</sup> Jerusalem at the time was also a dominion of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>73</sup> Testanegra could thus move easily from the coast to the center of the empire. He successfully returned to his former world, but he could not hide his Ottoman side from the Catholic pilgrims in Jerusalem, as Atucpa's testimonies would later reveal.<sup>74</sup>

Testanegra arrived in Istanbul and likely tried to recover his place as a janissary in changed political circumstances. Suleiman II had died and Selim II was the new sultan. In addition, Molloku Mehmed Pasa, his former high admiral had become the grand vizier of the empire. Molloku received Testanegra and after hearing about his long journey from Venetian captivity to his service for the Spanish king in the Philippines, Molloku decided on a new destiny for the former janissary.

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<sup>71</sup> Su Fang Ng, "Introduction," *Genre* 48, no. 2 (July 2015): 121.

<sup>72</sup> Exp. 95, 428.

<sup>73</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 101.

<sup>74</sup> Exp. 95, 428.

### *Solloku Mehmed Pasha*

One of the clearest examples of the privileged station of Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire is Solloku Mehmed Pasha. Originally from Bosnia, Solloku was from an Orthodox Christian family. He was part of the Janissary Corps, became the high admiral of the Ottoman navy, married the daughter of Sultan Selim II and at last became the grand vizier of the empire in 1565.<sup>75</sup> He was arguably the most powerful grand vizier up to that time.

When Solloku assumed office, one of his main objectives was to consolidate the position of Ottomans in the Indian Ocean. In order to advance his project of expansion, he supported research into the geography and politics of the region. Consequently, Solloku sponsored the most prominent artisans, scientist, geographers and historians, including Feridun Ahmed Beg, Sipahizade Mehmed, and Kutbeddin Mekki. By 1573, one year before Testanegra arrived in Istanbul, they were publishing volumes of global history and the history of the conquest of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>76</sup>

Solloku also tried to consolidate Ottoman power in the Indian Ocean by sending envoys to make alliances with Muslim traders and rulers in strategic locations of the Indian ports. In exchange for their loyalty, Ottomans offered Muslim traders military support against Portuguese attacks. In addition, Solloku sent secret envoys to corroborate and gather further information about foreign territories in order to continue the work of Seydi Ali Reis. The secret envoys had another goal. Their mission was also to establish contact with dissidents in other territories and incite them to rebel against local rulers, as in the case of Muslims and Portuguese along the Indian coasts.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, as Cassale puts it, Solloku drew “from a bank of accumulated knowledge about the globe that allowed him to construct with unprecedented sophistication a grand strategy for

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<sup>75</sup> Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 119.

<sup>76</sup> Casale, 119–20.

<sup>77</sup> Casale, 123.



imperial expansion.”<sup>78</sup> Just like the Spanish ministers did, he successfully promoted the rhetorical claims to Ottoman universal sovereignty and successfully executed the necessary technical requirements to build and maintain a global network of communications throughout these immense dominions.<sup>79</sup>

According to the accusations in the Atucpa process, once Testanegra arrived in Istanbul, he sold all the information he had gathered while in the personal service of viceroy Martin Enriquez and in the Philippines making maps of Chinese and Japanese coasts.<sup>80</sup> The information that Testanegra offered fitted perfectly into the Solloku’s expansionist project. As a consequence, it is possible that this enormous contribution to the knowledge of the Indian Ocean gave him a privileged status in Ottoman society. It is also very likely that when Testanegra offered his service as a janissary, Solloku found a different way to take advantage of his experience and social networks in the Spanish world. If he had managed to live in the Spanish empire and even take part in expeditions for King Philip II without coming under suspicion, he would make a fine addition to the Ottoman intelligence networks.

It is not possible now to know whether Ottoman rulers had considered mounting an expedition to America, as the witnesses in the process strongly affirmed. However, what is possible to suggest is that by gaining more and more footholds in the Indian Ocean and displacing the fragile dominion of Spaniards in the Philippines, the Ottomans would have been able to reach America through the Pacific. As a consequence, Testanegra’s privileged position in New Spain, made him the ideal agent to continue gathering information about the new Spanish dominions. The value of this information was twofold. On the one hand, Solloku would have intimate knowledge of the expansionist movements of a major imperial rival. On

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<sup>78</sup> Casale, 120.

<sup>79</sup> Casale, 120.

<sup>80</sup> Exp. 95, 358.

the other hand, he would have the information he needed to weigh the possibilities of a future expedition under the aegis of Ottoman universal sovereignty.

### *A new Ottoman envoy*

In 1574, the grand vizier Solloku sent Testanegra back to America. In some years, he would have to return to the Ottoman Empire to bring as much information as possible. Before making his way to New Spain, Testanegra visited his family in Greece, giving them some money out of the fortune he had collected for his services in the Ottoman and the Spanish empires. He then crossed the Mediterranean and visited some of the players in the contest for supremacy in the Mediterranean: Venice, Genoa, and Sicily.<sup>81</sup> He may well have felt more confident crossing the boundaries between rival territories than he once had. In his travels, he had learned how to avoid suspicion wherever he went.

