

Chapter 2

Tracing Migrations Within Urban Spaces: Women's Mobility and Identification Practices in Venice (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries)

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Introduction: From Identity to Identification

This Zuanna of whom I have spoken is somewhat shorter than average, her face is round and wide, of reddish complexion. I don't recall her eyebrows but I think they were thick. I can't remember the colour, but I think they were black. I think her nose was somewhat flat, with wide nostrils [...]. At first, she dressed like a Turk and then, while living at the *Casa dei Catecumeni*, she dressed like an Italian, but I can't remember how. Rather, I remember her coming to my house and seeing her around Venice wearing black clothes and headdress.¹

When I found this very detailed description in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, my research was focusing on how women of foreign origin presented themselves before the Venetian Inquisition (Bernardi 2017) since one of the first questions the Inquisitor would ask, concerned the defendants' personal details. Migrant women – be they from Northern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, the Venetian domains, or various cities of the Italian Peninsula – usually had to declare their name, age, place of origin, who their parents were, how they arrived in Venice, and their religion. At first, my aim was to understand in which ways these women defined their identity in a highly coercive context, such as a religious tribunal (Homza 2000, 5–6; Dyer, and Kagan 2004; Ginzburg 2006).² Then, a closer look at these same narratives, revealed the importance of exploring how women were identified more generally, and on which occasions their mobility was documented. This is the main object of this paper.³

The description above refers to Aisè, or Caia or Zuanna, a woman who travelled across the Mediterranean and lived in different cities of the Italian Peninsula. In 1684 her story drew the attention of the Roman Holy Office since she allegedly converted from Islam to Catholicism several

times. Due to her short- and long-distance mobility, the Inquisition had to collect information from distant localities and within different jurisdictions. At the same time, the woman defined her identity in multiple ways on the basis of legal, cultural and personal circumstances.⁴ As we will see, the story of Aisè *per se* cannot be considered a case of microhistory in the narrow sense. However, I tried to follow the micro-historical approach in two particular aspects, i.e. the specific attention paid to individual experiences, and the fruitful shift between ‘close-ups and long-shots’ (Ginzburg 1994, 56–58; Pomata 1998; Trivellato 2001).

Indeed, more general questions arise from the analysis of this particular story. When and how did individuals identify themselves? Which institutions were involved, and what was the relationship between registration and geographical mobility? Did mobility make identification more difficult, or even necessary? Why was it so important for some categories of foreigners to define their social condition and religious beliefs when they moved? This article seeks to go beyond an attempt at understanding identity, in an effort to examine practices of registration and classification (Rappaport 2014, 4–5).

In fact, in the last 15 years the attention of scholars has progressively shifted from identity, which has been long debated, to the procedures for identification. This interest has probably grown as a reaction to a rather monolithic and static conception of identity. As an alternative, scholars have taken a more dynamic approach to practices of recognition, categorization and identification of individuals. Nonetheless, the risk in using this new paradigm is to consider identification as a unilateral operation controlled by institutions with the aim to contain and discipline people (Buono 2014 I; 2014 II; 2015).

Early studies about identification have focused mainly on the idea that establishing the identity of individuals was a crucial aim in the process of modern state-building (Torpey 2000; Caplan, and Torpey 2001; Noiriel 2007). Consequently, they have emphasized the correlation between identification and coercion or identification and governability (Scott 1998; Foucault 2004). Another element that characterized early scholarship on identification is the relevance of bureaucratization as medium of social control and state formation in early modern society (Goody 1986). For instance, scholars who underscored the shift from oral to written culture have overestimated the reliability and credibility of written documents. Furthermore, they have undervalued the central role of reputation as a form of legitimation. In fact, social networks and local communities were important means of identification used by both institutions and social actors (Groebner 2001, 15–27; 2007, 15; Breckenridge, and Szreter 2012; About, et al. 2013).⁵

Recent studies though, such as those by Tamar Herzog, Simona Cerutti and Alessandro Buono, are turning the tide. Herzog has highlighted that written documents did not replace the relevance of

‘an oral knowledge that either opposed or converged with them’. Cerutti and Buono have demonstrated that recording identity was also a means to assign membership, providing access to urban resources (both material and immaterial) (Herzog 2003; 2012, 11; Cerutti 2012; Buono 2014 I, 107–120; 2015, 231–266).

In light of these recent considerations, my paper will contribute to question some historiographical assumptions about identification: namely the monopoly of government in recording and classifying people, and the replacement of orality (reputation and social networks) by written documents. In this respect, I have chosen a specific and, only partially, peculiar context: the cosmopolitan city of Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition, the use of different types of documentation – legal sources, ecclesiastical records and inquisitorial trials – and the analysis of different identification practices have allowed me to re-discuss the category of identity itself.

The city of Venice can be an appropriate context for questioning the historiographical assumptions that I have so far discussed. Like in other early modern cities, accommodation and assimilation of migrants was a precondition for the Republic’s cultural and economic growth (Moch 1992; Canny 1994; Lucassen, and Lucassen 1997; Lucassen, Lucassen, and Manning, 2010). Indeed, even though Venice was often affected by high infant mortality and destructive bouts of epidemic, at the turn of the seventeenth century it was still one of the most populous urban centers in Europe with a population of about 150,000 inhabitants (Beltrami 1954, 32, 71; Zannini 1993 II).

This analysis focuses on different ways in which foreigners were registered individually and identified within the Venetian urban spaces. I will start by providing a legal definition of ‘foreigner’, without necessarily considering this category in opposition to that of ‘citizen’. (Zannini 1993 I; Bellavitis 1995; 2001; Mueller 2010). To do so, I will not focus on specific foreign communities, or groups of migrants defined according to ethnicity, religion and profession, as past scholarly literature has already broadly done (Calabi, and Christensen 2007; De Munck, and Winter 2012, 11–22).⁶ I rather decided to examine the legislation concerning foreigners in general, and then gauge if Venetian public authorities acted in different ways depending on the different categories of people and specific historical circumstances (Cavallo 2001; Cerutti, 2012; Canepari, 2012).

The intersectional approach has hitherto been adopted in relation to contemporary history, but, with due hermeneutical caution, it has turned out to be particularly functional to the analysis of past societies as well (Marchetti 2013; Hancock 2016). Above all, I will consider the links between social condition, origin, religious belonging and gender. The focus on women’s mobility together with the role of gender in the classification process is crucial in re-discussing the way in which mobility was generally documented and controlled in the early modern period (Scott 1986; Sharpe 2001; Donato,

et al. 2006; Green 2012). More specifically, it is suggested that the registration of foreigners was not only a means to manage migration and mobility. On the contrary, the need to define and register identities seemed to grow in multiple ways and in different contexts, and through the interference of several actors.

As we shall see, this was true not only in relation to migration but also in reference to inter-urban mobility. Personal identification could be demanded within diverse jurisdictions and urban communities, such as charity institutions, guilds, ‘national’ communities, parishes, and so on. As a matter of fact, Venice was not surrounded by walls but there were many material and immaterial borders even inside the city itself. For this reason, inter-urban mobility could also imply a redefinition of social ties and, sometimes, a new registration of identity. It therefore seems appropriate – if not useful – to abandon a ‘rigid’ conception of urban areas and to pay more attention also to the crossing of internal boundaries.⁷

To briefly summarize the content of this paper, the first part focuses on the legislation concerning the registration of foreigners and their residence, questioning the presence or absence of women in this type of documentation, as well as the potential specificity of female mobility. The second part analyzes a case study, focusing mainly on the role of social actors, especially on the way they used institutions and identification to obtain privileges or to claim local membership. The third, and last part, concerns a practice of registration that was specifically addressed to migrant women. Although women were often absent from administrative records, when their identification was demanded, they also appeared as actors able to claim social and economic resources, even over long distances (Sharpe 2001; Zucca Micheletto 2014). Finally, the micro-analytic approach and the joint study of legal and administrative records helps to highlight the very relationship between institutions, urban communities and individuals, but also the central role played by some intermediaries.

