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MOBILITY AND AMBIGUITY. *CRISTIANI NOVELLI* FROM APULIA IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY VENICE

In 1550, for the second time after 1497, the Venetian Senate decreed the expulsion of all *Marrani* from the city and forbade its citizens and inhabitants to have any dealings with them. Within two months they had to leave Venice and its dominions. In case of violation the decree threatened the confiscation of property and a two-year galley sentence. The decree does not specify who was meant by *Marrani*. It only speaks of a «faithless people without religion (*gente infidele senza religione*)». Obviously, the Senate assumed that those directly and indirectly affected knew who the *Marrani* in Venice were. In the Edict of Expulsion of 1497, they had been described as a «people of heretics» who had migrated to Venice after the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. They allegedly used «dark and detestable practices», had «abundance of money», and harmed the city and its inhabitants by their pursuit of «their own benefit»¹.

The term *Marrani*, as it is well known, originally came from Spain or from the Iberian Peninsula². There, since the fifteenth century, the Jews who had converted during the mass conversions of 1391 and at the beginning of the fifteenth century were called *Marranos*, and not only they, but also their descendants. Under the pressure of persecution by the inquisition, many of them had left the Iberian Peninsula and had migrated to other regions of Europe, not least to Venice³.

There was, however, another community of descendants of Jewish converts that lived in mid-sixteenth century Venice. This is shown by

¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Senato Terra, Deliberazioni, Filze, b. 11.; cf. D. KAUFMANN, *Die Vertreibung der Marranen aus Venedig im Jahr 1550*, in «The Jewish Quarterly Review», XIII (1901), pp. 520-532, 526-527.

² A. FARINELLI, *Marrano. Storia di un vituperio*, Geneva, Olschki, 1925.

³ B. GAMPEL, *Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon and the Royal Response, 1391-1392*, Cambridge, †Cambridge University Press, 2016; D. NIRENBERG, *Enmity and Assimilation. Jews, Christians, and Converts in Medieval Spain*, in «Common Knowledge» IX (2003), pp. 137-155; D. M. GITLITZ, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1996; B. PULLAN, *The Jews of Europe and the inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983.

the reaction of an important group of Venetian society to the Edict of Expulsion of 1550, that of the merchants of the Rialto. They raised protest against the implementation of the Edict of Expulsion as it would mean serious losses for them because of the outstanding debts they were having with many who were considered to be *Marrani*, especially with the Spaniards and the Portuguese. Yet, they were also having close business relationships «with those called *Cristiani Novelli*, who live in Apulia (con quelli che chiamano Cristiani Novelli, che habitano in Puglia)». For these exported oil, grain and other fruits of Apulia from there and sold them in the city investing the gains of these sales in cloth and other goods. «With this whole nation too (*anche con tutta questa nation*)», both with those who lived in the city, and with those who lived outside Venice, they had debit and credit in their books from the transactions they conducted with them every day, resulting in long-term financial obligations that they, upon their honor, could neither alter nor terminate⁴.

The *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia in Southern Italy mentioned here were descendants of Jews who had converted to Christianity already at the end of the 13th century. In 1292 in the Kingdom of Naples under pressure by the inquisition, the Jews of 22 towns had more or less collectively accepted baptism⁵. In most regions of the kingdom these converts disappear from the sources already by the middle of the fourteenth century. Yet, in the coastal towns of Apulia, the converted Jews and also their descendants can be traced well into the sixteenth century. There they are repeatedly documented as *Neofiti*, *Christiani Novi* and *Cristiani Novelli*. The main center of the New Christians of Apulia was the port city of Trani. Here, 310 adult male converts are attested in 1292.

⁴ ASV, Senato Terra, Deliberazioni, Filze, b. 11.; cf. KAUFMANN, *Vertreibung der Marranen*, pp. 529-530.

⁵ B. SCHELLER, *Die Stadt der Neuchristen. Konvertierte Juden und ihre Nachkommen im Trani des Spätmittelalters zwischen Inklusion und Exklusion*, Berlin, Akademie, 2013, pp. 31-48; ID., *Die Bettelorden und die Juden. Mission, Inquisition und Konversion im Südwesteuropa des 13. Jahrhunderts: ein Vergleich*, in *Gestiftete Zukunft im mittelalterlichen Europa. Festschrift für Michael Borgolte zum 60. Geburtstag*, (ed.) W. HUSCHNER, F. REXROTH, Berlin, Akademie 2008, pp. 89-122; ID., *Die politische Stellung der Juden im mittelalterlichen Süditalien und die Massenkonzersion der Juden im Königreich Neapel im Jahr 1292*, in *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. 1: Konzeptionelle Grundfragen und Fallstudien (Heiden, Barbaren, Juden)*, (ed.) L. GRENZMANN, T. HAYE, N. HENKEL, T. KAUFMANN, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, pp. 143-172; cf. J. STARR, *The Mass Conversion of Jews in Southern Italy (1290-1293)*, in «*Speculum*» XXI (1946), pp. 203-211.

At the end of the fifteenth century there were still 120 households of New Christians living in Trani, which was about one-eighth of the city's population. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the New Christians of Trani constituted the backbone of the *Cristiani Novelli* population of Southern Italy. In this period they gained access to city councils, took up residence outside of the former Jewish quarter (the *Giudecca*), some even rose to high positions at the court of King Ferrante I of Naples (1424-1494). Yet, in 1495 they were expelled from Trani only to be welcomed by other towns, where they now took up residence⁶.

While the migration of Sephardic *Conversos* to Venice has received considerable attention, the presence of the *Cristiani Novelli*, the New Christians of Apulia in the lagoon has remained virtually unexplored, not least because of the methodological challenges posed by the Venetian evidence. Research on the *Conversos* in early modern Venice is based on the records of the inquisition, which started to operate continuously in Venice only in 1548. These also include investigations against *Conversos* and *Marrani*, who were suspected of judaizing, i.e. secretly professing Judaism or practicing Jewish customs. Picking up from there it is possible to trace the *Conversos* or *Marrani* documented in the inquisitorial sources also in other types of evidence, mainly notarial deeds⁷.

