

A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome

Edited by

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Wandering Lives

Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and “Refugees” in Early Modern Rome

Cesare Santus

1 Introduction

By the dawn of the early modern period, Rome had hosted great numbers of foreigners, transient visitors and permanent immigrants for centuries. Centre of a world religion, endowed with apostolic relics that attracted pilgrims from across the world, and home to an international court composed of people from different backgrounds, it was a setting characterized by strong social mobility. Newcomers were integrated within its religious associations and guilds, aided by a network of national confraternities that reflected the broader European context. These characteristics have made Rome a unique setting for the study of human mobility and migration, and more generally for social and labor history.¹ However, previous scholarship has largely been limited to an Italian or at best European scale. Historians interested in the study of the confessional control exerted by the Catholic Church on religious minorities and ‘heretical’ foreigners have mainly considered Protestant travelers, merchants and diplomats, to whom Iberian refugees of Jewish or Islamic origin have only recently been added. Nonetheless, starting from the end of the 16th century, an increasing number of people from the Balkans and especially the Near East also experienced the Eternal City in person.² This chapter will reconstruct the lives of

1 In 1581 Montaigne defined Rome as “la plus commune ville du monde, & où l'étrangeté & difference de nation se considere le moins; car de sa nature c'est une ville rattachée d'étrangers; chacun y est come chés soi”: *Journal du voyage de Michel de Montaigne en Italie*, vol. 2 (Rome: 1774), 198. The bibliography on foreigners in Rome is immense. For a short but good introduction, see Irene Fosi, “The Plural City: Urban Spaces and Foreign Communities,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Rome*, eds. Pamela M. Jones, Barbara Wisch, and Simon Ditchfield (Leiden: 2019), 169–183. I would like to thank Sebouh Aslanian, Aurélien Girard, Mathieu Grenet, Bernard Heyberger, Giovanni Pizzorusso, and Laurent Tatarenko for having helpfully discussed previous versions of this text with me.

2 Irene Fosi, *Inquisition, Conversion, and Foreigners in Baroque Rome* (Leiden: 2020); James Nelson Novoa, *Being the Nação in the Eternal City: New Christian Lives in Sixteenth-Century Rome* (Peterborough: 2014); Bruno Pomara, *Rifugiati. I moriscos e l'Italia* (Florence: 2017),

these Eastern Christians in Rome, and pose new questions about them, based largely on recently identified data in the archives of the Roman Inquisition.

After the Council of Trent, traditional Roman universalism evolved in a missionary direction, looking particularly to Eastern Christians, considered 'schismatics and heretics' who should be brought back into the fold. In 1577, Pope Gregory XIII financed the construction of a Greek College in Via del Babuino, intended for the training of priests of the Byzantine rite, while few years later, in 1584, he founded a Maronite College with the aim of improving the cultural formation of the Lebanese clergy, the only Eastern community entirely in communion with Rome. Particularly important was the establishment in 1627 of the Urban College, conceived as a seminary for the formation of the indigenous clergy under the new institution in charge of supervising the work of the missionaries, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.³ The new missionary wave sponsored by Propaganda Fide and the diffusion of European trade posts and consulates in the Eastern Mediterranean spread the Catholic faith within the Ottoman Empire, over time fueling the desire of individuals and communities to reach Rome and to profit from its spiritual, economic and political resources. These people could be travelers and diplomatic envoys, whose first-person travelogues were registered in manuscripts and colophons, or merchants operating between the Near East and the peninsular port cities. More often than not, they presented themselves as refugees fleeing religious persecution, or as simple pilgrims, determined to reach the See of St. Peter for devotional purposes, to obtain special ecclesiastical dispensations, or to seek alms and material assistance from the papal curia. Some came with the explicit purpose of joining the Roman Church; some others, being already Catholic, sought refuge

particularly 151–195. A general overview with useful bibliographic references is provided by Matteo Sanfilippo, "Discovering Migration in the Seventeenth Century: Propaganda Fide, the Holy Office, and Foreigners," in *Luke Wadding, the Irish Franciscans, and Global Catholicism*, ed. Matteo Binasco (New York: 2020), 61–76.

- 3 There is a large bibliography on the history of the Greek, Maronite, and Urban Pontifical Colleges. Among other contributions, see Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, *Το Ελληνικό Κολλέγιο της Ρώμης και οι μαθητές του (1576–1700): συμβολή στη μελέτη της μορφωτικής πολιτικής του Βατικανού (Το Helleniko Kollegio tēs Rōmēs kai hoi mathētes tou, 1576–1700: symvolē stē meletē tēs morphōtikēs politikēs tou Vatikanou [The Greek College in Rome and its Alumni (1576–1700): A Study on the Cultural Policy of the Vatican])* (Thessaloniki: 1980); Aurélien Girard, Giovanni Pizzorusso, "The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome: Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Letters," in *Collegial Communities in Exile: Education, migration and Catholicism in early modern Europe*, ed. Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor (Manchester: 2017), 174–197; Giovanni Pizzorusso, "I satelliti di Propaganda Fide: Il Collegio Urbano e la Tipografia poliglotta. Note di ricerca su due istituzioni culturali romane nel XVII secolo," *MEFRIM* 116–2 (2004), 471–498.

against the reprisals of fellow countrymen and Ottoman authorities; a few of them were simply interested in knowing more about *Frangistan* (“the land of the Franks,” as Europe was called in the Near East).

In order to welcome and at the same time control all these people, a network of host institutes was gradually established in Rome, linking together the medieval tradition of national hospices for foreigners with the new needs of Eastern Catholicism. Ethiopian monks and pilgrims were received from the end of the 15th century at the hospice of Santo Stefano dei Mori, located behind the Vatican basilica, while since 1566 Armenians passing through Rome or fleeing the Ottoman sectarian violence could be accommodated in the hospice and church of Santa Maria Egiziaca, close to the Tiberine Island. The hospice of Santi Sergio e Bacco, in Piazza della Madonna dei Monti, was entrusted in 1639 to the Ruthenian Basilian monks; a Syriac hospice was established in 1697 at the church of Sant’ Efreim (or Madonna della Sanità).⁴ The 18th century saw the crisis of some of these hospices (such as the Syriac one, closed in 1748) and the transformation of others, but it was also a privileged moment for the foundation of other religious institutes, linked to the new monastic orders born within the Eastern Catholic Churches, which needed a representative in the curia and often acted as local agents of the Eastern Patriarchs in communion with Rome.⁵

Although individual clerical colleges of the city have been investigated by many scholars, we still lack an overall comprehensive study of the various institutions that hosted Eastern Christian visitors and pilgrims during their stay in Rome. Many fundamental questions therefore remain unanswered. How many Eastern Christians traveled to Rome? Did they travel as individuals or

4 Cesare Santus, “L'accoglienza e il controllo dei pellegrini orientali a Roma: L'ospizio armeno di Santa Maria Egiziaca (XVI–XVIII sec.),” *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge*, 131, no. 2 (2019), 447–459; Laurent Tatarenko, “I ruteni a Roma: I monaci brasiliani della chiesa dei Santi Sergio e Bacco (secoli XVII–XVIII),” in *Chiese e nationes a Roma: Dalla Scandinavia ai Balcani. Secoli XV–XVIII*, eds. Antal Molnár, Giovanni Pizzorusso, and Matteo Sanfilippo (Rome: 2017), 175–191; on the hospitality toward Ethiopian monks in Rome, see the essays in the present volume by Olivia Adankpo-Labadie and Sam Kennerley; for the Syriac hospice, see below.

5 A Maronite hospice (not to be confused with the Maronite College) was established in 1707 at the church of Santi Marcellino e Pietro, close to the Lateran, and housed Antonin monks from Mount Lebanon; in 1734, the Melkite monastic congregation of Shuwayr obtained the church of Santa Maria in Domnica. Over the following decades, other Eastern religious congregations were granted a number of houses in which their members were hosted during visits to Rome: see Cesare Santus, “Rome, avant-poste de la France en Orient: Les chrétiens orientaux dans la Ville Éternelle et la Congrégation de la Propagande pendant l'occupation napoléonienne (1808–1814),” *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française* 401, no. 3 (2020), 135–157.

in groups? Did they follow patterns of chain migration? How long was their average stay in Rome? While there, did they attend the liturgy of their 'national churches' or rather the territorial parishes of their neighborhood? Did they try to remain faithful to their Eastern rite or did they adopt the Latin tradition, in order to ease their inclusion in the new society? How many of those who sought permanent employment at the Roman curia were successful? Did this happen thanks to their personal skills, or rather the protection of some powerful Roman prelate?

The absence of detailed primary sources has traditionally made it difficult to answer these questions. Scholars have nevertheless collected and interpreted the scarce extant documentation, following the biographical paths of wandering priests, alms-collectors and aspiring teachers of Oriental languages. By unsystematically searching the archives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for instance, Bernard Heyberger succeeded in finding traces of 114 Eastern Christians present in Rome during the period 1644–1779, along with 64 others scattered throughout Catholic Western Europe; these were mainly Arabic-speaking Christians from the *Bilād al-Shām* (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine). Although the sample was small and collected "in an empirical way," Heyberger assessed the fragmentary evidence in a masterly essay that dealt for the first time with the issue of Eastern Christian mobility and reception in Rome on a broader scale.⁶ Nevertheless, numbers of identifiable individuals remained small. In light of this, reflecting more broadly on the issue of Eastern Christian circulation in early modern Europe, John-Paul Ghobrial remarked that:

there is still little to suggest that the movement of Eastern Christians approaches anything like the sort of mass migration that scholars have identified for other groups of religious refugees in this period. Even if we were being generous, we might hazard an estimate of, say, only 1,000 or 2,000 separate individuals that can be identified in specific documents over the course of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.⁷

6 Bernard Heyberger, "Chrétiens orientaux dans l'Europe catholique (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)," in *Hommes de l'entre-deux: Parcours individuels et portraits de groupes sur la frontière de la Méditerranée (XVI^e–XX^e siècle)*, eds. Bernard Heyberger, Chantal Verdeil (Paris: 2009), 61–94. Heyberger has recently devoted a new article to the topic: "Migration of the Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection: A Long History," in *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges*, ed. Andreas Schmoller (Vienna: 2018), 23–42.

7 John-Paul Ghobrial, "Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (2017), 153–173: 161. As Ghobrial himself acknowledges: "for all that a quantitative history of circulation promises to offer, the truth is that we simply do not know how many

These figures must now be called into question.

The discovery of an exceptional source leads us to affirm that between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 19th centuries several thousand Eastern Christians visited Rome, implying that their overall movement in early modern Europe was much more significant than previously thought. In the following pages, I will describe this documentation and the data that can be obtained from it, presenting the first results of an ongoing investigation. I will then address a key issue related to Eastern Christian mobility, that is, the different reasons for leaving one's own native country and coming to Rome. Finally, I will tackle two further questions, namely: what strategies did these visitors employ to ease their reception and possibly transform their temporary stay into a permanent one? And how did the Catholic authorities manage to monitor these individuals, who were characterized by an ambiguous confessional identity and whose conversion was always viewed with suspicion? In addressing these questions, I will focus particularly on the Greek and Armenian cases.