Registration of Foreigners and Women’s Mobility

The Legislation

In 1642 the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia* established that Jewish women had to register themselves ‘in the same way as Jewish men were required to do’, under the same laws and penalties. The magistracy also mentioned several scandals that occurred in the Ghetto due to these women:

Considering the scandalous occurrences which have happened in the Ghetto because of foreign Jewish women, who have been in this city in different times, and some of whom have caused pernicious scandals due to their dissolute lives. Since their Excellencies want to remedy, with the present they declare that the day after their arrival, [women] like all foreign Jews, must declare their names, surnames, provenance, where they lodge and the

reasons why they have travelled to the city; the same duties and penalties established by law shall be applied to the above-mentioned Jewish women.⁸

I decided to quote this provision almost in its entirety because this is the only reference to foreign women within the whole legislation concerning the registration of foreigners. Although this could be considered only an isolated example, this also raises several questions: was women's migration documented in early modern Venice? How was female mobility controlled, and why? What was the difference among women belonging to different religious minorities? Before attempting to provide any answer, we need to explore the legislation concerning the activity of the *Esecutori*, a Venetian magistracy responsible for morality and public order, and, since the end of the sixteenth century, also in charge of registering newcomers and controlling their residences (Derosas 1980; Cozzi 1991).

In 1583 the Council of Ten, one of the most important government bodies, established that all the foreigners arriving in Venice from outside the Venetian domains had to register themselves. In particular, they had to report their name, surname, place of origin, the reason for being in the city, and their future domicile to the *Esecutori*. The magistracy handed out a sort of 'residence permit' that was called *bollettino*. In order to uncover potential infractions, an officer was in charge of walking around the city and control the accuracy of the information that was given at the moment of the registration.⁹ This document, therefore, was valid for limited periods only and foreigners were supposed to renew it whenever they decided to change their profession or their residence.¹⁰

A first important element is that the registration of foreigners took place not at the city's borders but within various urban spaces: in taverns, inns, and lodging houses. The same applied to most European cities at the time (Moatti, and Kaiser 2007, 1–25; Greefs, and Winter 2018). Innkeepers who rented rooms to foreigners were required to apply for a specific license and declare the arrival and departure of their guests.¹¹ They were veritable intermediaries between public authorities and newcomers. On the one hand, they had to denounce their foreign guests in order to be able to carry on their business activity and avoid punishment; on the other, they served as an important channel of communication, since they also informed foreigners about the measures adopted by the magistracies.

This practice of registration has been almost ignored by scholars so far.¹² Indeed, one can wonder if this administrative procedure was effectively put into practice and whether the quantity of documents produced was sufficiently representative of the number of migrants who arrived and left the city on a daily basis. An extensive search suggests that the *bollettini* have gone lost. This should not be surprising, especially when considering that these documents had to be carried around by foreigners.¹³ In fact, the *bollettini* consisted of receipts granted after a successful registration, already inscribed in the magistracy's books (Bamji 2019, 443).

Despite the physical absence of these documents, it has been still possible to conduct a quantitative analysis of the magistracy's administrative documentation. Since the *Esecutori* recorded the number of *bollettini* that had been commissioned from the official printer in order to pay him, we can count them in relation to limited periods of time. For example, in 1624, 12,000 licenses had been printed over the span of about ten months (between 13 April 1624 and 21 February 1625). From May 1628 to November 1631, instead, around 10,500 were printed, probably because of the decline in the population due to the plague.¹⁴ Furthermore, it seems that during the following century, these documents became increasingly specific in their appearance, both to prevent falsification and to facilitate administrative procedures. Every colour denoted a specific group: black for Italians, red for those coming from 'beyond the mountains', yellow for those coming from 'overseas' and green for Jews (Bernardi and Pompermaier 2019; Bernardi 2020).¹⁵

From the end of the seventeenth century, therefore, we can detect a more specific legal definition of 'foreigner', based on a more clear-cut distinction between Venetian subjects and migrants from outside the Venetian domains. However, the analysis of the legislation over the long term suggests that, despite the emphasis on jurisdiction, public authorities did not refer to foreigners as a collective group. Furthermore, the same legislation appeared flexible and changed over time. Some groups of foreigners were excluded from registration and could circulate without a residence permit. Instead, others were mentioned only later, due to particular economic and political contingencies.¹⁶

Even the focus on those categories of people excluded from registration is important to understand the actual function of this administrative practice, and its relevance for the identification of individuals. At first, the ordinances specifically exempted mariners, who were by definition mobile since they used to stay in Venice only temporarily, and those people who came with letters of recommendation (*lettere di credenza*) written by foreign sovereigns or dignitaries.¹⁷ They were generally merchants, ambassadors, or other travelers equipped with special travel documents that legitimated their presence in the city, even if differently. Moreover, migrants who arrived in Venice to work for a master (*maestro*), such as foreign artisans, were not required to register and could lodge wherever they wanted. This was thanks to the relationship with their employer, who had to vouch for them and testify about the foreign workers' place of residence and their departure.¹⁸

An exception was also made for those groups of foreigners, such as Turks, who had already negotiated their permanence within the city. The reason might be that they had to comply with even more stringent rules than the rest of the population. In 1621 the Venetian government established that Turkish merchants and travelers living in Venice had to stay only in one building, the *Fondaco dei Turchi*, on the Grand Canal. From that moment onwards their residence was put under the

surveillance of a Venetian magistracy, the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* (Venetian Board of Trade). Moreover, the regulations established that every day a custodian had to register the ‘names, surnames, origin, and goods of the people who arrive and leave the city’, so that Turkish merchants were forced to pay the rent and tax for the storage of their goods. This may mean that there was no need for an additional form of registration (Concina 1997, 219–46; Pedani 2010, 219–20).¹⁹

It is also interesting to note that legislation could also change over time in response to specific political or economic contingencies. The Jews’ charters (*condotte*) have been analyzed by scholars as major pieces of evidence for the regulation of Jewish residents in Venice. However, from 1612, the Jews were also required to register and obtain a license to lodge in the Ghetto, whether they were subjects of the Republic or foreigners from outside the domains. In fact, the Council of Ten instructed the Jewish Community (*Università degli Ebrei*) to provide the names, surnames, and places of origin of foreigners hosted in the Ghetto. All this information had to be collected by the hosts.²⁰ From that moment, therefore, the same measures were adopted for a space already separated and regulated by the government.

One must of course consider that these decisions were taken in a particular historical period: at the turn of the seventeenth century, controversies arose about the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and the suspects of crypto-Judaism. In 1589, the renewal of the charter legitimated their presence within the city, ensuring new economic opportunities for both the Republic and the Jewish merchants. Nevertheless, their presence was still perceived as a threat to Christian society (Ruspio 2007, 11–22). In those same years, doge Leonardo Donà, who was ambassador of the Republic in Spain, commented on the difficulties in controlling those who inhabited the Ghetto (since many Jews from Spain arrived in Venice thanks to privileges and safe-conducts, which prevented potential inquiries on their past), but also in enforcing control on their current residence within the city.²¹

Finally, the same foreigners from outside the domains could be exempted from registration after ten years of continuous residence in the Venetian territories. In this way, they had the possibility to live the city, circulate freely and return without renewing their residence permits. To prove their stability, foreign inhabitants needed the previous registrations together with oral testimonies of witnesses able to confirm their general details, profession and their permanence in the city.²²

We can assume that exemption from registration represented the final step of an assimilation process that, in fact, had already occurred. Indeed, a series of other elements could enhance their request: for instance, membership to a guild, military service, payment of economic duties and presence in the city of other family members. These activities, therefore, provided a series of rights and obligations that would define and strengthen local networks, and also gave the possibility to legally attest their own social status. It is particularly significant that it was precisely the very

condition of ‘settledness’ and the strength of social networks to ensure foreign inhabitants’ freedom of movement (Herzog 2003, 108; Cerutti 2007, 256; Cavallar and Kirshner 2011; Barbot 2013).²³

The Un-registration of Women

As a matter of fact, legislation makes almost no reference to foreign women. The status of foreign inhabitant, therefore, was a legal definition seemingly assigned exclusively to male migrants. To better understand how the registration procedure worked and in which circumstances women’ mobility was documented and controlled, however, we should question the absence of women in this type of source, rather than focusing only on their presence.

