

Becoming Venetian: Conversion and Transformation in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean

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For both (primarily local) Jews and (primarily immigrant) Muslims, becoming Catholic in seventeenth-century Venice entailed a prolonged process of social transformation and insertion into new relations of patronage and surrogate kinship. This article traces these converts' long trajectories after baptism and their ongoing relationship with a charitable institution, the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni (Holy House of the Catechumens). It shows how the Pia Casa was instrumental in shaping distinct forms of charity and surveillance that brought together Venetian élites' corporate spiritual and civic claims while also furthering their individual and family interests by weaving dense networks of patronage. Ultimately, the article considers how conversion operated as a project of metropolitan subject making in the context of Venetian–Ottoman imperial competition.

Keywords: Catholic Reformation; Conversion; Ottoman Empire; Pia Casa dei Catecumeni; Venice

Introduction

Against a prevalent Orientalizing disposition, which considers 'East' and 'West' as trans-historical, immutable, and self-contained binaries, historians of the early modern Mediterranean have for a long time emphasized the convergence and interdependence of sociocultural processes across the region. If earlier generations privileged the military, diplomatic, and economic aspects of cross-Mediterranean exchange, scholars now seek to understand how mundane and ongoing contacts between members of different societies (and of differentially situated members within each society) shaped emerging cultural categories of difference and sameness.¹

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The study of religious conversion in particular can benefit from and contribute to this new historiographical interest, as it highlights the need to take into account the mobility of people and signifying practices across political and religious boundaries, and to develop new conceptual tools for thinking about the relationship between the cosmographies and cultural categories of different groups. To understand this relationship, conversion should be studied as a set of historically-shifting social practices rather than as individual spiritual choices.

Yet much work on religious conversion in the early modern Mediterranean has tended to focus precisely on the spiritual motivations and sincerity of converts, i.e., whether people converted due to deep conviction or because of the material benefits that conversion promised to bring.² As anthropologists Talal Asad and Webb Keane argue, motivation and sincerity are not only extremely hard to gauge from available documentation (usually missionary), but also lack analytical rigour, embedded as they are in specifically modern Christian understandings of intentionality, interiority, and authenticity.³ Scholars who have embraced these critiques are now emphasizing how converts and missionaries differentially understood the stakes involved in conversion, and contextualize converts' transition from one moral community to another within wider imperial and colonial interests.⁴

In line with these historiographic shifts, this study explores not so much why people converted, but how. It asks what were the assumptions — in a specific institutional context — about how to transform difference into sameness, and with what consequences for different kinds of converts and their social relations. To this end, the article follows the longer trajectories after baptism of Muslim and Jewish converts to Catholicism in seventeenth-century Venice, as shaped by one of the key institutions that mediated the ongoing relationship between converts, local élites, and the Venetian state, the *Pia Casa dei Catecumeni* (Holy House of the Catechumens).⁵ In studying the Pia Casa archives, I am less interested in either institutional or Church history per se. Rather, I view religious conversion as a set of interlinked social practices employed in the project of subject making and the perpetuation of imperial power relations in the Venetian state. I show how the Pia Casa was instrumental in shaping distinct forms of charity that brought together Venetian élites' corporate spiritual and civic claims, and at the same time furthered their individual and family interests by weaving dense vertical and horizontal networks of patronage. Through the negotiation of converts' adoption contracts, dowries, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities, and the periodic distribution of alms, the institution also served as a laboratory for the elaboration of practices of social discipline and community-building, which were key to Venetian élites' mythic self-representations as the benevolent custodians of a well-run republic.⁶

The process of religious conversion in seventeenth-century Venice was inseparable from two other projects critical to the early modern state: the encouragement of immigration from the Ottoman Empire and the permanent settlement of frontier populations, on the one hand, and the attempt to subject the populace to parish-based forms of social discipline and supervision through Church activities, such as regular confession and communion, on the other.⁷ While focusing on how conversion related

to immigration and social discipline in the Venetian metropole, this study seeks to place these projects squarely within their imperial context.⁸ It therefore explores how both Venetian administrators and converts themselves exercised conversion not as a miraculous moment of rebirth but as a lifelong process intended to transform foreigners into loyal juridical subjects of metropolitan state and society.

Medieval Christian theologians conceived of conversion as a process of radical transformation and creation anew.⁹ Post-Tridentine conversion policies still featured many elements which both assumed and sought to reinforce a complete severance of ties with a convert's previous life.¹⁰ At the same time, Venetian administrators dealing with converts tacitly acknowledged converts' ongoing ties with their unconverted kin. Indeed, such ties were sometimes encouraged, seen as a key financial and emotional resource in safeguarding converts' wellbeing, and as a first step in converting additional family members.¹¹ Tolerance of such ties could be interpreted as recognition of the ongoing embeddedness of converts in preexisting social relations, linking their presents with their pasts. Such continuity was often taken for granted in Ottoman Muslim notions of religious conversion as well.¹²

Indeed, seventeenth-century Venetian conversion policies were shaped not only by the awakened religious sentiments of the Catholic Reformation, but also by ongoing contact with Ottoman society, and by the political and economic exigencies of a changing Mediterranean more broadly. In particular, the need — recognized by many Venetian patricians — to maintain good relations with the Ottomans in the face of growing economic competition from Dutch, French, and English naval powers often produced less than enthusiastic responses to Muslims seeking to convert to Christianity. It also sometimes led to acquiescence in the face of Venetians who had converted to Islam. How, exactly, Catholic conversion operated as a set of practices through which Venetian élites came to think about and sought to overcome Ottoman political and religious otherness is the subject of this study.

Converting Subjects

The Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, established in Venice in 1557 to shelter, instruct, and ultimately baptize its charges, was the fruit of collaboration between Venetian ecclesiastical authorities, Jesuits, lay patricians, and colonial administrators.¹³ It was modelled on a similar House established by the Jesuits in Rome in 1543 in response to calls for apostolic rejuvenation of the Church.¹⁴ Yet it was also deeply rooted in a long and thriving tradition of semi-autonomous charitable institutions in Venice as elsewhere on the Italian peninsula predating the Catholic Reformation. Such institutions provided an opportunity for patricians and non-patrician well-to-do citizens alike to exercise patriarchal modes of authority by distributing charity to socially inferior members of the congregation, be they poorer men, youth, or women.¹⁵ In the case of the Pia Casa, a general injunction to engage in charitable works was augmented by the specific Church teaching that 'a person who helped save

the soul of an unbeliever earned divine blessing, performing a deed that would be remembered at heaven's gate'.¹⁶

Several historians have turned their attention to the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni of Venice. Some, notably Brian Pullan and Benjamin Ravid, have focused on its coercive mechanisms, particularly vis-à-vis Jews, in the context of Tridentine Reform, while others, like Monica Chojnacka and Anna Vanzan, have emphasized its charitable activities and role in facilitating patronage across geographical, gendered, and economic divides.¹⁷ In my analysis below, I have sought not only to combine these two perspectives, and to treat the conversion of Jews and Muslims as one analytical field, but to identify how, as a nexus of benevolence and discipline, the Pia Casa functioned as an imperial state institution. Rather than view the House as distinct from its charges, I call attention to the transformative quality of institutional practices to define and redefine the institution itself, and all of those who were involved in its operations, including its citizen and patrician patrons.

Indeed, if part of the Pia Casa's mission was to integrate converts and governors into preexisting, local networks of patronage, in fundamental ways the House was also an imperial institution, linking the Venetian metropole with its colonies and frontier regions. Frequently, House governors bore personal ties to the Levant through years of service as Venetian colonial officials or as merchants in the Ottoman Empire. High-ranking Venetian clergymen serving in the colonies were also part of the House's extended patronage network, and were encouraged to join the board of governors while in Venice.¹⁸ They sent donations to the House, facilitated the transfer of potential catechumens to the metropole, and occasionally hired neophytes shortly after their baptism to serve in their households.¹⁹

Links with frontier colonies were also forged through the hiring of émigrés to serve in a variety of positions in the Pia Casa administration. For example, in choosing priors for the House, preference was given to candidates who commanded Greek, Hebrew, or Turkish 'so they could understand, and instruct, similar infidels'.²⁰ Not surprisingly, many priors and prioresses were immigrants from Venice's extensive colonies in the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean, and some were converts themselves.²¹ Such connections were often capitalized upon. Permission to return to the frontier was almost invariably granted to converts who sought it, especially if they went there to serve colonial officials or in the military.²² In this way, converts and their patrons extended the Venetian moral community to the frontier, if not beyond it. Occasional references to catechumens sent to the House by colonial magistracies suggest that it was operative in consolidating ties with colonized populations, and perhaps eliciting consent in places where Venetian rule was premised primarily on military and economic might.²³

The Pia Casa also fostered horizontal and vertical ties across estates in Venetian society and throughout the empire through fundraising. Most funding was secured from bequests left to the Pia Casa by patricians and citizens, both men and women, and, significantly, also by leading clergymen from the *Terraferma* and the *Stato da Mar*.²⁴ Additional funding was procured through fundraising campaigns by patented convert

alms-collectors in various Venetian territories, including campaigns dedicated to specific converts.²⁵ This practice meshed well with broader Venetian policies intended to further the Serenissima's hegemony on the mainland and in the maritime colonies. The administration of alms-collecting patents was also one of the mechanisms through which the Pia Casa sought to establish its jurisdiction over all converts of the Venetian state. Rather than allow converts to beg for charity on their own, the Pia Casa sent authorized converts on annual alms-collecting campaigns throughout all the churches of a given territory, the proceeds of which were then to be distributed among eligible converts.²⁶ For example, a contract and alms-collecting patent issued in 1619 to the Jewish convert Antonio Giustiniano forbade any other converts from independently collecting alms on the Terraferma. Instead, they were to be 'persuaded to return to the said Pia Casa their mother, assuring them that they will be provided for by the governors, as is their intention and thought'. The patent conceives of Venetian territory as a unified Christian space, where the Pia Casa's moral authority, and, hence, ability to raise funds for its cause, goes unchallenged. Yet its careful attention to the need to collaborate with and appease both local clergy and Venetian colonial administrators suggests a *de facto* recognition of the Pia Casa's limited efficacy outside the city proper.²⁷ The governors' repeated correspondence with colonial administrators and clergy pledging them to assist its alms-collectors confirms this sense.