Up to the middle of the sixteenth century, however, there is only one isolated piece of evidence of inquisitorial activity directed against persons suspected of judaizing: In November 1473, an inquisitor, named Francesco de Rodigo, started preliminary proceedings and his informants named two people to him, both of whom were from Apulia⁸. One of the two, a man named Angelo Ursino, could since then be traced

⁶ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*; cf. V. VITALE, *Un Particolare ignorato di Storia pugliese: Neofiti e Mercanti*, in *Studi di Storia Napoletana in Onore di Michelangelo Schipa*, Napoli, I. T. E. A. Editrice, 1926, pp. 133-146.

⁷ Cf. F. RUSPIO, *La nazione portoghese: ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia*, Torino, Silvio Zamorani, 2009.

⁸ Archivio Storico del Patriarcato di Venezia (ASPVe), Curia, Archivio 'Segreto', Criminalia S. Inquisitionis, b. 1 (1461-1558), ff. 135r-137v.; cf. *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti (1548-1560)*, (ed.) P. C. IOLY ZORATTINI, Firenze, Olschki 1980, pp. 339-340; R. SEGRE, *Cristiani novelli e medici ebrei a Venezia: storie di Inquisizione tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, in *Una manna buona per Mantova. Man tov le-Man Tovab. Studi in onore di Vittore Colorni per il suo 92° compleanno*, (ed.) M. PERANI, Firenze, Olschki 2004, pp. 394-396 (transcriptions); R. SEGRE, *Documenti di fonte veneziana sugli ebrei in Puglia*, in «Sefer Yu asin», N.S. VI (2018), pp. 93-121, pp. 96-97 (regest).

in a whole series of other documents from fifteenth century Venice. We will come back to him. Apart from the records of the inquisitorial proceedings of 1473, no sources from Venice have been found in which individuals were labeled *Cristiano Novello* or similar.

The history of the New Christians of Apulia in their region of origin, however, has been intensively researched in recent years⁹. At the same time, this has laid the foundation for the study of their presence in late medieval and early modern Venice. Numerous sources have been uncovered in which members of certain families were designated as a *Christianus Novus*, *Cristiano Novello*, *Neofita* or *Neofidus*. This allows to identify as New Christians not only the persons who are explicitly called *Cristiano Novello* or the like in the sources, but also those persons who belonged to the same family. In this way it is possible to identify more than 327 people from 25 families as members of that group that for more than 250 years was repeatedly referred to as *Cristiani Novelli*, for the city of Trani alone¹⁰. At the same time, first pieces of evidence have come to light that members of New Christian families from Trani migrated to Venice in the fifteenth century. One of the most important of these families were the De Gello. A tithe register of the church of Trani records a Nicola de Gello *Neofidus* in 1408. Three generations later, after the expulsion of the New Christians from Trani in 1495, several members of the de Gello family are again explicitly recorded as *Neofidus* or the like. One of them, Berlingerio de Gello, does business for the Medici in Venice in 1473. A Costatino de Gello is documented in Venice in 1489 as a partner of another New Christian from Trani, where they exported oil from Apulia¹¹.

⁹ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*; D. DE CEGLIA, *Lo storico bitontino Eustachio Rogadeo e la sua raccolta di documenti per la storia degli ebrei nel Mezzogiorno*, in «Sefer Yuhasin», N.S. VII (2019), pp. 85-130, ID., *Nuovi documenti sugli ebrei a Barletta*, in «Sefer Yuhasin», N.S. V (2017): pp. 83-108; ID., *Cristiani Novelli di Terra di Bari nel secolo XVI in due privilegi inediti di Giovinazzo e Bisceglie*, in Sefer Yuhasin N.S. III (2015), pp. 87-107; C. COLAFEMMINA, *Documenti per la storia degli ebrei in Puglia e nel mezzogiorno nella Biblioteca Comunale di Bitonto*, in: «Sefer Yuhasin», IX (1993), 19-44; ID., *Ebrei e Cristiani Novelli in Puglia. Le Comunità minori*, Bari, Regione Puglia, Assessorato alla cultura: Istituto ecumenico S. Nicola, 1991; ID., *Documenti per la storia degli ebrei in Puglia nell'Archivio di Stato di Napoli*, Bari, Regione Puglia, Assessorato alla cultura: Istituto ecumenico S. Nicola, 1990.

¹⁰ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1.

¹¹ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1, no. IX/1;12; 17; 30-31.

To follow these traces systematically is the aim of the project *The Sea of New Christians: mobility and ambiguity of converted Jews and their descendants in the Adriatic region of the Late Middle Ages (fourteenth to early sixteenth century)* within the framework of the research group *Ambiguity and Distinction. Historical-Cultural Dynamics*, which began its work in 2019. It is focusing on the interrelations between geographical mobility of New Christians from Apulia and their perception as a group with an ambiguous religious identity and affiliation¹². It therefore analyses the migration of New Christians from Apulia to the two main Adriatic commercial centers of Venice and Ragusa, today Dubrovnik. So far, the focus of the project has been the presence and situation of New Christians from Apulia in fifteenth century Venice. In the following some results of this ongoing research will be presented. They are preliminary, yet they allow to give answers to the questions, whether the New Christians from Apulia resided permanently or only temporarily in Venice and how numerous they were as a group of migrants during the fifteenth century. They give an idea of their role in the Venetian economy and they also show, to what extent the New Christians of Apulia were perceived as persons or a group with an ambiguous religious identity in fifteenth century Venice too.