Even if the law did not explicitly exclude women from registration, it is clear that newly-arrived women did not have to register their identity, nor were they expected to notify where they resided. In the period examined, public authorities often specified if a norm concerned both men and women. In Venice, for example, the *Esecutori* ordered both male and female lodging-house keepers (*albergatori* and *albergatrici*) to declare their economic activity. In a similar way, the Venetian Senate specified that this applied to ‘people of any status, condition, quality, gender’, in order to underline the general character of its ordinances.²⁴ Otherwise, authorities would refer specifically to women, when necessary: the *Esecutori*, for instance, appealed in particular to female subjects (*suddite*), forbidding them to manage lodging-houses on behalf of their foreign husbands. Indeed, those who came from outside the Venetian territories were not allowed to provide lodging to other foreigners; they could only do so if they had been permanent residents in Venice for at least 20 years.²⁵

Women are almost absent also when we consider legal practice. Even though legal proceedings of the *Esecutori* from the period prior to the 1690s have not survived, it is still possible to consult the annotations of the sentences for the entire span of the seventeenth century. While a significant number of females (especially foreigners) appeared as landladies and lodging-house keepers; there is no reference to female lodgers who were punished for not providing the required documents.²⁶ This is reflected in a list of names of foreigners recorded by the magistracy in 1607 and 1608, in which female names are totally absent.²⁷ Exemptions from registration follow this general pattern: none of the almost 200 seventeenth-century exemptions from the need for *bollettini* examined for this study relates to women.²⁸

Although the presence of foreign women in Venice was not documented in the same way as male migrants, gender relations still played a crucial role when someone needed to prove a stable presence in the city. As already mentioned, to be excused from registering it was necessary to attest continuous residency in the Venetian territories. In this regard, marriage represented an important means of legitimation: the fact a foreigner had a Venetian wife or that he had settled in Venice with

his family was considered as evidence, not only of stability, but also of an intention to remain permanently in the city (Bellavitis, 1995; 2001).²⁹

Specific models of femininity and masculinity likely influenced the way in which public authorities controlled migration and mobility within the urban fabric. Taking into account that migrant women were mostly un-registered, the analysis of the documentation from a gender perspective allows to reflect on the very reason for their absence. First of all, what should be considered is the peculiar family structure of the time as well as its internal power relations. In fact, it was probably the male household head (*pater familiae*) who was required to register on behalf of his entire family, regularly indicating where he lived in return for the residence permit (Costa 2001, 36–48).

Moreover, the authorities' concerns about foreigners differed on the basis of gender. In general, foreigners were considered a potential threat for public order mostly because they were unknown to the local community. This is especially clear when focusing on those categories of people that were more susceptible to receive punishment: the *Esecutori* were supposed to condemn primarily anyone who lied about their name or origin. Beyond that, they could banish vagrants and 'bad people', as well as foreign beggars.³⁰ To the *Esecutori*, therefore, registration was a means to facilitate the administration of justice and, indirectly, the distribution of economic resources. From the authorities' perspective, foreigners could commit crimes inside the Venetian domains and then freely move in other jurisdictions without being prosecuted. Conversely, criminals might also reside in the Republic's territories, easily hiding their past actions.³¹

On the other hand, if we consider once again the provision against foreign Jewish women of 1642, it seems clear that when women were required to register, it was mainly for questions of morality and sexual honor. This hypothesis is confirmed by the same language of the legislation on the matter. The magistracy attributed 'damaging scandals' (*scandali perniciosi*) and a 'disgraceful life' (*vita rilasciata*) to Jewish foreign women.³² Indeed, it is certainly not a mere coincidence that just one year before the charter that reformed residence conditions of Jews in Venice established a clearer separation of roles of the *Esecutori* from those of the other lay magistracy in charge of regulating their presence, the *Ufficiali al Cattaver*. The latter would control the contacts between Jewish men and Christian women, while the former was in charge of overseeing those between Jewish women and Christians (Pullan 1983, 79–80).³³

The moral question alone, however, does not fully explain the need to register. In my view, it is the intersection between different social categories that made Jewish foreign women more susceptible to the authorities' direct control. It is not clear whether the magistracy was actually referring to prostitutes in the norm (suffice to note that the 'scandals' negatively connoted Jewish

women and their reputation). Furthermore, due to their ‘foreignness’ Jewish women were less traceable at a local level, because of the lack of both social networks and a proper administrative history. Finally, their belonging to a religious minority certainly demanded closer attention for what concerned their relations with Christians (Nirenberg 2002; Galasso 2002, 109; Caffiero 2013).

At this point, however, it seems necessary to specify that the concerns on the sexual honor of mobile women, also depended on the type of sources under scrutiny. The *Esecutori* registered foreigners for reasons mainly related to morality, religion and public order. On the contrary, other Venetian magistracies were in charge of controlling mobility for different purposes, according to their jurisdiction (Costa 1969; Cerutti 2003; Hespanha 2013). It is beyond the scope of the present study to provide full details here, but it is significant that mobility did not always raise the same concerns. This implies that the authorities did not use the same criteria for registration. The *Giustizia Nuova*, the magistracy responsible for the supervision of inns and taverns and for taxing the hospitality industry, paid attention mainly to economic issues and registered foreigners without distinguishing between those coming from outside the Venetian domains and subjects. The same can be said of the *Provveditori sopra la Sanità*, the magistracy in charge of public health. In order to prevent the spread of contagion, they controlled the migrants’ trajectories irrespective of their origin or gender.³⁴

Beyond the legal definition of ‘foreigner’, what emerges from the Venetian sources is the central role of local knowledge, both in terms of written documents and social networks. Authorities were definitely not concerned with migration or mobility *per se* – these were structural phenomena of past societies – but with permanence. Although the registration of foreigners consisted in a relevant administrative practice, it was not always necessary or demanded. The invisibility of women in this type of documentation, therefore, suggests that mobility could be controlled also outside the institutions. In fact, local communities and women’s reputation represented an important means of identification and recognition. It was mostly where local control (family, neighbors, and so on) failed or could potentially fail, that authorities had to intervene by requiring official registration.

Between Migration and Inter-Urban Mobility: The Itinerary of Caia *Alias* Zuanna *Alias* Aisè

A Christian Woman in the Fondaco of the Turks

The story of a woman named Aisè, which I reconstructed by intersecting different types of sources, discloses the social actors’ attempts at negotiation and manipulation of the institution. It further questions the need for identification in cases in which mobility was not exclusively geographical, but also religious, and, by implication, social and cultural as well. Ironically, attributing different names to the same woman implied an identification process on my part. The difficulty in

defining who a person was in a period when photographs, fingerprinting, or retina scans did not exist, inevitably also affects the way in which historians attempt to trace the mobility of individuals. For this purpose, the inquisitorial trial has proved to be a good starting point, since most of the existing records about Aisè were included in copy within the legal proceedings. Furthermore, the sources I have identified among different archival collections contain sufficient cross references to establish connections.³⁵

As anticipated, Aisè was a woman from Livorno who allegedly lived as a Muslim in Constantinople for twenty years. While traveling across the Mediterranean, from Constantinople to Corfu, from Corfu to Venice, and from Venice to Rome, she supposedly changed religion, name and social status several times. We know about her story because in 1682 she was tried by the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* and a few years later she was also brought before the Inquisition. In fact, Aisè tried to be baptized twice: first at the *Casa dei Catecumeni* (Holy House of Catechumens) in Venice and then at the same institution in Rome (Caffiero 2004; Rothman 2006; Ioly Zorattini 2008; Mazur 2016).³⁶

After having explored the way in which public authorities requested for individual identity to be defined, I will demonstrate how identification was not just a top-down process. On the contrary, single individuals also played a central role. This woman, for example, represented and defined herself in different ways with respect to the changing contexts and authorities which she had to deal with. This was possible not only in long-distance migration but also through short distance urban mobility. As a matter of fact, her identity was demanded or needed to be defined on multiple occasions, especially when she crossed a geographical, institutional, or even a cultural border across the Mediterranean, and even inside the city itself.

In July 1682, a woman in her forties stood before the *Cinque Savi*. She had been denounced by some Christian custodians of the *Fondaco dei Turchi* as they had seen her holding a rosary near the building. She stated that her name was Caia and that she was a Muslim. She then asked for a license to embark for Split before going to Constantinople.³⁷ The woman had been living for some time in the *Fondaco dei Turchi* on the Grand Canal, a place which housed Turkish merchants and travelers. The *fondaci* were part of the urban plan which guaranteed the presence and safety in the city of foreign communities with which the Republic traded. At the same time, it ensured the Venetian authorities' control over them and their separation from Christian society (Concina 1997, 219–249; Preto 2013, 132–133; Pedani 2010, 211–229; Orlando 2014, 11–24).³⁸

Since the documentation specifies that Aisè had been living for a period of time in the *Fondaco dei Turchi*, it is apt to further explore the people who actually used to attend this place. Historiography has hitherto claimed that women were forbidden from accessing the building. Ennio Concina, for

instance, mentions some ordinances that made the *Fondaco* inaccessible to young people, women, and ‘bad’ people (Concina, 1997, 233). The discovery of a list of both people and goods arriving and departing from the *Fondaco*, dating from 1720, strengthens this claim. Indeed, the list contains just male names and it seems to refer only to those men who were lodged there or used the *Fondaco*’s warehouses to store their goods.³⁹

Once again, it is worth question whether the lack of women in the surviving registers was due to their actual absence in the specific context, or if it depends on the fact that they were not required to register, as men did. In other words: how much does the nature of the registration and its purpose affect the gender ratio in this kind of record and, consequently, the historians’ perception of the presence or absence of women in specific urban spaces? In this case, the request to register one’s lodging address was functional to verifying the payment of rent and taxes on the goods stored. It is possible to surmise, therefore, that the records do not represent all the individuals who took advantage of the *Fondaco* for other reasons.