2 Professions of Faith: An Exceptional Source for the Study of Eastern Christians in Rome

To shed new light on this subject, we must turn to previously unknown or neglected documentary sources. The most important for our inquiry are those preserved in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, direct heir to the Roman Inquisition. In the post-Tridentine age the Holy See paid special attention to the confessional status of those residing in its domains. This was especially true in cases where religious identity was deemed ambiguous, such as that of Eastern Christians. Nonetheless, while inquisitorial control over Lutheran and Calvinist foreigners and converts from Islam and Judaism has been thoroughly examined by many scholars, no studies of this kind have examined the other representatives of "Christian otherness": Eastern Christians from an Orthodox background.⁸ From this point of view, very

Eastern Christians migrated to early modern Europe, at least not yet" (ibid.). For religiously motivated migration in early modern Europe, see Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* (Cambridge: 2015), and Cornel Zwierlein and Vincenzo Lavenia (eds.), *Fruits of Migration: Heterodox Italian Migrants and Central European Culture 1550–1620* (Leiden: 2018).

8 Fosi, *Inquisition, Conversion, and Foreigners*; Peter Schmidt, "L'inquisizione e gli stranieri," in *L'inquisizione e gli storici: Un cantiere aperto* (Rome: 2000), 365–372; Kim Siebenhüner, "Conversion, Mobility and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600," *Past & Present*, 200 (2008), 5–36; Marina Caffiero, "Schiavitù, conversioni e apostasie di musulmani tra

few researchers have afforded these archival collections serious consideration, preferring to rely on better known collections, especially the archives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the institution supervising missionary activity toward Eastern Christians. Yet as this chapter demonstrates, the records of the Roman Inquisition are extremely rich and shed considerable light on the forms of control exercised by the Holy Office over Eastern Christianity, both in judicial and doctrinal terms.⁹

During their stay in the city, pilgrims and travelers were hosted in the hospices attached to their national churches or, if that space was reserved for members of religious orders, took shelter in the public hospitals and charitable institutions of Rome, like the well-known Trinità dei Pellegrini, or even in private houses and inns.¹⁰ Those visitors who wanted to join the Catholic Church might also be received in the conversionary institutes of Rome, along with Protestants, Jews and Muslims.¹¹ In order to be welcomed and see their demands met, an increasing number of Eastern Christians confessed the Catholic faith before the Roman Inquisition. This practice seems to have concerned not only visitors who presented themselves as 'schismatics' willing to be absolved from censures and be reconciled, but also Uniate Catholics who had already converted in their country of origin.¹²

From the 1650s onwards, a more centralized approach seems to have been put in place. Armenian pilgrims, who in the past would profess their Catholic

Inquisizione e Casa dei catecumeni," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2013), 81–106; and Serena Di Nepi's chapter in this volume.

9 For a discussion of this topic and a review of the sources, see Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)* (Rome: 2019).

10 While the Armenian hospice sheltered a considerable number of lay pilgrims, the other Eastern Christian 'hospices' in Rome were more like religious houses or monasteries and welcomed simple pilgrims only occasionally. On the Trinità, see Matthew Coneys Wainwright's chapter in this volume; a pilgrim from Kiev has left a travelogue in which he carefully describes his reception at the hospital in 1724: Vassili Grigorovitch-Barski, *Pérégrinations (1723–1747)*, trans. Myriam Odaysky (Geneva: 2019), pp. 86–90. A general overview on the hospitals of Rome is provided by Anna Esposito, " 'Charitable' Assistance between Lay Foundations and Pontifical Initiatives," in *A Companion to Early Modern Rome*, 199–213.

11 This especially concerns the *Ospizio dei Convertendi* (see below) and the Collegio dei Neofiti, where several Eastern Christian pupils enrolled at the end of the 16th century: Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo dei manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca vaticana* (Rome: 1939), 406, *ad indicem*.

12 This applies particularly to those Catholic clergymen who had been ordained by Eastern bishops not in explicit communion with Rome and thus needed to be dispensed from canonical irregularity.

faith mainly before the confessors of their hospice, were now asked to be personally present in the palace of the Holy Office.¹³ In 1655, the Roman Inquisition started to systematically record the professions of faith of Eastern Christians in a separate and specific way: over time, they filled five registers, which are now preserved in the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹⁴

The first volume, marked "P4-e" and entitled "*Professiones Fidei annorum 1655 ad 1714. Pro Armenis. Jo. Lupus S. Rom. [Inq.] Notarius*," actually extends only to 4 December 1673 and concerns not only Armenians but also other Eastern Christians. The second, marked "RR3-d," begins on 1 September 1675 and ends on 11 April 1710; the third, marked "RR3-a," resumes on 8 March 1715 and ends on Christmas Eve, 1732; the fourth, marked "RR3-b," covers the period between 9 March 1733 and 23 December 1750; and finally the last volume, "RR3-c," begins on 20 January 1751 and lists the last profession on 11 April 1807.¹⁵ As is evident, apart from a few short gaps (for example a five-year period between April 1710 and March 1715), we have an almost complete series spanning between the mid-17th and early 19th centuries.¹⁶

13 Santus, "L'accoglienza e il controllo," 452–53. For the new politics of conversion put in place by Alexander VII, linking hospitality and persuasion to conversion, see Fosi, *Conversion, Inquisition and Foreigners*, 150–178, and her chapter in this volume.

14 The precise genesis of these registers is still to be clarified. According to a not always reliable source, 1655 was also the year of a decree sanctioning the necessity of absolving Eastern Christians from the excommunication in which they had incurred for their schism and errors: Francesco Albizzi, *De inconstantia in iure admittenda, vel non* (Amsterdam: 1683), ch. x, § 24. To my knowledge, only three scholars have mentioned the existence of the registers in the past, albeit in a rather cursory way: see Silvano Giordano, "La *Professio Orthodoxae Fidei ab Orientalibus facienda* elaborata da Urbano VIII," in *Confessional Identities in Central-Oriental Europe in the 17th–21th centuries*, eds. N. Bocşan et al. (Cluj: 2009), 95–111; Aurélien Girard, "Comment reconnaître un chrétien d'Orient vraiment catholique? Élaboration et usages de la profession de foi pour les Orientaux à Rome (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles)," in *L'Union à l'épreuve du formulaire: Professions de foi entre Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (XIII^e–XVIII^e siècle)*, eds. Marie-Hélène Blanchet and Frédéric Gabriel (Leuven: 2016), 235–258; Laurent Tatarenko, "I ruteni a Roma," 187.

15 The current archival reference code does not respect chronological order; traces of the original reference system are visible on the spine of some volumes.

16 In the period before 1655, the professions were normally recorded along with other notarial deeds and sentences; even after this date, one might happen to find in other volumes some professions not included in these registers. For example, see Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (hereafter ACD^F), *Sanctum Officium* (SO), *Stanza Storica* (St. St.), RR3-e, f. 79r–80v (some few individuals from the missing years 1710–1714) and QQ2-i (in this volume the profession of faith of the metropolitan of Ischanion Simon is recorded, among others, while in P4-e only his signature at the bottom of a printed

These five volumes of various lengths and dimensions were compiled over time by different scribes, but always following a similar structure.¹⁷ At the beginning of each volume there is an index of names, divided in alphabetical order by means of lateral tabs; knowing a baptismal name, it is therefore possible to find the corresponding entry listing the profession of faith (the index, however, is often incomplete). The following pages contain professions of faith in chronological order, as they were recorded by the notary of the Holy Office according to a fairly consistent formula. The first words always mention the name of the individual(s) who appeared “personally and spontaneously” before the Commissioner of the Inquisition, stating their age, their place of origin and sometimes their status, especially if they were churchmen.¹⁸ Then the notary recorded the uttering of the profession of faith, specifying which formula had been used, since the standard Latin text had been translated and printed in many different languages (Syriac, Greek, Armenian, Arabic, Church Slavonic, etc.).¹⁹ Those not yet in full communion with the Church must also be absolved from their “schism and errors,” and the notary often listed the date of the formal decree by which the Congregation had admitted them to the profession and absolution, usually a few days before and upon presentation of a plea from their part.²⁰ Finally, the entry (or return) of the penitent into the arms of the true Church was confirmed by two witnesses, with an interpreter when necessary, who had the task of translating, explaining and confirming the correct formula during the confession of faith. If the new Catholic knew how to write, he then signed in his own language or in Italian; otherwise he would simply draw a cross. The interpreter also countersigned at the bottom of the text. Room was left in the margin alongside the entry for later additions and remarks, for example to note that the person requested a record of his or

formula remains). For the sake of consistency, in the corpus analyzed below I have taken into consideration only the professions duly recorded in the above mentioned registers.

- 17 The smallest measures 17 x 12 x 10 cm, the largest 31 x 22 x 4 cm; the volumes contain between 200 and 300 folios, except P4-e, which is shorter and lacks some final folios.
- 18 We have evidence that Eastern prelates of a certain rank (patriarchs, archbishops, etc.) in some cases did not take the profession at the Holy Office but rather at the private residence of a cardinal.
- 19 Very often the notary specifies that the profession took place *iuxta formam graecis unitis* [or: *schismaticis*] *praescriptam*: it is not clear whether this is just a stylistic difference or whether it implies that different formulas were employed for Catholics and schismatics. The standard text of the profession of faith had been established under the pontificate of Urban VIII; on the preparation and publication of the different formulas, see Girard, “Comment reconnaître un chrétien d’Orient.”
- 20 See the petitions contained in other series of the Archives such as QQ2 or RR2-e, which can be further compared with the annual volumes of *Decreta*.

her profession (*habuit duplicatum, habuit fidem*) or a certificate of Catholicity (the so-called *litterae testimoniales*).

Even at first sight, these volumes represent a goldmine of information for the historian, since they include the biographical details and often the personal signature of at least 3,000 individuals over a period of 150 years. With some caution, they can be used to obtain a large set of data about their annual number, the peak periods for their arrival, and the places in the Levant from where the majority of them departed. This documentation is the backbone of a prosopographical database that I am currently building by cross-referencing the data of the professions of faith with those preserved in other series of the same archive (*Decreta, Extensorum, Dubia circa sacramenta*, ritual issues) and in other Roman collections (Propaganda Fide, archives of the colleges and hospices). Data comparison occasionally allows us to fill in gaps in the inquisitorial documentation. For example, we know that some 1,900 Armenian pilgrims were said to have stayed in the hospice of Santa Maria Egiziaca between the year of its foundation and 1659, i.e. the period prior to the Holy Office registers.²¹ The archives of the hospice, today preserved at the Pontifical Armenian College of Rome and still awaiting a proper inventory, in some cases provide their names and dates of arrival or departure.²²

Although this project is at an early stage and transcription of the professions of faith is still in progress, it is already possible to reflect on some data based on a partial but significant sample. In the first fifty years recorded (1655–1705, 1674 is lacking), 695 professions of faith are listed. The Armenians represent the largest group by far (454 professions, 65 per cent of the total), followed by Orthodox Christians of Greek and Slavic language (26 per cent), faithful of the Syriac tradition (3 per cent), and a small number of Melkites (Arabic-speaking Orthodox), Wallachians, and people of ambiguous origin. Surprisingly, the notary also included in the registers the professions of 27 individuals in no way related to the Eastern Churches, but who in the eyes of the Inquisitor

21 Archivio di Propaganda Fide (APF), Scritture riferite nei Congressi (SC), Ospizio degli Armeni, 1, fol. 10v.

22 See the register of Armenians who died in Rome between 1605 and 1609 or the list of departures and arrivals in the hospice during the years 1617–1625: Archivio del Pontificio Collegio Armeno (APCA), *Santa Maria Egiziaca* (SME), box 1530–1799, loose papers; *ibid.*, vol. XII: “In questo libro scrivono li Armeni che vengono giornal[men]te in Roma, et si partono...” The archive is not normally open for consultation and it lacks a proper catalogue. Thanks to the kindness of the rector, Father Nareg Naamo, I was allowed to survey the surviving material relating to Santa Maria Egiziaca: see Cesare Santus, “L'accoglienza e il controllo dei pellegrini orientali.” Quotations from the volumes reflect my personal and provisional cataloging of the material.