Labels such as *Cristiano Novello*, *Christianus Novus*, or *Neofitus*, after all, still marked them as newcomers among the Christians, more than two hundred years after the conversion of their ancestors in 1292. They were perceived as “newly planted”, who had neither firm roots nor strong shoots in the Christian faith. Their religious identity and affiliation was thus repeatedly marked as unstable. And as a consequence, in their region of origin, the question whether they were in some way Jewish came up periodically during the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth century¹³.

Until the middle of the fourteenth century, only the inquisition openly suspected the converted Jews of Apulia or their descendants of apostatizing from the Catholic faith and thus being heretics. These allegations were not heard again until 1446, when political factions in Trani and other cities succeeded in employing them to incite a fresh wave of inquisitorial persecution. Between 1446 and their expulsion from Trani in 1495, the accusation of judaizing appears in the documents only

¹² https://www.uni-due.de/forschungsgruppe_2600/tp07.php (31.10.2022).

¹³ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, pp. 311-335.

once. In the years after 1495, however, the urban government of Trani eventually accused the New Christians of heresy to legitimize their displacement and dispossession. The New Christians' alleged ambiguous religious identity thus also generated an ambiguous political and social situation, alternating between inclusion and exclusion.

Mobility and Migration: The New Christians from Apulia in fifteenth century Venice

The bulk of sources documenting the presence of the New Christians from Apulia in Venice consists of notarial deeds recording business dealings, mainly powers of attorney (*carta commissiois*) and receipts for payment (*securitates*), but also acts of buying and selling and other contracts, whereas only very few testaments could be traced in the notarial documentation¹⁴. Yet, cross referencing the information from the notarial deeds with other sources it also allows us to understand these more comprehensively.

The New Christians from Apulia can be grasped in Venice since the end of the fourteenth century. In their vast majority they originated from Trani. Exponents of at least ten New Christian families from there can be traced in Venice in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. In addi-

¹⁴ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore. Notai, b. 11/52 (Diversi), 23 (Giovanni Borghi, 1399-1420), 45 (Andrea Cristiani), 47 (Andrea Cristiani, 1405-1406), 48 (Andrea Cristiani, 1407-1411), 49 (Andrea Cristiani, 1411-1418), 50 (Andrea Cristiani, 1418-1421), 52 (Andrea Cristiani, 1421-1428), 53 (Donato Compostel), 54 (Giovanni Crescimbene, 1400-1431), 58 (Anastasio Cristiani), 74 (Francesco degli Elmi, 1442-1459), 81 (Domenico Filosofi, 1400-1420), 92 (Giorgio di Gibilino, 1359-1409), 95/1 (Francesco Gibellino, 1390-1450), 95/2 (Francesco Gibellino, 1412-1423), 96 (Pietro Griffon, 1410-1416), 104 (Tomaso Luciani, 1412-1438), 105 (Paolo Liberali da Oderzo, 1432-1463), 120 (Gasparino Mani), 132 (Marciliano de Naresi), 133 (Novello Gaspare di Venezia), 149 (Vittore Pomino, 1434-1438, 1439-1442, 1443-1445), 191 (Federico Stefani, 1398-1439), 192 (Francesco de Soris, 1405-1409), 193 (Francesco de Soris, 1410-1413, 1413-1417, 1417-1434), 194 (Enrico de Sileris, 1423-1435), 195 (Fantino Saracco, 1451-1484), 208 (Pietro del fu ser Zambonini de Tibertinis da Bologna), 210 (Prospero de Tomasi (1416-1417), 215 (Vol, 1434-1436, 1440), 225 (Angeletto de Venetiis, 1400-1405), 226 (Angeletto de Venetiis, 1403, 1406-1411), 227 (Angeletto de Venetiis, 1412-1417), 228 (Angeletto de Venetiis, 1418-1420, 1421-1423); Testamenti, b. 975 (Enrico de Sileris, f. 21v); b. 415 (Giovanni Buosi) ced. Cart.; b. 558a (Antonio Gambaro), ced. Cart. 23; b. 356 (Bartolo Basso), 119, ff. 58v-59v; b. 203 (Giacomo Chiodo), 118, ff. 101v-102r cf. Segre, *Documenti* (regests of some of the documents).

tion, there were four families from Manfredonia, one family had branches in both cities (Table 1)¹⁵.

Table 1: Families of New Christians from Apulia in fifteenth century Venice

Family	First mentioned	Number of Individuals mentioned	City of Origin
Barisano	1402	4	Trani
Bottoni	1404	5	Trani
Catalano	1401	3	Trani
Florio	1418	3	Manfredonia/Trani
Fomay	1402	2	Trani
Gello	1402	2	Trani
Gentile	1440	1	Trani
Grimaldi	1416	1	Manfredonia
Menadoy	1432	4	Manfredonia
Metullo	1401	8	Trani
Nucio	1404	2	Trani
Pace	1397	3	Manfredonia
Pavello	1406	1	Manfredonia
Ursino	1412	4	Trani
Zardullo	1412	3	Trani

A significant number of New Christians from Apulia obviously had moved to Venice permanently or at least for longer periods of their lives. Two members of the De Pace family from Manfredonia acquired Venetian citizenship in 1397 and 1403 after five years respectively fifteen years of residence¹⁶. In 1460 Giovanni Florio and Dario di Giovanni Florio from Manfredonia became Venetian citizens too¹⁷. Members of nine

¹⁵ Cf. SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1, no. 3, 5-10, 15-17, 24; C. COLAFEMMINA, *Documenti per la storia degli ebrei in Puglia nell'Archivio di Stato*, no. 1, p. 308.