In the period 1590–1670, the Pia Casa hosted a total of approximately 1,300 catechumens, between five and fifty a year, usually for a month or two prior to baptism and shortly thereafter, but occasionally for significantly shorter or longer periods.²⁸ Before they could be baptized and received into the new faith, candidates underwent a period of catechetical instruction by the House prior, were taught to recite their prayers, and attended mass and confession regularly.²⁹ The Pia Casa employed a variety of techniques intended to produce disciplined, controllable subjects. Catechumens were subjected to monastic-style time discipline, with clear limits on their hours of sleep, and with activities carefully regulated and scheduled for different times of day.³⁰ Male and female catechumens were socialized into normative gender roles, with absolute segregation between the sexes. Female catechumens were restricted to the premises and employed in cooking, spinning, and washing laundry.³¹

Jews made about a quarter of catechumens in the Pia Casa in this period, and many came to the House with or following relatives. A large percentage of these Jewish catechumens, 43% of men and 64% of women, were Venetian. The now extensive scholarship on Venetian Jewry has alerted us to important socioeconomic and cultural differences within the ghetto population — between 'Levantine' and 'Ponentine' with roots and lingering contacts in the Spanish and Ottoman Empires, 'Germans' or Ashkenazi Jews, and Italian Jews. Still, all Venetian Jewish converts shared some important features. Most obviously, almost all spoke some variety of Italian, and many wrote and read it as well. Long before their conversion, many Jewish converts formed part of kinship, social, intellectual, and commercial networks extending beyond the ghetto walls and indeed beyond Venice and the Mediterranean. Such networks and skills proved decisive in shaping converts' future residential and professional paths. It also made relapse following a chance

encounter with former coreligionists, especially unconverted relatives, more plausible in governors' eyes, warranting prolonged seclusion in the House prior to baptism.³²

But, perhaps even more than other similar contemporary institutions, the Venetian Pia Casa did not target only local Jews. Quite a few Jewish catechumens came from other parts of the Italian peninsula (26%), the rest of Europe (8%), Ottoman commercial centres such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Thessalonica (8.6%), Venetian and other Mediterranean colonies (3.4%), and North Africa (2.3%). But the majority of catechumens, about three-quarters, were Muslims, mostly from the Ottoman Balkans (58%), North Africa (13.5%), the Greek Islands (12%), and Anatolia (6.7%). Only 6.3% came from the Black Sea, Ottoman Syria and Palestine, and the Safavid and Mughal empires combined.³³ In other words, most converts came from the Ottoman–Venetian frontier and from Mediterranean regions with a long history as European colonies or trading posts, and thus may have had some prior contact with the Venetian world; quite a few may have been first generation Muslims.³⁴

Some Muslim catechumens were soldiers in the Venetian army on the mainland or oarsmen and mariners in the Venetian fleet. They were sent to the House by or with the consent of their commanders, and usually returned to their posts shortly after baptism. Others came on their own, or were sent specifically for their baptism from Venice's Adriatic and Mediterranean colonies.³⁵ But the large majority of Muslim converts were domestic slaves in Venetian patrician and citizen households, where they might have served for years prior to their conversion.³⁶ Although they were immigrants, and thus 'poor in relational resources', as historian Simona Cerutti puts it, long sojourns in Venice made at least some of them less poor in such resources than is sometimes assumed.³⁷ Still, since slaves often arrived in Venice alone, their separation from natal kin and community as a precondition for conversion had already been accomplished, obviating the need to confine them to the Pia Casa for long periods.³⁸ Indeed, from the 1640s on, rather than seclusion in the confines of the Pia Casa, many Muslim catechumens, especially children and women, who had already been employed as domestic slaves around the city, remained in their masters' homes while receiving catechetical instruction. Although registered with the Pia Casa, they came to the House only for their baptism ceremony, which could take place anywhere between a day and over a year from the date of their admittance as 'children of the House'.³⁹ There is evidence to suggest that some converts were even registered with the Pia Casa after their catechization and baptism elsewhere. These procedures did not supplant catechization in the Pia Casa, but rather seem to reflect the institution's effort to exert authority over all convert baptisms in Venice.⁴⁰

Attending to catechumens' occupational profile should not obscure the fact that the majority of them ranged from newborns to teenagers.⁴¹ This is significant, in that the younger the converts the more their future depended on governors' efforts to marry them off honourably by financing their dowries or to place them in artisanal apprenticeships, in convents, in the military or navy, or in domestic service. Efforts to secure converts' future took different paths, depending on how governors perceived the moral, intellectual, and physical capacities that age, gender, ethnic origin, level of education, and pedigree

bestowed on different kinds of people. Converts' future paths were also shaped by Jewish and Muslim converts' disparate access to local social networks.

Of the roughly 1,300 catechumens who entered the Pia Casa from 1590 to 1670, over 160 (12%) did so with or following relatives. In several cases, nuclear families from the Ottoman Empire arrived in the House together, and, significantly, in all cases they departed en bloc shortly after baptism to resettle outside Venice, often in the frontier.⁴² Here, conversion fitted not only into a familial search for social mobility, but also within an imperial logic that sought to repopulate the frontier and extend the metropolitan moral community to it. More frequently, a converting parent decided to take his or her children along.⁴³ This could reflect a search for mobility and better prospects upon a spouse's death, or an attempt to break free from an unhappy marriage.⁴⁴ The records rarely reveal the motivations behind such moves, but it is safe to assume that the arrival of free Muslim Ottoman women and children in the Pia Casa was part of a larger migration wave in search of new prospects. A case in point is that of the thirty-year-old widow Salige from Corquiza (Korce in Albania), who arrived in the Pia Casa with her two children, a twenty-five-year-old fellow townswoman, and two other children on 1 July 1665. All six, along with another Muslim convert and her two children, were baptized in a single public ceremony in the church of the Jesuits two months later. With the governors' blessing, a few weeks after baptism the three women went to live together on their own in a house in *Corte Morosina* in the parish of S. Martin, while their children dispersed: one became an apprentice to a local weaver, and the other five were placed as domestic servants in Venice, Padua, and Cremona.⁴⁵ The children's divergent paths proved key to their future: In 1670, all five children who remained in the Veneto region received funds from a bequest left to the House, while the girl sent to Cremona was never mentioned in the records again, suggesting that her tracks were lost.⁴⁶

By observing that conversion could facilitate family mobility we should not assume 'family' as the agent of purposive action. This is well illustrated by the de Castro family, whose five adult siblings passed through the Pia Casa in considerable intervals: Salamon, Mosè, Sara, Rachel, and Abram, children of Bianca and the late Isach de Castro, a well-respected Venetian Jewish family of Iberian descent, were all baptized between 1650 and 1665.⁴⁷ The timing and order of their arrival at the Pia Casa, and their respective ages at the time, are significant: First to convert were the two younger sons, then their two youngest sisters. All four were between eighteen and twenty at the time of their baptism. In 1657, when the youngest sister Rachel arrived in the Pia Casa, she was accompanied by her widowed mother, Bianca, who was sixty at the time. Perhaps Bianca preferred baptism over severing ties with four of her five children; perhaps the prospect of staying by herself in old age without even her youngest daughter to assist her seemed bleak enough to warrant such a move. Finally, when the last sibling to convert, Abram, set foot in the Pia Casa in 1665, at age forty, he brought along his wife Stella and their five toddler children.⁴⁸ Abram was the eldest, and, unlike his siblings, had already established a family of his own at the time of conversion. Like his mother, his ultimate baptism — years after his four siblings — suggests a reluctant surrender to a move that was probably not of his own making, but that would keep the

clan together. Indeed, upon baptism Abram, Stella, and their children joined Abram's siblings in the family house in the parish of S. Maurizio.

Unlike the de Castros, the vast majority of converts arrived in the Pia Casa alone and left it alone. Even when parents arrived with their children, they were likely to be separated and set on different tracks, sometimes for good, with the children sent to work or given in adoption to Venetian families.⁴⁹ To understand the logic of this separation of convert parents from their children we should look at the long-term patronage claimed by the Pia Casa over neophytes.

Perhaps the key principle to organize the Pia Casa's relationship with neophytes was the reconfiguration and sometimes severance of former kinship ties, while using a patriarchal vocabulary to define the different positions of authority within the institution. Catechumens were referred to as 'children of the House' in all official documentation, a designation that stuck, regardless of age, for years after baptism. Governors, on the other hand, were 'brothers,' following confraternities' official egalitarian ideology (if quite tenuous practice). They also figured as 'fathers' to the catechumens, over whose destinies they exerted enormous control. The two patrician or citizen ladies appointed to counsel the prioress on the management of the female wing were similarly to show converts 'charity, and maternal love'.⁵⁰

This patriarchal logic was articulated in myriad charitable and disciplinary practices which cemented a lifelong bond between neophytes and the Pia Casa, and which defined 'convertthood' for years after baptism. The Pia Casa extended its paternal care not only to converts, but to well-behaved converts' children as well. In some cases, the governors stepped in to support converts' children upon a parent's death. At least as frequently, intervention was sought out by the convert parents themselves.⁵¹ By scaling charity to match converts' moral conduct, the governors not only encouraged their former charges to meet their standards of good behaviour, but on occasion intervened as surrogate parents, with lifelong ties to and claims over converts and their families.

Beyond Baptism: Godparenthood and Patronage

In distinction from the Ottoman sultan's direct patronage and sponsorship of converts to Islam, in Venice the relationship between the state and the convert to Catholicism was mediated by the Pia Casa, which arranged godparents for converts' baptism ceremonies. Through these ceremonies sponsors were able to further their civic as well as spiritual claims.⁵² As the baptism ceremony helped forge spiritual kinship and establish or further patronage ties between godparent and convert-godchild, it also consolidated claims by the Pia Casa to be the convert's true parent. What makes the godparenthood of Venetian converts particularly interesting is that the parental figure with whom godparents were to establish co-parenthood relationships was not a person, but an institution — the Pia Casa itself, which, as we saw, claimed paternal guardianship over all 'children of the House'.

Of 304 Venetian converts whose godparents are known, 277 had one godparent, 23 had two, and only four — all of them women and girls — had three or four

godparents. The overwhelming majority of godparents were men, and the 18 godmothers on record sponsored mostly female converts (and two very young boys). Although Jews make up only a quarter of converts with known godparents, they constitute over half of those with multiple godparents, suggesting their greater insertion into local networks of patronage. In contrast, Muslim women were especially unlikely to receive multiple godparents — only two such cases are registered.⁵³

The majority of godparents of both Jewish and Muslim, female and male converts were patricians, but quite a few were citizens and artisans, occasional foreign dignitaries, and even servants. When two or more godparents were assigned, one was often patrician, the other citizen or artisan. This reflects the collaboration of patrician and citizen élites on the Pia Casa's board. It also alerts us to the fact that not all godparents assumed actual responsibilities vis-à-vis their godchildren, but were sometimes selected primarily for their social prominence, especially when multiple godparents were assigned.

In general, the practice of godparenthood in Venice, as in many other societies, strongly prohibited parents from serving as their children's baptismal sponsors.⁵⁴ This rule was repeatedly broken in the case of converts, for whom, as shown above, the Pia Casa governors often took the place of birth parents. Many converts' godparents, though by no means all, were House priors, governors, or their immediate kin, and, not infrequently, the convert's past or future masters and legal guardians.⁵⁵ Thus, baptismal sponsorship also strengthened the authority of individual governors and priors over neophytes, who became their godchildren or employees. In 1591, forty-seven-year-old Sabatai son of Isach of Ferrara was brought to the Pia Casa by one of the governors, Eusebio Renati, himself a Jewish convert, who eventually served as Sabatai's baptismal godfather four months later.⁵⁶ Renati was not the only governor to sponsor converts: The citizen Paolo Cremona, longtime governor of the Pia Casa and one of two commissioners in charge of an enormous bequest distributed to converts, was either godfather or master to at least six converts.⁵⁷ Thirty-year-old Turkish slave Jesup, renamed Zanbattista, had as one of his godfathers the House prior, Gerolamo de Roca, also a convert. His second godfather, Serafin Serafinelli, a longtime governor of the House, was a commercial broker who later became president of the commercial brokers' guild.⁵⁸ Zanbattista's long career as a broker may have been facilitated by Serafinelli's own ties.⁵⁹ Such conflation of duties demonstrated in Cremona's and Serafinelli's cases must have been quite common, as later regulations specifically forbade governors from serving as converts' godparents, in order to prevent them from favouring their godchildren over other neophytes, and to encourage them to keep to their role as 'communal fathers' of the entire House.⁶⁰

Through baptismal sponsorship, even godparents who were not otherwise affiliated with the Pia Casa proved crucial to the House's operations, by furthering its patronage networks into new milieus. Unlike Rome, where a large percentage of the godfathers of Muslim converts were clergymen and foreign dignitaries, in Venice, the godfathers and godmothers of both Jewish and Muslim converts were primarily local, lay patricians, usually not of the first rank of the political élite, but rather members of the patriciate's minor branches, or the children or younger siblings of important state

officials, as well as quite a few well-to-do citizens.⁶¹ Yet even with less illustrious godfathers, not only convert godchildren, but the Pia Casa itself stood to gain powerful patrons. In the mercantile and artisanal milieus in which many converts could hope to eventually find employment, a merchant godfather could prove at least as useful as a diplomat or a high-ranking civil servant.