In Spanish-ruled Naples, Testanegra's luck ran out. Someone there identified him as a traitor to the Spanish crown. Witnesses referred to Testanegra as a person who "was going to sell the land" to the Ottoman enemies,<sup>82</sup> probably alluding to the intelligence the former Janissary gathered in the Philippines while part of a Spanish expedition, information he later sold to the grand vizier Solloku. Testanegra was soon in jail on the charge of spying for the Ottomans.<sup>83</sup>

Testanegra was in prison for almost a year. Neapolitan authorities only freed him after two Spanish spies who had been working in Istanbul could not identify him.<sup>84</sup> There can be no doubt as to the reason the spies could not identify Testanegra. Having arrived in Istanbul after years in captivity and in America, he was not a familiar face to them. In any case, it is significant that after facing this charge, he continued his travels throughout unfriendly territories. He seems to have been more confident than ever in his abilities to escape official

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>82</sup> "le prendieron y pusieron en la cárcel diciendo que este era espía del Gran Turco y que iba a venderles la tierra," Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 429.

notice. After gaining his freedom in Naples, Testanegra proceeded north to Rome, then Florence, and on to Spain where he boarded the fleet of Diego de Maldonado bound for America.

Once he arrived in New Spain, he again entered the service of the kingdom's viceroy, Martin Enriquez. Testanegra likely excused his absence claiming that he went as a pilgrim to the Holy Land on a vow made after his shipwreck in the Philippines, a story he later told the *alcalde mayor*.<sup>85</sup> Enriquez must have held him in high esteem because Testanegra immediately recovered his place in the viceroy's personal guard. From his position in the guards, Testanegra could resume his old post by the viceroy's side on nearly every occasion, meeting all of the most prominent people in New Spain. Yet, after only two years and without any apparent reason, Testanegra left the viceroy's service, moving north to the mining area of Real de Minas de Pachuca.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

## **PART II. The Prosecution**

In 1579, Testanegra settled in Atucpa, a small Indian town in east-central New Spain. Spaniards had assumed political control of the region from the Otomi nation around 1522. By the time Testanegra arrived, the town had around eight thousand Native inhabitants and fewer than fifty Spanish families.<sup>86</sup> The town was growing fast. Cattle ranching had taken off in the area and the herds and profits were rapidly growing. After 1565, explorers found new mineral deposits and used new methods to extract metals. In a few short years, the region had become one of the most important mining areas for the Spanish crown. Thanks to the mineral deposits in Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Taxco, and Pachuca, the extraction of precious metals, especially silver, became the most important royal interest in New Spain.

Testanegra settled in the town for a few months and then he leased a building to establish a lodge.<sup>87</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Authorities*, a lodge was an inn designated specifically for travelers from outside the viceroyalty. The lodge gave foreign visitors a place to eat, drink alcohol, sleep, and keep their horses. In the lodge, Testanegra worked with Marco, a former Venetian sailor. Based on the testimonies from the judicial process, Marco found himself in Testanegra's service because of the debts the Venetian owed him. With the evidence at hand, it is impossible to determine how Marco fell into Testanegra's debt, but it may have been before coming to New Spain. According to one witness, the pair traveled across Europe and sailed to America together.<sup>88</sup>

Their relationship proved too much for Marco. The former Venetian sailor, used to a life of relative freedom, resented his servitude. In Atucpa, Marco saw his chance to break free of his haughty companion, Testanegra. Before slipping out of town, Marco told the neighbors everything he knew about Testanegra: his life as a Janissary, his Venetian captivity, his return

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 44–46.

<sup>87</sup> Exp. 95, 359.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

to the Ottoman Empire after the expedition to the Philippines, his sale of the expedition's information to Solloku and the Ottoman plans to make an expedition to American shores by way of the Pacific. Marco's denunciation was a masterstroke. With Testanegra in jail, Marco would be released from his service. Given all he stood to gain, why did it take so long for Marco to denounce Testanegra to the authorities?

The possibilities are many, but the information available in Testanegra's case file suggests a good reason. Testanegra, meanwhile, had lived there for years and had established a good reputation for himself in the service of the viceroy and while traveling to Asia as part of a royal expedition. Marco had lived in New Spain only for a couple of years. He was virtually unknown and of no account. As a foreigner Marco lacked the credibility and social networks to back up any claims he made against Testanegra. Had he denounced Testanegra earlier, the whole affair would have backfired. His enemy and master had ample resources to defend himself and send Marco to jail for any reason.

Marcos's word carried greater weight because the *alguacil* of Atucpa, Martin Larios, and others in town had noticed something strange about Testanegra. His accent was different, for one thing. And they doubted Testanegra's reason for traveling to Jerusalem after the royal expedition to China. They also heard the pejorative way Testanegra referred to Christian sailors in the Mediterranean<sup>89</sup> and the respectful tones he reserved for the Ottoman ruler. But there was one circumstance that to the people of Atucpa offered irrefutable proof of Testanegra's suspicious origins—his circumcision.<sup>90</sup>

As days went on, the rumors about Testanegra spread through town so rapidly that the royal authorities of Atucpa started a secret investigation with the *alcalde mayor*, Diego Diaz del Castillo at its head. Del Castillo found that all the rumors swirling around town agreed on

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<sup>89</sup> One of the witnesses declared he heard Testanegra said "yo tengo que irme a meter a galeras para vengarme de estos putos bujarrones españoles." Ibid., 359.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 357-359.