¹⁶ Floridus de Pace qd Donati, Cives Veneciarum, <http://www.civesveneciarum.net/dettaglio.php?id=856>, versione 88/2021-11-05; Iohannes de Pace qd Donati, Cives Veneciarum, <http://www.civesveneciarum.net/dettaglio.php?id=1848>, versione 88/2021-11-05 (31.10.2022)

¹⁷ Darius Florii Iohannis, Cives Veneciarum, <http://www.civesveneciarum.net/dettaglio.php?id=939>, versione 88/2021-11-05; Iohannes Florii, Cives Veneciarum, <http://www.civesveneciarum.net/dettaglio.php?id=1916>, versione 88/2021-11-05 (31.10.2022)

of the ten *Cristiano Novello* families from Apulia are explicitly documented as inhabitants, «habitatores», of Venice: Barisano, Bottoni, Catalano, Gentile, Metullo, Nucio, Pace, Pavello, Ursino, Zardullo¹⁸. Some of them can be traced more or less continuously for periods of twenty years or more. The afore mentioned Angelo Ursino can be found in the sources for at least 40, maybe 61 years from 1412 to 1452/73¹⁹, Barisano de Donato for 38 years (1407-1445)²⁰, and Donato Catalano, for 21 years (1415-1436)²¹.

¹⁸ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 227, f. 60v: Barisano di Donato Barisano 1413-05-12, f. 362v: Bartolomeo di Donato Barisano 1418-01-22; b. 193, f. 87v: Angelo di Leone Bottoni 1412-02-01; b. 95/1 Nicola (Cola) Bottoni 1426-08-26, Ruggero di Pietro Bottoni 1433-12-15; b. 81, f. 282r Bartolomeo di Michele (Miccho) Catalano 1413-09-13, b. 95/2, f. 95r Donato di Michele (Miccho) Catalano 1418-10-01; b. 215, f. 253v. Gaspere Gentile 1440-11-02; b. 192, f. 40v, f. 140v Angelo di Giovanni Metullo 1409-08-26; b. 96 f. 6v Carlo Metullo 1411-04-24; b. 193, f. 24r, 27rv Guglielmo Metullo 1413-10-26; b. 74, f. 26r Nanni di Cecco de Nucio 1442-06-04; b. 226, f. 200r Antonio di Valentino de Pace 1409-08-26; b. 54, f. 24v Florio di Donato de Pace 1401-04-23; b. 226, f. 18r. Matteuccio Pavello (Covello) 1406-06-19; b. 149, f. 49v Angelo di Tommaso Ursino 1438-06-09, Francesco di Leuccio Ursino; b. 215, f. 115v Leuccio di Zansueli (Zardullo) 1435-04-24.

¹⁹ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 49, 8r 1412-05-11, 29r 1415-10-29, 30r 1415-11-10; b. 193, f. 127v 1416-03-23; f. 141r 1416-06-13; b. 210, f. 98v-99r 1417-12-07; b. 104, f. 23r 1418-05-13; b. 228, f. 220r 1420-03-11; f. 230v-231r 1420-07-05; f. 232v-233r 1420-07-08; f. 270rv 1420-11-27; b. 191 1421-12-05; b. 95/2, f. 195r 1422-04-02; b. 95/2, f. 249v 1423-11-01; b. 95/1 1425-07-20; b. 194 1426-06-21, 1427-07-04, 1427-07-26, 1428-07-19; b. 52, f. 12r 1428-08-03; b. 194 1428-09-25; b. 11, f. 8v 1430-06-16; b. 975, f. 21v 1432-08-28; b. 149, f. 49v 1438-06-09; b. 58, f. 59v 1443-05-06; b. 105, f. 4r 1445-03-03; b. 558/b, 226r. 1452-05-13; Cancelleria Inferiore, Testamenti, b. 975, (Enrico de Sileriis), f. 21v; b. 415 (Giovanni Buosi) ced. Cart.; b. 558a (Antonio Gambaro), ced. Cart. 23; b. 356 (Bartolo Basso), 119, ff. 58v-59v; cf. SEGRE, *Documenti*.

²⁰ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 47, f. 26r 1404-07-26; b. 48 1407-07-14, b. 48 1409-09, 1410-05-08, b. 49 1411-07-09; b. 48 1411-07-19, b. 49 1411-07-29, 1411-09-15, b. 227, f. 4v 1412-03-31, b. 193, f. 104r 1412-07-28; b. 227, f. 60v 1413-05-12; b. 193, f. 126v 1416-03-16; b. 49, f. 20v 1416-07-30; b. 53 1417-09-01; b. 210, f. 98v-99r 1417-12-07; b. 208 1418-02-01; b. 228, f. 231v 1420-07-05; b. 52, f. 19r 1421-08-25, f. 23v 1422-10-30, f. 8r 1423-05-11, 8v 1423-05-14; b. 95/2, f. 252r 1423-11-23; b. 52, f. 7v 1425-05-01 (2), f. 6r 1426-05-05 (2); b. 95/1 1426-08-26; b. 52, f. 1r 1428-03-02; b. 215, f. 209r 1436-08-02; R. C. MUELLER, *The Venetian money market*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 112.

²¹ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai b. 49, f. 29r 1415-10-29, f. 29v 1415-11-04; f. 30r 1415-11-10, f. 34v 1415-12-30, f. 1v 1416-03-28, f. 7r 1416-05-16, f. 20v 1416-07-30, f. 20v 1416-07-30, f. 22r 1416-08-25; b. 95/2, f. 95r 1418-10-01; b. 228, f. 66r 1418-12-24; b. 52, f. 19r 1421-08-25, f. 16r 1422; b. 228 1422-01-16; b. 52, f. 23v 1422-10-30, f. 8r 1423-05-11 (2), f. 8v 1423-05-14, 1423-08-05, f. 15v 1423-08-05; b. 95/2, f. 252r 1423-

Yet, some New Christians from Apulia are documented in notarial deeds from Venice for several years and mentioned as inhabitants of different parishes, but can later be traced in the source material of their city of origin. Nicola Bottoni of the important Bottoni family, for instance, is mentioned in notarial deeds from Venice between 1420 and 1428. In 1418 he is also mentioned as inhabitant of the parish of San Silvestro. In 1454, however, we find him back in Trani, where he died in 1461²². Bartolomeo Catalano appears in the *notarile* from Venice between 1412 und 1421, already in 1413 he is documented as a resident of the parish of Sant' Aponal. Yet, in 1422 he is documented in Trani²³. These cases indicate that a substantial part of the *Cristiani Novelli*, documented in the Venetian Sources, were temporary migrants, who moved to Venice as young adults and returned to their city of origin at an older age. In other cases, however, the evidence seems to indicate, that New Christians moved back and forth continuously between their city of origin and Venice. Angelo Bottoni, for instance, is documented in Trani in 1398, in Venice in 1404, again in Trani in 1406, in Venice in 1411 and in Trani in 1412²⁴.