In addition to weaving or strengthening patronal ties between converts, their godparents, and the Pia Casa, baptismal sponsorship could also reinforce cliental ties between older converts and the institution. By inviting older converts to sponsor the baptism of more recent catechumens the Pia Casa not only consolidated its existing ties with neophytes, but also celebrated their value as signs of the efficacy of its work: to be worthy godparents, converts had to first prove themselves as good Christians. Serving as godparents was thus a 'proof' of success as converts, and, indeed, as upstanding members of a locally-based Christian community.⁶²

One practice through which the localization of converts can be examined is their re-naming at baptism. Whereas some converts were recorded simply as 'the moor of X' or 'the Turk of Y', the majority were referred to by Christian names, sometimes even prior to their baptism. Unlike the Muslim and Jewish traditions, where converts were often given names which singled them out as converts, the names given to converts in Venice were frequently very common in the population at large.⁶³ Despite their generic nature, or perhaps precisely because of it, such names both indexed and solidified the convert's new membership in Venetian society. Furthermore, unlike other Venetians, whose personal names were 'above all a statement of the natal family', and hardly ever based on a godparent's name, converts' names not infrequently followed those of masters, godparents, or their relatives. Converts' names thus also reinforced their embeddedness in patronage systems and spiritual, rather than natal, kinship networks.⁶⁴

In other cases, converts' new names actually recalled their pre-Christian lives. Converts might be given Christian names which sounded similar to their original names.⁶⁵ Or they might keep their previous names.⁶⁶ Even when a new Christian name was registered at baptism, the old name might prevail: Sultana, a Muslim convert-turned-nun from Klis (Croatia), a frequent recipient of charity from the Pia Casa, was referred to by that name far more often than by either her Christian name, Lucia, or by her monastic name, Zuanna.⁶⁷ Cases such as this, in which converts retained their previous names, suggest continuity rather than a radical break with the past.

Becoming Local?

In theory, if not always in practice, conversion in Venice was to serve as an act of simultaneously becoming a Catholic and a Venetian juridical subject. Contemporary legislators often translated converts' new civic membership into concrete economic benefits and opportunities for social mobility via artisanal patents. Indeed, from the mid-seventeenth century on, papal bulls and Venetian senate decrees alike repeatedly

sought to guarantee converts' economic advancement by allowing them to exercise any trade or profession of their choosing without paying guild entrance fees.⁶⁸

One path of insertion into Christian society was the pursuit of education. Promising young converts' university or seminary education was occasionally funded by the House.⁶⁹ That those neophytes placed in seminaries mattered more than others is clearly indexed by the level of detail of the entries about them in the House register as well as in their sheer volume. Beyond their individual merits, perhaps the special treatment of these children was warranted by their families' long-term pattern of 'exemplary' relationship with the Pia Casa.⁷⁰

A few Jewish converts, especially if baptized as adults and of élite background, could make a claim to prior expertise in Hebrew, Talmud, or Cabbala, all highly valued commodities in the world of humanistic learning.⁷¹ The bulk of converts, however, especially Muslim, could not build on their intellectual assets in staking out a future. Only rarely, if ever, could the few Muslim converts with knowledge of Arabic, Turkish, the Qur'an, or Shari'a law find scholarly employment. The reasons for this are multiple, and have to do, in part, with humanists' generally lower level of interest in Islam and Turkish and Arabic letters, compared with Judaism and Hebrew, and the availability of Christian native Arabic speakers.⁷² It may have stemmed also from Muslim converts' limited command of Italian, in contrast with Jewish converts, who were often fluent speakers of the language. Muslim converts were also confronted by a wide perception of Muslims as mostly fit for menial work as slaves, servants, or soldiers, rather than as scholars and educators. Indeed, most converts eventually resorted to the same occupations and status they had held prior to their conversion.⁷³ Many also remained dependent on charity from the Pia Casa for years after their baptism, if not for life. This situation forced many to tighten their local networks of patronage and eventually allowed some Muslim converts more direct access to routes of insertion into Venetian society, as compared to Jewish converts-turned-friars, priests, preachers, and scholars: As slaves and servants, soldiers and journeymen, Muslim converts could and did get adopted by or married into local families.

The overall dependence of converts' career paths on their access to local social networks is further illustrated by the rarity of Jewish converts who became soldiers: Out of a population of about two hundred youth and adult male Jewish converts, only six are documented as having become soldiers. None of them came from Venetian territories, although Venetian Jews constituted over a half of Jewish converts in the Pia Casa.⁷⁴ This suggests that it was not so much that Jews were deemed unfit for military service in the eyes of the Pia Casa governors, but rather that local converts had more career paths available to them than foreign-born converts, either Jewish or Muslim.

Like other members of early modern Venetian society, converts faced a highly gendered occupational structure. If most young male converts could expect placement as either apprentices with local artisans or as soldiers and mariners, the overwhelming majority of young female converts became maidservants in Venetian households. But it was neither gender nor religious provenance alone which determined converts' trajectories, but their intersection. Thus, only half a dozen Jewish women converts are

documented as having become maidservants, compared with over a hundred Muslim women. Similarly, although monachization was often women converts' only viable alternative to marriage or domestic service, of the sixteen documented monachized women converts none seems to have been a Moor.

Of course, career paths were determined not only by governors' wishes and perceptions of the transformative potential of different types of converts, but also by converts' own inclinations and resources. Yet the paucity of cases of converts who completely severed their ties with the Pia Casa upon baptism suggests that the ability of the governors to keep converts under their watchful eye remained strong throughout the period.

One powerful incentive for keeping in touch with the House was the distribution of charity, which mirrored, and at times enhanced, the widely uneven trajectories of different kinds of converts. This is well illustrated by the list of recipients of a major bequest of 4,000 ducats left to the Pia Casa by the patrician Tommaso son of Andrea Mocenigo in 1626.⁷⁵ For two and a half decades the governors engaged in constant litigation with various magistracies which administered the funds, and in those years its moneys were distributed only sparingly and for specific ends.⁷⁶ But starting in 1652, the bequest's interest revenue was disbursed annually to between 15 and 30 converts, who received 30 ducats each. Technically, all converts baptized through the Pia Casa after 1626 were eligible, by order of their baptism date, as long as they came to register on designated dates with their baptism certificate in hand.⁷⁷ However, the recipients' profile diverges considerably from that of the overall convert population: Of the 28 Jewish children baptized from 1630 to 1670, 21 (75%) became beneficiaries. Four out of the seven who did not were foreign born, or the children of newly arrived foreigners.⁷⁸ In comparison, of 140 Muslim children baptized in those years, only 59 (42%) became beneficiaries. This suggests that local-born Jewish children converts stood a much greater chance than did foreign-born Muslim ones of staying in Venice through adulthood, and thus benefiting from the Pia Casa's charity. Similarly, although women constitute only 28% of those baptized in the Pia Casa in this period, they account for 46% of beneficiaries of the Mocenigo bequest.⁷⁹

A strong incentive for women converts to stay in Venice was the prospect of marriage negotiated and funded by the Pia Casa. Since non-Christian marriages were automatically dissolved if only one of the spouses converted, governors of the Pia Casa did not shy away from seeking to match even previously married converts with new spouses. In particular, governors actively sought out eligible husbands for female converts of childbearing age. Although the surviving records do not give a complete picture of convert marriages, they do indicate that the bulk of converts who got married in Venice did so with fellow converts or with local artisans. For example, in 1593, the governors sought to bring about the marriage of two converts, a former Jew named Girolamo and a former Muslim named Isabetta, as long as the dowry could be limited to 90 ducats.⁸⁰ No Venetian convert in this period seems to have married into the citizen class (the *cittadini originari*), hardly surprising in light of this estate's self-conscious endogamy. Nor did I find any archival evidence for converts obtaining even

the lesser status of Venetian citizenship *de intus*, despite the 1542 bull *Cupientes iudaeos*, issued by Pope Paul III, according to which converts from Judaism were eligible for citizenship in their place of baptism.⁸¹ Without the economic privileges granted by citizenship, marriage to a fellow convert or to an artisan could only rarely guarantee financial independence, and thus furthered the couple's reliance on the House for continued support.⁸²

As students of early modern conversion policies have recently noted, the provision of dowries for young female converts was of crucial importance in facilitating their transition from one community to another.⁸³ Here, the importance of godparents is visible once again, as they not only provided employment opportunities, but also vouched for their godchildren's merit and interceded on their behalf when appealing to the Pia Casa to finance their dowry. Indeed, the distribution of dowries was shaped by and makes manifest the divergent types of patronage available to Jewish and Muslim converts: For many formerly enslaved Muslim converts, a master's support was crucial in securing the House's endorsement of their marriage and willingness to provide a dowry. For example, in 1639, the patrician Paolo Capello approached the Pia Casa on behalf of his maidservant, Zaneta, who had been baptized a decade earlier and whose marriage he was negotiating at the time. Thanks to his efforts, the governors decided to increase the House contribution towards Zaneta's dowry from twenty to forty ducats.⁸⁴ Jewish converts, on the other hand, sometimes had previously-converted relatives who could arrange their marriage and turn to the governors for assistance in financing a dowry. In 1654, Fra Angelico, a Jewish convert-turned-monk, asked the governors for assistance in securing a dowry for his relative, Angelica *alias* Bona, who had been baptized and adopted by a Venetian shoemaker at the age of four in 1639. Her prospective husband, a goldsmith, an only child and 'a person of means and good customs' from Ancona, was himself a Jewish convert. The governors stepped in and promised 160 ducats from the House treasury towards the substantial dowry of 300 ducats asked for.⁸⁵ While the governors endorsed the marriages and contributed towards the dowries of both Zaneta and Angelica, the scale of their contributions, the marriage alliances themselves, and the patronage networks that were cemented through their negotiations were quite different.

Adoption and Affect

If baptism provided converts with a set of spiritual kin, and matrimony with a set of affinal kin, adoption was to supplant, rather than supplement, converts' birth kin. It was part and parcel of the efforts to sever converts' former family ties and insert the Pia Casa governors themselves into key roles in converts' reconfigured kinship networks. Beyond the strong conceptual links between adoption and baptism in both Western and Byzantine patristic and liturgical writings, adoption also provided an important venue for the placement of young converts.⁸⁶ Yet, it is hard to speak of converts' adoptions, as mediated and recorded by the Pia Casa, as a unified practice. The fifteen cases of adoption documented in the Pia Casa archives for the period 1570–1670

concern eight girls and seven boys, both Jewish and Muslim, ranging from newborns to young men and women. The records themselves range from brief references to a child having been taken by so-and-so as 'soul son' or 'soul daughter' to elaborate, notarized contracts detailing the adoptive parents' obligations towards their adoptive child, as well as sanctions to be taken by the Pia Casa should parents fail to meet their obligations.⁸⁷ Some contracts focus on parents' commitment to nurture their adopted child and provide for her. Others highlight instead the future inheritance awaiting the child once the adoptive parents die. Some only stipulate that the child will be required to love and honour her parents, while others clearly require that the child serve her parents and nurse them in their old age. Some pledge to provide dowries upon an adopted daughter's marriage, others when she joins a monastery. Several contracts include additional contributions to the Pia Casa itself.

The range of assumptions about financial and affective obligations between adoptive parents and children manifest in the documents is equalled by the wide range of social status and wealth of adoptive parents, and their presumed motivations in adopting a convert child. While no adoptive parents explicitly pledged to make their adopted child a legal heir, we may wish to qualify historian Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's conclusion that adoption became 'impossible' in early modern Italy.⁸⁸ As the examples below show, the range of affective ties possible between adoptive parents and child did not depend on legal endorsement.

Some adoptive parents were artisans and professionals, like the Greek tailor Zordan Prosdocimo and his wife Margarita, who in 1577 adopted Marina, an eleven-year-old Muslim convert, or the physician Pietro Cazzi, who in 1632 adopted his godchild Paolo Ignazio, *alias* David Cohen from the ghetto.⁸⁹ Some explicitly mentioned their wish to pass on their trade to a child as their motivation for adoption.⁹⁰ This wish suggests that adoption and apprenticeship were often conflated.⁹¹ In other cases as well adoption contracts often stipulated specifically the parent's material obligations to the child.