represented another Christian heresy: Protestantism. It is not easy to understand why these Calvinists and, above all, Anabaptists from northern Europe were included in registers specifically designed for Easterners. A possible explanation points to the Roman institution that had welcomed them and sent them to the Holy Office for their profession of faith: the *Ospizio dei Convertendi* in the *rione* Borgo. Although this hospice had been established in 1673 essentially for the reception and catechesis of Lutheran and Calvinists, browsing through its records one can occasionally find some traces of Eastern Christians too: they had been probably sent there by the confessors of the nearby basilica of Saint Peter's and in some cases they passed through the *Convertendi* before ending up in the other institutions especially dedicated to them.²³

The surprisingly high number of Armenians is probably influenced by the conditions of Roman hospitality. As we shall see, the Armenian hospice was the best functioning, the most receptive and also the most solicitous in the control of the orthodoxy of its guests, explicitly requesting that they make their profession of faith before the Holy Office. As for the Maronites, whose contacts with Rome are well known, a possible explanation for their complete absence from the Inquisitorial registers lies perhaps in their status as the Eastern Catholic nation *par excellence*; Copts and Abyssinians (Ethiopians) appear in the registers only in the 18th century, when the Melkite component also increases.²⁴

It is reasonable to question the appropriateness of such a classification: it is based on the definition attributed to every individual by the sources and we know very well that early modern labels can be ambiguous and misleading. The term *graecus*, for example, covered a variety of meanings much wider

23 For example, out of a sample of around 1900 guests received in the hospice between 1673 and 1700, there are four "Greeks," three guests from Russia, an "Ethiopian," an "Armenian," a convert originally "from Aleppo" and some other people from the Balkans; the Ethiopian was placed in Santo Stefano dei Mori and one of the Greeks in the Greek College: Bruno Neveu, "Tricentenaire de la fondation à Rome de 'l'Ospizio de' Convertendi' (1673): Ses hôtes français au XVII^e siècle," *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 17, no. 2 (1973), 361–403; 381; Sergio Pagano, "L'Ospizio dei Convertendi di Roma fra carisma missionario e regolamentazione ecclesiastica (1671–1700)," *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma* 10 (1998), 313–390; 325–329, 352–353; Ricarda Matheus, *Konversionen in Rom in der Frühen Neuzeit: Das Ospizio dei Convertendi 1673–1750* (Berlin: 2012), 102, 181–182. Almost all the Calvinists and Anabaptists present in the inquisitorial registers are equally to be found in the records of the *Ospizio dei Convertendi*.

24 The best-known presence of Maronites in Rome concerns the students of the Maronite College, who made their profession within the College and not before the Holy Office. However, the circulation of other lay and religious individuals from Lebanon and Syria is well attested: see Heyberger, "Chrétien orientaux dans l'Europe catholique."

than the current usage of “Greek.” It was attributed to all those who followed the “Greek rite” (i.e. the Byzantine rite), often regardless of their linguistic or ethnic affiliation. In this way, Arabic-speaking Melkites, Albanians, Serbs and other Slavs could also be considered “Greeks.”²⁵ But even this more general ritual differentiation might not be correct, given the difficulties of linguistic communication and the possible ignorance of ecclesiastical notaries. The most precise and reliable information on the ethno-confessional origin of the individuals in question can be obtained, where possible, from their own words. Let us consider the case of a certain Solomon, son of Michael, originally from the city of Cairo, described as “a Copt by nation” (*natione coptus*). If we had no other evidence we would have to trust this confessional classification (made plausible by correspondence with his geographical origin), but at the foot of his profession of faith we can read his own signature, written in Armenian.²⁶

The task of identifying visitors’ places of origin is also difficult, due to the corruption of toponyms pronounced in the original language and written down in a Latinized form. However, Armenian pilgrims came mostly from the Caucasian plateau (in particular from the region of Nakhchivan, historically influenced by Catholic propaganda), from Persia (many from New Julfa, the Armenian suburb of Isfahan) and from the Eastern *vilayets* (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire, as well as from Constantinople, at the time the city with the largest Armenian population in the world. The majority of Slavic-speaking visitors were “Ruthenians” from Podolia and the regions around Lviv and Kiev, subjects of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Syrians came from the Tur Abdin (a mountainous region today in southeastern Turkey) as well as from Aleppo and Damascus. As for the Greeks, it is not surprising to see that the majority of the professions concern people coming from places where for centuries there had been a deeply rooted Latin minority (the Aegean archipelago) or that had been subjected, at different times, to the control of the Republic of Venice (the Ionian Islands, Crete and the Peloponnese).²⁷

As for the Eastern Christians settled in the ports of the Italian peninsula (especially Venice, Ancona, Livorno or Naples), often they had already professed the Catholic faith in the presence of the local Catholic clergy. For example, as early as 1622 the archbishop of Naples had obtained the faculty to receive the

25 Cesare Santus, “Tra la chiesa di Sant’Atanasio e il Sant’Uffizio: Note sulla presenza greca a Roma in età moderna,” in *Chiese e nationes a Roma*, 193–223.

26 ACDF, SO, St. St., RR3-a, fol. 75v (23 October 1722).

27 For a detailed historical map of the places of origin, see Cesare Santus and Patrick Pentsch, “Lieux d’origine des chrétiens orientaux à Rome selon les registres du Saint-Office, 1655–1705,” in *Atlas des migrations* (Actes Sud, forthcoming), 10:3.

professions of Greek priests and enable them to celebrate, provided they were of Catholic sentiment.²⁸ In the central archive of the Holy Office there is a copy of the professions of faith collected in Livorno by the missionary entrusted with pastoral care of local Armenians. Comparing the entries of the Livorno and Rome registers, we notice some instances of individuals who professed the Catholic faith in both cities, in quick succession or even many years later. For example, Melik', son of Velat (or Valet), was present in Livorno on 8 May 1685 and reappeared in Rome the following June, while 24 years elapse between the two professions of Melk'on, son of Sarkis, from Erzurum.²⁹

Focusing on the demographic characteristics of the sample allows us to draw some comparisons with Italian and European pilgrims who visited Rome in the same period, well known thanks to the archives of hospitals and confraternities. The almost 700 individuals who appear in the period 1655–1705 are representative of all ages, from children of nine years to elderly men of 85, but the age that appears most frequently is 30, while the average person was around 35 years old. This conforms with the typical profile of the European pilgrim, a male under the age of 40. Female pilgrims were few and they mostly accompanied their husbands: according to the archives of the Ospedale della Santissima Trinità, they represented only 20 per cent of solitary pilgrims, and much lower percentages were recorded in some national hospices.³⁰ In the case of Eastern Christians, over the 50 years considered we count only six women, but contrary to the overall trend their numbers seem to increase with the passage of time, especially in the second half of the 18th century.³¹

28 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-i, fasc. 4: "Archiepiscopo Neapolis conceditur facultas admittendi ad Fidei Professionem Sacerdotes Graecos ab Oriente advenientes, et cum eis dispensandi, ut in Ordinibus ministrent, dummodo Graecorum erroribus non adhaeserint." On the Greeks in the Kingdom of Naples, see Angela Falcetta, *Ortodossi nel Mediterraneo cattolico: Frontiere, reti, comunità nel Regno di Napoli (1700–1821)* (Rome: 2016), which also discusses the Italo-Greek and Italo-Albanian communities of southern Italy. Despite their link with the Greek College and the monastery of S. Basilio in Rome, only a few individuals from these communities appear in the inquisitorial registers during the period considered.

29 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ3-a, fasc. VIII, fols. 570r-599v: *De fidei professione ab Armenis Liburni degentibus emittenda iuxta decretum anni 1671*. The professions of Melik' and Melk'on in Livorno are at fols. 581r-v; their Roman professions are recorded in RR3-d, fol. 67v (1 June 1685) and fol. 215v (6 November 1709). In the latter case, it may be a homonym.

30 Dominique Julia, "L'accoglienza dei pellegrini a Roma," in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 16: *Roma, la città del papa* (Turin: 2000), 823–861: 839–841.

31 Starting from 1740, for example, a dozen professions of faith were signed by Greek women traveling alone. More detailed and complete statistics on the Greeks in Rome can be found in Santus, "Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio e il Sant'Uffizio."

Another distinction between the behavior of Eastern Christian and European pilgrims is the frequency and seasonal flow of their visits. For example, the statistics of the Ospedale della Trinità show that the greatest influx, especially of Italian pilgrims, corresponded with the spring months (April, May and June) and therefore the key moments of the liturgical calendar (Easter, Pentecost, etc.): entries for these months represent about 40 per cent of the total number of pilgrims. The winter months were busy especially during Holy Years, since they coincided with the opening and closing ceremonies.³² As far as Eastern Christians are concerned, however, the opposite seems to have been true: most professions were usually recorded between November and January, while attendance at the Jubilee of 1675 was at its height in October, and in 1700 in July.

Numbers of European pilgrims peaked in 1625 and then steadily declined throughout the century. Again, Eastern Christians followed an opposite trend: for obvious reasons, linked to the progressive spread of Catholicism in the East (promoted from the 1620s with the foundation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide), the number of Eastern Catholics began to assume significant proportions only from the second half of the 17th century. If we expand the data considered and include the first two decades of the 18th century, an increase in the number of professions of faith in Rome becomes clearly visible, especially for the Armenians. In the first thirty years fully recorded on the registers, an average of only a dozen people per year signed their profession, but in the next thirty this number almost doubles (Table 8.1).³³ It is noteworthy that the peak of professions of faith of the first decades of the 18th century finds a correspondence in the entrances to the *Ospizio dei Convertendi*, and from this point of view it would be interesting to compare the data relating to Protestants and Eastern Christians.³⁴ It should also be pointed out that while in the 17th century the majority of the professions concerned individuals identified as 'schismatics,' in the following century we find an increasing number of pilgrims who were already Catholics.

It is necessary, however, to handle the figures relating to the professions of faith with caution. These sources are of a different nature to the hospice

32 Julia, "L'accoglienza dei pellegrini," 833–837; Paolo Cozzo, "‘Pel comodo dei pellegrini divoti’: Riflessioni sull'accoglienza religiosa a Roma in età moderna," in *L'accoglienza religiosa tra tardo antico ed età moderna: Luoghi, architetture, percorsi*, eds. Silvia Beltramo and Paolo Cozzo (Rome: 2013), 199.

33 In the period 1655–1685 the average number of professions is 11.7 per year; for 1686–1719 it rises to 23. The years 1674 and 1711–1714 are missing and are therefore not taken into account.