three basic facts. First, Testanegra had traveled throughout the Mediterranean, Spain, North Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Second, he possessed geographic information about the Americas, the Philippines, and China that he later sold to the Ottoman Sultan, notably a host of maps depicting routes on the Indian Ocean. Third and most important, the Ottomans intended to explore the American coast using an unknown route in the Pacific. They possessed all the intelligence they needed for an expedition, including details about the land, the seaways, and the ports.<sup>91</sup>

The shocking rumors, Diaz del Castillo officially started a judicial process against Testanegra on the charge of espionage. From the beginning, this case was followed “de oficio,” meaning the royal justice of Atucpa proceeded against Testanegra without any direct accusation or denunciation. Marco had left the city to avoid Testanegra’s vengeance. Diaz del Castillo soon gathered the testimonies of other main witnesses of in the case: the alguacil Martin Larios; Jorge Muñoz, his father-in-law; and Francisco Amaro, Testanegra’s friend. All of them were Spaniards and *vecinos* of Atucpa.<sup>92</sup>

In their testimonies, they recalled multiple conversations in which they heard Testanegra speaking favorably of Suleiman the Magnificent and complaining about the victories of the Spanish Crown over the Ottoman Empire.<sup>93</sup> They also testified about his past as an Ottoman corsair, his captivity aboard a Christian ship, and his escape to America. They had heard about Testanegra’s intentions to travel again to the Ottoman Empire and smuggle additional geographic information back to the Sultan. For them, the main proof of his past was

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<sup>91</sup> According to the testimony of Díaz del Castillo, Testanegra “había estado en la China y en la isla Filipina y corrido medio mundo y que hizo a esta flota... sólo con pretensión de hacer una nao para entrar en esta tierra por parte que nunca jamás ha entrado ninguna persona porque llevaba pintada toda la tierra y mares y puertos de ella...” Exp. 95, 357.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>93</sup> One of the witnesses declare he heard Testanegra said “...el rey mi señor el Gran Turco no hace lo que hacía el principe Don Juan de Austrias que algo tomaba a los moros luego lo mandaba imprimir y el Gran Turco mi señor no lo hacía sino que callaba...” Ibid., 360.

his circumcision, which he had shown them, as well as the testimony of Marco who had been in the Mediterranean when Testanegra fell captive on a Christian ship.<sup>94</sup>

After hearing these serious accusations, Diaz del Castillo proceeded to take Testanegra to the public jail of the town. Within days he took down Testanegra's testimony, who denied all the charges.<sup>95</sup> Testanegra declared that he was born in the town of Patras in Greece but fled when the Janissary commission came looking for recruits. He said he lived as a *picarrillo* in Venice, making his living as a fisherman. Then he moved to Spain and finally enrolled as in the fleet of Luis Carrillo and Alonso Munoz.<sup>96</sup>

Testanegra said he arrived in New Spain and soon joined the service of Alonso de Villaseca, the richest merchant in the viceroyalty. He declared he later enrolled in the service of the viceroy and traveled in an expedition to China.<sup>97</sup> The expedition ended when the ship carrying him sank, but he managed to survive and return to New Spain. Testanegra emphasized that he was a good Christian, but a poor and illiterate man. He said he had lived in New Spain for twelve years but later changed his testimony, claiming he had lived in New Spain for eighteen years.<sup>98</sup> In the meantime, he sent some letters to Mexico City asking his contacts for help, according to the records from Atucpa.

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<sup>94</sup> "que es levantisco de la nación del dicho Alexandre el cual... es un puto retajado y ha servido como mujer en una galera la cual tomó un capitán cristiano que se decía Alexandre el cual le torno a bautizar otra vez y puso su mismo nombre..." Ibid., 358.

<sup>95</sup> "Dijo que niega todo lo que le es preguntado y que él cree en Dios y en la Santa Fe Católica según como lo cree y tiene la Santa Madre Iglesia de Roma y que este confesante nunca ha estado en tierra de moros ni en Constantinopla ni mismo ha sido retajado más que estuvo enfermo de su miembro muchos días." Ibid., 361.

<sup>96</sup> "Dijo que puede ser más tiempo de doce años cuando vino el licenciado Muñoz a estas tierras pasó él a estas partes y que vino por marinero en unas naos de un capitán llamado Buitrón inglés..." Ibid., 362.

<sup>97</sup> "y después volvió a esta Ciudad de México y en ella sirvió a Alonso de Villaseca y de allí se vino a servir de alabardero con el muy Excelentísimo Señor Virrey de esta Nueva España y de allí se salió y se fue a servir a su Majestad a la China por marinero." Ibid., 362.

<sup>98</sup> "...porque yo soy un pobre hombre y no tengo caudal para vestirme... ni habrá testigo que me haya visto marcar la tierra ni puertos porque yo no soy piloto ni entiendo de la navegación de la mar ni se leer ni escribir sino sólo de ser grumete que he andado en esta carrera de España a esta Nueva España ya que pasé a estas partes de Nueva España más de diez y ocho años y después de acá he ido a la China en servicio de su Majestad y a lo que se ha ofrecido en servicio de Pedro de Luna y he servido a su Excelencia de alabardero..." Ibid., 368. Later Testanegra said he arrived in New Spain twenty years before. It was the third time he changed the date of his arrival in New Spain.