A different type of adoption involved wealthy patrician ladies, like the Ferrarese widow Leonarda Cumena, owner of extensive fields in the Este region, who in 1591 adopted Nicolosa, a teenaged convert from Lepanto.⁹² Cumena followed a pattern documented elsewhere in early modern Europe as well: a childless widow, who exerted control over her own lineal property, sought to continue her family line by passing on that property to her adoptive child.⁹³ Perhaps she also sought to secure nursing in her old age.

Both boys and girls could be adopted to fulfil a host of affective, spiritual, and nurturance needs, providing an important mechanism of social reproduction in the absence of natural progeny.⁹⁴ Given the limited surviving documentation of convert adoptions, it is hard to reach any definitive conclusions about the extent to which parents' expectations in such adoptions were gender-specific. Here I can only provide some preliminary observations: The adoption of boys more often than that of girls served as a kind of apprenticeship, with the adoptive father passing a trade on to his child. Conversely, girls' adoptive parents more often expressed a commitment to their moral, Christian upbringing and promised to provide a suitable dowry, or other forms of sponsorship.⁹⁵ Yet social reproduction and the preservation of artisanal identity was

not entirely absent from girls' adoptions, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned case of Marina, who was adopted by a tailor and his wife, and, two decades later, wedded to another tailor, Francesco ai Servi. Upon Francesco's death, Marina became known as 'the tailor' ('la sartora') herself.⁹⁶

The adoption of both girls and boys could also be cast as intended to fulfil primarily affective rather than practical or financial ends. In 1577, an elderly, childless couple, a cobbler named Bortolo and his wife Maddalena, approached the Pia Casa with the explicit request to adopt a child 'for consolation and solace in their old age'. They were given Catterina, a seven-year-old Muslim convert, whom Bortolo immediately 'took in [his] arms and kissed paternally, and promised to keep by him in his house as an adopted daughter, and treat her as such, educate her in good customs, and in the holy Christian religion, in the same manner they would have treated her if she were conceived and born to the couple.'⁹⁷

Whereas Catterina's adoption followed a path familiar to us, in which a childless couple approaches a welfare institution and adopts a relatively young child previously unknown to them, other adoptions were quite different: In 1572, Matteo q. Andrea Dragacich, a Bosnian clerk in the Venetian Arsenal, and his wife Franceschina, brought to the Pia Casa a nine-year-old Muslim slave named Stana, whom they had acquired in the region of Zara. A few months later, upon Stana's baptism in the parish church of S. Salvatore, the couple professed to be childless and offered to adopt her 'as their true daughter ... and treat her and marry her as such.'⁹⁸ In 1634, a Bosnian named Pietro *alias* Osman was adopted by his eponymous godfather Pietro Garofalo. The adoption took place after Garofalo had expressed his wish to keep the godchild 'in his house, next to him, and take care of him as his proper son'. The adoptee was twenty-two years old at the time.⁹⁹ As these cases suggest, legal adoption was only occasionally contracted between strangers, with the Pia Casa as both legal guardian and broker. In many other cases, it was the culmination of long periods of cohabitation between adoptive parent(s) and child, often under a different header, such as domestic service.

Indeed, the line not only between adoption and apprenticeship, but also between adoption and domestic service was sometimes blurred. Nicolosa, while adopted by a wealthy, patrician widow, was not to become heir to the bulk of her mother's possessions.¹⁰⁰ Her case, more than any other reviewed above, resembles an employment contract between a lady and her waiting maid; but it should be emphasized that the stipulation of services to be rendered in exchange for future inheritance was not entirely absent from other cases as well.

While governors were attentive to adoptive parents' needs, in at least some cases they seem to have put the child's interests (as they understood them) first. In 1612, a hat maker named Chiara, who had served as baptismal godmother to a young Muslim convert, sought to adopt him. After many deliberations, and with several governors expressing concern that such a move will be 'contrary to [the child's] wellbeing', Chiara was granted her wish, only to have the child taken away the following week and, eventually, placed with a haberdasher in the parish of S. Moisè.¹⁰¹

Chiara's wish to adopt her godchild should be understood within a larger context where the line between kinship, guardianship, and ownership was often crossed regardless of conversion, especially when slaves and servants were concerned. Affective ties between masters and servants were channelled to a variety of practices, ranging from the provision of dowry and various types of financial assistance to concubinage and adoption. We should not assume that affective ties across ranks somehow undermined the power structures in which they were embedded. Rather, such ties often helped cement power relations, and were part and parcel of the patriarchal logic of Venetian housecraft and statecraft.¹⁰² A case in point, illustrating masters' spiritual, godparental, and patronal attachments to their convert slaves, is the relationship between Zamaria Schietti and his slave Fumia: In 1619, Schietti committed in writing to give a fifty ducat dowry to his fourteen-year-old slave Fumia, whom he had purchased in Istanbul, on condition that she be accepted as 'daughter of the House'. A week later, Fumia was introduced and accepted as a catechumen. Despite rumours of Fumia's 'falling down' with a mariner the following month, she was eventually baptized, with Schietti serving as her godfather.¹⁰³ Schietti's relationship with Fumia presented, at least to the governors, a model of Christian charity: after purchasing her from infidels, Schietti brought the girl to Venice, where he guaranteed the salvation of her soul by admitting her to the Pia Casa to be catechized and baptized. Moreover, by agreeing to pay for her dowry, he offered her the prospect of respectable, if humble, marriage.

As these records suggest, the dyadic relationship between masters and their convert slaves was complicated by the Pia Casa's unequivocal claim to guardianship over converts. The governors exercised this guardianship in practice, by watching over converts' masters, and, in some cases, removing converts from households when suspicion of maltreatment arose. Indeed, the Pia Casa's custodial claims over converts did not terminate even after their legal adoption: Adoption contracts in the House archives all contain clauses specifying the governors' right to intervene and retrieve the child from her adoptive parents in cases of maltreatment or failure to provide appropriate dowries.¹⁰⁴ Many convert children placed with masters or adoptive parents outside the House were visited periodically by the governors, who, even when the adoption was cemented contractually, still treated the adoptee as a 'child of the House'. The bond between a convert and the Pia Casa was believed to take precedence over other kinship ties forged throughout a convert's life, whether prior to baptism or after.

Fear of concubinage may have led the governors to remove young female converts from patrician households where they had been placed as servants, but where they might also cohabit with unmarried men. Yet, the governors' ability to control and prevent such cases was clearly limited, as repeated allusions to scandals do crop up in the archives. The prevalence of concubinage between female slaves and their Venetian masters is also indicated by a number of cases of young children catechized in their masters' houses and baptized after only a brief sojourn (if at all) in the Pia Casa, only to be immediately taken back in by their masters.¹⁰⁵ How widespread concubinage really was is difficult to determine.¹⁰⁶ Yet some cases do suggest that conversion became a channel for

legitimizing and supervising otherwise-problematic intimate ties between Venetian patricians and citizens and the Muslim slave children and women in their households.

Finally, we should note that the governors' concern for converts' sexual morality was highly gendered. Whereas the cohabitation of female converts with men to whom they were not legally married was strictly forbidden, when it came to male converts, governors seem to have been far less troubled. On 11 November 1629, the register of converts' departures notes that 'Signor Zacomo Martin, formerly Lazaro the Jew from Padua, left the House on the day he was baptized, and went to live in the street of Santa Sofia, in the house of the Venetian Signora Alba, whom he wants as a wife'.¹⁰⁷ No mention is made of chastisement or any attempt to prevent Zacomo from moving in with his lover.

Surveillance

I noted above that financial assistance provided a strong incentive for converts to settle in Venice and meet governors' moral standards. Indeed, as a precondition for any assistance from the Pia Casa, converts were asked to present a letter from their parish priest to ascertain *vita & moribus*, i.e. good Christian behaviour and periodic confession.¹⁰⁸ In 1623, all neophytes departing from the House were additionally required to report their whereabouts every three months.¹⁰⁹ How effective were supervision by parish priests and periodic head counts in inducing proper behaviour is hard to gauge. Yet the very notion that governors should keep track of neophytes for decades after their baptism suggests the extent to which the institution's relationship with former charges was understood to be lifelong, rather than limited to the period of catechization in preparation for baptism. Conversely, the attempt itself to exercise lifelong disciplinary control over neophytes was hardly unique. The Tridentine Reform was a project of comprehensive 'social discipline', a reorganization of parishioners' daily life and its subjection to close supervision by parish clergy.¹¹⁰ In that sense, neophytes seemed particularly suitable subjects of ecclesiastical injunctions, which were applied in this period to other populations as well.

Another way for the governors to keep in close touch with neophytes was to hire them to perform tasks within the Pia Casa, including tasks requiring a high level of trust. In 1613, the governors elected a Jewish convert named Giovanni Battista Malipiero as the House bookkeeper, pledging to pay him ten ducats a year in return for keeping the register, and arriving in the house periodically to note down the governors' decisions.¹¹¹ In 1615, they appointed as solicitor Iseppo Strassoldo, who had converted with his son and two daughters some years earlier. His task was to collect money owed to the Pia Casa from credits and legacies. On other occasions, Strassoldo was entrusted with keeping the keys to the House archives and was sent on a fundraising mission to Rome — both highly responsible tasks.¹¹² As noted above, converts were regularly appointed as alms-collectors for the House in various parts of the Venetian state, with a percentage of the money collected to be kept by the collector as a means of supporting himself and his family.

Hiring poorer members of a congregation to perform tasks previously performed by volunteers from among the membership was a typical development of late sixteenth-century Venetian confraternities.¹¹³ For the Pia Casa, such arrangements allowed it to minimize expenses and use its funds as an extra carrot to induce converts' good behaviour. In 1612 the convert Geronima became landlady to young neophyte Orsetta and to another convert's two newborn babies, who were to remain in her custody for the next decade. The monthly stipend paid her in recompense for keeping these neophytes in her household supported both her and her convert husband, Francesco the builder. Francesco himself, like other converts who had already established themselves as artisans, was assigned a young neophyte as apprentice with a contract, after the latter had quit an earlier assignment to a vocational school for dealers in secondhand clothes.¹¹⁴

If governors clearly considered it their duty to secure shelter and employment for neophytes after baptism, not all their charges welcomed such efforts. The records, brief as they may be, allow us a glimpse of at least some dissenting converts, who did not appreciate governors' disciplinary interventions. In 1595, two Jewish neophytes, accused of leading a 'bad way of life', and consorting with a 'bad sort of women', were threatened with removal of the House's protections and the revoking of their allowances. When these threats did not meet with any results, the governors asked the Archbishop of Split to strongly admonish the two, and also decreed that until they behaved like good Christians, the wayward neophytes were to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, confess to the Jesuit friars at the church of Umiltà, and be prevented from leaving the house unless accompanied by the prior. If all failed, they were to also be denied bread and milk. Only after they were threatened with being removed from the House altogether did the disobedient neophytes come to meet the governors' demands, and were unceremoniously led to the Patriarch for their reconciliation ceremony.¹¹⁵

Some converts were more resolute in rejecting governors' efforts to determine their future. Antonio *alias* Assan from a village near Skopje, left the House in March 1619, as the House prior noted,

without wishing to wait for the Congregation to procure accommodation, and said he wanted to go to Mestre to join a cavalry company, nor did he wish to heed my admonitions as Prior, in which I begged him and begged him again to stay, attend confession and communion for Easter, and let the Venerable Congregation provide for him, and showed him that his [actions] were a temptation and a clear sign of wishing to be a bad Christian; to which he did not respond other than [by saying:] I give you my word that I want to go away, and so he left, or rather he went to Ca da Mula in the parish of San Vio, where the aforementioned Michiele lived, and they left together.¹¹⁶