34 Matheus, *Konversionen in Rom*, 148. See also the remarks in the conclusion on this point.

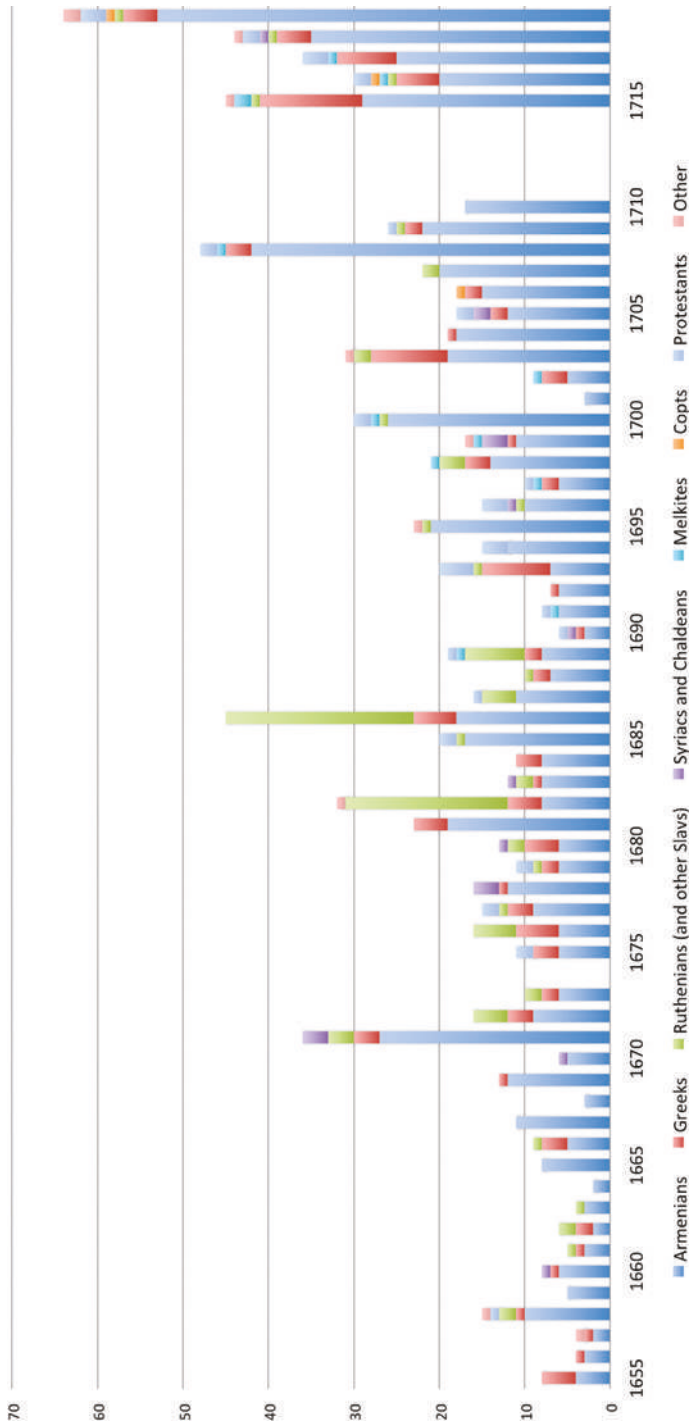


TABLE 8.1 Professions of faith of Eastern Christians before the Roman inquisition, 1655-1720
(SOURCE: ACDF, SO, ST. ST., P4-E, RR3-D, RR3-A)

records or Holy Year diaries normally employed to calculate statistics on pilgrims in early modern Rome, and the inquisitorial registers, especially at the beginning, may not have been exhaustive.³⁵ Nonetheless, we may note one last interesting difference between the flow of European pilgrims and trends in Eastern Christians' professions of faith, i.e. the relevance of Jubilees. While in some Holy Years the number of Eastern faithful seems to increase significantly, this is not always the case. On the occasion of the 1650 Jubilee, some sources report that Armenian visitors exceeded 100, but only five years later, during the extraordinary Holy Year called to mark the elevation of Alexander VII, we find only eight professions of faith for all Eastern Christians, and no more than nine during the Jubilee of 1675. Even admitting that professions of faith were not made by all Eastern Christian pilgrims and that some remained unknown to the Holy Office, the trend is not consistent: while the Jubilees of 1700 is indeed one of the peaks, the years with the greatest number of professions (1671, 1682, 1686, 1703 ...) are 'normal' ones. Therefore, we must conclude that the influx of Eastern visitors to Rome was governed by various and different dynamics, more complex than simple pilgrimage. It is time to examine the reasons for this mobility in greater detail.

3 Reasons for Mobility: Diplomatic Envoys, Pilgrims, Confessional Refugees and Alms-Collectors

At the beginning of February 1588, in Rome, the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See, Don Enrique de Guzmán, Count of Olivares, was visited by a strange person dressed in exotic clothes. He introduced himself as an Armenian merchant by the name of Alek'sandr, and claimed to be an envoy of the Georgian king, Simon of Kartli, who at the time was engaged in a fierce war against the Ottomans and was desperately seeking any possible military alliance. Convinced that both the Pope and the King of Spain resided in Rome, reigning respectively over the spiritual and temporal domains, Simon had dispatched Alek'sandr to the Eternal City, where he was first received by Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santoro, Grand Inquisitor and protector of the Eastern Christians. Santoro arranged to put the envoy and the ambassador in communication,

35 In the case of the Armenians, for example, where I was able to compare the list of professions with the documents of the hospice of Santa Maria Egiziaca (though only for some years), the majority of individuals coincided; a few of them, however, do not appear in the inquisitorial registers, even if they are said to have been absolved by the confessor of the hospice.

thanks to the linguistic intermediation of another Armenian living in Rome, called Sult'anšah T'oxat'ec'i or, in Italian sources, Marco Antonio Abagaro.³⁶

Sult'anšah himself had arrived in Rome 14 years before, in the context of another diplomatic mission, entrusted to his father Abgar by the Armenian Catholicos Mik'ayēl of Sebastia. This too had concerned the petitioning of European sovereigns to liberate Christian subjects of the Grand Turk, but Abgar had also taken the opportunity to print some of the very first Armenian books in Italy. The memory of this event is still preserved in copies of the Psalter he published in Venice in 1565, which include a portrait of Abgar and his son surrounded by cardinals, receiving from the Pope the permission to engrave the Armenian typographic fonts.³⁷ Abgar at some point returned home, but Sult'anšah remained for the rest of his life in Rome, where he pursued a successful career at the service of the Roman curia: first as the papacy's official translator regarding Caucasian and Persian matters, and then as director of the hospice for Armenian pilgrims.³⁸

This anecdote exemplifies the type of Eastern Christian mobility that has been most studied to date, if we exclude work dedicated to trading diasporas: high-ranking individuals, diplomats or men of culture who engaged directly with popes and sovereigns, leaving behind them a plurality of sources that aid the historian's task.³⁹ Although early modern Rome was indeed a point of passage or arrival for many prelates and scholars, some of whom managed to settle in the city and make a career in the curial administration, as we will see later, we must nevertheless bear in mind that individuals of this kind were

36 Luis Gil Fernandez and Ilia M. Tabagua, *Fuentes para la historia de Georgia en bibliotecas y archivos españoles (siglos XV–XVII)* (Madrid: 1939), 36–37, 212–222.

37 Raymond Kévorkian, *Catalogue des "incunables" arméniens (1511/1695) ou Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne* (Geneva: 1986), 26–27, 153–159; Anna Sirinian, "La presenza degli Armeni nella Roma medievale: Prime testimonianze manoscritte ed epigrafiche (con un'iscrizione inedita del XVI secolo)," *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, ser. III, *Rendiconti*, 86 (2013–2014), 3–42; Gabriella Uluhogian, "Il Salterio di Abgar T'oxat'ec'i (a.1565) e l'avvio degli studi armenistici presso la Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano," in Gabriella Uluhogian, *Collectanea Armeniaca*, eds. Rosa Bianca Finazzi and Anna Sirinian (Rome: 2016), 313–337.

38 For more detail on the hospice and its functioning, see Santus, "L'accoglienza e il controllo." I am currently preparing an article on the Abgar family in Rome, based on new archival documents.

39 See for example Christelle Baskins, "Framing Khoja Sefer in the Sala Regia of the Quirinal Palace in Rome (1610–1617)," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 24 (2015), 3–28. For a methodological discussion on the study of early modern mobility which explicitly takes into consideration Eastern Christians, see now John-Paul Ghobrial, "Moving Stories and What They Tell Us: Early Modern Mobility Between Microhistory and Global History," *Past & Present* 242, Supplement no. 14 (2019), 243–280.

few. The vast majority of visitors were low-ranking clergymen or even humble laymen, simple pilgrims and desperate individuals looking for material aid or relief. Sult'anşah himself left an eloquent testimony of their condition in a letter he addressed to Catholicos Tadeos II in 1583, describing the arrival in Rome of a multitude of Armenians, all in need of something:

someone cries and complains: "My son has been taken prisoner and I have nothing to ransom him." [...] Someone else [says]: "They owe me money but I cannot get it"; someone [says]: "I am poor and helpless"; someone [says]: "A robber has taken away all my property"; someone [says] "I have lost all my belongings at sea"; someone [says]: "I want to build a church [in my country]"; someone [says]: "We do not have the sacred furnishings for the church." And many innumerable others. Some who come have been forced to leave their faith and ask for lodging; some others, tormented by the violence of the infidels, at the end of their flight have taken refuge here. I welcome all of them with love and care, I take them in my bosom like a shepherd does with a newly-born lamb, I am a consoler of the travelers who have come. But I cannot satisfy their hearts and their needs with things or money and send them back. For me it is a great shame and disgrace to let many of them go begging from door to door.⁴⁰

This quotation lists many of the reasons used by travelers to justify their coming to Rome. The sovereign pontiff was seen, even by non-Catholics, as a protector of the Christian faith against the oppression of the infidels, as a generous benefactor of the poor, and as the ultimate judge who could absolve from particular canonical censures, intervene in complicated personal situations and even settle commercial and legal disputes. Leafing through the petitions addressed to the Roman congregations, the cardinals, or directly to the pope, we therefore find mention of Eastern believers who had sold their children to the 'Turks' in order to repay their debts, along with cases of monasteries unable to pay taxes to the Ottoman treasury and people tormented by remorse for having abjured their faith in conditions of need.⁴¹ We discover intricate personal stories and

40 The letter has been discovered and published by H.S.V.N. [Isahak Srapyan], "Noragoyñ lusaworut'iwnner Abgar Dpři masin" [Recent clarifications on Abgar Dpři], *Handēs amsōreay* 11 (1906), 321–325; 322, lines 23–33. The original Armenian text has some lacunae and is not always clear; the English translation is mine (many thanks to Marco Bais and Paolo Lucca for their help).

41 For examples of the sale of children, see the cases of the Armenian merchant Mxit'ar from Ganja and of the Melkite priest of Jerusalem Yuhanna Shahîn: APF, Acta, vol. 95, 16 April 1725, § 20, fols. 215v–216v; SOCG, vol. 647, fol. 476r. One remorseful apostate

travelogues with an adventurous flavor.⁴² We meet Greek and Armenian prelates who tried to enroll their nephews in the clerical colleges of Rome in order to guarantee them an adequate education, but we also find impostors and unscrupulous adventurers. In many cases, the supplications of Eastern Christians followed rhetorical *topoi* that exaggerated the misadventures suffered because of the persecution of the Ottoman authorities and of the 'schismatic' clergy.⁴³

Rome could be an efficient court even for non-religious matters: in a world where Catholic corsairs attacked Levantine ships without paying too much attention to the religious identity of the owners of the stolen goods, recourse to the Pope was often the last hope of obtaining compensation, or at least a guarantee of protection.⁴⁴ The monks and inhabitants of the island of Patmos, for example, succeeded in 1681 in obtaining a brief of Innocent XI to shelter them from attacks by Maltese and Tuscan ships: still, in the first half of the 18th century, they periodically sent emissaries to Rome to complain about continuous transgressions and to ask for the reinforcement of papal protection.⁴⁵

was the Armenian Kalust, originally from the city of Van, who during a business trip to Mesopotamia was kidnapped by Turks, tortured and sentenced to death. He eventually saved his life only by denying the Christian faith. After his liberation, he decided to be absolved of the sin of apostasy by coming to Rome, where he stayed from July 24 to October 22 1671. See ACDF, SO, St. St., P4-e, fol. 39v.