Further evidence supports the hypothesis that the *Fondaco* of the Turks was not a place reserved for male merchants only and that women as well could have access to the *Fondaco*’s benefits, even though they did not necessarily live there. By analyzing the building’s fundamental rules and the behavior of its inhabitants, it is possible to ascertain that access was not forbidden to women in general, as other scholars have argued so far. On the contrary, legislation refers in particular to women and children who were also Christian.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the social and political status of Turks in Venice should be also considered. Contrary to other communities of strangers living in the city, such as the Jews or Greeks, Turkish merchants had neither a well-defined internal organization, nor ‘national’ charitable institutions. Their residence within the urban space was closely dependent on the agreements between the Venetian government and the Ottoman authorities, which fluctuated in an ever-changing scenario (Pedani 2010, 27).

In light of this, the *Fondaco* likely represented an important point of reference especially for Turkish women: it was a sort of ‘border territory’, where they could, for example, obtain authorization to enter or leave the city; but also a means of converting to Catholicism or Islam, according to the authority (Muslim or Christian) to whom individuals addressed their request. In addition to Aisè’s experience of the *Fondaco*, the story of a young Turkish woman, who converted to Catholicism at the beginning of the seventeenth century, is relevant to the argument: in 1622, the woman in question found protection inside the building asking an Ottoman official the permission to leave Venice and go back to her own faith (Vanzan 1996, 330–331; Minchella 2014, 23).

Standing before the Venetian magistracy, and with the help of an interpreter, Aisè stated in Turkish that she had been born in Livorno to Christian parents before falling into Ottoman hands at

the age of six, when she was boarded on a corsair ship along with her father and brother. She was then taken to Constantinople by a general of the Turkish imperial army and she lived as a Muslim for over twenty years. According to Aisè, after the death of the Ottoman functionary, she was sold to an Armenian who took her to Cephalonia, where he abandoned her.⁴¹ The magistracy was interested in knowing how she arrived in Venice and what religion she professed, so the woman continued the story of her many travels by sea monitored by a series of intermediaries and mobility permits. From Cephalonia, she reached Corfu thanks to a license of the general commissioner Grimani. There she spent ‘fifteen days of contumacy’ before being able to set sail for Venice.⁴²

However, Aisè’s statement did not tally with the information that an inhabitant of Zakynthos had given to the magistrates in the meantime. The woman had completely left out a stage of her journey: according to the witness, Aisè had lived on Zakynthos for two years as an Orthodox Christian and worked for Venetians as a servant. He also stated that she had a son, whom she bore to the Christian Armenian who had sent her there, and who had died in infancy. The magistrate decided to arrest her and after some time sent her to the *Casa dei Catecumeni*, where she was baptized *sub conditione*, taking the name Maria.⁴³

Casa dei Catecumeni: Defining Religious Affiliation

According to historiography, this practice was pretty common in the Italian peninsula in the early modern period, especially when people declared to be born in places considered as ‘mostly Christian’. Generally, religious authorities opted for a conditional baptism when they doubted that a person had already been baptized, or when they were unsure whether the sacrament had been celebrated in conformity with the requirements of the Catholic Church. These issues arose in particular during the Counter-Reformation, when the Roman Church reaffirmed the unbreakable and uniform nature of the sacraments (Prosperi 2006, 1–65, 56; Broggio, et al. 2009; Boccadamo 2010, 216–17).

Conditional baptism should be considered through the lens of the doctrinal and theological debates of the time, but the formula *sub conditione* could also be a significant legal tool in the administration of justice. For example, it could have been a solution in the absence of a baptism certificate or a distinct social network. In my opinion, it could also have been a way to avoid further investigations, in particular when a more accurate examination did not fit with contingencies or with the institution’s main goals. Our sources give the impression that the priority of the *Casa dei Catecumeni* was to offer protection to lone women without ‘roots’ within the urban fabric, thus providing them with a more defined social role (not only within Catholic society, but, more broadly, in the city of Venice). Considering the above, it is interesting to note that the transition of the woman

to the religious institution occurred at the request of a lay magistracy, and not with the Inquisition's mediation, as it generally happened in other Italian cities (Caffiero 2010, 312).

The acceptance by the *Casa dei Catecumeni* and the subsequent conversion, implied the registration of Aisè's identity along which went hand in hand with a process of acquisition of rights and duties. Sacraments, therefore, were actually collective rituals and crucial social practices, which sanctioned membership to the local community. In fact, the *Casa dei Catecumeni* in Venice was the result of the collaboration between the Venetian ecclesiastical authorities, lay patricians, colony administrators and the Jesuits, which is why we can say that this institution used conversion also as a means of state-building and as a tool for implementing migration policies (Ortega, 2008, 334; Rothman, 2006). People from Ottoman lands, converts – and women in particular – were included in new kinship networks. Many converted women were employed as domestic servants in families that were linked to this institution, and often, thanks to donations from benefactors, the *Casa dei Catecumeni* guaranteed a dowry to some of the unmarried women. It was not a mere coincidence, thus, that several young Turkish women were sent to the Venetian *Casa dei Catecumeni*, even if they had been already converted in the domains (Vanzan, 1996, 331).

This institution shaped a new 'official' identity for Aisè, ensuring that, in case she had not been baptized incorrectly or not baptized at all, she was now clearly and unequivocally a Catholic. Though, the ritual was followed by some measures of local acceptance and integration: it was clearly marked by dressing in specific clothing, alternative social networks, a profession and a Christian name. As recent studies have asserted, therefore, conversion was not motivated just by religious concerns, rather it was influenced by social relations, family tensions and economic and political contexts as well. When the available documentation allows to inter-weave different types of sources, the connection between all these factors becomes more visible (Foa, and Scaraffia, 1996; Allegra 1996; Fabre 1999; García-Arenal 2001; Mills, and Grafton 2003; Poutrin 2012; Ditchfield, and Smith, 2017).⁴⁴

Following those scholars who analyze more 'how' people converted in the early modern period than the choices of single converts, the story of Aisè allows to consider the phenomenon of religious conversion also as a practice for personal identification and for the control of female mobility. As stated before, when women were required to register it was usually because of matters related to morality. However, it was actually solitude along with a lack of networks, which was considered dangerous for social order. On the one hand, the registration of Aisè's identity was required by the institution; on the other, the subsequent identification of the woman allowed her to access local membership and enjoy the city's economic and social resources (Caglioti 2008; Bellavitis, et al. 2009; Fosi 2011).

After some time Aisè moved to Rome, where she applied to be baptized again at the Roman *Casa dei Catecumeni*. This time she presented herself with the name Aisè, declaring that she was a Muslim, probably to take advantage of the institution's benefits once more. However, in 1683 she was recognized in Piazza Navona by Giovanni de Luca, an Armenian merchant from Venice who had a shop in St Mark's Square where she used to go. We do not know exactly how events unfolded but what emerges from the documentation is that the merchant was called to testify at the *Casa dei Catecumeni* in Rome. He stated that he knew the woman by a different name and affirmed that she had already been baptized in Venice, where he had seen her attend the church and using the rosary. The *Casa dei Catecumeni*'s notary denounced Aisè to the Inquisition, but he forgot to ask the Armenian for a detailed physical description of the woman, which would have allowed the inquisitors to identify her.⁴⁵

From the analysis of the documentation, it is not possible to establish why Aisè moved to Rome, and much less the circumstances of that encounter. Inquisitorial records are replete with cases in which people crossed paths, often meeting in the most frequented Mediterranean cities. However, it was more likely that the episode in Piazza Navona was not just an accident.