Much to the House prior's chagrin, and against the spiritual and financial security promised by the institution to those who stayed in Venice and under the governors' watchful eyes, Antonio opted for employment away from the city, among fellow converts. His case may have inspired others: only three days later, another convert, Francesco *alias* Suliman similarly decided to try his luck as a soldier in Padua, rather than wait for the Pia

Casa 'to provide for him, even though his godfather and the scribe of the ship Mascherina who had brought him to the house wished to place him in a trade', as the prior lamented.¹¹⁷

As the records suggest, governors understood the institution's role as not merely to catechize its charges and then set them up with means of supporting themselves, but rather to socialize them as morally upright and economically productive members of Venice's metropolitan society. Sometimes, this warranted disciplinary action: In 1631, Giovanni Giacomo *alias* Mustafâ from Izmir, who had been baptized the previous year and posted onboard ship, was sent away. When he returned less than a month later, the governors declared him a scurrilous person, foulmouthed and obstinate, and banished him 'so that he does not hurt the other children of the house'.¹¹⁸ Conversely, only rarely were disciplinary measures taken against neophytes simply for holding unorthodox beliefs: In May 1598, a neophyte named Marco, a catechumen for the previous six months, was removed from the House for eight days with a small stipend 'in order to see if he can be cured of his contempt for the Holy Mass and for the veneration of sacred images'.¹¹⁹ I could not find indications of similar measures taken against neophytes already baptized. The overall laxity in enforcing converts' doctrinal conformity (as opposed to their socially normative behaviour) fits a larger pattern in Venice, where, as a rule, theological heterodoxy was curbed primarily when it might lead to public scandal. It further suggests how in this context conversion was intended to produce loyal juridical and social subjects, rather than merely to save souls.

Conclusions

As I have argued in this paper, conversion in early modern Venice operated as a mechanism for the transformation of Muslims and Jews, two prototypical others of the Venetian state, into properly-constituted Catholic subjects, capable of filling normative kinship and institutional roles in Venetian society. Besides producing such subjects, converting non-Christians also brought moral prestige to the converts' patrons, who thus participated in a more general, imperial enterprise of projecting Venice's self-image as a Christian republic beyond its frontiers.

For both (primarily immigrant) Muslims and (primarily local) Jews, becoming Catholic in early modern Venice entailed a prolonged process of social transformation and insertion into new social relations of patronage and surrogate kinship. In this sense, baptism marked the beginning, rather than the end, of the transformative process. Furthermore, precisely because aptitude for self-transformation was understood to be heavily dependent on a convert's moral, physical, and intellectual qualities, a radical break with his or her previous life was only seldom attempted, and even more rarely achieved. Instead, converts' preexisting social networks were crucial in determining their itineraries after baptism. Local Jewish converts, especially those male adults who spoke Italian and had a trade, valued intellectual skills, or some prior contacts among Venetian commercial and cultural élites, were less dependent on the Pia Casa to provide them with employment, and thus define the terms of their

insertion into society. Muslim converts, whose only available career paths were often domestic service (especially for women) and the military (for men), frequently with their pre-baptismal masters, depended much more on the Pia Casa's patronage in the long run. A strong incentive to maintain good ties with the Pia Casa was further provided by the prospects of marriage with local artisans or fellow converts, financial support, and employment opportunities facilitated by the Pia Casa and by one's godparents. These practices and the hierarchical relations they helped cement were rooted in converts' original status as immigrant servants and slaves.

Almost a century ago, Georg Simmel famously argued that 'the stranger . . . is an element of the group itself . . . In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group. Its uniform life includes the specific conditions of this element'.¹²⁰ In this article, I have considered Muslim and Jewish converts to Catholicism as such organic members of early modern Venetian metropolitan society. I suggested that not only was converts' position determined by the multiplicity of shifting social relations in Venice, but that their very insertion in society shaped Venetian social relations, as well as that society's boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, conversion through the Pia Casa operated not only to transform non-Christians into loyal subjects of the Venetian state, but also to define the mutual obligations of different kinds of subjects within metropolitan society, and between metropolitan and colonial subjects. Through the guardianship and spiritual kinship of converts, Venetian patrician and citizen patrons of the Pia Casa could fashion themselves as disinterested guarantors of the Republic's common good and Catholic orthodoxy. At the same time, through the administration of bequests and the negotiation of dowries, adoption, employment, and apprenticeship contracts, governors wove dense horizontal and vertical networks of patronage and clientage, with both converts and governors themselves as nodal points for the distribution of money, power, and affect. In other words, individual patricians and citizens could thus further their private interests while exercising forms of charity that constituted them as moral persons and as political subjects. By partaking in a ritualized ideological victory over one of Venice's major political rivals, the Ottomans, the Pia Casa's governors and benefactors became executors of the common good of the Republic. At the same time, by casting this ideological victory in terms of religious conversion, and by collaborating with both Jesuits and locally-appointed patrician clergy, the Pia Casa championed Venetian claims to Catholic orthodoxy in the face of Roman criticism. Finally, through practices such as alms-collecting campaigns throughout the Venetian countryside, and the resettlement of converts in various colonial outposts, the Pia Casa participated in the process of empire-building.

In her path-breaking study of conversion in the Victorian British Empire, postcolonial literary critic Gauri Viswanathan has forcefully urged us to see conversion 'as an act akin to the forces of modernity in its appeal to personal (rather than collective) choice, will, and action . . . conversion posits a severe challenge to the demarcation of identities set by the laws that govern everyday life and practice'.¹²¹ In a similar vein, Lucetta Scaraffia has defined early modern Mediterranean renegades as

the paradigmatic articulators of modern individual identity: Because of their exterior status in both Christian and Muslim communities, she argues, renegades had to ‘produce their own values and norms, based on their individual choice’.¹²² In this study, I have sought to present a different view. Rather than as the epitomes of individual ‘free choice’, I have shown how converts — and their interlocutors — operated within specific institutional constraints that shaped their social relations, subjectivities, and, indeed, the very category of ‘convert’. In early modern Venice, what counted as being fully converted to Catholicism clearly depended upon one’s long-term ability to appear as a moral person. Counting as moral strongly depended on being a productive, settled member of Venetian metropolitan society, the terms of which, in turn, depended on gender, place of origin, and social status prior to conversion. Rather than the heralds of modern identity politics, I suggest, converts renegotiated the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, but through a process that was heavily mediated by imperial institutions and their respective assumptions about subjecthood and its transformative potential.

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Notes

- [1] The shift in emphasis from comparison to convergence is spelled out particularly well in the work of scholars initially trained as Ottomanists: Necipoğlu, *Architecture*; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*; Berktaş, ‘Studying “Relations”’; Greene, *A Shared World*; Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire*; but see also: Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*; Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*.
- [2] Bennisar, ‘Conversion ou reniement?’; Allegra, ‘L’ospizio’; Foa and Scaraffia, ‘Introduzione’; Vanzan, ‘In Search’; Bono, ‘Conversioni’; Baer, ‘Honored’; Scaraffia, *Rinnegati*. The renewed interest in Mediterranean slavery is no exception to this rule, and scholarship on the religious conversion of slaves is still very much informed by the same paradigm of sincere vs. forced or induced conversion. See, for example: Bono, *Schiavi*; Davis, *Christian Slaves*.
- [3] Asad, ‘Comments’; Keane, ‘From Fetishism’.
- [4] A very partial list of works that address the implications of the imperial settings of early modern conversion includes: Morrison, ‘Discourse’; Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*; Gruzinski, ‘Christianisation’; Dorsey, ‘Going to School’; Richter, ‘Native Voices’; Khodarkovsky, ‘The Conversion’; Ottman, ‘Models’; Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions*.

- [5] My analysis is based on a database I created of virtually all convert baptismal records, account books, and other documents in the archives of the Pia Casa for the period 1590–1670, the first eighty years for which substantial serial documentation by and about this institution survives. The main archival series consulted are: *Archivio delle Istituzioni di Ricovero e di Educazione* (henceforth: AIRE), CAT A 1 (Capitoli et Ordeni per il buon Governo delle Pie Case de' Catecumeni di Venezia, 1737), CAT B 4 (Notatorio, 1592–1599), CAT B 6 (Notatorio, 1610–1619), CAT C 1 (Catastico, 1504–1695), CAT C 2 (Catastico, 1557–1718), CAT E 8 (Commisaria Mocenigo, 1636–1665), CAT G 1 (Misc., 17th century), CAT G 3 (Serie dei Priori del Pio Logo de Catecumeni), CAT G 5 (Serie dei Priori del Pio Logo de Catecumeni); and *Archivio della Curia Patriarcale di Venezia* (henceforth: ACPV), *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1 (1590–1594), 2 (1616–1696), 3 (1626–1738), 18 (Indice dei Battezzati dal 1626 al 1911 Catecumeni), 19 (Legato Garzoni, 1605–1672), 20 (Legato Garzoni, 1557–1809). Additional archival materials were consulted in the *Archivio di stato di Venezia* (henceforth: ASV).
- [6] On the myth of Venice, see: Muir, *Civic Ritual*; Grubb, 'When Myths'; and, most recently, De Vivo, 'The Diversity'.
- [7] On vagrancy in the Ottoman–Venetian frontier zone, see: Pedani, *Dalla frontiera*. On parish-based social discipline in the Venetian state, see: Montanari, *Disciplinamento*; Bizzocchi, 'Church'.
- [8] On the need to study the Christianization of Europe as a merging of missionary activity with the reason of state, see: Muldoon, 'Introduction', 5.
- [9] According to historian Elisheva Carlebach, 'Medieval religious usage borrowed the term *conversion* from the al/chemical sciences as a metaphor, in which one substance was changed into something utterly different by a mysterious process. Conceptions of transformation or rebirth had always informed the imagery of Christian conversion. In conversion to Christianity, divine grace transfigured the soul, created it anew, so that no residue of the earlier self remained'. Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 1.
- [10] Among other things, Canon law required the dissolution of converts' marriages if their spouses refused to convert, since their cohabitation would invariably lead to blasphemy and contumely to the faith. It also forbade the cohabitation of converted children with an unconverted parent. See: Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 177; Ravid, 'Forced Baptism'. However, as Carlebach cogently shows, converts' claims to have completely severed ties with family also stemmed from their 'need to appeal to Christian charity. Orphaned from the community that had nurtured them, they appealed for financial support as well as social acceptance to their adoptive community'. See: Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, 24.
- [11] On such lingering ties, see, for Venice: Pullan, *The Jews*, 275–93; for Rome: Sermoneta, 'Il mestiere'; Stow, 'A Tale'; Stow, 'Neofiti'.
- [12] Krstic, 'Narrating Conversions'; see also, albeit for a later period, Deringil, "'There Is No Compulsion'", 554.
- [13] Ellero, *L'Archivio I.R.E.*; Vanzan, 'La Pia Casa'. The founders were the theologian Dr. Giovanni Battista Trescolini, and the patrician laymen Giacomo Foscarini, Giovanni Battista Contarini, Alfonso Maravessi, Girolamo di Cavalli, Giusto Morosini, and Francesco Marcolini. Contarini and the Jesuit sympathizers Cavalli and Foscarini were among the founders and governors of another Venetian charitable institution, the *Ospedale dei Derelitti*. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 4–5; Aikema and Meijers, 'I catecumeni', 215. On the great success of the Jesuits among Venetian political élites in the second half of the sixteenth century, see: Cozzi, 'Fortuna'. On the tight control exerted by the Venetian patriariate over ecclesiastical benefices throughout the state, see: Del Torre, 'Stato regionale'.
- [14] Following Rome and Venice, several other cities on the Italian Peninsula opened institutions for instructing and baptizing converts during this period: Bologna (1568), Mantua (1574), Ferrara (1584), Naples (1601), and Reggio (1630). For Rome, see: Milano, 'Battesimi'; Rudt de