Testanegra's declaration was not enough to dismiss the case. In the following weeks, Diaz del Castillo heard sixteen witnesses in favor of Testanegra. They included a couple of priest, miners, and some respected members of the town. The witnesses also included people with backgrounds similar to Testanegra's. They hailed from places like Rhodes and Cyprus, all dominions of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>99</sup> Testanegra had even more friends but not all of them could testify. In his defense, he offered authorities a list of many people in Mexico City who were not able to travel to Atucpa to testify in the case. As a consequence, after extending the process well beyond normal deadlines, Diaz del Castillo asked the municipal government of Mexico City to receive the testimony of Testanegra's witnesses.<sup>100</sup> According to some notifications in the record, we know that witnesses attended the summons, but the documents do not tell us their names and declarations.

Most of the witnesses knew the cause of the lawsuit and gave similar responses to the interrogatory that Testanegra had made. Many of them said they knew Testanegra as a poor man in the mining area of North Mexico ten years before. They did not lie. When Testanegra settled in New Spain in 1567, eked out a precarious life as a shepherd.<sup>101</sup> Once he met Villaseca in Zacatecas his fortunes improved dramatically. Eventually, he enrolled in the service of the viceroy where he gained a privileged economic and social status.

The witnesses affirmed Testanegra was a good Christian, from a Christian family, and that he did not have the necessary skills to map the land meaning that he was illiterate.<sup>102</sup> They told the truth. Testanegra was born in a Christian Greek family and, because of his childhood,

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<sup>99</sup> One of the witnesses was Gregorio del Rio "español cristiano natural que dijo ser de la ciudad de Rodas griego de nación," *Ibid.*, 371-372. Other witness was Pedro Chipre. *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>100</sup> "ahora apareció la parte de él y me pidió que que porque algunos de los testigos... estaban fuera de este pueblo y residían en la ciudad de México y minas de Pachuca le mandaba dar mi carta receptoria... hagan parecer ante sí a todas las personas que por su parte fueren nombrados y presentados," *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>101</sup> "Dijo que este testigo sabe que después de pasado a estas partes este Alexandre Testanegra le vido este testigo servir de pastor a Juan de Caballos en la ciudad de Puebla y desde allí supo este testigo que el dicho Testanegra se había ido a las minas de las Zacatecas," *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>102</sup> One of the witnesses affirmed "que el dicho Alexandre no pasó ni vino a esta Nueva España a pintar ni a marcar tierras ni puertos de mares por ser como dicho tiene hombre inhábil y de poco entendimiento y para entender en semejante negocio era necesario un hombre de habilidad y que entendiera la astrología y cosmografía," *Ibid.*, 377.



his captivity in a Christian ship, and his journey in the Catholic, Spanish Empire, he had learned how to perform as a good Catholic. In addition, he was effectively an illiterate man, with no knowledge how to read or write in Spanish.

As a Greek child in a family of sailors, he did not receive a special education and did not learn to write in his native language, either. But, as new Muslim he surely received training in Arabic. And he also received instruction in Turkish as part of his training as a Janissary. Arabic was the language of trade in the Indian Ocean and it should have helped facilitate Testanegra's travel along its shores. Witnesses and authorities perceived his lack of writing skills in Spanish as total illiteracy. In fact, it was his Arabic and Turkish language training that helped him in gathering information on Indian geography and commercial routes. In addition, he may in fact have possessed reading skills in Spanish since he had to read maps and cartographic descriptions to obtain information while he was serving in the naval exploration to China, he had to read maps and cartographic descriptions.

While some witnesses vouched for Testanegra, others revealed important information about his suspicious origins. According to these witnesses, the Ottomans took Testanegra when he was a child, he became a Janissary, converted to Islam, was circumcised, and spent many years working in the military service of the Sultan in Istanbul until he was captured while working in an Ottoman fleet.<sup>103</sup> At this point, because of the seriousness of the testimonies, Diaz del Castillo decided to turn over the case to the Royal Audiencia in Mexico City.<sup>104</sup>

In the days that followed, the Audiencia decided that there was enough evidence to proceed against Testanegra. Court officials ordered Diaz del Castillo to send the accused, the records, and his confiscated personal belongings to Mexico City.<sup>105</sup> In spite of Testanegra's

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<sup>103</sup> One of the witnesses declared "y que andando en unas galeras de moros siendo muchacho le cautivo un capitán llamado Alexandre que era Cristiano y que todos los que habían cautivado de la parte del dicho capitán llamado Alexandre los hizo pasar a cuchillo y que este Alexandre Testanegra por ser muy mozo y muy bonito y vivillo lo había dejado para su paje y en aquella razón luego lo hizo bautizar y le puso su mismo nombre de Alexandre principalmente por verlo retajado." *Ibid.*, 359-360

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

constant demands for liberty, the Royal Audiencia was looking for physical proof in order to make solid charges. Surprisingly, the Royal Audiencia did not proceed with more interrogatories. Instead, the judges of the Audiencia required a medical test to determine if Testanegra was circumcised or he just had a scar from *cancer*. According to his declarations, before coming back to New Spain, Testanegra had sex with a woman in Seville. From her, he caught a venereal infection so virulent that a pharmacist had to cut off part of his penis to save his life.<sup>106</sup>

In contrast, the doctor of the Audiencia said that even if he had some marks indicating a disease of the penis, they were recent and did not require a major procedure to cure them. Instead, the doctor contended, the scar was from many years before and resembled the method of genital mutilation.<sup>107</sup> For the Audiencia his circumcision was not enough proof to demonstrate that Testanegra was an Ottoman spy. Nor did his personal effects include any suspicious elements, such as books, maps, letters, or religious artifacts that authorities could attribute to Islamic practices or espionage.<sup>108</sup> Yet, this fact was not strange either. Emrah Safa Gurkan has suggested that, unlike Spanish intelligence networks, Ottoman spies depended mainly on oral communication to transmit their messages. In this way, they avoided enemies trying to intercept their information channels.<sup>109</sup> This method proved effective for Testanegra. Authorities could not find physical evidence of his Ottoman networks and mission.