Holy Office: The Physical Description as a Proof of Identity

One significant fact is particularly relevant to the analysis: the very omission of Aisè's physical description in the Armenian's testimony legally precluded the conclusion of the trial. We know this from a letter of the Sacred Congregation sent to the doge in February 1684 and by a precise instruction for the Venetian Inquisitor:

19 February 1684

Due to the notary's carelessness, the Armenian has not visually recognized or even described the woman in order to ascertain her identity, the trial is flawed and the sentence remains equally impeded.⁴⁶

Although the word 'identity' is widely used by historians, it is very uncommon to find it in a seventeenth-century document. At this point we could ask ourselves what contemporaries really meant by 'identity'. In this specific context the expression does not fit the modern concept of the term, namely 'to be a specific person and not another'. Instead, it seems to be more similar in significance to 'identification', intended in the sense of the act of recognizing something or someone as part of a socially produced network. In the context of the inquisitorial trial, therefore, the woman's physical aspect had to match the descriptions provided by the witnesses, thus locating her in the said network.⁴⁷

The Roman Inquisition thus requested an immediate search for the Armenian merchant and his fellow countrymen, who in the meantime had returned to the lagoon city, to obtain a detailed description of the woman. In March 1684, the Venetian Inquisition thus instructed the informative trial and gathered the documentation and testimonies requested by Rome, including a copy of Aisè's statement taken by the *Cinque Savi* and the certificate of her baptism.⁴⁸

This situation is significant not because it illustrates the difficulty in identifying individuals, but for the centrality of the physical aspect – even more than language, clothing and ritual practices – in the process of identification. I suggest that it was commonly accepted that clothes, language and even names could be easily changed in the early modern Mediterranean. The same was not equally true for the body. Physical characteristics, in some occasions, could become a binding instrument in identifying a specific person. On the other side, language and manners decoded and formalized an affiliation, to some extent. We can thus notice that the alleged ‘opacity’ and the ‘untrustworthiness’ of the information about a person's physical appearance can be questioned (Groebner 2001, 15–27), as the testimonies in Aisè's trial clearly demonstrated, like for example, the statement by Abbot Zeno, cited at the beginning of this article.

In light of this, we can question how common this practice was as part of the inquisitorial procedure. Observing carefully the Abbot's words, it is possible to note that his declarations were clearly formulated on the basis of a pre-existing model. Indeed, the Roman Congregation had sent to the Venetian Inquisition a detailed description of the woman, in order to compare it with the witnesses' oral statements. Moreover, the Congregation instructed the local tribunal to act in the ‘usual way’ (*in forma solita*), so referring to specific and already fixed criteria. According to a famous inquisitorial manual of the seventeenth century, the *Sacro Arsenale* by Eliseo Masini, the inquisitor had to examine the complainant about the personal details of the accused, such as ‘name, surname, father, country, profession, domicile, age’, also reporting an accurate physical description: ‘height, face, beard, and so on’.⁴⁹

Of course, it was not always possible or necessary to identify a person, especially if they moved from one place to another (Kosto 2016, 290). Yet I believe that the identification process did not necessarily depend on distance, but rather on the mobility between one urban community and another. Social networks, thus, were a key feature in constructing the identification process. These networks, in fact, often went beyond geographical borders and thus widened the possibility of recognizing an individual ‘trans-locally’. Aisè moved between distanced places as well as within different jurisdictional spaces and, in the end, it was possible to identify her because someone could describe her physical appearance in both Rome and Venice.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the woman had tried to use similar

points of reference in both cities (the *Casa dei Catecumeni* and then probably the relationship with the Armenian merchant who denounced her).

The testimony of Orsetta di Ponte, the prioress of the *Catecumeni*, who was heard on March 24, provides another version of the events and leads us to the origin of the story. According to her, Aisè actually showed up twice at the Venetian *Casa dei Catecumeni*. The first time she was sent there by the Archbishop of Corfu. On that occasion she was dressed ‘alla schiavona’ with her face partially covered by a linen veil.⁵¹ Pretending not to speak Italian but only Turkish, Aisè stated that she was the daughter of a great pasha, that she had seven corsair brothers, and that she wanted to convert to Christianity. Once again, Aisè had given an account of her past which did not match the one that she had provided on other occasions. Furthermore, according to the prioress, she gave herself away by speaking in Italian whilst conversing with the interpreter. On that occasion she said that if they refused to baptize her in Venice, she would try to get it done elsewhere. These words lead back to the concrete possibility that individuals had to move and identify themselves in different ways according to contingent needs and objectives.⁵²

Sent away from the *Casa dei Catecumeni* in Venice, Aisè went to live at the *Fondaco dei Turchi*, where she was seen with the rosary and denounced to the *Cinque Savi*, to whom she presented herself saying that she was a Muslim and asked the permission to sail to Constantinople.⁵³ In Venice the Inquisitorial trial ended with the informative phase and for now we do not know what happened in Rome. Yet, this is a suitable case study for assessing the negotiations that took place between institutions and social actors. Moreover, it allows to reflect on the relevant role of a series of intermediaries: especially in relation to women, they intervened to control and facilitate their mobility as well as to provide authorities with crucial information. This enables us to move to the next analysis.

Between Written Documents and Oral Testimonies: The Registration of Greek Orthodox Women

Identification and Urban Resources

Shifting the attention from administrative records to judicial proceedings has made it possible to explore a series of identification practices that had previously been ignored by scholars. Above all, the focus on migrant women – especially those who belonged to a religious minority – has been crucial in distinguishing between the circumstances in which mobility was formally registered and those in which it was controlled from below. In this regard, the identification process related to the inheritance of a Greek benefactor has turned out to be particularly representative. The procedure to obtain the legacies of Tommaso Flangini, in fact, represents one of those rare occasions in which women had to register.⁵⁴

Contrary to what concerns other registration procedures, in this case women's mobility was not documented for reasons regarding morality or sexual honor. Instead, the registration was aimed at assigning – or eventually denying – rights and obligations of membership. As we have already observed thanks to Aisè's story, migrant women, like men, could mobilize economic resources and build up multiple social ties at different stages of their migration (Sharpe 2001; Green 2012). This case study helps to explore the very concept of distance (both in terms of time and space) on the basis of personal identification. In other words, could geographical mobility and temporary distance weigh on the possibility of individuals to demand certain rights, or otherwise effect the institution's ability to verify the legitimacy of their claims?

Tommaso Flangini (1558-1648) was a prominent member of the Greek Community in Venice – one of the largest foreign communities in the city, mainly for its political and financial relevance.⁵⁵ A native of Corfu, he was the scion of a very rich family, a lawyer, and also a merchant. Upon his death, part of his inheritance was donated to several charitable initiatives. Among others, he created a fund to provide Greek maidens with adequate dowries. Every year eligible girls had to register, and 10 names were selected by lot among the applicants; those who were chosen would obtain a concession of 100 ducats each (Korrè 2016).

Tommaso's will established that the women wishing to benefit from such gift had to go through a process of registration and identification. First of all, the eligible beneficiaries were supposed to be poor young women of Greek parentage, who lived in Venice or in the Venetian domains. Moreover, they had to marry a Greek man or enter a convent. The Greek origin, however, was not enough, since the applicants also had to demonstrate to follow the principles of Greek Orthodoxy. The selection procedure and subsequent verification were regulated thanks to the cooperation between Greek religious authorities and a lay magistracy, the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali e luoghi pii*. The first authenticated the documents and the second verified the conditions of the applications, eventually proceeding to investigate transgressions.⁵⁶

The applications were verified in two phases: first, a registration took place at the Greek Orthodox Church in Venice. On that occasion, candidates had to attest their origin and religious confession, showing a certificate of baptism. In addition to this, they also had to prove their poverty and good conduct, which instead were attested by the Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Greek chaplains of Saint George's Church.⁵⁷ They received a receipt (*bollettino*) that would allow them to claim the benefit at the appropriate time. Secondly, the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali* had to verify their marital status through a marriage certificate, authenticated by the Greek Orthodox authorities. The petitioners could collect the money promised only after they had married or entered a convent.⁵⁸

However, regulations allowed for certain exceptions and not all maidens were required to register their identity. For example, the daughters of Greek sailors who died while at the service of the Republic could obtain the economic benefit even without meeting all the requirements. That was the case of Isabetta, the daughter of a Greek from Chania and a Catholic. She obtained the endowment even if her parents were not both Orthodox Greeks and she got married under the rite of the Roman Church. This treatment was probably due to the relationship of trust between Isabetta's family and the Republic of Venice, which was already consolidated and also publicly demonstrated.⁵⁹

Moreover, the Venetian magistracy would consider the different geographical and political contexts in which the Greek women were asked to collect the required documents. In fact, in the mid-seventeenth century, the jurisdictional status of the Orthodox Greeks differed between the city of Venice and its domains. Within the lagoon, indeed, Greeks could enjoy a certain independence, since they disposed of a place of worship where sacraments were administered according to the Orthodox rite. In the 1694 Barbara, the daughter of a Greek captain, pleaded with the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali*, asking to be admitted to the extraction even though she was baptized as a Catholic. Barbara justified this fact arguing that when she lived in Bergamo with her parents there was no Orthodox Church in the city.⁶⁰