- Collenberg, 'Le baptême des juifs'; Rudt de Collenberg, 'Le baptême des musulmanes'; Roccio, 'Catecumeni'; Caffiero, "'La caccia'"; Lazar, 'Negotiating Conversions'. For Bologna: Campanini, 'L'identità coatta'; Sarti, 'Bolognesi schiavi'. For Ferrara: Lattes, 'Gli ebrei'. For Naples: Nardi, *Opere*.
- [15] Of the vast literature on Venetian charitable institutions, see especially: Pullan, *Rich and Poor*; Gentilcore, 'Figurations'; Terpstra, *The Politics*; Black, 'The Public Face'. See also Grendi, 'Sistemi di carità'; Terpstra, 'Apprenticeship'; and Cavallo, *Charity and Power*, for illuminating discussions of how confraternal charity shaped early modern civic élites' ideas of welfare reform.
- [16] Kertzer, *The Kidnapping*, 56. In 1687 Pope Innocent XI issued a plenary indulgence and a perpetual remission of sins to all governors of the Venetian Pia Casa. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 73–4 (10 January 1687 m.v.). Besides concrete social advantages discussed below, serving as a governor of the Pia Casa also brought a spiritual return: Upon a governor's death, five masses were to be celebrated in his honour in the church of the Pia Casa, the remaining governors were to recite *De Profundis*, and the catechumens the Rosary. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 16.
- [17] Pullan, *The Jews*; Ravid, 'The Forced Baptism'; Vanzan, 'La Pia Casa'; Chojnacka, *Working Women*.
- [18] AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 15.
- [19] One of the major bequests left to the Pia Casa in this period was from Bernardo Florio, the archbishop of Zara, in 1657. See: Degli Avogadro, *Notizie storiche*, xxv.
- [20] AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 29.
- [21] Anzola Boni, a Jewish convert, served as prioress from 1631 to 1635. Girolamo Pastricci from Split (Croatia) became House prior in 1645. Nicolò Nepusa from Kötör (Montenegro) became House prior on 26 March 1654. A year later, on 4 March 1655, he was replaced by Michel Cozunovich, also from Split. Cozunovich served as prior for the next two decades. For a (partial) list of the House priors, see: AIRE, CAT G 3, f. 1 ('Serie dei Priori del Pio Logo de Catecumeni'). On Anzola Boni: ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 19, c. 8v (13 October 1635).
- [22] For example, after serving for six years in the household of the Pia Casa governor and procurator of St. Mark Andrea Contarini, Giacomo Antonio *alias* Amer from Klimno (Croatia), baptized at age seven, was sent to the colony of Zante (Zakynthos) to work for the English consul William Vit. Upon his return twelve years later, and after a short sojourn in Bergamo, his old master and patron Contarini purchased for him the title of captain in a cavalry regiment in Dalmatia. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, 40r (27 February 1652 m.v.); ACPV, *Examina Matrimoniorum*, b. 63, cc. 151r–152r (29 January 1670 m.v.). For other similar cases, see: ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1, c. 3r (13 November 1590), c. 6r (30 October 1591), 8v (12 July 1592); ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 2v (8 April 1618), c. 3r (20 June 1618), c. 16v (3 March 1633), c. 19r (1 September 1645), c. 60v (22 July 1665). On the significance of Zante in Venetian–Ottoman imperial relations, and on English involvement there, see: Goffman, *Britons*, 52–3; Fusaro, 'Les Anglais'.
- [23] For example, in 1663 the governors admitted into the House an unnamed renegade, sent at the explicit request of the *Camera dell'armar* (Defence Ministry) to be catechized and sent back to his place of residence, Sibenik in Dalmatia. AIRE, CAT C 2, c. 427r (6 September 1663).
- [24] For a list of the bequests, see: Degli Avogadro, *Notizie storiche*, xxv.
- [25] In 1595, the Venetian Pia Casa raised money as far away as the church of Val de Reder in the diocese of Trent for the dowry of a convert named Antonia, who was to marry Zuane, a Venetian scale-maker. AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 50r (14 June 1595). See also: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 55v (13 October 1595).
- [26] The practice seems to have originated in Rome, where Converts were patented as alms-collectors as early as 1551. See: Simonsohn, 'Some Well-Known', 34.
- [27] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, b. 20, cc. 93–5 (1 July 1619).

- [28] The regulations required at least eight months to elapse before a catechumen is baptized, to make sure of his or her true intentions. In reality the period was often much shorter. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 43.
- [29] Catechumens could also receive instruction from mendicant Friars fluent in their languages. The regulations stipulated that if the prior did not command the language of a prospective catechumen, he was to find a mendicant friar or another Christian to serve as interpreter, and then locate a clergyperson to provide religious instruction. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 42–3.
- [30] AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 52.
- [31] The 1737 regulations of the Pia Casa suggest the limitations of earlier efforts to shape catechumens' daily life: much attention was devoted to the physical separation of female catechumens from the outside world. Any unmediated contact with men was strictly prohibited. Visits to the female wing by governors were to be infrequent, and conducted only by pairs of older governors past their fiftieth year while accompanied by the prioress. The prioress was likewise required to accompany the confessor during his weekly visits to the female wing, and to stay close by for the entire duration of his visit. AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 19, 33.
- [32] On Venetian Jewry in general: Malkiel, *A Separate Republic*; Arbel, *Trading Nations*; Davis and Ravid, *The Jews*; Favero and Trivellato, 'Gli abitanti'. On Jewish commercial networks: Arbel, 'Jews'. On Jewish converts' professional skills: Segre, 'Neophytes'. On converts' relapse: Pullan, *The Jews*, 255–71; Head, 'Religious Boundaries', 180. See also the testimony of Jewish convert Giulio Morosini in a 1651 Holy Office investigation into the suspected Marranism of Agostino Fonseca, reproduced in Ioly Zorattini, 'Note', 337–41, and the 1634 trial of Francesco Maria de Giacinti, a Modenese Jewish convert turned Dominican friar, and his unconverted father who had persuaded him to run away to Venice and return to Judaism, discussed in Zanardo, "Lor colpa".
- [33] These figures, as well as the ones regarding the provenance of Jewish catechumens above, and of Muslim women in note 36, are based on the 651 catechumens whose place of provenance was registered and identifiable, i.e. exactly half of all catechumens registered by the Pia Casa for the period 1590–1670.
- [34] This was especially true of Muslim women, 84% of whom came from the Balkans and the Greek Islands, compared with 65% of Muslim men. Only 3% of Muslim women came from Anatolia, Arab speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, and the Black Sea region combined, and none came from Central Asia.
- [35] On Ottoman subjects in the Venetian army and navy, see: Petta, *Stradioti*; Pilidis, 'Morire per honor'; Lo Basso, 'Schiavi'. On Ottoman merchants in Venice, see: Vercellin, 'Mercanti turchi a Venezia'; Vercellin, 'Mercanti turchi e sensali'; Kafadar, 'A Death'. On Venetian colonial officials sending catechumens to the House, see: Vanzan, 'In Search'.
- [36] On domestic slavery, see: Romano, 'The Regulation'; see also: Sarti, 'Obbedienti' on Bolognese slave converts.
- [37] For an illuminating interpretation of the status of foreigners in early modern legal thought as 'poor in relational resources', see: Cerutti, 'Giustizia', 452. For concrete examples of Balkan immigrant servants' networks in Venice, see: Romano, *Housecraft*, 99, 100, 121, 133, 156.
- [38] However, archival traces of scandals in the wake of attempts by Ottoman Muslims to claim their relatives converted in Venice, especially young women, confirm the governors' fears. See, for example, the case of a Muslim convert who, after twelve years in Venice, attempted to return to the Ottoman Empire, but was captured in the *Fondaco dei Turchi*: ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 14, cc. 89v–90v (9 October 1622); or the case of the converted daughter of a high-ranking Muslim Ottoman official from Clissa who became a nun in Venice, and whose father's attempts to persuade her to return home were refused and met with counter attempts to convert him to Catholicism: ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, reg. 18, cc. 38r–48v (4 June 1627); or, finally, the case of a Bosnian convert

who claimed to have run away from her husband, and to have been consequently kidnapped by her Muslim relatives with the help of Venetian collaborators: ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Misc. Penale, b. 343, fasc. 15 (7 August 1642). This and similar cases are discussed in Vanzan, 'In Search'.

- [39] Such arrangements clearly benefited masters, who did not wish to part with their domestic labourers for extended periods of time. It also offered the Pia Casa an effective way to claim authority over more neophytes without shouldering all the responsibility for their future. For a sample of cases, see: ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, cc. 19v, 20r, 21v, 22r; ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 3, cc. 12r–v.
- [40] This hypothesis is supported by the exceptionally high number of baptisms registered by the Pia Casa in 1647–1649, 37, 45, and 37 respectively, compared with the annual average of 10 in the previous quarter of a century.
- [41] In the period 1640–1670, in which age at baptism was registered in over 95% of the cases, children and youth under 16 constituted over 37% of all converts, with additional 20% in the age group 17–20. As other parameters of the convert population (gender ratio, prior religious affiliation, and place of provenance) did not change much between 1590 and 1670, it is safe to assume that children and youth constituted an actual majority of converts even before 1640. These figures diverge quite dramatically from the corresponding figures for Rome, where many more Jewish converts seem to have been adults between nineteen and thirty, with children and youth constituting a much smaller portion of the total convert population. For a table of Jewish converts by age in early modern Rome, see: Milano, 'Battesimi', 144–5.
- [42] On 1 August 1619, the 'well deserving' Paolo Armano, *alias* Regeb from Üsküdar (now part of Istanbul, on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus), his renegade wife Maria, baptized as an infant, and their five sons, arrived in the Pia Casa. Paolo had served onboard a Venetian armoured vessel, and upon baptism was persuaded to resume his post along with three of his sons. The governors promised to assist Maria and their remaining children and, upon departure, both spouses received money and new clothes. In early 1624, another converted couple, Paolo and Rosetta Marina, left the Pia Casa with their daughter and moved into their own house in 'a village in the region of Sarenzo' (Istria). Later that same year, Giovanni Pietro de Piccolo, a renegade Christian from Udine now reconciled with the Church, his Muslim wife, and their five baptized children left the Pia Casa with the governors' permission to go to the town of Loreto, where the wife was to be baptized. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 154r (1 August 1619), c. 156v (12 September 1619), c. 159r (26 September and 24 October 1619), c. 159v (14 November 1619); ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 8v (13 February 1623 m.v.), c. 10r (23 July 1624).
- [43] In the case of local Jewish converts, this could often lead to acrimonious legal battles. See, for example, the failed appeal by Abram Caneiani and the organized Venetian Jewish Community to the Venetian Senate in an effort to retrieve Abram's son, taken by his mother, Altadonna, to the Pia Casa in 1616: ASV, *Compilazione delle leggi*, b. 294, c. 278 (14 March 1616). On child baptism in Venice, see: Ravid, 'The Forced Baptism'; on contemporary theological debates regarding child baptism, see: Roth, 'Forced Baptisms'; Rowan, 'Ulrich Zasius'; Bernos, 'Le baptême'. For an extensive treatment of two nineteenth-century cases of child baptism against parental wish in the Papal States, see: Kertzer, *The Kidnapping*; Kertzer, 'The Montel Affair'.
- [44] On conversion as an Ottoman women's strategy for escaping marriages, see: Baer, 'Islamic Conversion'.
- [45] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 62r (25 October 1665), c. 62v (8 September 1665 and 5 October 1665), c. 63r (17 November 1665 and 22 January 1665 m.v.).
- [46] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 3, c. 31v (7 September 1670 to 25 February 1670 m.v.).