42 See the story of the Greek "Giovanni Stamno" described in Santus, "Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio e il Sant'Uffizio," 214–215. In 1744 the Armenian priest Awetik', son of Kostandinos ("Nunziato Costantini"), described in a letter his adventurous life and the acts of violence he had committed fighting in Persia against the Ottomans. He believed he had been acquitted of his sins by the *kat'olikos* of Ējmiacin, but after he converted to Catholicism he started to be tormented by remorse. He then decided to come Rome to obtain a dispensation from the Pope, but on the road he was assaulted by the Turks and wounded and was forced to stop in Venice, where he lived in utter poverty (ACDF, SO, St. St., RR2-e, fasc. 17).

43 Falcetta, *Ortodossi nel Mediterraneo cattolico*, 129–130.

44 See Bernard Heyberger, "Sécurité et insécurité: Les chrétiens de Syrie dans l'espace méditerranéen (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)," in *Figures anonymes, figures d'élite: Pour une anatomie de l'Homo ottomanicus*, eds. Meropi Anastassiadou and Bernard Heyberger (Istanbul: 1999), 147–163; Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants. A Maritime History of the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: 2010).

45 The condition set by Rome for such protection, of course, was the profession of Catholic faith. It is for this reason that traces of the passage of the envoys can be found in the registers of the Holy Office, while the Propaganda Fide archive contains the personal signatures of all religious and lay inhabitants, placed at the bottom of their profession of faith, sent by letter. See APF, Acta, vol. 80 (1710), fol. 475; Acta, vol. 81, fol. 53 (3 February 1711); Acta, vol. 93 (1723), fols. 197, 579; Acta, vol. 94 (1724), fol. 15; Acta, vol. 96, fol. 17 (14 January 1726); SC, Greci, vol. 3; Congregazioni Particolari (CP), vol. 69; ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-I, fasc. 21 and RR3-a, fol. 88r. See also the documents published by Georg Hofmann, *Patmos*

If nearly all the Eastern Christians who reached Rome did so in the hope of obtaining something, this is particularly true for the two categories that soon began to rival, if not outnumber, normal pilgrims. These may be termed 'confessional refugees' and 'professional beggars.' The former group was the fruit of Catholic mission in the East and the result of the confessional polarization promoted by missionaries, particularly in the most populous urban centers of the Ottoman Empire, such as Constantinople, Aleppo, and Cairo. Here, the Catholic apostolate produced a division within Eastern Christian communities, particularly after ambiguous and tolerant attitudes were replaced by a rigid policy of sectarian separation between Catholics and 'schismatics.' Converts were gradually prevented from continuing to visit Orthodox churches and clergy in order to avoid any form of *communicatio in sacris* (cross-confessional interaction). However, this ban soon caused trouble. The situation of Eastern Catholics within the Ottoman institutional framework was completely irregular: until 1830, they could not have their own churches nor a separate clerical hierarchy, but had to rely on the 'official' ones under the Armenian and Greek Patriarchs of Constantinople. Accordingly, those converts who refused to receive the sacraments from the priests of their original community could also be considered political rebels, since they did not obey the legitimate religious authority appointed by the Sultan: as such, they were exposed to violent retaliation. Caught between the Roman prohibitions, which left no room for co-existence or dissimulation, and the Ottoman requirement that Orthodox hierarchies be respected, some Eastern Catholics found themselves in an impossible situation and decided to flee. Those churchmen who could no longer celebrate in the company of 'schismatics' turned to Rome, not only as a shelter and protection from persecution, but also as the only place where it was possible for them to have an ecclesiastical career. In the case of the Armenians, there is a clear and direct correlation between the gradual increase in visitors to Rome and the outbreak of confessional hostilities in the early 18th century; moreover, most Armenian visitors came from places affected by missionary activity.⁴⁶

Alongside faith, money has always been the other major driver of mobility, and it is often difficult to clearly separate 'confessional' motivations from those that were purely economic. The majority of the paperwork produced in Rome by Eastern Christian visitors concerns their requests for material aid,

und Rom: Darstellung der Beziehungen zwischen dem griechischen Johanneskloster und der römischen Kirche nach ungedruckten Quellschriften (Rome: 1928).

46 The prohibition of *communicatio in sacris* and consequent confessional clashes are thoroughly discussed in Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*.

or alternatively for authorization to beg for alms or celebrate in the Roman Churches (so as to receive a Mass stipend). In theory, we should distinguish between indigent pilgrims, who turned to the Holy See to request a charitable subsidy that might help pay for their journey home; Eastern clergymen, who took refuge in Rome fleeing persecution and did not know how to live without a stable occupation; and finally ‘professional beggars,’ wandering monks sent to Europe with the explicit task of gathering alms to improve the material condition of their monasteries or dioceses of origin.

However, the complicated lives of many Eastern Christians often challenge the boundaries between these categories. We might consider the famous cases of “Timoteo Agnellini” and Athanasius Safar, who in the second half of the 17th century both showed up in Rome as Syriac Catholic Bishops of Mardin fleeing persecution. The former, who arrived in Rome in 1671 with the recommendation of a missionary, initially did not reveal his episcopal ordination, vitiated by a formal defect, and enrolled in the Urban College, taking advantage of his knowledge of Oriental languages to be put on the Propaganda Fide’s payroll. While the Congregation planned to use his linguistic talent in the Eastern missions, Agnellini had no intention of returning to his homeland: after ignoring the orders of the cardinals, he left Rome to begin a long, clandestine alms-collecting tour of Italy and France, until complaints against him became so numerous and serious that he was eventually forced to return to Rome, where he was incarcerated by the Holy Office.⁴⁷ In contrast, his competitor Safar succeeded in obtaining formal permission to beg “for the needs of the Syriac Church” and spent several years in the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico), collecting the incredible sum of 46,000 pieces of eight. This sum was however the subject of a dispute and was taken over by the curia, which used it to repay the debts of the Antiochene patriarchate and to establish in 1697 a hospice for the “Syriac nation” in Rome, but Safar succeeded in obtaining also a lifetime annuity for him and his nephew’s family, who spent the rest of their lives in the city.⁴⁸

47 In his first address to the Roman Curia Agnellini had presented himself as a simple Syriac priest: see ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-a, fasc. XXXI, fol. 311r; P4-e, fol. 35v (profession of faith, 30 January 1671). His life has been reconstructed in detail by Bernard Heyberger, “La carrière manquée d’un ecclésiastique oriental en Italie: Timothée Karnush, archevêque syrien catholique de Mardin,” in *L’Italie vue par les étrangers*, ed. Bernard Heyberger, *Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Mulhouse* 19 (1995), 31–47 (see also below for further details).

48 Ibidem. See APF, Acta, vol. 66, 18 December 1696, fols. 253v–255r; Acta, vol. 113, 2 April 1748, fols. 85r–88v.

We might also mention the case of Astuacatur Šatanēnc', an itinerant Armenian monk from New Julfa who relentlessly crossed Europe in search of alms, relying on the certificates of Catholicity which he obtained in Rome and Marseilles thanks to his considerable personal network.⁴⁹ This last example allows us to touch upon a fundamental but still little addressed issue, namely the role of information transfer and letters of recommendation in facilitating the mobility of Eastern Christians. The importance of travel documents was such that when a young man from Kiev realized he had lost them during his wanderings in southern Italy, he exclaimed: "A pilgrim without licenses [*patentes*] is nothing other than an armless man, an unarmed soldier, a wingless bird, a leafless tree!"⁵⁰ We know that pilgrims in some cases relied on travel and urban guides translated into their own language, as in the case of the Armenian translation of the *Guida Angelica* that described the churches to visit in Rome;⁵¹ however, we still have little information on how personal, family or clerical networks worked in allowing travelers to follow itineraries and find lodging or local contacts.⁵²

49 Sebouh D. Aslanian, "‘Many have come here and have deceived us’: Some Notes on Asateur Vardapet (1644–1728), An Itinerant Armenian Monk in Europe," *Handēs amsōreay* (2019), 133–194.

50 Grigorovitch-Barski, *Pérégrinations*, 70.

51 *Noragoyñ utlekc'ut'ivn... / Nuova Guida Angelica Perpetua Romana. Per visitare le Chiese dentro, e fuori di Roma ove si celebrano le Feste, e Stationi... tradotta dall'idioma Italiano in Armeno da Monsignor Giona d'Elia Vescovo di Sebaste; mediante la fatica, e l'ajuto di Don Giovanni suo fratello* (Rome: 1725). It is a translation of the classic guide by Stefano Gallonio, *Guida angelica perpetua per visitar le Chiese, che sono dentro, e fuori di Roma tutto l'Anno, e ne' giorni delle Feste* (Rome: 1629). The work was originally conceived as a leaflet for practical use and had many successive reprints: see Alberto Caldana, *Le guide di Roma: Ludwig Shudt e la sua bibliografia. Lettura critica e catalogo ragionato* (Rome: 2003), 76, 171–172. Already in the middle of the previous century, the Armenian priest Zaccaria Agam (see below) had translated into his language the *Trattato nuovo delle cose maravigliose dell'alma città di Roma* by Pietro Martire Felini (Rome: 1610), but this version does not seem to have been published: see APF, SOCG, vol. 222, fol. 28r (3 March 1659).

52 The study that Sebouh Aslanian is currently preparing on the mobility of Armenians in the early modern age explores some of these networks. See Sebouh David Aslanian, "The 'Quintessential Locus of Brokerage': Letters of Recommendation, Networks, and Mobility in the Life of Thomas Vanandets'i, an Armenian Printer in Amsterdam, 1677–1707," *Journal of World History*, forthcoming, and chapter 3 of his book *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers in the Armenian Diaspora* (Yale University Press, in preparation). On letters of recommendation and alms-collecting, see also Ghobrial, "Moving Stories," 263–64.

4 Disciplining Hospitality: Social and Confessional Control over Eastern Christians in Rome

Starting from the last decades of the 17th century, the ever-increasing influx of Eastern Christians to Rome began to be perceived as a problem. One contributing factor was the gradual corruption of the positive image of the pilgrim by the negative portrait of the vagabond, characterized by an ambiguous confessional identity and driven only by the desire to raise money. From this point of view, the threat of heterodoxy provided Rome with the pretext to align itself with forms of social regulation and vagrancy control that progressively appeared throughout Europe in the same period, contributing to the more general phenomenon of *grand renfermement* and to the development of personal identification systems such as passports or testimonial letters. In 1677, as a form of retaliation against the Greek Orthodox clergy's success in obtaining full control of the holy places in Jerusalem, the Roman curia decided to prevent any future alms-collecting tour in Europe or America that it had not specially authorized.⁵³ This prohibition, reiterated several times in the following decades, involved a crackdown on Greek beggars, but also more generally on all Eastern Christian visitors, who despite their profession of Catholic faith found it increasingly difficult to obtain official licenses allowing them to collect offers and economic aid.⁵⁴

Over time, Rome became a target not only for temporary visitors, but also for confessional exiles or 'refugees' who wanted to settle permanently in the city and live on the curia's payroll. Tired of dealing with their endless requests, Roman congregations began to draw up lists of Eastern prelates residing in

53 APF, Acta, vol. 47, fols. 60v-61r, §9: "La S. Sede col parere di questa Congregatione, dopo haver scritto a Principi che per mezzo de' loro Ambasciatori alla Porta procurassero in tutti i modi la recuperatione del detto Santuario, ordinò che in avvenire non si permettesse ad alcun Greco, ancorché facesse o havesse fatta la professione della fede, di questuare per la Christianità senza espressa licenza della Congregatione medesima, che derogasse in specie alla detta proibitione, et havesse posterior data; e tal decreto ad istanza del Commissario Generale di Terra Santa è stato dato alle stampe, affinché più facilmente pervenga alla notizia di tutti" (16 March 1677).