Without strong evidence, the Audiencia turned the case to the Inquisition of Mexico City. In this way, they could guarantee the prosecution of the suspect. The Inquisition, as a religious institution, could not proceed against Testanegra for the charge of espionage but it

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>107</sup> “y que no obstante que sí parece haber tenido él dos llaguitas una en la parte alta y otra en la parte baja y ser muy antiguas el susodicho tiene de arriba el capullo cortado y señales y le parece habérselo cortado de mucho más tiempo atrás que las dichas llaguitas y que por estar cortado como está le parece y es cierto que se le cortó y era retajado... y que le parece que por las dichas llaguitas no había necesidad de cortárselo,” Ibid., 412.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>109</sup> See Emrah Safa Gurkan, “Espionage in the Sixteenth Century Mediterranean: Secret Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman Habsburg Rivalry” (Georgetown University, 2012).

had the jurisdiction to investigate his suspicious origin, adherence to Islam, and circumcision in depth.<sup>110</sup> The Inquisition immediately accepted the case. Once they received all the information available, the accused as well as his confiscated personal items, the religious authorities proceeded to interrogate Testanegra. After months in prison and three interrogations, the Inquisition's interrogatory revealed more detailed information related to what witnesses and Testanegra himself had declared in Atucpa and before the Royal Audiencia. Apparently, Inquisitors had more information about what the records showed. For example, they knew about Testanegra's travel from the Philippines to Jerusalem, Istanbul, and Greece. They also knew about his time in prison in Naples and how he came back with four Ottoman Greek envoys to gather further information of Spanish America.<sup>111</sup> The way they obtained that information is unknown. But it is important to keep in mind that Mexico City's municipality also received witnesses for the case and they could have provided further information.

After an intensive journey, Testanegra admitted that he traveled illegally to America and he also declared that four years before, the authorities in Naples prosecuted him for the charge of Ottoman espionage. When authorities asked him why authorities considered him a spy in Naples, he affirmed that it was a mistake. He declared he was on his way from Greece to Spain when officials detained him in Manfredonia in error. Inquisitors pushed for more on this question but Testanegra refused to give further details. Finally, after an exhaustive interrogatory, he also admitted he was vassal of the Ottoman Sultan and that there were Muslim converts in his family in Greece.<sup>112</sup>

However, the case was about to see a decisive turn. In order to corroborate the medical test that the Audience had made, the Inquisition requested a second exam. At the end, doctors determined the exact opposite of the first test. They declared that the scar on Testanegra's penis

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<sup>110</sup> Exp. 95, 425.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem.*

was the result of a recent venereal sickness.<sup>113</sup> But why did the results of both exams contrast that much? Even though in some processes the Inquisitorial authorities requested multiple medical examinations, it was not common for the results to vary that much. In any case, after this exam, authorities in both institutions made a final resolution.

Inquisitors and the members of the Audiencia believed in the guilt of Testanegra as they declared in the sentence.<sup>114</sup> However, in spite of all of his shocking confessions and witnesses' testimonies, the Inquisition ruled to acquit him. This decision meant that the authorities were not sure about his innocence, but also felt that they did not have enough proof to prosecute him for the charges of espionage and heresy. As a consequence, they freed him and returned his property.<sup>115</sup> How did this happen? Why did Inquisitors not pursue the case with further investigation and interrogatories? I argue that this resolution was not a consequence of authorities' disinterest, nor the scarcity of testimonies, but the result of Testanegra's successful strategic maneuvers.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 434.

### **PART III. The Strategy**

In contrast to the Inquisition's final ruling, there were two things that the religious tribunal could have done differently to find stronger evidence to prosecute the Greek sailor. First, since Testanegra's first prosecution transpired in Naples, the Inquisition in Mexico City could have requested Testanegra's file from its Neapolitan counterpart, keeping him in prison in the meantime. In this way, inquisitors could corroborate or dismiss Testanegra's declarations about his first process for espionage and send him back to the Audiencia to continue the lawsuit. Second, if Testanegra's two medical examinations had opposite results, it might have prompted the Inquisition to request a third and definitive test or request the advice of the General Inquisitor in Spain, as happened with the most complex cases.

Usually, the Inquisition would have proceeded with the request of the records from Europe, the additional medical exam and the request for advice to the General Inquisitor, but it did not. The inquisitors did not condemn Testanegra based on the partial guilt-confessions he made. In other cases, given Testanegra's confession about his illegal travel to New Spain, secular authorities would have sent him back to Europe or, at least, would have made him pay a fine. Most surprisingly, even though Testanegra confessed to being an Ottoman vassal and that he had Muslim relatives, the Audiencia and the Inquisition did not exile him from the Spanish dominions or condemn him to forcedly work in the galleys. In sum, Testanegra eluded conviction, exile, and pecuniary sanction. Why?