There were thus obviously two types of migration of New Christians of Apulia to Venice: temporary and permanent migration. But there was also mobility that did not lead to an extended residence, although this seems to have been rather the exception from the rule. It is difficult to say, whether permanent or temporary migration was more common. Yet, the notable absence of testaments in the sources could be a hint, that the latter rather than the former was the rule. Sources from Apulia show that

11-23; b. 52, f. 8v 1425-05-09 (2); b. 215, f. 115v 1435-04-24, f. 176v 1435-06-28, b. 215, f. 209r 1436-08-02, ff. 277r-279v 1436-11-16.

²² ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai b. 228, f. 220r 1420-03-11; f. 230v-231r 1420-07-05; b. 52, f. 7v 1425-05-01; f. 8v 1425-05-09, f. 6r1426-05-05; b. 95/1 1426-08-26; b. 194 1427-05-13, 1427-10-13; b. 52, f. 1r 1428-03-02; SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1, no. V/6.

²³ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 193, f. 95r 1412-05-13; b. 49, f. 15v 1412-07-28, f. 16r 1412-07-28; b. 81, ff. 221v-223r 1412-11-02; b. 81, f. 282r 1413-09-13; b. 95/2, f. 27rm 1414-07-27; b. 81, ff. 342v-343r 1415-04-20; b. 23 1415-05-08; b. 49, f. 29r 1415-10-29; f. 29v 1415-11-04, f. 30r 1415-11-10, f. 1v 1416-03-28, f. 15 1416-07-13; b. 228, f. 220r 1420-03-11; b. 191 1421-12-04, b. 191 1421-12-05; SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1, no. VI/4.

²⁴ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 47, f. 20r 1404-08-23; b. 48 1411-06; b. 193, f. 87v 1412-02-01; b. 81, ff. 221v-223r 1412-11-02; b. 193, f. 95r 1412-05-13; SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, Anhang 1, no. V/3.

Cristiani Novelli formed trading partnerships that were to last a certain number of years, with one or two *compagni* residing in Apulia, the other(s) going abroad²⁵. It is very likely that many of the *Cristiani Novelli* we find in notarial deeds from fifteenth century Venice were partners of such societies, who took residence at the Lagoon for many years, some for the rest of their lives.

The majority of the New Christians from Apulia resided in the *sestiere* of San Polo, above all in the parish of Sant' Aponal, but also in other *sestieri* and parishes. (Figure 1) There was a certain concentration of their presence, but there were most probable no streets exclusively inhabited by *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia. Their decision about where to live was thus based on factors such as familiarity and proximity to work. San Polo and Sant' Aponal in particular was near the Rialto, where the New Christians from Apulia did their business.



Figure 1: Residence of the *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia in fifteenth century Venice, © Dr. Nicolò Villanti.

The New Christians from Apulia were merchants. As such they are repeatedly documented in the sources, both from their region of origin and from Venice. Merchants, *mercatores*, *mercanti* or *mercatanti* was also the designation they used for themselves when they applied to authorities, like the pope or the king of Naples, as a group. «Gratie adomandate

²⁵ V. VITALE, *Trani dagli Angioni agli Spagnuoli*, Bari, Vecchi 1912, p. 198, note 4; cf. SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, pp. 152-157; Anhang 1, no. III/9; IX/22.

alla Maiestà delo Serenissimo Signore Re per nui mercatanti de Trana», is the wording of the prelude of a series of *capitoli* they submitted to King Alfonso V. in 1445²⁶.

Sources from Apulia from the middle and end of the fifteenth century show that the New Christians played a leading role in the export of grain from Apulia, to Dalmatia but also to Venice. At the same time, numerous sales of cloth from Northern Italy in Apulia by *Cristiani Novelli* are documented.²⁷ The Venetian sources now prove that this pattern was already established by the beginning of the fifteenth century. Six notarial deeds from the first half of the fifteenth century document the purchase of considerable amounts of cloth by *Cristiani Novelli*. In three cases the prize is mentioned: 100, 175 and 225 ducats. In all but one of these purchases the merchants from Apulia bought cloth that had been produced in Venice or the Veneto (fi. Padua)²⁸. Yet, in 1436 Donato Catalano is in business with two merchants from Florence, Bernardo de Uzzano and Nicolò degli Agli, for the import of 1200 pounds of silk, 1.200 «libbre di sirici seu sete de opera», from Calabria²⁹.

We find a direct link between the export of cloth and the import of grain in a barter of barley worth 175 ducats against cloth of the same value by Angelo Ursino and a Giovanni Basta di Alessio (Lezha in Albania) in 1427³⁰. Apart from this deal, transactions of grain involving the New Christians of Apulia are documented only four times. However, each of these transactions concern whole shiploads of grain (wheat or barley) the *Cristiani Novelli* had imported to Venice³¹.

The grain trade was a particular kind of trade. Provisioning a city during the middle ages was a considerable challenge. Establishing food

²⁶ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Cancillería Real, Alfonso IV el Magnanimo, reg. 2907, ff. 86v-87v; cf. *I registri "Privilegiatorum" di Alfonso il Magnanimo della serie "Neapolis" dell'Archivio della Corona d'Aragona*, a (ed.) C. López Rodríguez, S. Palmieri, Napoli 2018, no. 82, p. 270 (regist).