Intermediaries of Identification

This two-stage process entailed the need to verify that the person who was promised the dowry was indeed the same who got married. The Greek women could lay claims on the money even long after the gift was assigned. At the same time, despite the registration took place in Venice, most of the applicants lived in the Venetian domains or migrated there after obtaining the necessary economic support to get married. As the documentation shows, the women who registered were of very diverse origin, they came from Corfu, Cephalonia, Zakynthos, Sibenik, Pula, Kotor, and so on. Some of them left Venice only after registration, while others were living in the city but had been baptized elsewhere.⁶¹

We have already considered that long-distance mobility could make personal identification necessary. Nonetheless, migration usually complicated this very process. The Venetian magistracy had to deal with many different types of transgressions: for example, sometimes very rich and noble families tried to obtain the gift even if their daughters obviously did not need any economic help. This was possible because local ecclesiastical authorities, which were entitled to grant the certificates, would not dare to contradict such powerful families. In other cases, individuals used a different name, pretending to be the same person to whom the gift had been granted. It could also happen that the

certificates contained false information about marital status and date of birth, so that also widows and married women were able to claim the economic benefit.⁶²

We can assume that the falsification of these documents was mostly due to the lack of local authorities' knowledge about mobile actors. Indeed, the Venetian magistracy needed to collect information directly from the localities of the domains where the petitioners resided. This was possible through the transfer of documents between the city of Venice and the Greek territories, as well as their authentication by local institutions, which were not neutral entities. Orthodox authorities, for example, can be considered as part of the local community, since they were deeply involved in its social hierarchies and power relations. For these reasons, the cooperation of multiple intermediaries was crucial to identify the Greek women and validate their documentation.⁶³

In this context, intermediaries would be in charge of mediating between the economic interests of Greek families and the attempts of the public authorities to verify the identity of single beneficiaries. An example of this consists in the role played by the procurator (*procuratore*). Greek women who wished to receive the 100 ducats but lived far from Venice could nominate a procurator, namely a person in charge of collecting the gift on their behalf. In order to obtain the money to be delivered to the grantee, the procurator had to present the necessary documentation to the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali*. Very often, this person was the same that physically transferred the certificates from the place where the Greek women lived, or got married, to the city of Venice. He had to be an inhabitant of Venice, or someone who was present in the city at the moment of the request.⁶⁴

Even an in-depth analysis of the documentation does not always show the kind of relationship between the procurator and their clients. Sometimes they seemed to be chosen on the basis of defined criteria, for example high-profile personalities (such as Greek nobles or the religious authorities of the Greek Community of Venice) were appointed. Other times, the reason for the choice is unclear: procurators could also be relatives, friends or business partners of these women's fathers and husbands. On the one hand, their role was functional to the distribution of economic resources, on the other they were nominated by Greek families as their own representatives. Moreover, there is no evidence that their services were considered as a real profession which entailed remuneration.

The role of procurators, therefore, could be in some ways associated to the liminal position of the (better-studied) chief inhabitants of the parish (called the *capi contrada*). These figures have been described by recent studies not only as the authorities' informers or envoys, but also as proper mediators between public institutions and micro urban communities, which were typical subunits of the corporate societies of the early modern period (Swartz 1968; Kent 1981; Buono 2018; Antonielli 2018). Nevertheless, what differentiated the Greek women's prosecutors from chief inhabitants,

parish priests or constables, was their very ability to move, even physically, from one jurisdiction to another. In fact, they also acted as intermediaries between lay magistracies and Greek Orthodox authorities. This was possible because Greek women could benefit from extended social networks. The Greek Orthodox Community, to which they belonged, included the Greeks of Venice together with Greeks from other Venetian territories.

At this point, a question arises: could the documentation carried by procurators from one locality to another – even within the same jurisdiction – be considered automatically valid? The procedure to obtain Flangini's endowment provides insights on the presence of a shared administrative practice, which was accepted trans-locally in the Mediterranean. The exchange of certain documents, such as the certificates of baptism and marital status, would allow the process of identification even in the absence of the persons themselves. Nevertheless, these same documents had to be recognized and then validated by various authorities and intermediaries.

Personal vs Collective Gift

Here too, documents could be helpful, but not decisive: one could suspect that the attestations were false or inaccurate, but the need to attest the identity of petitioners was particularly complex, especially since many families treated this gift not as the property of the recipient, but as collective property that could be transferred.

A legal proceeding, dating to the beginning of the eighteenth century, gives us a sense of how the institutions in charge of regulating the concession of dowry conceived the gift differently from the social actors who applied for it. In March 1716, as every year, the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali* gathered together with the Greek religious authorities in the Orthodox Church of Venice. On that occasion, among the Greek girls who were entitled to receive Flangini's endowment, the name of Zoia Raftopulo was drawn out. Zoia was the daughter of two Greeks from Zakynthos. Almost ten years later, in 1728, a certain Zan Battista Sordina addressed the magistracy to collect the money on behalf of the woman.⁶⁵

In compliance with the regulations, the procurator showed some documents before receiving the gift. The marriage certificate had to prove the celebration of the union between Zoia and the Greek Cristoforo Costopulo. It dated from 1726 and attested that the marriage was officiated on the Island of Corfu. Moreover, Sordina presented a copy of the power of attorney (*procura*) which authorized him to collect the money on Zoia's behalf. This document had been subscribed by the spouses and then validated by a notary in the presence of two witnesses. The marriage certificate, instead, was written by an Orthodox priest and validated in the ecclesiastical chancery. Moreover, the *Bailo* of Corfu provided to ensure the accuracy of the required documents to the Venetian authorities.⁶⁶ Even

if Zoia had lost the receipt of the concession (*bollettino*), the magistracy could still verify the legitimacy of the privilege since her name was present into the official registers. In view of the above, 100 ducats were delivered to the procurator Sordina.⁶⁷

A few months later, someone else decided to address the *Procuratori sopra gli Ospedali* on behalf of the same woman. In 1729, Michiel Salamon was provided with the required documents, even if the information they contained did not match those supplied by the other procurator. For example, the marriage certificate attested that Zoia married a certain Michiel Livatino and their union was allegedly celebrated the same year on the island of Zakynthos, and not in Corfu as the other certificate stated. Furthermore, Salamon also presented a *procura*, which was allegedly subscribed by both Zoia and her husband. It was not until the magistracy verified the presence of Zoia in its registers, that it realized that the money had already been assigned.⁶⁸

It is highly probable, therefore, that the Venetian authorities would have not encountered any irregularity if Zoia had not lost the receipt of her concession. Apparently, the verification of the documents and the personal identification of the applicants were not always demanded. However, these practices became necessary in particular legal proceedings. The *Procuratori sopra gli Ospedali* considered the two procurators entitled to collect the gift because they both presented the required documents with the adequate subscriptions. The same goes for what concerned the Greek Orthodox Community. The chaplains of Saint George's Church oversaw the certificate delivered from Zakynthos and attested that Zoia married Michiel Livatino in September 1729, and the union was celebrated according to the Greek Orthodox rite. However, less than one year before they also had validated the certificate of the marriage between Zoia and Cristoforo Costopulo.⁶⁹

It was only after consulting the registers that the magistracy discovered a possible case of falsification: 'either in the first, or in the second case, documents have been fabricated which contain false information on the time, persons involved and place'.⁷⁰ At this point, one option remained: to mobilize the local courts in the Venetian domains and the social networks of the people involved. Even if Zoia asked for economic aid in Venice, she lived and got married in different Greek Islands. Therefore, she had to register her identity in different Mediterranean localities, and through different institutions. At the same time, Zoia had gradually built and maintained a composite social network that spanned from Venice, to Corfu, to Zakynthos.