54 See the numerous cases listed under the entry "Questue" in APF, *Indice per materie degli atti di rito orientale della S.C.* For some examples of the periodical prohibitions which were issued against Greeks, Armenians and especially the wandering monks from Mount Athos in order to prevent their alms-collecting tours, see John-Paul Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory," *Past & Present* 222, no. 1 (2014), 51–93; 63. The alms collected against the aforementioned ban could be seized by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, as it happened to a Greek monk in 1735: Santus, "Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio," 218–219.

the city, verifying how many truly needed charity and how much money was spent for their maintenance. The goal was to rationalize assistance and to encourage Eastern Catholic prelates to make themselves useful to their original communities; however, as expected, these attempts met with much resistance. In 1710, for example, the Propaganda Fide ordered seven Syriac and Armenian bishops to leave the city and return to their own dioceses. Four of them immediately appealed against the decision, obtaining a postponement of the departure date, on the grounds of their advanced age, illness or economic condition.⁵⁵ According to an internal inquiry of 1739, as many as eight bishops and 16 priests or monks representing all Eastern Christian communities lived in Rome and received the so-called “parte di palazzo,” the Vatican subsidy consisting of board and lodging.⁵⁶ Among them there were certainly individuals who rendered a useful service as interpreters, directors of hospices, ordaining bishops or even just as local representatives of the Uniate Patriarchs, but others could be simply defined as “idle” prelates and troublemakers.

One such example is “Giacomo Hai,” Armenian Archbishop of Marash, who in 1699 had presented himself as a victim of persecution against the Catholic faith. Hosted in Santa Maria Egiziaca, he left without permission and disappeared until the following year, when he was arrested by the Vienna Internuncio for threatening “to embrace the Sect of the Lutherans.” Brought back to Rome, he was at this point imprisoned in Castel Sant’Angelo, but even during his detention he did not cease to provoke scandal. Through letters sent to Syria and Palestine, he asked the local Armenian prelates to threaten the Franciscans of the Holy Land with persecution if they did not intercede in his favor with the curia. Finally released in 1716, he was placed in the ecclesiastical hospice of Ponte Sisto; yet in the following years we still find some accusations against him, such as that of irregularly listening to the confessions of the Latin faithful and of altering the Armenian rite to his liking.⁵⁷

As this case clearly indicates, besides the material problem of continuous requests for economic aid from the Eastern Catholic clergy, there were also serious questions concerning their orthodoxy. In order to make a living, many Eastern priests started celebrating Mass in Roman churches and parishes, collecting the corresponding alms and offerings. This sparked several cases of complaints, with Eastern clergy accused of “celebrating heretically” or following imperfect liturgies, often due to an improper mixing of the Oriental and

55 APF, Acta, vol. 81, fols. 1v-2v (12 January 1711).

56 APF, CP, vol. 133, fols. 3r-10r.

57 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-g, fasc. 2, fols. 3r-18v (1716) and fasc. 44 (1736); APF, CP, 133, fol. 6rv (1739); Heyberger, “Chrétien orientaux dans l’Europe catholique,” 67.

Latin rites. In 1725, for example, the Melkite priest “Neofito Name Giubeir” (ibn Jubayr) denounced the behavior of the Greek bishop Dionisio Modinò in the church of the Trinità dei Pellegrini, for “he celebrated the mass as a heretic, in a completely secret way that I have never seen nor heard.”⁵⁸

Beyond suspicions about the heterodox intentions of the celebrant, the problem of mixing rites and altering liturgies to meet the needs imposed by the stay in Rome concerned all Eastern clergy. Many of those who had obtained curial appointments submitted requests to adopt the Latin rite because of the length of the Byzantine office, double dietary requirements, and the difficulty of finding the proper vestments, books and altar servers necessary for the celebration of the divine liturgy. Although in general the Holy See was fairly rigid in regulating changes of rite (long lists of rejected requests are kept in the Propaganda Fide and Holy Office archives), a more flexible approach was adopted when dealing with high-ranking clergy or those with powerful protectors. In this case, however, the license was granted with the clause “*dummodo ad proprium Ritum non redeat*,” which prohibited repudiation.⁵⁹

The majority of Eastern religious passing through Rome, however, celebrated mass according to their rite in the churches of the city, often in a disorderly manner. In order to keep the phenomenon under control, on 6 December 1725 the Cardinal Vicar promulgated an edict which required the parish priests and sacristans of Rome only to grant the use of their churches for Eastern liturgies if precise requirements were met (a formal license from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the existence of a special chapel different from those commonly employed for the Roman mass, possession by the celebrant of adequate vestments and host).⁶⁰ However, since the majority of Eastern ecclesiastics continued celebrating in Latin churches, almost always using Latin vestments, in 1739 it was proposed that the use of national churches or the chapel of the Urban College be made mandatory.⁶¹ Even in these cases special authorization remained necessary: in the church of the Greek College, for example, any celebration had to be previously authorized by the rector and one of the cardinal protectors. For this reason, we can still read the permission requests advanced

58 ACDF, SO, *Dubia Varia 1708–1730*, fasc. XXII, fols. 495r–505; APF, Acta, vol. 95, fol. 586ff. (11 December 1725); see Santus, “Tra la chiesa di Sant’Atanasio e il Sant’Uffizio,” 220–221.

59 In ACDF, SO, St. St., volumes of the series “QQ2” are especially concerned with this issue. It should be noted that the impossibility of abandoning the Latin rite, whether native or acquired, was a way of underlining its superiority over all others.

60 ACDF, SO, *Dubia Varia 1708–1730*, fasc. XXII, fols. 499r–503r.

61 *Ibid.*, fol. 503r; APF, CP, vol. 133, fols. 6r–13v, 19r–25v. This obligation was later mitigated by the general regulation of 1743 (see below).

by prelates or simple priests, both for personal devotion and for economic necessities.⁶²

In addition to the problem of mixed rites and 'heretical pollution' of the liturgy, it was also necessary to verify the ecclesiastical status of Eastern clergy. This problem is well illustrated by the vicissitudes of the Ethiopian monk Giovanni Tabaga. He had left his hometown near lake Tana in 1746, embarking on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his way back, during a stop in Egypt, he met the local European missionaries, being convinced by them to convert to Catholicism and take refuge in Rome. When his intention became evident, however, the 'schismatics' put him under arrest and seized all his documents and belongings. Tabaga eventually managed to reach Jaffa and from there Cyprus, where he was finally free to make a proper profession of faith in the hands of the Vice Prefect of the Holy Land. From Cyprus he then moved to Malta, where he stayed for three months, until a ship finally brought him to Italy: in October 1749, he entered Rome, being received in the hospice of Santo Stefano degli Abissini. Having cut all ties with his country of origin, Tabaga had to begin a wholly new life in the Eternal City. He started by asking formal permission to celebrate Mass according to his own rite, following the traditional procedure established in previous decades. He first had to renew his profession of Catholic faith before the Holy Office and obtain the dispensation from the canonical irregularity of having been ordained by a schismatic prelate, then ask the secretary of Propaganda Fide to write a letter of recommendation for the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, before finally presenting the documentation to the Vicar and waiting for the formal license to celebrate in the city's churches.⁶³

In Tabaga's case, however, something went wrong: in order to grant the letter of recommendation, the secretary of Propaganda Fide, Nicola Lercari, asked to see the documents that testified to his priestly ordination. Tabaga could only show the certificates of professions made in Cyprus and Rome and refer to the testimony of the Franciscan missionary who had converted him in Egypt – but the latter merely confirmed that the Ethiopian monk had been seen celebrating in the Coptic churches of Cairo. Lercari was not convinced, claiming that

62 See the "Licenze di celebrar messa nella chiesa di S. Atanasio per i Greci forastieri," in ACGr, vol. 4, fols. 214r-240v (old numbering); Santus, "Tra la Chiesa di Sant'Atanasio e il Sant'Uffizio," 219–220.

63 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-c, fasc. 20, fols. 437r-504; RR2-e, fasc. 82; his profession of faith with personal subscription is recorded in RR3-b, fol. 111r, 1 November 1749: "Qasis [Yo]hann[as] wald 'Abib rāḥab." (Many thanks to Damien Labadie for his help with transliteration.) Tabaga passed away in the Hospice on 5 December 1780; the Latin inscription on his tombstone has been published by Mauro da Leonessa, *Santo Stefano Maggiore degli Abissini e le relazioni romano-etiopeiche* (Vatican City: 1929), 336.

Tabaga needed the *lettere dimissorie*, i.e. the certificate issued by the bishop who had ordained him in Ethiopia. Suspecting that the monk had been consecrated in an irregular or defective manner, he had him questioned about the form used in the celebration and then had his answers compared with the ritual described in the manual for missionaries published in 1615 by the Discalced Carmelite Tomás de Jesús, *De procuranda salute omnium gentium*. It was only when the matter was brought before the Holy Office that the administrator of the hospice of Santo Stefano intervened in his favor. Giuseppe Assemani, a famous Maronite orientalist who was also the Custodian of the Vatican Library, challenged Lercari's insinuations concerning the correctness of the ordination formula used by the Ethiopian and Coptic Churches and sincerely expressed his astonishment regarding the demand for certificates of ordination: it was not the practice of Eastern bishops to grant them, and even if this were the case, surely a heretical bishop would not have sent such a document to a priest who had converted to Catholicism! The secretary's requests were therefore unreasonably severe, unless they concealed other motivations. With obvious irritation, Lercari replied that he was simply applying the rules established a few years earlier, following an Armenian bishop's denunciation of the arrival in Italy of many Eastern priests "not ordained, or ordained by non-bishops."⁶⁴

On 27 July 1748, indeed, the Propaganda Fide had sent a circular letter to all nuncios, apostolic vicars and heads of Catholic missions in the East delineating how they should treat those who wanted to enter into communion with Rome. While in the case of laymen it was sufficient to deliver to each of them "a certificate in public form, signed and sealed, of the profession of faith made by the convert in their hands," something more was needed for Eastern priests ordained by heretical prelates. Before dispensing them from the irregular condition in which they had been ordained and admitting them to the exercise of their functions, it was necessary "to seek with all possible diligence the proofs of their Ordination ... and finding similar conclusive and sincere proofs they must give the converted priest a public certificate in the same form as above."⁶⁵

64 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-c, fasc. 20, fols. 458r-462r, 467r-468r. Lercari was suspected of wanting to make life difficult for Ethiopian monks so that he could take control of the hospice and entrust it to his protégé, a Coptic secular priest. See APF, SC, Ospizio di S. Stefano dei Mori, "Notizie dello stato della Chiesa, e Monastero di S. Stefano dei Mori," § XLVI-XLVII. Some years before, Assemani had written an entire dissertation about the validity of priestly ordination among the Copts (and other Monophysites): Cesare Santus, "Giuseppe Simonio Assemani consultore del Sant'Uffizio," *Parole de l'Orient*, 47 (2021), forthcoming.