²⁷ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, pp. 223-233.

²⁸ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 227, f. 4v; b. 81, ff. 221rv, 221v-223r, 319rv, 342v-343r.

²⁹ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 215, ff. 277r-279v.

³⁰ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 194 1427-07-04.

³¹ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 120 Florio de Pace 1406; b. 192, 40v Matteuccio Pavello (Covello) Nicola Metullo 1406; b. 191 Bartolomeo Catalano/Angelo Ursino 1421; b.149, f. 27v Francesco di Leucio Ursino.

security was also one of the foundations of political stability and legitimacy³². In late medieval Venice the grain trade was thus strictly controlled by the state³³. Already in the twelfth century a separate administration of the annona was supposedly created. By 1256 the *officium* or *camera frumenti* existed, in 1365 a new magistracy, the *provveditori alle biave*, took over most of the annorary responsibilities. The annona oversaw supply, issued licenses, and assured merchants a good profit via guaranteed prices. It bought grain that was offered by private merchants, but it also commissioned wholesalers to buy grain. In 1445 it contracted one of the leading Apulian New Christians in Venice, Barisano de Donato, to deliver 10.000 *staia* of wheat to Venice, which amounted to 17 percent of the 60.000 *staia* wheat the public grain office stored in its granaries at the time, just to give an idea of the dimensions³⁴.

The *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia, or at least their leading exponents, obviously were wholesalers specialized in the grain trade and as such despite their rather small size as a group of migrants had a vital function for the Republic of Venice not only in the fifteenth but up to the middle of the sixteenth century, at least.

The strive for food security was also one of the motors of Venetian expansion in the Adriatic. Already since the thirteenth century emissaries of the Republic were present at the court of the kings of Sicily respectively Naples but also, as consuls and vice-consuls, in the port towns of Apulia, that had the biggest importance for the grain trade: Trani and later Manfredonia. Here they represented the Venetian merchants who resided there³⁵.

In the second decade of the fifteenth century conflicts arose between the city of Trani and the merchants from Venice there about customs and other issues. After complaints to the queen of Naples had come to no avail, the senate imposed a boycott on trade with Trani and her citizens

³² G. DAMERON, *Feeding the Medieval Italian City-State. Grain, War and political Legitimacy in Tuscany c.1150-1350*, in «Speculum» XCII (2017), pp. 976-1019.

³³ For the following cf. H.-J. HÜBNER, *Quia bonum sit anticipare tempus. Die kommunale Versorgung Venedigs mit Brot und Getreide vom späten 12. bis ins 15. Jahrhundert*, Berlin-Bern-New York-Paris-Wien, Lang, 1998, pp. 336-338; MUELLER, *Venetian money market*, pp. 361-362.

³⁴ MUELLER, *Venetian money market*, p. 111, note 154; HÜBNER, *Quia bonum sit*, p. 379.

³⁵ F. CARABELLESE, *Le relazioni commerciali fra la Puglia e la Repubblica di Venezia dal secolo X al XV*, voll. 1-2, Trani, Vecchi, 1897-1898, VITALE, *Trani*, pp. 193-194.

in 1428. When the matter was settled two years later, in 1430, by direct negotiations between the commune of Trani and the Senate, we find two *Cristiani Novelli*, who had migrated to Venice, among the emissaries of the Apulian port town: Ruggerio Bottoni and Barisano de Donato Barisano³⁶. The commune of Trani obviously wanted to use their networks in Venetian Society and Politics to her advantage. Around the same time, in 1429, the senate appointed a *Cristiano Novello*, Lisolo Capuano, as Venetian vice-consul in Manfredonia³⁷. As a «*maximus zelator status nostri*» he could hold this office, although he was not a Venetian citizen, let alone noble, to whom the office of a consul or vice-consul was usually reserved³⁸. He held the office at least till 1449 and played an important role for the supply of the republic of Venice with grain from Apulia³⁹. In the fifteenth century the *Cristiani Novelli* from Trani and Manfredonia obviously had the role of political brokers between their hometowns and the Republic of Venice, highlighting once again the vital function they had for both of them.

Vanishing Ambiguity: The Perception of the Cristiano Novelli from Apulia in fifteenth century Venice

Although we have not found any evidence that the New Christians of Apulia were labelled as *Cristiani Novelli* or *Neofiti* in their everyday activities, we must assume that the designation *Cristiani Novelli* for a group of people from Apulia was already known in Venice at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A previously unknown document from 1409 records a complaint that three or four *Cristiani Novelli* were bulk-

³⁶ *I libri commemoriali della repubblica di Venezia, Regesti*, (ed.) R. Predelli, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2012 (1st ed. Venezia 1896), vol. 4, no. 11/11f., 14, 17, 19; 12/127, 131f.; cf. CARABELLESE, *Le relazioni commerciali 1*, pp. 82-83; VITALE, *Trani*, pp. 143-51.

³⁷ ASV, Senato Misti, vol. 57, f. 188v (NS f. 192v) 1430-02-05; cf. M. POPOVIC-RADENKOVIC, *Le relazioni commerciali fra Dubrovnik (Ragusa) e la Puglia nel periodo angioino (1266-1442) 2*, in «Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane» LXXVII (1959), pp. 153-206, p. 163; for Lisolo Capuano and the Capuano-family of Manfredonia cf. C. COLAFEMMINA, *Documenti per la storia degli ebrei in Puglia nell'Archivio di Stato*, no. 1, p. 308.

³⁸ ASV, Senato Misti, vol. 1, f. 194v (NS f. 196v) 1443-10-08; cf. ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Libro Verde, vol. 1, ff. 57v-58r.