Oral testimonies were an essential source of information able to override the lack of local knowledge about mobile actors. At the same time, these represented a crucial instrument in order to ascertain the accuracy of written documentation. (Herzog 2012; Buono 2015). The *Provveditori sopra agli Ospedali* sent all the certificates owned by the two presumed procurators to the Venetian Islands. In this way, local authorities could establish their validity by comparing them with parish registers

and notarial deeds, but also by questioning those who had produced the documentation, so that they could recognize their own handwriting.⁷¹

Moreover, in both Corfu and Zakynthos, the investigation also aimed to identify the petitioner. Was the woman the same person to whom the endowment had been entitled? It was from the statements of the very protagonists of this inquiry that the crucial element for the comprehension of the whole matter emerged: the woman asking for the endowment was not called Zoia but Dimitrulla, and the grantee was not Dimitrulla but her younger sister, Zoia. The latter was supposed to get married with Cristoforo Costopulo, her dowry being the 100 ducats from Flangini's fund, since her parents could not afford to give her such a sum. However, before the wedding was celebrated, she became very ill. Thus, her older sister Dimitrulla, who was still a maiden at the time, got married to Cristoforo on her behalf, and then claimed the endowment.⁷² Cristoforo seemed to have no qualms in declaring that:

Since the legacy was granted to Zogia, my wife's sister, we have used her name, since the same Zogia, who was still living, had agreed to give her sister the legacy to get married.⁷³

In my view, these declarations, which resulted in Cristoforo's imprisonment, are symptomatic of how institutions and social actors conceived, and consequently made use of the gift, differently. From the Greek families' perspective this endowment represented a resource to be shared within the kin group, and thus to them it was naturally possible to transmit it from a family member to another. To the institutions, however, this gift represented – at least in theory – an inalienable credit to be collected and administered exclusively by the grantee. That explains the necessity to personally identify the legitimate holder of the privilege.⁷⁴

The investigations that were conducted in Zakynthos found Cristoforo Costopulo guilty of claiming the endowment in place of its legal titular. Consequently, the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali* established the illegitimacy of that concession and ordered its refund.⁷⁵ At the same time, the other alleged husband, Michiel Livatino, was accused of falsifying the documents, since local authorities confirmed the marriage certificate was not accurate: according to the witnesses, Zoia (the younger sister) had already died by the date written in the document; furthermore, the two sisters did not belong to the same parish that was notified in the certificate. Finally, the priest declared that he had never celebrated that union.⁷⁶

Once again, we can notice a discrepancy between the people who were supposed to register their identity and those who could actually benefit from the registration. In this case, migrant women had to register and document their mobility in first person, although their husband represented the

actual beneficiary of the gift. Despite Zoia appeared in the magistracy's administrative records and Dimitrulla officially nominated a procurator, all the witnesses, and subsequently the Venetian magistracy, identified their husbands as those responsible for the operations to collect the endowment and for the fabrication of the documents.

To summarize and conclude, this chapter enhances the need to shift the focus of historical research from identity to identification practices. In my view, historians cannot use their sources to question 'who a person was', using modern categories of analysis, such as those of 'authenticity' or 'interiority'. Instead, scholars should inquire on 'how' identities were claimed, imposed, negotiated, and (sometimes) registered. As Joanne Rappaport has recently argued, 'the use of the word identity forces to perceive a solidity and permanence where there is flux'. On the contrary, the process of identification would assume a relationship among institutions, urban communities, and social actors. This aspect could emerge particularly through judicial records and by focusing on urban spaces, where one can observe better how classificatory categories were also made and re-made 'from below' (Rappaport, 2014).

At first, I considered a practice of registration of foreigners that since the end of the seventeenth century became particularly relevant and complex. The analysis of this type of documentation and the attempt to quantify the residence permits, has allowed to disclose a legal definition of foreigner, based on a clear-cut distinction between Venetian subjects and migrants from outside the Venetian domains. Then by considering gender, origin, profession, religion inter-sectionally, it was possible to note a certain flexibility in the legislation. Some categories of foreigners have turned out to be more susceptible to the provisions, while others were completely excluded.

Generally, public authorities enforced registration especially for people with whom they were less familiar, those who had less local social ties, in order to be able to recognize them when necessary. I believe that the need for registration was driven less by the intention to control foreigners than by the level of local knowledge. As mentioned before, what concerned authorities was not mobility, or 'foreignness' *per se*, but rather 'permanence' (Sahlins, 2004). They wished to define and register foreigners' identity knowing who they were, where they live, and what they were doing. The ultimate goal was to make them known and, thus, assimilated.

A gendered approach has led to question the historiographical assumptions about mobility and identification mentioned in the introduction. Despite this field of research has so far been focused mainly on police surveillance and border controls, this analysis helps to consider identification as a process that was neither just demanded from above, nor as something that occurred merely through registration (Rosental 2012). Although women's mobility was not always documented, the Venetian

sources clearly show that social, moral, and political control of mobility were exercised by both institutions and society at large, within a plurality of centers of power (Herzog 2004). In Aisè's case, for instance, it was possible to establish when registration of identity was required and other occasions when it was demanded by individuals. Practices for identification, therefore, also represented a means for assimilation of both male and female migrants, who could then access to the city's social and economic resources, as attested, for example, by the documentation relative to Flangini's legacy.

The last point that I would like to stress is the coexistence of written documents and orality, especially for what concerned the identification of women. Judicial sources, in particular, have allowed to reconstruct a reality in which written culture did not replace the crucial role of reputation and social networks. By exploring the attempts to identify migrant women and trace their mobility, it has been possible to note that written licenses and registrations were not always demanded. Documents mattered, certainly, but at times the oral testimonies of witnesses were even more important. As I have already pointed out, the intersection between written and oral culture was necessary not only in relation to urban mobility but also, to a certain extent, in relation to long-distance migration.

¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Sant'Uffizio (*SU*), b. 123, 9 May 1684 (my translation).

² More in general, on fictional narratives and their construction, see Zemon Davis (1983; 1987).

³ The article presents some of the main arguments of my dissertation: Bernardi (2020); it also resumes and expands what I have already asserted in: Bernardi and Pompermaier (2019).

⁴ There are many examples of migrants who presented themselves in different ways according to the social and cultural *milieux* in which they lived, especially in scholarship on religious conversions in the early modern Mediterranean. Among the works that have most influenced this research, see García-Arenal and Wiegers (2003); Zemon Davis (2006); Colley (2007); Subrahmanyam (2011). With regard to the Venetian context and in particular to female mobility, see Siebenhüner (2008); Dursteler (2011).

⁵ For a reflection about the importance of distinguishing the actual debate from past juridical and symbolic systems, see in particular, Ginzburg (2012).

⁶ With respect to Venice, see in particular: Braunstein (1977); Ravid (1987); Chambers and Pullan (1992); Molà (1994); Imhaus (1997); Concina (1997); Chauvard (1998); Ruspio (2007); Zannini (2009); van Gelder (2009); Orlando (2014); Grenet (2016).

⁷ Some studies have recently nuanced the perception of a gap between long and short distance mobility, in particular with regard to women's mobility paths: Fontaine (1996); Eve (2001); Arru and Ramella (2003), Moatti and Kaiser (2009); Canepari (2009); Harzig and Hoerder (2009); Green (2012, 783–84).

⁸ ASV, *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia* (*Esecutori*), b. 58, reg. 2, 28 May 1642, c. 5v (translation).

⁹ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 61r, 29 December 1583; *ivi*, cc. 61v-62r, 13 January 1583 *more veneto* (m.v.); ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 57, reg. 1, c. 57v, 30 December 1586.

¹⁰ ASV, *CL*, prima serie, b. 87, v. *Bestemmia*, cc. 211r-212v, 29 April 1637.

¹¹ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 61r, 29 December 1583; ASV, *CL*, b. 210, v. *forestieri*, cc. 791v-792r, 8 November 1612; ASV, *CL*, b. 12, v. *albergarie*, c. 419v, 24 September 1666; ASV, *Miscellanea stampe della Serenissima Repubblica* (*Miscellanea stampe*), b. 50, cc. not numbered, 22 April 1794.

¹² Rosa Salzberg mentions this procedure in recent works, although with different purposes and without providing a quantitative or a long-term analysis. See for example: Salzberg (2018; 2019); see also Bertrand (2017).

¹³ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 59, reg. 1, cc. 42r-42v, 17 March 1657.

¹⁴ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 58, reg. 1, c. 130r; *ivi*, c. 163r, 15 May 1630; *ivi*, c. 174v, 26 November 1631. In those years the census counted between 141,000 and 142,000 inhabitants.

¹⁵ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 58, reg. 2, c. 126r, 2 December 1651. In reality, the division by colour appeared in the documentation since the beginning of the seventeenth century.

¹⁶ For a critique of a single definition of ‘foreigner’ in the early modern period, see in particular: Herzog (2003); Sahlins 2004; Cerutti (2012); Prak (2018).

¹⁷ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 62v, 13 January 1583 m.v.

¹⁸ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 76, fasc. “Alcune Parti, Proclami, Leggi a stampa”, 1589.

¹⁹ ASV, *Cinque Savi*, seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 1, 29 March 1621.

²⁰ ASV, *Esecutori*, c. 68v, 18 July 1612; ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 58, Terminazioni, c. 85v, 28 May 1621; see also Malkiel (1991).