Based on the analysis of the whole file, it is possible to appreciate how Testanegra developed a strategy to overcome the charges. When the process started in Atucpa, he knew the reason that the alcalde mayor brought the lawsuit against him.<sup>116</sup> He sent letters in advance to his friends in the town and City of Mexico asking them to provide favorable testimonies, as the records reveal. More importantly, Testanegra was able to prepare a questionnaire for his

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<sup>116</sup> Exp. 95, 369.

witnesses in order to confirm his personal story as an innocent person.<sup>117</sup> According to his strategy, which included both the previous letters and the closed questions he prepared in the interrogatory, he could prevent his testifiers from providing information that could suggest his guilt. For instance, one of the questions said, “Do you know that Testanegra arrived in New Spain eighteen years ago in the fleet of Cosme Buitron as grumete when he was 16 years old?”<sup>118</sup> This question for itself provided all the information the witness had to confirm by answering affirmatively. The same happened with one of the most crucial questions: “Do you know that Alejandro was not circumcised but the scar he has in the penis was because he had cancer and that Tapia the pharmacist cured him in Cádiz?”<sup>119</sup> Again, with the prepared question, Testanegra was giving his witnesses only the exact information they needed to confirm in the story.

Preparing the questions, Testanegra also managed to discredit his enemy, Marco, undermining the accusations against him. For instance, one question said, “Do you know that Marco is a poor man, a foreigner, a drunk, crazy, a thief, and a mortal enemy of Testanegra?”<sup>120</sup> By answering this question affirmatively the witnesses discredited the good reputation of Marco, a foreigner recently settled in the community. In yet another question, he prompted, “Do you know that Testanegra is a good Christian who always attends mass, gives to charity, and belongs to a Christian family, and also that he is a good working man?”<sup>121</sup> With this

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<sup>117</sup> “Interrogatorio de la parte. Por las preguntas siguientes sean preguntados los testigos que son o fuesen presentados por Alexandre Testanegra preso en el pleito que contra él la justicia real trata de oficio sobre que pasó a estas partes a marcar la tierra y puertos...” Ibid., 370.

<sup>118</sup> “si saben que el dicho Alexandre Testanegra que pasó a esta Nueva España diez y ocho años poco más o menos en la flota que venía por general Cosme Buitrón Farfán por grumete y que sería de edad de diez y seis años poco más o menos...” Ibidem.

<sup>119</sup> “si saben que el dicho Alexander no está retajado ni lo puede estar y lo que tiene cortado de su miembro fue por enfermedad que tuvo en él y por atajar el cáncer... y lo curó Tapia boticario de Sanlúcar...” Ibidem.

<sup>120</sup> “si saben que el dicho Marco... es un hombre de baja suerte y pobre y extranjero que se toma vino y falta de juicio [and Testanegra hit him because] hurtos que le hacía y por hallarlo borracho siempre... que es enemigo mortal de Alexandre que no habría la boca sino para decir mal de él y es tal persona que con juramento o sin él no se le debe dar crédito a lo que él dijese...” Ibidem.

<sup>121</sup> “si saben que el dicho Alexandre es hijo de padres Cristianos y natural de Grecia y han vivido muy cristianos como católicos cristianos... que el dicho Alejandro es buen Cristiano temeroso de Dios y de su conciencia hacienda mucho bien a pobres y socorriéndolos en sus necesidades y ha vivido como buen Cristiano y no dejando de confesar todos los años y siempre yendo a la iglesia los domingos y fiestas del año... y lo que tiene lo ha ganado con su sudor y trabajo sin encargar su conciencia...” Ibid., 371

question and the unanimous answer of his witnesses, Testanegra succeeded in emphasizing his good reputation as an upstanding member of the society and as a respectable Catholic man.

In spite of Testanegra's smart strategy, the plan did not work entirely as he planned. Some of the witnesses in his favor refused to confirm the information given by the questions. Instead they told the authorities Testanegra came from the Mediterranean, that he was a Venetian captive, a circumcised man,<sup>122</sup> and that even though Marco was a foreigner they believed his testimony.<sup>123</sup> The fact that people close to Testanegra revealed critical information about him and confirmed his suspicious background suggest that the accusations against him were not entirely the consequence of Marco's revenge. Those people, seven among the sixteenth witness, were not enemies of Testanegra but they were close acquaintances who had no intention of hurting him.

Once the alcalde mayor, Diaz del Castillo, realized the accusations were well grounded and could prove the serious charge for espionage, he transferred the lawsuit to the Royal Audiencia. This institution was the highest justice court in New Spain and it had the jurisdiction to prosecute espionage. The Audience accepted the case but did not pursue additional interrogatories. The judges only ordered a medical test to confirm if the Greek sailor was circumcised.<sup>124</sup> When the physician of the Audiencia confirmed the Testanegra's scar was in fact a circumcision, they decided to turn the case to the Inquisition.<sup>125</sup> Why did the Audiencia accepted the case but did not conduct further investigation?