³⁹ ASV, Senato Misti, vol. 3, f. 109v (NS f. 110v) 1449-04-26.

ing up saltpeter that they imported to Venice from Apulia with ordinary salt.⁴⁰ With the New Christians from Apulia themselves also the designation that was used for them in their region of origin had migrated to Venice. Given the close relations between the Republic of Venice and Apulia, and not least the city of Trani, where most of the new Christians in Venice came from, it is most likely that the meaning of the designation was also known. And that means: The Senate and many of those who had dealings with the *Cristiani Novelli* must have known that they were descendants of Jews who had taken baptism long ago⁴¹.

However, in fifteenth century Venice, the New Christians from Apulia were obviously not held suspicious with regard to their religious identity and affiliation to a considerable degree. This can be seen, if we take a close look at the aforementioned inquisitorial investigation of 1473 considering the New Christians living in Venice. The inquisitor claimed, it was «publica vox et fama» that there were some Christians in the city of Venice who in the vernacular were called *Cristiani Novelli* and who followed the rite and customs of the Jews⁴². In contrast to this assertion, a mere two informants subsequently appeared before the inquisitor. One of them, a merchant from Genova, named Giovanni Mensana, did not have anything to say about *Cristiani Novelli*. But he felt the urge to tell Francesco di Rodigo, the inquisitor, «motus zelo fidei, tamquam verus catholicus et Ecclesie sancte filius», that in the city of Venice some Greeks not only stubbornly stuck to their error, but were also contaminating other true Catholics with it⁴³. The second informant was a Jew from Sicily, named Golli. He after all could mention two persons when asked if he knew any *Cristiani Novelli* in the city of Venice. He had heard of a certain Angelo Ursino, who lived in the parish of Sant' Aponal and of another one, a certain Marino of the same parish⁴⁴.

While Marino has not left any traces in the evidence that would have come to light so far, Angelo Ursino is one of the best documented *Cris-*

⁴⁰ ASV, Senato Misti, vol. 48, f. 51r. 1409-01-24.

⁴¹ SCHELLER, *Stadt der Neuchristen*, pp. 324, 348.

⁴² ASPVe, Curia, Archivio 'Segreto', Criminalia S. Inquisitionis, b. 1 (1461-1558), f. 135r; cf. *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, no. 1.

⁴³ ASPVe, Curia, Archivio 'Segreto', Criminalia S. Inquisitionis, b. 1 (1461-1558), f. 136r. This part of the document is missing in *Processo del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, no. 1.

⁴⁴ ASPVe, Curia, Archivio 'Segreto', Criminalia S. Inquisitionis, b. 1 (1461-1558), f. 135r; cf. *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, no. 1.

tiani Novelli from Apulia in the *notarile* from Venice. Cross referencing the records of the proceedings of the inquisitor with the evidence from the notarial deeds, it becomes clear that the inquisitor's suspicion regarding the religious conduct of the *Cristiani Novelli* was by no means as widespread in Venice as the inquisitor claimed.

Angelo Ursino is attested in notarial deeds from Venice at least 28 times between 1412 and 1452⁴⁵. The majority of these documents (seventeen) were powers of attorney, four of them active, and thirteen passive⁴⁶. The rest were various kinds of business transactions, like payments or guarantees. But Angelo Ursino is also documented as a witness and as executor of testaments⁴⁷. He was one of the leading exponents of the *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia in Venice and maintained close relationships with many of these. But he was also well integrated into Venetian society beyond his own group. The seventeen powers of attorney he gave and received are distributed among fifteen persons, since two of these persons received a power of attorney from him or authorized him more than once. Seven of these persons were *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia, who had migrated to Venice⁴⁸. The majority of the other eight were merchants from the Veneto or other regions of northern Italy, one was a shipowner from Venice, two came from Apulia, but were not *Cristiani Novelli*⁴⁹.

One of the few testaments by *Cristiani Novelli* from Apulia, who had migrated to Venice, fortunately is none other than the testament of An-

⁴⁵ Cf. above note 19.

⁴⁶ Cf. note 48-49.

⁴⁷ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 149, f. 49v; Cancelleria Inferiore, Testamenti, b. 975, (Enrico de Sileriis), f. 21v; b. 415 (Giovanni Buosi) ced. Cart.; b. 558a (Antonio Gambaro), ced. Cart. 23; b. 356 (Bartolo Basso), 119, ff. 58v-59v; cf. cf. Segre, *Documenti*, pp. 96, 101-107.

⁴⁸ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 49, f. 8r 1412-05-11; b. 228, f. 232v-233r 1420-07-08 (Carlo Metullo); b. 49, f. 29r 1415-10-29, f. 30r 1415-11-10; b. 228, f. 220r 1420-03-11; b. 191 1421-12-05 (Bartolomeo Catalano); b. 104, f. 23r 1418-05-13 (Antonio di Valentino di Pace; Bartolomeo di Donato di Barisano); b. 228, f. 230v-231r 1420-07-05 (Nicola Bottoni); b. 95/1 1425-07-20 (Zanone Zardullo); b. 194 1427-07-26; (Molillo Bottoni).

⁴⁹ ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, b. 193, f. 127v 1416-03-23 (Antonio di Pietro Rizzo, Venice), f. 141r 1416-06-13 (Gentile Pasquarelli, Trani); b. 228, f. 270rv 1420-11-27 (Andrea di Marino, Molfetta); b. 95/2, f. 249v 1423-11-01 (Pietro Asperiveris, Verona; Giovanni di Iacopo, Modena); b. 194 1428-09-25 (Giovanni di Muggia, Istria), 1428-07-19 (Pietro Sparaneri, ?); b. 11, f. 8v 1430-06-16 (Daniele di Francesco, Verona); b. 105, f. 4r 1445-03-03 (Andrea da Garbignano, Lombardy [?]).

gelo Ursino's wife, Agnola⁵⁰. Her father was Grimaldo Menadoy from an important family of *Cristiani Novelli* from Manfredonia⁵¹. However, she was most likely born in Venice, since her will names her godfather, Giovanni Iuda, a member of an important family of *cittadini* of Sant' Aponal in Venice⁵². Already her father, Grimaldo Menadoy, obviously had lived in Venice with his wife and children. When Angelo Ursino was targeted by the inquisitor in 1473, he and his family had lived in Venice for more than sixty years and were well integrated into different networks of Venetian society. He must have been an old man at that time, if he was alive at all. The last document that mentions him before the inquisitor's investigation of 1473 is from 1452, a striking temporal gap.