- [47] The Iberian de Castro family was by the mid-seventeenth century scattered throughout Europe. On some of the highly learned and prolific branches of this family, many of whom were physicians and academics in Hamburg and Amsterdam, see: Kaysersling *et al.*, *Biblioteca*, xiv and *passim*.
- [48] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, cc. 63v–64r (27 September 1665).
- [49] For example, in 1592 the governors decided that the convert Gerolamo, recently employed by the Venetian Salt Office, could only visit his daughter, who was still living in the Pia Casa, every fifteen days, and only in the presence of female guardians. In 1616, the two school-aged sons of a Muslim convert from Antivari (Montenegro) were taken from her and placed first in the prioress' quarters, then outside the Pia Casa, with an older convert and her husband. Five months later, in an unusual move, one of the boys was consigned to his mother for a week only 'because otherwise he suffers'. Converts' adoptions are discussed below. AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 4r (25 June 1592); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 99r (3 March 1616), c. 103r (16 June 1616), c. 105v (25 August 1616), c. 107v (10 November 1616), c. 108v (23 November 1617).
- [50] The incorporation of women in the running of the House dates to 1613, when a group of patrician and citizen ladies was prompted to provide 'useful observations' on the proper running of the female wing in the wake of an unnamed scandal. AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 20.
- [51] For example, in 1615, the governors approved a petition by the convert Chiara to help provide a dowry for her daughter, who was about to get married, since 'the mother has always behaved herself well'. Later, they also gave the daughter a straw mattress. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 91r (14 May 1615), c. 96r (19 November 1615).
- [52] On the Ottoman sultan's spiritual claims to universal dominion over believers and nonbelievers alike, see: Necipoğlu, 'Sultan Süleyman'; Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver'. On sultanic patronage of subject-converts, see: Minkov, 'Conversion'.
- [53] One was the moor Anna *alias* Fattime from Alexandria, who went to serve in the household of patrician Francesco Contarini. The other was the Russian Marina *alias* Sabba, a fourteen-year-old slave of the Marini family, who went back into their service upon baptism. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 42r (26 April 1654), c. 60r (29 December 1664).
- [54] On this taboo, see: Gudeman, 'Spiritual Relationships'; Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem*; for Venice, see: Grubb, *Provincial Families*, 48–9.
- [55] This phenomenon requires further discussion, as it raises crucial questions on the relationship between spiritual kinship (particularly patronal adoption) and Venetian patrimonial state formation. For suggestive comments about this relationship in general, see: Parkes, 'Fostering Fealty', 762 and *passim*.
- [56] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1, c. 4v (20 March 1591), c. 5r (7 July 1591). On Eusebio Renati, see also: Pullan, *The Jews*, 127, 245, 289.
- [57] In 1647 he became master to twelve-year-old Niccolò *alias* Husaim from Strana, and a year later also to eight-year-old Pietro *alias* Xafer from Clissa. In following years, he godfathered twenty-two-year-old Giovanni *alias* Assan from Edirne, thirty-year-old Istanbulite foot soldier Paolo *alias* Mehmet, twenty-year-old Paolo *alias* Michiel from Asistat, Hungary, and twenty-seven-year-old Lorenzo *alias* Michiel Francese from Venice. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 21r (15 August 1647), c. 23v (13 September 1648), c. 30v (25 June 1650), c. 34r (4 June 1651), c. 54r (8 May 1661), 64v (24 January 1665 m.v.).
- [58] ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1, c. 12r (7 February 1592 m.v.).
- [59] Serafinelli godfathered at least three other converts: twenty-two-year-old Giulio *alias* Samuel from Ferrara, eighty-six-year-old oarsman Giacomo *alias* Ali Moro from Alexandria, and fifty-eight-year-old oarsman Zuanne *alias* Ali from Gallipoli. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1, cc. 16v–17r (6 January 1593 m.v.), c. 17v (5 June 1594), cc. 17v–18r (24 June 1594).
- [60] AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 43.

- [61] A preliminary search for the names of several dozen converts' patrician godparents in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* yielded almost no entries, suggesting the godparents' secondary political and cultural prominence as a group. For a discussion of Roman converts' godparents, see: Rudt de Collenberg, 'Le baptême des musulmanes', 50–71.
- [62] In 1592, Nicolò, a Jewish convert, godfathered another Jewish convert, thirty-eight-year-old Andrea Stefano *alias* Jacob Cain from Frankfurt. Perhaps the neophyte's foreign provenance warranted his godfathering by a more established convert. Andrea Stefano ran away from the Pia Casa only nine days after his baptism, taking away some clothes, to the governors' great dismay. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 1, c. 9v (17 November 1592), c. 10r (26 December 1592).
- [63] Giovanni/Giovanni Battista was by far the most popular convert's name, representing over 30% of male converts' Christian names; the most popular female convert name was, not surprisingly, Maria, appearing in almost 20% of female converts' Christian names. In fact, for both men and women, the five most popular names appeared in over 50% of the cases. For men, these were, in descending order of popularity: Giovanni, Francesco, Giovanni Battista, Antonio, and Pietro. For women, the names were: Maria, Caterina, Anzola (Angela), Anna, and Maddalena. About 80% of converts, both women and men, received a single Christian name. Only a tiny fraction received more than two.
- [64] On Venetian naming practices, see: Grubb, *Provincial Families*, 42–7.
- [65] As in the case of twelve-year-old Muslim girl Fumia, who was baptized as Euffemia in 1665, or the Jew Samaria who was baptized as Zamaria in 1626. ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 2, c. 62v (8 September 1665); ACPV, *Battesimi dei Catecumeni*, 3, c. 1v (10 October 1626). Governors' creativity stopped short of following the same naming practice with Fumia's mother and five-year-old brother: the former, Salige, was renamed Francesca. The latter, Mustafa, was renamed Francesco.
- [66] As in 1617, when the governors decided to buy a used cloak for 'Matine, ex turco', now a servant in the house of Leonardo Priuli in the parish of S. Stae. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 109r (1 December 1617).
- [67] Of the forty-odd references to her in the House meeting notes, she is named 'Sultana' 23 times, 'Lucia-Sultana' 11 times, and 'Lucia' only once: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 13r (13 February 1610 m.v.), c. 13v (25 February 1610 m.v.), c. 17r (21 April 1611), c. 19r (13 May 1611), c. 29r (18 August 1611), c. 33r (6 and 13 October 1611), c. 38r (22 December 1611), c. 45r (15 March 1612), c. 54r (23 August 1612), c. 55v (20 September 1612), c. 56r (27 September 1612), c. 58v (8 November 1612), c. 63v (18 January 1612 m.v.), c. 66r (28 February 1612 m.v.), c. 71r (23 May 1613), c. 76r (31 October 1613), c. 77v (19 December 1613), c. 78r (2 January 1613 m.v.), c. 89r (19 February 1614 m.v.), c. 89v (9 April 1615), c. 91r (29 May 1615), c. 96v (26 November 1615), c. 97r (17 December 1615), c. 97v (7 January 1615 m.v.), c. 98v (4 February 1615 m.v.), c. 102r (3 June 1616), c. 116v (29 March 1618), c. 129r (16 October 1618), c. 134r (20 December 1618), c. 135r (18 January 1618 m.v.), c. 141v (21 March 1619), c. 144v (16 May 1619), c. 163r (23 January 1619).
- [68] Senate decrees in this matter were issued on 2 January 1676 m.v. and on 30 June 1688, and are reproduced in AIRE, CAT A 1, cc. 68–70.
- [69] As in the case of Zanetto son of Tomasina, who was sent to the seminary of S. Cipriano in Murano soon after his baptism in 1592, and whose schooling was funded by the Pia Casa. Five years later, expenditure on his books, writing materials, and clothes, as well as general reminders to 'take care of the needs of Zanetto in the seminary' still figured prominently in the house records, as they do throughout the register until its end in 1599. A similar pattern of heavy financial investment in a particular child convert destined for an ecclesiastical career emerged in 1610, when the Jewish convert Giovanni-Iseppo Strassoldo asked that his son Paolo be sent to the seminary of Castello. Three years later, when Paolo completed his course

of studies there, and after a period of service as assistant to the Patriarch of Aquileia, he was sent to another seminary, that of the Somaschi order, where his annual tuition of 30 ducats, a new set of clothes, and a bed were all paid for by the Pia Casa. Long after he had left to attend the neophytes' college in Rome, and his allowance from Venice was officially terminated, Paolo still received books that were paid for by the Pia Casa. For Zanetto, see: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 61r (7 March 1596). See also: c. 4r (18 June 1592), c. 11r (13 January 1592 m.v.), c. 13r (18 February 1592 m.v.), c. 15r (18 March 1593), c. 16r (8 April 1593), cc. 20r–v (10 June 1593), c. 21v (15 July 1593), c. 22r (29 July 1593), c. 23r (16 August 1593), c. 25r (14 October 1593), c. 26r (10 November 1593), c. 27r (2 December 1593), c. 33v (31 March 1594), c. 34v (5 May 1594), c. 35r (17 May 1594), c. 36v (16 June 1594 and 7 July 1594), c. 37v (4 August 1594), c. 38r (11 August 1594), c. 39r (15 September 1594), c. 40r (22 September 1594), c. 40v (27 September 1594), c. 44v (9 February 1594 m.v.), c. 47v (9 May 1595), c. 62r (4 April 1596), c. 70r (13 August 1596). For Paolo: AIRE, CAT B 6, cc. 2r–v (12 October 1610), 4r (9 November 1610), 8r (16 December 1610), 9v (7 January 1610 m.v.), 20v (26 May 1611), 21v (9 June 1611), 27v (11 August 1611), 37v (15 December 1611), 66r (28 February 1611 m.v.), 71r (23 May 1613), 72r (20 June 1613), c. 85v (4 September 1614), c. 86r (18 September 1614), and c. 107v (3 November 1616). On the neophytes' college, established by Pope XIII in 1577 with the intention to train young catechumens for eventual church service, see: Bono, 'Conversioni', 434.

- [70] Paolo's father, Iseppo, was a high-trust employee of the House, while his two sisters, Maria and Giulia, became nuns in the monastery of Saints Mark and Andrea in Murano. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 1v (1 October 1610), c. 22v (16 June 1611), c. 37v (15 December 1611), c. 77v (19 December 1613), c. 89v (9 April 1615), c. 94v (15 October 1615); AIRE, CAT C 2, c. 430r (3 July 1608), 430v (1 September 1610).
- [71] Simonsohn, 'Some Well-Known'. Two cases stand out: the Jerusalemite Rabbi Domenico Gerosolimitano *alias* Samuel Vivas, who became censor of Hebrew books after his baptism in 1593, and the Venetian Giulio Morosini *alias* Samuel ben David Nahmias, who enjoyed a long career in Papal service in Rome following his 1649 baptism. In both cases, exceptional education at youth enabled these converts to become serviceable in ecclesiastical circles and to secure not only their own future, but, in the case of Morosini, that of his brother and nephew as well. For Gerosolimitano's baptismal record, see: ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 1, c. 14v (6 August 1593). See also: Ioly Zorattini, 'Domenico Gerosolimitano'. For Morosini's baptismal record, see: ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 29r (22 December 1649). See also: Simonsen, 'Giulio Morosini's Mitteilungen'; Ravid, 'Contra Judaeos'; Ioly Zorattini, 'Derekh Teshuvah'.
- [72] On Arabic in the humanist curriculum, see: Dannenfeldt, 'The Renaissance Humanists'.
- [73] Here the evidence for Venice differs from the situation in Bologna where, according to Raffaella Sarti, even if conversion itself did not necessarily imply the end of slavery, conversion following a sojourn in the Pia Casa did bring about freedom automatically. See: Sarti, 'Bolognesi', 459.
- [74] Of the six, three came from Istanbul, one from Avignon, and one from Poland (the sixth was of unknown provenance).
- [75] AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 3v.
- [76] In 1635, 30 ducats from Mocenigo's legacy were promised as dowry for the Jewish convert Anna Maria *alias* Rachel Grassin, upon contracting a marriage to the cooper Domenico di Negri. Two years later, the Jewish converts Zuanne and Francesco, father and son, received 60 ducats from Mocenigo's legacy so they could start practising their old trades of tailor and draftsman, respectively. AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 13v (26 December 1635), c. 15r (7 January 1637 m.v.).
- [77] This stipulation clearly advantaged children over adult converts, as the waiting time from baptism until benefiting from the Mocenigo bequest could last as much as a couple of decades.