²¹ The accusation of crypto-Judaism usually implied an investigation about the past and the identity of the accused. In my opinion, the registration of their names could represent an important means of investigation. This hypothesis is confirmed by the use of the *bollettini* in some inquisitorial trials. Further insights are provided in my PhD thesis.

²² ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 57, reg. 1, c. 287v, 24 September 1597.

²³ Citizenship had similar eligibility criteria in early modern Europe. Additionally, 10 years is a canonical figure of speech in Roman law to denote a change of status, see in particular Costa (2001).

²⁴ ASV, *Sanità*, b. 3, c. 114r, 26 July 1624.

²⁵ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 63v, 14 May 1588.

²⁶ For example, ASV, *CL*, prima serie, b. 210, v. *forestieri*, cc. 791r-791v, 8 November 1612; ASV, *Esecutori*, bb. 60, 61, 62, 63, 64.

²⁷ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 75.

²⁸ ASV, *Esecutori*, bb. 57, 58, 59.

²⁹ Once again, the same thing can be noticed for what concern the citizenship. See Bellavitis (2001).

³⁰ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 62v, 13 January 1583 m.v. On the relationship between mobility and marginality, see for example: Leroy (1998); Cerutti (2003, 63).

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 58, reg. 2, 28 May 1642, c. 5v.

³³ ASV, *Esecutori*, b. 54, c. 91r, 11 August 1641.

³⁴ This argument has been extensively presented in my PhD thesis, where the activities of the single magistracies are analyzed in depth.

³⁵ The sources that I used are the following: the inquisitorial trial for ‘Mohammedanism’ initiated by the Holy Office of Venice in 1684, a copy of Aisè’s statement taken by the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* in 1682, and included in the inquisitorial file; the Venetian *Casa dei Catecumeni*’s registers. ASV, SU, b. 123; Archivio storico del Patriarcato di Venezia (ASPV), *Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Sezione Antica*, Catecumeni, Neofiti, reg. I; ASPV, *Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Sezione Antica*, Catecumeni, Registri dei Battesimi (1676-1687). The same case is tackled from a different perspective in Vanzan (1996, 329); Ortega (2008, 337); Minchella (2014, 89–93).

³⁶ The *Casa dei Catecumeni* was an institution founded during the Counter-Reformation with the aim of promoting the conversion of infidels. On the Venetian *Casa dei Catecumeni*, see in particular Rothman (2006); Ioly Zorattini (2008). In relation to other geographical and political contexts, also see: Caffiero (2004); Al Kalak and Pavan (2013); Mazur (2016); Marconcini (2016).

³⁷ ASV, SU, b. 123, 29 July 1682; the document mentions a license that was granted by the dragoman Zorzi. However, we do not know if this was a generic authorization or a written license to embark as a passenger for specific localities. Generally, to leave the *Fondaco* it was necessary to have a license (called *bollettino*) proving the payment of rent and storage of goods. ASV, *Cinque Savi*, seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 2, c. not numbered, 28 April 1627. The family of a woman, named Lucia, asked the *Cinque Savi* for a license in order to embark for Bosnia, after she had escaped from her hometown and converted to Christianity, in a similar way to Aisè.

³⁸ ASV, SU, b. 123, 29 July 1682. For a comparison with another cosmopolitan urban reality of the Italian peninsula, see in particular Santus (2019).

³⁹ ASV, *Cinque Savi*, seconda serie, b. 187, fasc. 9, c. not numbered, 23 March 1720.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, fasc. 1, c. not numbered, 29 March 1621.

⁴¹ ASV, SU, b. 123, 29 July 1682.

⁴² *Ivi*, testimony of Cristoforo de Medeci from Zakynthos.

⁴³ ASPV, *Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Sezione Antica*, Catecumeni, Neofiti, reg. I; ASPV, *Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Sezione Antica*, Catecumeni, Registri dei Battesimi (1676-1687); ASV, SU, b. 123, September 1682.

⁴⁴ To further explore this issue with a particular focus on the conversion narratives, see also: Malena and Calvi (2008); Keane (1997); Baer (2004); Solfaroli Camillocci and Pitassi (2010); Krstić (2011); Rothman (2012); Mazur and Shinn (2013); Perry (2005).

⁴⁵ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, 7 March 1684, testimony of Giovanni de Luca.

⁴⁶ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, 19 February 1684, letter of the Sacred Congregation to the Doge (my translation).

⁴⁷ For an etymological and linguistic analysis of the terms ‘identity’ and ‘identification’ see Buono (2014, 36–37).

⁴⁸ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, 19 February 1684, letter of the Sacred Congregation to the Doge.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*; Masini (1665, 34–35).

⁵⁰ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, testimonies by: the Armenian Giovanni de Luca, 7 March 1684; the Abbot Andrea Zeno, 9 March 1684; Battista Bramazza, the prior of the Venetian *Casa dei Catecumeni*, 9 March 1684; the Turk captain Antonio Rodosto, 14 March 1684; the Armenian Busato Caffa, 14 March 1684; Orsetta da Ponte, the prioress of the *Casa dei Catecumeni* in Venice, 24 May 1684; the catechumen Paolina Cornara, 24 May 1684.

⁵¹ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, 24 March 1684, testimony of Orsetta da Ponte. The adjective ‘schiavona’ refers to people from the region known in English as Dalmatia and other territories along the eastern Adriatic coast.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ ASV, *SU*, b. 123, 29 July 1682.

⁵⁴ ASV, *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali e luoghi pii (Ospedali)*, b. 151, reg. “Estrazioni di grazie a Donzelle 1665-1783”.

⁵⁵ On the Greek Community in Venice see in particular: Fedalto (1967); Tiepolo and Tonetti (2002); Orlando (2014, 89–98); Burke (2016) and Grenet (2016).

⁵⁶ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 151, fasc. “Catalogo donzelle graziate”, c. not numbered, “Punto del testamento Flangini a carte 26 passo c.”; *ivi*, c. not numbered, 24 April 1665. To study the “Commissaria Flangini” (1643-1797), I fully consulted the boxes (*buste*) 151, 152, 153. The *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali e luoghi pii* (1561-1797) was a magistracy in charge of administering and controlling the Venetian charitable institutions. In the 1586, the *Provveditori sopra gli Ospedali* were appointed to provide for the redemption of those subjects who had been enslaved by the Turks. Moreover, the magistracy was responsible for monitoring the endowments addressed to charitable institutions. Da Mosto (1937, 205).

⁵⁷ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 151, fasc. “Catalogo donzelle graziate”, c. not numbered, “Punto del testamento Flangini a carte 26 passo c.”; *ivi*, 24 aprile 1665. In the 1578, the Venetian government authorized the installation of the first Greek Archbishop of Philadelphia in Venice, Gabriel Seviros. He was the spiritual head of the Greeks in Venice and the representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

⁵⁸ *Ivi*, c. not numbered, 24 April 1665.

⁵⁹ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 153, c. not numbered, 24 February 1675; *ivi*, 17 March 1676; *ivi*, 6 September 1676.

⁶⁰ *Ivi*, c. not numbered, 26 September 1694.

⁶¹ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 151, reg. “Estrazioni di grazie a donzelle 1665-1783”.

⁶² ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 151, fasc. “Grazie a donzelle”, c. not numbered.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 153, c. not numbered, 26 March 1679.

⁶⁵ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 152, fasc. “Processi per la graziata Zoia Raftopulo”, c. 2r, 21 March 1716; *ivi*, cc. 1r-1v, 16 October 1729.

⁶⁶ The *Bailo* of Corfu was the leader of the Venetian delegation to the island of Corfu under the Venetian domination. He was the governor of the Island and the representative of the Venetian economic and political interests. See O’Connell (2009).

⁶⁷ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 152, fasc. “Processi per la graziata Zoia Raftopulo”, c. 6r, 28 April 1729.

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, c. 9r, 30 August 1729.

⁶⁹ *Ivi*, c. 10r, 14 June 1729.

⁷⁰ *Ivi*, c. 1v, 16 October 1729 (translation).

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 152, fasc. “Processi per la graziata Zoia Raftopulo”, c. 16v, 26 October 1729, testimony of Cristoforo Costopulo (translation); *ivi*, cc. 19v-20r, 26 October 1729, testimony of Dimitrulla.

⁷³ *Ivi*, cc. 19v-20r, 26 October, testimony of Cristoforo Costopulo.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, c. 22r, 27 October 1729.

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, cc. 34v-36v, 26 February 1729 m.v.

⁷⁶ ASV, *Ospedali*, b. 152, fasc. “Processi per la graziata Zoia Raftopulo”, cc. 25r-25v, 30 October, testimony of the Papà Antonio Notarà.

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