I suggest that as the Audiencia studied Testanegra's case, its judges realized that he had been in the personal guard of the viceroy for years. The Greek sailor emphasized his royal

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<sup>122</sup> "que conoce al dicho Alexandre Testanegra de catorce años al presente al cual lo conoció en Cádiz que vino en una nao veneciana y venía por grumete de ella y en la cual la razón de huyó y se fue a Sevilla y de allí supo este testigo como se había embarcado para esta tierra." *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>123</sup> "...y aunque el dicho Marco riñó algunas veces con el dicho Alexandre no por este creen... que el dicho Marco le levantaría semejantes cosas porque le tienen por hombre muy buen cristiano y hombre de bien al dicho Marco..." *Ibid.*, 358-359.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

service to the viceroy and the King of Spain at every opportunity he had in order to highlight his good reputation. So, it is possible to assume that the viceroy and president of the Audiencia, Martín Enríquez de Almanza, found out about Testanegra's process very soon. The accusation against the sailor indirectly involved Martín Enríquez because he had hired Testanegra as his personal guard, sent him to the Philippines, and hired him again when he came back from Jerusalem and Greece.

As viceroy of the New Spain, Martín Enríquez had a special license to hire people for his personal service without providing further investigation of their background to the royal authorities. The fact that the viceroy hired Testanegra without knowing about his Ottoman ties suggests two main facts: The incapacity of royal authorities to stop the arrival of people with forbidden backgrounds to Spanish America, and the incapability of the royal court to prevent the establishing of Ottoman intelligence networks on American soil.

The Audiencia's judges believed Testanegra was guilty for espionage as they stated in the records. However, by making a deeper investigation, it could have damaged the good reputation of the viceroy. I argue that the only possibility of proceeding against Testanegra was to initiate a heresy trial in the Inquisition, now by focusing on his adherence to Islam. It was the opportunity for Martín Enríquez, president of the Audience, to get rid of an Ottoman spy and a Muslim without compromising his good reputation before the rest of the royal authorities.

In contrast with the lawsuits which Atucpa and the Audiencia brought against Testanegra, the Inquisition started their investigation with a though questionnaire. Its officials not only considered the previous testimonies and the interrogatory that Testanegra made, but also prepared more detailed questions.<sup>126</sup> First, they started with his general information, asking him about his family, his life in Greece, how he arrived in New Spain, and why. He told these authorities the same story he had told Diaz del Castillo in Atucpa. As the questions went on,

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 426.



the Inquisitors tried to obtain more details of his journey from the Mediterranean. However, he did not offer further information.<sup>127</sup>

Before leaving the second interrogatory, inquisitors asked him to “go through your memory and tell us later why you were imprisoned in Naples.”<sup>128</sup> At that moment, he realized that the Inquisition had privileged information of his past because, before this process, none of the prior witnesses had mentioned that part of his story. As a consequence, the next day Testanegra started to partially confess his Ottoman ties. He admitted that he had been imprisoned in Naples because authorities accused him of being an Ottoman spy. Then the inquisitors asked why Naples’ authorities had suspicions about him and he explained it had been a mistake. The inquisitors insisted on the questions and finally Testanegra confessed that he was effectively a vassal of the Sultan, but emphasized he was a good Christian and had not done anything against God or his faith.<sup>129</sup> However, even though the Greek sailor recognized his Ottoman vassalage, he never claimed he was a vassal of the Spanish king only limiting his defense to his reputation as a good Christian.

Inquisitors had succeeded in obtaining a solid declaration of his Ottoman vassalage. Immediately, this tribunal requested a new medical examination. The next day the physicians arrived at the jail and examined Testanegra. They observed that, in fact, Testanegra had a cut on his penis. Nonetheless, they concluded the wound was of recent infection by examining certain ulcers he also had. The physicians told the Inquisitors that Testanegra did not have a cut “in the manner of Moors and Jews” but as result of a malady.<sup>130</sup>

The next day, the Inquisitors called Testanegra to testify. At this point, he was not sure if the medical examination would be the final evidence for his condemnation. The authorities

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 426-428.

<sup>128</sup> “Y con esto cesó la audiencia y fueron de llevar a su cárcel amonestado que recorra su memoria y en todo diga verdad acerca de la causa de su prisión ahí en Nápoles como aquí,” Ibid., 430.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>130</sup> “y que es parece según su arte haberse quitado el prepucio por causa de las llagas como cada día se hace y a esto se inclinan más que a parecerles circuncisión al uso de moros y judíos,” Ibid., 431.

asked him to “tell us the truth under the oath you had made.” Then Testanegra confessed that the last time he went to visit his family in Greece he realized that the family of his sister – her husband and sons– had already converted to Islam.<sup>131</sup> This was the final confession that confirmed Testanegra’s Muslim background and Ottoman ties. Astonishingly, inquisitors released him and returned his properties.<sup>132</sup> However, his liberation was partially justified because officials could not prove that he was a heretic. Quite the contrary, all the witnesses in the process affirmed that he was a good Catholic.

