

## Abstract - Blind Spots, Gaps, and Archival Silences: Tracing Contestation in the Venetian State Archive

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My current research project asks how early modern power and record-keeping were connected. It does so by analysing the intertwined processes of popular protest and archival suppression in early modern Venice. The reputation of Venice as *La Serenissima*, ‘the most serene one’, is among the most enduring myths in European history, resting – among other elements – on the absence of any significant popular contestation during the early modern period. I argue, instead, that Venice’s reputation rests on extensive archival suppression, rather than on the actual absence of popular protest.

Venice boasts one of Europe’s largest early modern state archives, which has been mined for pioneering scholarship ever since Ranke’s work in the nineteenth century. Its rich collections have provided the empirical foundation for studies on economic, social, cultural, religious histories and so on. This project focuses on what these extensive government archives do not tell us, i.e. the presence of extensive and recurring collective protest in early modern Venice. Drawing on critical archival studies and theoretical reflections on power in the archive, it deconstructs blind spots, gaps and intentional silences to reconstruct popular protest in the street, from grain riots and labour conflicts to mass demonstrations on Saint Mark’s Square and invasions of the Ducal Palace. Ultimately, it shows how this fundamental dimension of Venetian politics has been successfully erased from state records and thus from history.