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PROJECT

Migration in the Early Modern World: the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land as a Case Study

My research project sets out to investigate mobility among Middle Eastern parishes and from the Middle East to Europe, in order to propose a revision of current theories on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region (1500-1800) and to propose a new methodology for the study of mobility in the early modern world.

The early modern world was a world on the move: people moved to escape persecutions, to flee famine, for business, and with a wide range of personal motivations. Short- and long-distance migration was common both in Europe and within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, scholarship has shed light on a constant flow of people moving between the two shores of the Mediterranean. In this research framework, my project aims at a deeper comprehension of the migration processes and at giving new answers to some still unresolved crucial questions on migration in the early modern period: Was migration in the early modern world a network-driven phenomenon? What was the role played by Catholic missionaries in addressing and facilitating short- and long-distance migration in the Mediterranean? What continuities and similarities are there between short- and long-distance migrations?

By analyzing the movements of people who passed by the houses of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land, I will investigate individuals' and groups' mobility within the Middle East and toward "Christianity". I am especially interested in contextualizing individual experiences in a wider regional framework, connecting the microlevel (individual: numbers of migrants, life-cycle stages, wealth/gender patterns), the macrolevel (political events, on an imperial and intercontinental scale; economic factors (taxation, trade)), and the mesolevel (networks, communities). In particular, I will use network analysis to examine the data on mobility furnished by the Franciscan documents (parish books, correspondence, chronicles), and I will conceptualize the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land as a migration network.

Recommended Reading

Tramontana, Felicità. *Passages of Faith: Conversion in Palestinian Villages (17th century)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.

-. "Protestants' Conversion to Catholicism in the Syro-Palestinian Region. (17th century)." *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 41, 3 (2014): 401-422.

-. "Khubbz as Iqta' in Four Authors from the Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods." *The Mamluk Studies Review* 16 (2012): 103-122.

Conversions and the Diminishing Christian Presence in Palestinian Villages (17th century)

Between 1650 and 1660 Orthodox Greeks, originally from the Palestinian villages of Dayr Aban and Suba, went to the Islamic court of Jerusalem on several occasions to record their conversion to Islam. Within the same span of time, and in none too distant Bethlehem, some of their coreligionists became Catholic instead, thereby rewarding the efforts of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land who, since the turn of the century, had engaged in missionary activity in the Holy City and its surrounding villages.

Since the 1980s, religious conversion has been a central issue in cultural and political history. This historiographical trend can also be discerned in research into the social history of the Ottoman Middle East. Here, however, works on the topic mostly focus on conversion in urban contexts. Yet conversions that occurred in villages and rural areas have hardly been the subject of specific studies.

Challenging this approach, I will analyze the changes of religious affiliation that occurred among the Christian villagers of a seventeenth-century district of Jerusalem. The process of Islamization that shaped the religious geography of the Syro-Palestinian region after the arrival of the Arabs had been particularly slow in the district of Jerusalem. In the seventeenth century the Christian inhabitants of the district were numerous and scattered across the Holy City and in many of the neighboring villages. During the same time, even though the majority of the population was already Muslim, Islam expanded further. Yet in the same period, among the villagers of the district, Catholicism, which from the last decades of the sixteenth century attracted many Eastern Christians throughout the whole Middle East, also began to gain ground.

Through the stories of conversions of the inhabitants of some villages in the area (Dayr Aban, Suba, Bethlehem, Bayt Jala, Bayt Shahur and Ayn Karim), I will try to explain how a new faith spread within and among the Christian communities of the villages around the Holy City, and what effects the conversions had on the religious geography. More specifically, looking at conversions that occurred during the 17th century in the light of the diminishing Christian presence in the Palestinian countryside, I will investigate the consequences of conversion on the distribution of the Christian population in the area.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Tramontana, Felicità (Roma, 2015)

Una terra di intersezioni : storia e istituzioni della Palestina di età moderna

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Tramontana, Felicità (2014)

Passages of Faith : conversion in Palestinian villages (17th century)

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=832272906>

Tramontana, Felicità (Wiesbaden, 2014)

Passages of faith : conversion in Palestinian villages (17th century)

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Göttinger Orientforschungen

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=780391454>

Tramontana, Felicità (2012)

Khuz̤ as iqt̤ in four authors from the Ayyubid and early Mamluk period

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=832273430>