As mentioned, according to the confessions that the Inquisition obtained, authorities could impose over Testanegra pecuniary penalties, prison, or exile. However, the Inquisitors choose the least likely sentence, which was compurgation. This ruling meant that the authorities did not believe in the innocence of the accused, but they not have enough proofs to prosecute him. This sentence was not common in New Spain. From 1551 to 1700, compurgation represented only two percent of the total resolutions in the Inquisition.<sup>133</sup> Given the testimonies and the declarations of Testanegra, compurgation was a very unlikely resolution. I argue that authorities wanted Testanegra knew that they would proceed with the investigation in case they found additional proofs. Additionally, the resolution was also unique because both institutions, the Inquisition and the Royal Audiencia, ruled that Testanegra was forbidden to travel outside of New Spain without the Audiencia’s previous authorization. In this way, they were trying to prevent this potential Ottoman spy from taking additional information to the enemy. The next day, Testanegra was on his way to Atucpa again.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 433.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>133</sup> John F. Chuchiak claim that the Inquisition resolved a canonical compurgation “when a suspect or prisoner appeared to have a public reputation for having been a heretic, but the trial and its evidence were unable to prove or materialize any apparent guilt of heresy. This verdict allowed the trial to remain technically open for new evidence but also permitted a type of partial absolution by having a specified number of ‘Christian character witnesses’ swear that the accused was not a heretic.” However, in case of a future accusation “the inquisitors would proceed against the suspect as a relapsed heretic and thus sentence him more harshly by relaxing him to the secular arm.” John F. Chuchiak, ed., *The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1820: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 46.

## Conclusion

Considering all the evidence available, it is possible to say that Testanegra was a spy. He born as a Christian Greek, but Ottoman soldiers chose him to be part of the Janissary's forces. Working as a naval Janissary, he became a war captive in a Venetian vessel and his master forcedly baptized him into Catholicism. When he could finally escape from his captivity, he settled for a few months in the Castilian kingdom. However, at that exact moment, Muslim Iberians rebelled against the Spanish crown and the environment became highly hostile for people with Muslim and Ottoman networks. He found his way to America working as a sailor and a few months later worked for Alonso de Villaseca, the richest man of New Spain. When Martín Enríquez new viceroy of New Spain arrived in Mexico City, Testanegra became his personal guard, and the ruler later sent him to the Philippines as part of the Spanish project of exploration in the Chinese coasts. While exploring new routes between the Philippines and New Spain, the complications of the journey led him to spent one more year exploring the Indian ocean until he found his way back to Ottoman dominions.

By then, Solloku Mehmed Pasha, his previous admiral in the naval forces, was the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman empire and was working in a global project of exploration and mapping. Testanegra offered Solloku all the information he possessed about Spanish America and the Spanish project of expansion in the Philippines, thus receiving the commitment to return to America. Now Testanegra was an Ottoman envoy in charge of gather geo-political information on the Spanish empire. While crossing the Mediterranean, Naples's authorities realized he was a spy and tried to prosecute him without success. So, he traveled to America and enrolled once again in the service of Martín Enríquez. Years later, he settled in Atucpa, Central Mexico. In this town, the alcalde took him to jail for charges of espionage, later sent him to the Royal Audience for the same charge, and finally the Audience sent him to the Inquisition for the charge of heresy. Authorities were trying to ensure his prosecution. However, for a second time, Testanegra eluded conviction and followed his journey.

This study suggests some of the reasons why the Ottomans were interested in Spanish America and the Philippines. According to the expansionist policy of Solloku Mehmed Pasha, they were trying to gain the political control in the Indian Ocean and expand their economic networks through these territories. When Testanegra offered him all the information he gathered about the position of Spaniards in the Philippines and the routes they were exploring to connect these islands with New Spain, it opened a new possibility for the Ottomans. They could send explorers to America through the Pacific Ocean.

This study also demonstrates that Testanegra succeeded in overcoming the processes against him because three main facts. First, he managed to send letters to his friends asking them to corroborate his version of the story and also make the questionnaire that Díaz del Castillo use to interrogate his witnesses. In this way, he could prevent most of his testifiers from providing information that could suggest his guilt. Second, the fact that Martín Enríquez was not only the viceroy of New Spain but also the president of the Audience could benefit Testanegra. By doing a deeper investigation about him, the Audience could damage the good reputation of the viceroy because they both were involved for years. Third, Testanegra protected his public reputation as a good Christian from his arrival to Spanish America, and although the Inquisition was suspicious of his circumcision, no one could affirm that he was a heretic or a bad Catholic.

This case clearly also shows how all remote places and oceans were connected through the experiences of sailors, merchants, adventurers and even spies. Testanegra went around the world connecting the Mediterranean, the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish America, the Philippines, and the Indian Ocean. Understanding the life of Testanegra as a soldier and sailor, far from fixed imperial boundaries, will expand our comprehension of human mobility since throughout his journey he acquired new affiliations and cultural identities. He was a Christian Greek, a Muslim Janissary, a Catholic servant of the Spanish crown, and an Ottoman spy, but also a traveler, a soldier, and a sailor. This study also shows the way different jurisdictions in New

Spain operated in order to protect the Spanish crown, against both the arrival of people with forbidden backgrounds and the establishment of Ottoman intelligence networks during the sixteenth century.

Even though the case of Testanegra is unique in many senses, it suggests important questions about the experience of Greek travelers during the sixteenth century and the complexity of the background they brought with them. By analyzing the role of Greeks in this society, it is possible to see that the frontiers between empires were not exclusively related to Christian and Islamic traditions. Greeks fit into the Ottoman empire because their diverse background did not condition them to actively participate in the political, military and social spheres. But they also fit into the Spanish empire because society perceived them as Christians and not as subjects of the Ottoman Sultan. By adhering to the Catholic Spanish model, they could be successfully integrated into the American society, as many cases in the archive demonstrate and wait to be analyzed.

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