65 ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-c, fol. 487r: "Formola di attestato da darsi alli sacerdoti scismatici, ed eretici, o ordinati dal vescovo scismatico ed eretico." See also ACDF, SO, St. St., M3-m,

A few years before, in 1743, Pope Benedict XIV had issued a series of detailed regulations that prescribed where Eastern Catholics could stay in Rome and how they should perform their liturgies, specifying also that the rectors of national churches and hospices were to observe their behavior and confirm their fulfillment of the Easter duty.⁶⁶ This was the first time a pope had set out the general infrastructure of Roman hospitality towards Eastern Christians, but the hospices and hospitals of the city had long served the dual function of receiving and controlling foreign visitors.⁶⁷ If we look more carefully into the regulations of the Armenian hospice, we can see for example how the surveillance of its guests' religious identity worked in practice. In order to obtain a bed (in the common dormitory or in the section reserved for clergy), linen, and money with which to pay for food, visitors had to certify their confessional affiliation as soon as possible, making their profession of Catholic faith at the Holy Office within three days of their arrival in Rome. They therefore had to confess to the Armenian priest permanently employed in the church close to the hospice, receiving communion and participating in the liturgies and catechesis for the entire period of their stay. Before departure, the confessor at the hospice filled out a pre-printed bulletin in which he certified the successful confession and discharge of the guest, while the rector and treasurer recorded any money that was granted as a "charitable subsidy for the poor Armenian pilgrims who, after visiting these holy places and confessing and communicating, leave for their homelands."⁶⁸ This complex procedure (not so different from that established for the reception of European pilgrims, especially in the effort to prevent fraud) was a means to verify the confessional identity of Eastern

fasc. 1, "Espedienti per ovviare al disordine che i Sacerdoti Orientali celebrino senza i necessari documenti" (1747).

66 Archivio di Stato di Roma (ASR), *Bandi*, Coll. 2, b. 325: "Ordini, e Regolamenti per gli Ecclesiastici, e Laici Orientali, dimoranti in Roma, 15 febbraio 1743." However, the regulation was largely based on the observations made in 1739 by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (APF, CP, vol. 133, fol. 19r-20v; a copy of the regulation at fol. 24r).

67 See Irene Fosi, "A proposito di *Nationes* a Roma in età moderna: Provenienza, appartenenza culturale, integrazione sociale," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 97 (2017), 383–393; 389, 391–392.

68 APF, SC, Ospizi, vol. 1: Ospizio degli Armeni, fols. 5r-18v ("Relazione alla Sagra Visita dello Stato della Chiesa, et Ospizio di S. Maria Egizziaca della Nazione Armena," 1659), 18v-20r ("Regole da osservarsi da Pellegrini, ed Abitanti nel Venerabile Ospizio di Santa Maria Egizziaca della Nazione Armena per Ordine dell'E.mo, e R.mo Sig.r Card. Orsino Protettore"). In the new regulation drawn up in 1774, the reception process is described in an even more detailed way (ibid. fols. 196r-200v). For the charitable subsidy, see APCA, SME, vol. LII, "Giustificativi dei pagamenti, 1656–1673," unnumbered folios; Santus, "L'accoglienza e il controllo dei pellegrini orientali."

Christians passing through Rome and regulate their mobility.⁶⁹ When somebody presented himself to the Roman curia asking for economic subsidies, it was possible to check if he had already made his profession of faith or not, while inquiring further concerning his reputation. However, these measures did not always work. A percentage of Eastern Christians managed to escape the profession of faith, either by sleeping outside the hospices or by turning to less scrupulous confessors.⁷⁰

5 The Role of Intermediaries: Language Skills and Curial Careers

The process of reception and control described above could take place only thanks to the linguistic mediation of interpreters, who questioned pilgrims regarding their origin and confessional affiliation and confirmed that they truly understood the meaning of the profession of faith, whose text was often written in a literary language very different from the spoken one.⁷¹ These key figures fell into two categories. The first were Eastern clergy already living in the city, 'confessional refugees' who had fled the Near East because of their conversion to Catholicism. Once sheltered under the umbrella of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, they often tried to recommence the ecclesiastical career they could no longer exercise in their original community. Some enrolled in the Urban College to become Catholic missionaries, while others were periodically sent to other Italian cities to act as parish priests and supervisors of

69 See Julia, "L'accoglienza dei pellegrini," 851–853, and Matthew Coneys Wainwright's chapter in this volume.

70 ACDF, SO, St. St., P4-e, fols. unnumbered; QQ2-g, fasc. 7, fols. 100r–103v (April 1720); Santus, "L'accoglienza e il controllo," 456. As early as 1659, a collective petition of Armenians in Rome denounced that the profession of faith was strictly required from the poor pilgrims, whilst the same was not true for the wealthy merchants who sometimes lodged at the hospice: APF, SOCG, vol. 223, fols. 26r–27r. The Greeks, lacking a specific hospice, were even freer from this point of view: in 1715 the Greek penitentiary in Saint Peter's boasted that in his many years of activity he had never absolved a pilgrim without first checking that he had professed the Catholic faith at the Holy Office, but he then admitted that he could not guarantee that those knowing the Italian language would not resort to other confessors (ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-l, fol. 112r–v).

71 It should be considered that in languages such as Greek, Arabic or Armenian the diglossia, i.e. bifurcation between ecclesiastical and vernacular language, is a particularly significant phenomenon. If we add that the content of the profession of faith was particularly complex and difficult to understand by uneducated people, it is clear why someone expressed the fear that converts would repeat the formula "come pappagalli, senza capire quel che nella Professione si legge" (ACDF, SO, St. St., P4-e, fols. unnumbered).

the Eastern communities residing there. This was a good opportunity to test their abilities and it is no coincidence that some of the Armenian and Greek confessors in Rome had previously performed the same task in Livorno or at the sanctuary of Loreto.⁷² Those with a higher level of education sometimes succeeded in being directly employed by the Roman curia. In this way, they became interpreters and penitentiaries of Oriental languages in St. Peter's Basilica, translators and orientalists in the service of the Vatican Library, but also censors and consultants of the Holy Office, for example in matters relating to Eastern liturgies.⁷³ In order to reach such a position, however, it was essential to obtain the protection of a powerful Roman prelate, such as the cardinal protector of one's own nation.⁷⁴

On the other hand, those who acted as interpreters were not always high-profile Easterners who had settled in Rome. Sometimes an otherwise unknown Greek or Armenian layman who had professed his Catholic faith years earlier suddenly reappears in the documentary record as a translator for a countryman, thus demonstrating that he had not returned home but had stayed in Rome and somehow gained employment by the Holy See. This was the case, for example, with the Athenian laymen Argyros Bernardini, who acted as interpreter for the Archbishop of Naxos in 1680, four years after his own profession of faith.⁷⁵ Similarly, Andrea Vido – a former renegade originally from

72 On the history of the Armenian community of Livorno and its relations with Rome, see Mesrop vardapet Owl'owrlean [Uhrlean], *Storia della Colonia armena di Livorno e della costruzione della sua chiesa (con appendici)*, trans. Alessandro Orengo (Livorno: 1990). For the Greeks, see Santus, "Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio," 211.

73 On the role of Eastern Christians as record-keepers and collectors of Oriental manuscripts, see now John-Paul Ghobrial, "The Archives of Orientalism and its Keepers: Reimagining the Histories of Arabic Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe," *Past & Present*, 230, Supplement no. 11 (2016), 90–111. The Maronites were particularly successful in being employed by the curia: Nasser Gemayel, *Les échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe* (Beirut: 1984).

74 The bibliography on the cardinal protectors is rather scarce: see the classic work of Josef Wodka, *Zur Geschichte der nationalen Protektorate der Kardinäle an der römischen Kurie* (Innsbruck: 1938); Martin Faber, *Scipione Borghese als kardinalprotektor: Studien zur römischen Mikropolitik in der frühen Neuzeit* (Mainz: 1999); and the recent *Gli "angeli custodi" delle monarchie: I cardinali protettori delle nazioni*, eds. Matteo Sanfilippo and Péter Tusor (Viterbo: 2018). These works dedicate very little space to the "Eastern nations," even though the protectors of Greeks and Armenians were usually prominent figures in the College of Cardinals.

75 ACDF, SO, St. St., RR3-d, fols. 6v, 34r. Bernardini had been sent to the Holy Office from the *Ospizio dei Convertendi*, where he had been received in 1676: Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, *Ospizio dei Convertendi*, vol. 5, no. 158 (many thanks to Stefano Villani for sharing this information with me).

Nafplio – appeared before the Holy Office in September 1727 to profess the Catholic faith, and the following March assisted at the profession of five countrymen from Peloponnese and Thessaly. Having offered his linguistic skills to a Greek bishop seeking alms in Vienna (July 1728), he also appears by name as interpreter in four other Roman professions between December 1729 and December 1730.⁷⁶

It seems logical to assume that the function of interpreter would be entrusted only to clearly identifiable Catholics, when penitentiaries or missionaries could not cover it. However, on many occasions we find instead individuals characterized by an ambiguous or disputed confessional identity serving as interpreter. This is the case with two Greek bishops whose signatures appear several times, Sofronio Grassi (*alias* Spiridione Crassà) and Dionisio Modinò.⁷⁷ The former was the prelate served by Vido and was suspected of being a “schismatic” of immoral and simoniac behavior; yet this did not prevent him from being employed by the Holy Office as an interpreter several times during the year 1735.⁷⁸ Modinò, consecrated Metropolitan of the island of Milos in the Cyclades by the patriarch of Constantinople in 1704, later converted to Catholicism and took refuge in Rome at the end of 1718, where he resided in the clerical hospice of Ponte Sisto. We have already mentioned that his way of celebrating the mass came under scrutiny, since it was considered “heretical.” The accusation was evidently not an obstacle to his career, since in 1737 he was appointed as the ordaining bishop for Greek Catholic priests in Rome.⁷⁹

Sometimes these allegations appear to have been provoked by personal rivalries. In 1674, Zaccaria Agam, who had been confessor for the Armenians at the Hospice of Santa Maria Egiziaca for over 15 years, was accused of not being a true Catholic, but only pretending out of economic interest. The accuser was a fellow national, Basilius Bausech (Barsegh), a pupil of the short-lived Armenian College in Rome who was employed at that time as the curia’s official translator and corrector of Armenian liturgical books. Following these allegations (already advanced in 1668) and others related to his scarce effectiveness, Agam was eventually removed from Rome and Barsegh replaced him as the main

76 ACDF, SO, St. St., RR3-a, fols. 133v, 137v, 154v, 157r, 162v; APF, SOCG, vol. 668, fols. 109v-110r. Additional details on Vido are provided by Falcetta, *Ortodossi nel Mediterraneo cattolico*, 9, 131, 174–75.