- [78] They hailed from Split, Amsterdam, Parga in the Epirus, and North Africa, respectively.
- [79] A similar pattern emerges for another major bequest, left to the House by the patrician Vincenzo Garzoni in 1592, which provided a lifelong stipend of 50 ducats a year to 20 converts, with new recipients added as older ones passed away. Of the 34 recipients documented up to 1670, 18 (53%) were Jews, and 19 (56%) were women, of whom 11 (a third) were Jewish — compared with only 6% Jewish women in the total convert population.
- [80] The wedding did not materialize, due to the groom's illness and eventual death. See: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 18v (13 May 1593).
- [81] On the Papal bull, see: Pullan, *The Jews*, 251–2. A late eighteenth-century decree by the Venetian Senate only mentions converts' eligibility for Venetian 'subjecthood' ('sudditanza'): ASV, Compilazione delle Leggi, b. 294, c. 263v ('Sulla capacità de Neofiti agli Ecclesiastici Benefici', 8 April 1785).
- [82] Despite a substantial dowry of 600 ducats provided by her adoptive parents and by her godfather, Father Francesco dell'Orio, upon her marriage to the Venetian tailor Francesco ai Servi in 1597, the convert Marina still relied on the Pia Casa for charity for over twenty years, i.e. during her entire marriage and into her widowhood. Christmas Charity for her was recorded in the House meeting notes as late as 1620. Marina's case was hardly unique, as several other women converts made repeated appearance in the House records as regular recipients of charity. AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 69v (27 June 1597), c. 79r (4 September 1597), c. 86r (28 May 1598), c. 86v (4 June 1598), c. 87v (9 July 1598); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 37v (15 December 1611), c. 45r (15 March 1611), c. 56r (27 September 1612), c. 57v (25 October 1612), c. 77v (19 December 1613), c. 83v (5 June 1614), c. 88r (15 January 1614 m.v.), c. 89r (5 March 1615), c. 89v (9 April 1615), c. 97r (12 December 1615), c. 100r (24 March 1616), c. 110r (22 December 1617), c. 124r (19 July 1618), c. 141v (21 March 1619), c. 158v (17 October 1619), c. 163r (23 January 1619 m.v.).
- [83] See: Allegra, 'Modelli' for Turin; Van Boxel, 'Dowry' for Rome.
- [84] Zaneta's ties to the Pia Casa did not end there: Three years later, widowed and with a baby daughter, Zaneta approached the House again, to have her child sent to a nursemaid so she could take up a position in the household of Tommaso Morosini. The governors approved her request, and decreed a monthly stipend of 6 *lire* for her daughter's upkeep for as long as Zaneta held her job with the Morosinis. Finally, in 1661, Zaneta was among the lucky converts to receive a lifetime stipend of 50 ducats a year from the legacy of Vincenzo Garzoni. ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 3, c. 2v (4 March 1629); AIRE, CAT E 8, cc. 17r–v (9 June 1639), c. 21r (18 October 1642); ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 19, cc. 1r and 5r (1 December 1661). On Garzoni's bequest, see: Degli Avogadro, *Notizie*, xxvii.
- [85] The sum was to be paid in part by Angelica's and her brother Iseppo's 30 ducat shares of the Mocenigo bequest and in part by the House's general treasury, which provided dowries of 100 ducats in other, similar cases. The union, however, did not materialize, and a year later Fra Angelico approached the congregation again and received their approval to use the funds as dowry for Angelica's marriage to another eligible subject, the Friulian Antonio f. Luca. AIRE, CAT E 8, c. 44v–45r (24 September 1654) and c. 47r (11 May 1655).
- [86] On the relationship between baptism and adoption, see: Macrides, 'Substitute Parents', 309–10.
- [87] For examples of the latter, see: AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 33v–34r (16 October 1572), cc. 34v–35r (26 January 1576 m.v.), cc. 35v–36r (2 March 1577), cc. 69v–70v (16 November 1591).
- [88] See: Klapisch-Zuber, 'L'adoption impossible'.
- [89] AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 35v–36r (2 March 1577); ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 16v (18 April 1632).
- [90] Doctor Mattio Suriano, physician to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, adopted nine-year-old Carlo Francesco in 1616 'so that he can instruct him in medicine'. In 1633, the merchant Stefano

Pironi adopted fourteen-year-old Giovanni Battista Pironi *alias* Schiaus, his godchild, 'so that he learns the trade of silk weaver'. According to the entry in the Pia Casa's register, Stefano was to keep Giovanni Battista 'as a son, and according to his behavior so will he be well kept, and treated, [and] no mention of a salary was made'. For Carlo Francesco's adoption, see: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 98r (28 January 1615 m.v.). For Giovanni Battista's, see: ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 17r (10 May 1633).

- [91] On apprenticeship-adoption, see: Klapisch-Zuber, 'L'adoption impossible'.
- [92] For Marina's adoption contract, see: AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 35v–36r (2 March 1577). For Nicolosa's: *ibid.*, cc. 69v–70v (16 November 1591).
- [93] Gager, 'Women'. Adoption contracts which referred specifically to services to be rendered by the adoptee have been documented elsewhere in early modern Europe, for example in Florence. See: Fubini Leuzzi, "Dell'allogare", 883–4.
- [94] For a survey of these functions in a cross-cultural perspective, see: Goody, 'Adoption'.
- [95] On the cross-cultural significance of apprenticeship and sponsorship in adoption, see: Goody, *Parenthood*; on the nexus of adoption and apprenticeship for foundling boys and adoption and domestic service for foundling girls, see: Gavitt, *Charity*, 243.
- [96] For Marina's marriage to Francesco ai Servi, and the dowry provided by her parents and by her godfather, Father Francesco dell'Orio, see: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 69v, (27 June, 1597), c. 77r (10 July 1597).
- [97] AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 34v–35v (26 January 1576 m.v.).
- [98] AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 33v–34r (16 October 1572).
- [99] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 17v (15 February 1633 m.v.).
- [100] Instead, she was only guaranteed 200 ducats in inheritance and her use of the funds was severely restricted. Specifically, in the case of her adoptive mother's death, Nicolosa was to receive 50 ducats to dispense as she pleased and additional 50 ducats to pass on to her blood relations. In the absence of such relations, the money would go to the Pia Casa. Another 100 ducats would only become available to Nicolosa as a supplement for her religious dower, should she choose to join a monastery. In exchange, the girl was obligated to accompany her adoptive mother if and when she decided to pursue her plan of joining a Jesuit monastery. AIRE, CAT C 1, cc. 69v–70v (16 November 1591).
- [101] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 57r (19 October 1612), c. 57v (25 October 1612), c. 58r (2 November 1612), c. 67r (14 March 1613).
- [102] Romano, 'The Regulation?'; Romano, *Housecraft*. For a broader discussion of intimacy as a space for the articulation of social boundaries and hierarchies in imperial settings, see: Stoler, 'Affective States'.
- [103] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 138v (21 February 1618 m.v.), c. 139r (28 February 1618 m.v.), c. 141r (21 March 1619), c. 142v (11 April 1619).
- [104] In April 1618 the child convert Orsola was placed with a Venetian jeweller named Lorenzo, with the prospect of legal adoption. Several weeks later, the governors of the Pia Casa called the parish priest of S. Polo to intervene on Orsola's behalf and defend the child vis-à-vis the jeweller. The following week, the governors decided to visit Orsola themselves, accompanied by the women governors 'to make sure she is treated well by the jeweller'. A few weeks later, the parish priest again was instructed to 'visit the child consigned to the jeweller . . . see how she is treated, and, if necessary, remove her'. Apparently, the visitors were satisfied with what they had found, for they ultimately decided to sign a written contract with Lorenzo for Orsola's adoption. AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 117r (9 April 1618), c. 118v (24 April 1618), c. 123v (12 July 1618), c. 125v (9 August 1618), c. 127v (21 September 1618).
- [105] In 1580 the baby of Moorish slave Mariana was consigned to his father and Mariana's master, the physician Sempronio Maltempo, who promised to 'educate [the baby] out of charity, and

- return him [to the Pia Casa] at the request of the governors, without asking for any expenses, and without any exceptions'. AIRE, CAT C 1, c. 41v (4 August 1580).
- [106] Sally McKee's work in progress on sex slaves in medieval Venice promises to be an important contribution to this field. On concubinage in Venice see also: Cowan, 'Patricians'; Cowan, 'Mogli'; Byars, 'Concubinage'.
- [107] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 14r (11 November 1629).
- [108] AIRE, CAT A 1, c. 23. In 1613, the governors decided to threaten Lucia-Sultana, a convert and a longtime recipient of the House's charity, with discontinuing her stipend unless she moved out of the house where she was then living and refrained from her habit of visiting homes that were 'scandalous and contrary to the Catholic faith'. Earlier inquiries after Sultana's morality and poverty seem to have satisfied the governors, and she was given small sums of money on a regular basis throughout 1611–12. Ultimately, in 1615 Lucia-Sultana joined the Pizzochere sisters of S. Stefano and became a nun. The Pia Casa provided her with a stipend for rent, clothing, and food for the first year, later extended for a second year or until some other funding source came up. In another case in 1615, the governors deigned to give 12 *lire* and 12 *soldi* in charity to the convert and commercial broker Andrea 'upon proof of confession and communion'. Andrea had been baptized twenty years earlier, in May 1595. For Lucia-Sultana, see: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 71r (23 May 1613), c. 91r (29 May 1615), c. 102r (3 June 1616). See also: *ibid.*, cc. 13r–v, 17r, 19r, 29r, 33r, 38r, 45r, 54r, 55v, 56r, 58v, 63v, 66r, 76r. For Andrea: AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 47v (12 April 1595), c. 48r (12 May 1595); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 87v (8 January 1614 m.v.).
- [109] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 7r (16 February 1622 m.v.).
- [110] On Tridentine emphasis on parochial conformity, see: Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation'. For a historiographical survey of 'social discipline' in early modern Italy, see: De Boer, 'Social Discipline'. For specific disciplinary aspects of the Tridentine Reform, see the collected essays in Prodi and Penuti, *Disciplina*; Prodi and Reinhard, *Il Concilio*.
- [111] AIRE, CAT B 6, 64v (24 January 1612 m.v.).
- [112] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 90r (23 April 1615), c. 90v (30 April 1615), c. 94v (15 October 1615).
- [113] Glixon, *Honoring God*, 2.
- [114] AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 61v (14 December 1612), c. 63v (18 January 1612 m.v.), c. 84r (12 June 1613), c. 85v (4 September 1614). References to young neophytes kept by Geronima appear in the register up to its end in 1619.
- [115] AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 48v (18 May 1595), c. 52r (20 July 1595), c. 52v (24 July 1595), c. 53r (3 August 1595), c. 53v (10 August 1595).
- [116] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 4r–v (23 March 1619); AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 134v (20 December 1618). The prior alludes here to the governors' intention to place Antonio in the service of Ottavio dall'Oglio, who later employed several other converts: AIRE, CAT B 6, c. 140r (14 March 1619).
- [117] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 44 (17 March 1619).
- [118] ACPV, Battesimi dei Catecumeni, 2, c. 15r (5 August 1630) and c. 15v (8 March 1631).
- [119] AIRE, CAT B 4, c. 86r (28 May 1598).
- [120] Simmel, 'The Stranger', pp. 402, 408.
- [121] Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 75.
- [122] Scaraffia, *Rinnegati*, 169 (my translation).

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