After the inquisitor's informant, Golli, the Jew from Sicily had named him, Francesco di Rodigo summoned the parish priest of Sant' Aponal, Francesco Sanson, and questioned him, if he had ever heard of *Cristiani Novelli* living in his parish and observing certain rites and customs that deviated from the Catholic faith or were forbidden. The parish priest thereupon, too, named Angelo as one of two inhabitants of his parish who would be called as such («respondit quod scit in eius parrochia esse duos ita nuncupatos, quorum alter notatur ser Angelus Ursinus»). Yet, the information he could offer considering Angelo Ursino's religious conduct, was very vague. He claimed, he had heard one of his parishioners, one Androlo Strazarolo, say that Angelo spoke a lot to others about the Old Testament. Therefore, he would have warned the latter not to believe these speeches, lest Angelo confuse him with his wicked Jewish arguments⁵³.

Francisco Sanson had held the parish since 1445⁵⁴. Angelo Ursino must thus have been known to his parish priest as a person who was called *Cristiano Novello* for a long time, when the inquisitor questioned him about his religious conduct in 1473, without taking any action against him or at least admonishing him. It is thus likely, that he had

⁵⁰ ASVe, Cancelleria Inferiore, Testamenti, b. 975, (Enrico de Sileriis), f. 21v.

⁵¹ Cf. C. COLAFEMMINA, *Documenti per la storia degli ebrei in Puglia nell'Archivio di Stato*, no. 1, p. 308.

⁵² J. R. WHEELER, *The Sestiere of San Polo. A Cross Section of Venetian Society in the second Half of the fifteenth Century*, Ph.D.-Thesis, University of Warwick, 1995, pp. 124-126 (<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/36146>; 31.10.2022)

⁵³ ASPVe, Curia, Archivio 'Segreto', Criminalia S. Inquisitionis, b. 1 (1461-1558), ff. 137r; cf. *Processi del S. Uffizio di Venezia contro ebrei e giudaizzanti*, no. 1.

⁵⁴ J. R. WHEELER, *San Polo*, p. 122

not really suspected him of an ambiguous religious conduct and identity until then.

We also find Angelo Ursino in three wills set up by another migrant from Trani, named Andrea Benedetto, between 1433 and 1436. In the testaments Andrea Benedetto lists Angelo Ursino as one of his godfathers and appoints him together with these as one of the executors of the will⁵⁵. Andrea Benedetto was a converted Jew, not a descendant of a convert like Angelo Ursino, but a man who had been born and had been married as a Jew and had then been baptized. The wills mention two brothers of his who had not converted to Christianity and a stepdaughter who was married to a Jew.

The wills show that Andrea Benedetto tried to distance himself remarkably from his kin that had remained true to Judaism. He forbade his wife any contact with her Jewish son-in-law, unless he would also accept baptism. He promised his two brothers and his stepdaughter an inheritance in case they converted to Christianity. And he instructed his wife to ensure that his books would not fall into the hands of Jews. Obviously, Andrea Benedetto took his new Christian faith extremely serious and wanted to sever all ties to his former religion and brethren.

It is therefore telling that Andrea Benedetto had chosen Angelo Ursino of all people as one his godfathers and one of the executors of his last will. Although he was known as one of the *Cristiani Novelli*, obviously neither the converted Jew Andrea nor the other godfathers, among them members of patrician families like the Morisini and Moro, had any suspicions regarding Angelo's religious conduct and affiliation.

The case of Angelo Ursino thus suggests that fifteenth century Venetian society did not perceive the New Christians of Apulia as persons with an ambiguous religious identity and affiliation. People in Venice with different social backgrounds obviously knew that the ancestors of the *Cristiani Novelli* had been Jews. Nevertheless, this ancestry did not raise any doubts for them. When Venetians ordered their world symbolically and practically by applying the distinction Christian/Jew, they unambiguously placed the *Cristiani Novelli* on the Christian side. Only the inquisitor, who was not from Venice itself but from Rodigo on the

⁵⁵ ASVe, Cancelleria Inferiore, Testamenti, b. 415 (Giovanni Buosi) ced. Cart.; b. 558a (Antonio Gambaro), ced. Cart. 23; b. 356 (Bartolo Basso), 119, ff. 58v-59v; cf. cf. SEGRE, *Documenti*, pp. 101-107; cf. also R. SEGRE, *Preludio al Ghetto di Venezia. Gli ebrei sotto i dogi (1250-1516)*, Venezia, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2019, pp. 209-210.

mainland, took the designation as a New Christian as a cause to raise questions regarding their religious conduct. But this characteristically did not have any consequences, because his preliminary proceedings did not lead to further investigations about the *Cristiani Novelli* in Venice, let alone a trial.

Conclusion

The New Christians from Apulia can be grasped in Venice since the end of the fourteenth century. In their vast majority they originated from Trani. Most of them moved to Venice at least for longer periods if not permanently. As grain traders they had a vital function for the Venetian economy and society that was also the basis for a role as political brokers between their region of origin and the lagoon. Most likely also in Venice too it was known that *Cristiani Novelli* of Apulia were descendants of Jews who had taken baptism generations ago. In contrast to their region of origin, however, it appears that their religious identity and affiliation generally was not put into doubt in Venice. Whether this changed when with the arrival of Sephardic *Conversos* in Venice in the late fifteenth century also the new negative designation as *Marrani* migrated to Venice is a question for future research.