77 Both cases are mentioned with further details in Santus, “Tra la chiesa di Sant’Atanasio,” 213.

78 ACDF, SO, St. St., RR3-a, fols. 12r and 14v.

79 Archivio del Collegio Greco (ACGr), vol. 6, fol. 310; ACDF, SO, St. St., RR3-a (profession of faith, 29 January 1719, fol. 35v; the first signature as interpreter is dated 16 August 1720 and reoccurs even later, in the years 1740–1750).

interpreter of the Armenian professions of faith.⁸⁰ This and other cases suggest that Eastern Christians in Rome did not necessarily behave according to the logic of national or “diasporic” solidarity. On the contrary, they were sometimes in competition with each other for access to the same economic and employment opportunities, as in the case of those who offered their linguistic skills for teaching or translation.⁸¹ More generally, we are often confronted with individuals who could rely only in a limited way on a community-based welfare network, normally preferring other forms of sociality and protection, like clerical patronage.⁸²

6 Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

Having examined the reasons for the influx of Eastern Christians to early modern Rome and the strategies some of them employed in seeking to settle there, we should try to assess the general characteristics of their presence. First of all, it must be underlined that we cannot properly speak of Eastern Christian ‘communities’ residing in Rome – at least, not in the way we do with Venice, Livorno or Naples. Italian and other European port cities witnessed the arrival of Greeks, Armenians and Arabic-speaking Christians, mainly as a result of

80 APF, Acta, vol. 44, 18 December 1674, § 11, fols. 369r-370r. In the previous twenty years, Zaccaria Agam appears several times as interpreter for Armenians professing their faith in front of the Holy Office (ACDF, SO, St. St., P4-e); he also signed many of the certificates issued by the Hospice to their guests (APCA, SME, vol. LII, “Giustificativi dei pagamenti, 1656–1673”). A biographic profile of him in APF, SOCG, vol. 223, fols. 87r-88v; once destitute, some sources report that he became involved in alms-collecting tours in the company of suspicious people. See Aslanian, “Some Notes on Asateur vardapet,” 164–165; Meružan Karapetyan, “Hromi hay gałt’ōjaxi patmutyunic’ [On the history of the Armenian community of Rome],” *Patma-banasirakan Handes* 147–148, 1–2 (1998), 165–178 (176–178). As for Barsegh and his fanaticism and Latinizing attitude, see Gabriele Avedichian, *Sulle correzioni fatte ai libri ecclesiastici armeni nell’anno 1677* (San Lazzaro, Venice: 1868). They were both buried in Santa Maria Egiziaca: their tombstones are now at the Pontifical Armenian College in Rome.

81 The role of Eastern Christians in the teaching of Oriental languages in Rome has been studied especially with reference to Arabic: see for example Aurélien Girard, “Teaching and Learning Arabic in Early Modern Rome: Shaping a Missionary Language,” in *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Jan Loop, Alastair Hamilton, and Charles Burnett (Leiden: 2017), 189–212.

82 Indeed, a new generation of scholars has scaled back the importance of the ‘national factor’ (i.e., communal solidarity between immigrants of the same origin) in the logic of urban settlement and social association: Eleonora Canepari, *Stare in compagnia. Strategie di inurbamento e forme associative nella Roma del Seicento* (Soveria Mannelli: 2007).

the merchant and maritime diaspora. In such places, newcomers organized themselves in communities centered around a church or confraternity which would allow the preservation of their cultural identity, over time establishing accommodation structures, schools and cemeteries. Conversely, in Rome Eastern Christian places of worship and gathering were not collective foundations, established 'from below,' but rather institutional bodies, almost always decided 'from above.' Moreover, most of the city's hosting institutions were reserved for the clergy, or otherwise subjected guests to various forms of confessional control. In this regard, we should distinguish between the hospices which brought together religious and lay Eastern Christians passing through Rome (as in the Armenian case), and the clerical colleges and monasteries, where this was not so. Lay Greek pilgrims and visitors, for example, could not resort to the Greek college of Sant'Atanasio and were therefore forced to seek refuge in the city's hospitals and inns.⁸³

The dispersed character of the Eastern Christian presence in Rome is also reflected in other contexts. In the Levant, confessional solidarity among Eastern Catholics allowed for the establishment of ties and collaboration between people of different rites, languages and backgrounds: Catholic Armenians married Catholic Melkites, Syriac Catholics resorted to Maronite priests.⁸⁴ One might assume that in Rome this would not have happened and that immigrants would have kept the company of their fellow nationals, following their own rite as prescribed. However, not only was Latinization and the mixing of rites a contemporary concern, as we have seen, but the boundaries between different communities were also blurred and frequently crossed. Careful examination reveals that even spaces that should have rigidly conformed to the communitarian division, such as 'national' churches and hospices, were sites of mixing and border-crossing. The Ruthenian hospice of Santi Sergio e Bacco hosted not only Slavic Catholics but on some occasions also Maronites and even an Armenian bishop.⁸⁵ The Greek college had been founded to welcome exclusively "*pueri et adolescentes graeci*," but in the 18th century they were a

83 Heleni Porfyriou, "La presenza greca: Roma e Venezia tra XV e XVI secolo," in *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri XIV-XVIII secolo*, eds. D. Calabi and P. Lanaro (Roma-Bari: 1998), 21–38. For an excellent discussion on the notion of 'community' in the Greek case see Mathieu Grenet, *La fabrique Communautaire: Les Grecs à Venise, Livourne et Marseille, 1770–1840* (Rome: 2016).

84 See Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique* (Rome: 1994); Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*.

85 See Tatarenko, "I ruteni a Roma," 185; Anatole Upart, "'Rito greco, lingua dalmatica': Ruthenians in Early Modern Rome," *Il Capitale culturale*, Supplementi 7 (2018), 137–161: 147–148.

minority, outnumbered by Italo-Albanians, Ruthenians and some Levantines who were 'Greek' only by name, being of the Latin rite.⁸⁶ The curial authorities themselves were guilty of transgressing the very same principles they had established, such as when they allowed Eastern Catholic ordinands to be consecrated by bishops of a different rite (or even by Latin bishops) in the absence of a suitable Eastern prelate in Rome; or when they prescribed that Latin masses should be held regularly in the churches of the Eastern colleges and hospices.⁸⁷

Turning from institutions to individuals, the aforementioned Timoteo Agnellini, who in the last decades of the 17th century led an errant life divided between alms-collecting and scholarship, is a good example of a character difficult to define according to specific national, ritual or linguistic criteria. He had presented himself in Rome as the Syrian ("Jacobite") Archbishop of Mardin, but later he was discovered to have been consecrated by a Chaldean patriarch. He wrote several works in Arabic, which he chose to author by using the name "Ḥumaylī" in the title page. That term is analogous to the "Agnellini" employed in Italian: they are both translations of what is perhaps his original name, *Gar-nuk* (which he spelt "Carnuch"), meaning "lamb" in Armenian – and it is precisely from this language that he acted as interpreter for the Holy Office. His polyglot skills allowed him to translate his identity depending on the language and the cultural context in which he had to introduce himself.⁸⁸

Such a fluid and intermingled reality is also reflected in the directions that future research may take. It would indeed be interesting to deepen our knowledge of Eastern Christians even outside the institutes specifically dedicated to them, following the aforementioned tracks that link them to the Hospital of ss. Trinità dei Pellegrini, to the Collegio dei Neofiti and, above all, to the *Ospizio dei Convertendi*. In this respect, a comparison between the characteristics of Eastern Christian mobility and strategies of inclusion with those relating to converts from Protestantism or from Jewish and Muslim backgrounds

86 Santus, "Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio," 193–197.

87 To cite just one case, in 1742 the Coptic priest "Pacomio Sammaria" was ordained by the Greek bishop Dionisio Modinò "attento quod in Urbe non adsit proprius Episcopus Catholicus ritus Coptici": APF, SC, Ospizio di S. Stefano dei Mori, "Notizie dello stato della Chiesa, e Monastero di S. Stefano dei Mori," § XXXIV–XXXV.

88 Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, vol. 4 (Vatican City: 1951), 54–55; Kévorkian, *Catalogue des "incunables" arméniens*, 169–170. He signed indifferently as "Timoteo Agnellini" or "Timoteus Carnuch" at the bottom of the professions of faith made by Armenians in 1704–1709: ACDF, SO, RR3–d, fols. 182v–213v. John-Paul Ghobrial has recently stressed how "individual identity in the early modern period was rooted in concrete, local processes of identification" ("Moving Stories," 248, 279).

would be particularly important.⁸⁹ In addition to completing the examination of the inquisitorial documentation⁹⁰ and of material concerning hospices and colleges, new discoveries could derive from investigation in the archives of the Vicariate, which contain the acts of the Tribunal of the Cardinal Vicar as well as the parish registers of Rome, with the *status animarum* and the records of baptisms, marriages and deaths. These documents, which require a long and systematic examination, may contribute to the study of a subject that has been overlooked here, namely the presence of lay Eastern Christians who managed to stay in the city without the support of the curia, living in private homes, exercising a profession and perhaps marrying local people.⁹¹ Finally, the prosopographical database may be a starting point for 'following' specific individuals through the archives of the Italian peninsula (and beyond), highlighting the movement of Eastern Christians and linking Rome with the better known Greek and Armenian communities of Livorno, Ancona or Venice.⁹²

In conclusion, from the picture we have described so far, Rome appears to be at the center of a particular network of mobility and circulation: it attracted pilgrims, converts and more generally people looking for education, canonical dispensations, resolution of cases of conscience, sanctions of Catholicity (which might facilitate further travels in other European countries), and above all alms and material aid. The Roman Congregations tried to manage this influx

89 For example, it would be interesting to compare the tales of conversion concerning Protestants and renegades appearing before the Holy Office with the petitions presented by Eastern Christians: Irene Fosi, "Conversion and Autobiography: Telling Tales before the Roman Inquisition," *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (2013), 437–456.

90 Examination of inquisitorial documents includes a survey of the decrees of the Holy Office and of the *Extensorum* series for the period prior to 1655, as well as the examination of the volumes of sentences no longer kept in Rome but in Dublin, which I could not see: Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin: 1900), 241–284 (Eastern Christians are mentioned in ms. 1234, 1240).

91 Mentions of Greek painters have been found in this way by Massimo Pomponi, "Artisti stranieri a Roma nel primo trentennio del Seicento," in *Alla ricerca di "Ghiongrat": Studi sui libri parrocchiali romani (1600–1630)*, ed. Rossella Vodret (Rome: 2011), 107–188, on 177; see also Benedetta Albani, "Sposarsi a Roma dopo il Concilio di Trento," and Domenico Rociolo, "Sposarsi a Roma nel secolo XVIII," in *Venire a Roma, restare a Roma: Forestieri e stranieri fra Quattro e Settecento*, eds. Alessandro Serra and Sara Cabibbo (Rome: 2018), 57–82, 83–97. Additional notarial, judicial and economic documentation is also preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Roma; see for example my initial discoveries as part of a survey of Eastern Christian presence in Napoleonic Rome: Santus, "Rome, avant-poste de la France en Orient."

92 On this methodology, see Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "Il nome e il come: Scambio ineguale e mercato storiografico," *Quaderni storici* 40 (1979), 181–190; Ghobrial, "Moving Stories," 249.

so as to avoid as much as possible vagrancy, confessional ambiguity and excessive exploitation of the 'welfare system' by the Eastern clergy. By choice or by necessity, the stay of most Eastern Christians in Rome was therefore temporary, even though some individuals managed to find permanent employment. This was especially common among those who arrived in Rome already able to benefit from curial acquaintances and a network of patronage, or endowed with a particular skill, such as knowledge of Oriental languages: for all others, the risk of ending up in poverty and without means of support was high.⁹³ The wandering lives that have populated this essay tell us how many distinctive hardships and obstacles Eastern Christians had to overcome in their attempt to fulfill their dreams in the Eternal City.

93 See for example the case of the Greek "Giovanni Stamno," dressed in rags, "with tears in his eyes," forced to sleep in the hospice of Santa Galla and to wander around the city begging for bread (ACDF, SO, St. St., QQ2-I, fasc. XVIII, fol. 175r, 15 September 1723).

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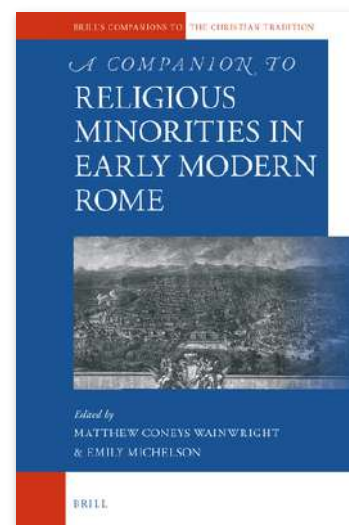
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