BROKERING EMPIRE

Trans-Imperial Subjects
between Venice and Istanbul

E. NATALIE ROTHMAN

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Introduction

In Venice, all are foreigners who are not Venetians"—such were the caustic words of Cornelio Frangipane (1508–1588) on concluding a visit to the city sometime in the 1550s. A nobleman, a lawyer, and a poet, Frangipane hailed from the Friuli, one of the most economically deprived and war-ravished Venetian colonies, situated on the Venetian-Habsburg-Ottoman frontier. His embittered comments notwithstanding, Frangipane was a staunch supporter of the Venetian cause. A few years earlier, in 1545, he presented an official address upon the election of doge Francesco Donà, in which he "exalted the city of Venice for its balanced form of government, its rule by many, its liberty, tranquility, and sagacity, and especially its prudence." Indeed, although he was a self-proclaimed foreigner, Frangipane's rigid juxtaosition of "Venetians" and "non-Venetians" actually voiced a metropolitan elite perception of Venetian society itself as serene and cohesive, free of tensions and political strife.

1. "Tutti sono forestieri in Venezia che Veneziani non siano" (Frangipane 1588, 14).
2. As a buffer zone between Venice and its Habsburg and Ottoman neighbors, the Friuli, some 100 miles northeast of the Lagoon, was well known for its impoverished rural populace, and it served as a steady source of labor migrants—especially women—to staff Venetian industries, services, and domestic labor sectors ever since its conquest in 1420. On Friulian working women and men in early modern Venice, see Cigjinsacka (2001, 87, 91, 95–96).
Such an image consolidated in that exact same period into an emerging myth of Venice, institutionalized through myriad state projects, including the writings of Venetian patricians and their interlocutors abroad.4

A few decades later, another visitor to the Lagoon, Thomas Coryate (c. 1577–1617), an English traveler, painted a rather different picture of Venice. "There," he declared, "you may see many Polonians, Slavonians, Persians, Grecians, Turks, Jews, Christians of all the famous regions of Christendom, and each nation distinguished from another by their proper and peculiar habits."5 Whereas Frangipane lumped all non-Venetians together, Coryate instead emphasized the diversity and multiplicity of clearly demarcated and highly organized "nations" in the Venetian metropolis, each self-conscious of its difference from all others. Coryate's depiction rendered Venice as a welcoming and receptive hub, where subjects hailing from far-flung places did not simply find their place but gave the city its unique character. Frangipane's Venice was a lightning rod for republican unity and civic virtue; Coryate's Venice was a beacon of tolerance in an internally segmented structure. This image of Venice, too, was to have a long afterlife.

Indeed, both Frangipane and Coryate partake in mythic visions of Venetian society and state that informed both their contemporaries and later generations of historians. Frangipane's enigmatic aphorism presents a unified Venetian social body; in contrast, Coryate's suggests multiple, ordely, well-bound, and perduring categories of ethnic belonging. Each author captures one dimension of Venetian mythic self-representation while ignoring the numerous contradictions and ironies inherent in Venetian legal structures—a self-proclaimed republic controlling extensive colonial territories, each with its own layers of accumulated customary law, and a fiercely endogamous patrician oligarchy ruling over polyploid urban and rural populations not only on the Italian mainland but also in the Adriatic, Aegean, and eastern Mediterranean. Neither observer addresses the fraught questions—which had preoccupied jurists for centuries—of who was a Venetian, and whether and

4. As James Grubb notes, the myth of Venice identified the glory of the city with its formidable republican institutions and rigid social hierarchies, and was premised on the double notion of "a unified and civic-minded patriciate, guardian of the common good" and "a populace actively involved and fiercely loyal" (1986, 73, 44, 49). Like other aspects of the myth of Venice, the claim of the city to republicanism was promoted as late as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to counter its characterization by some political rivals as an oppressive oligarchy. On the myth and its myriad articulations, see Finlay (1999); De Vivo (2000); and, more recently, Penlon (2006). For a classical discussion of the nature of the Venetian political system and its shifting representations—republican and otherwise—in European political thought, see Bouwsma (1968). See Bowd (2000) for a useful overview of the state of the extensive historiographical debate regarding the myth of Venice in general and Bouwsma's thesis in particular.

5. Coryate (1611, 175–76).

how this status might be inherited and acquired by descent; by birth in the city; or through long residence, loyal service, and the cultivation of civic pride.6 Moreover, Frangipane's and Coryate's acceptance of a timeless distinction between self-contained "nations," be they Venetian or other, flies in the face of numerous projects that sought to redefine who might belong in the city—and how. Such projects were not the exclusive purview of metropolitan jurists, legislators, and political commentators. Definitions of belonging were shaped through, and in turn helped shape, a range of social actors and institutions in Venice, its colonies, and beyond. It is through the dialectical relationship between such actors and institutions that boundaries around categories of membership were drawn and redrawn.

In this book, I explore the complex networks of alliance and interest, hierarchies of authority, and modes of interaction between the various groups and individuals that helped draw political, religious, and linguistic boundaries in early modern Venice. Such networks engaged—and with time transformed—contemporary patrician notions of social order premised on rigid legal hierarchies, civic unity, and Christian communitas—all constituent elements of the fabled myth of Venice as a serene and cohesive society, free of tensions and political strife. In tracing these networks, I underscore how various articulations of belonging and foreignness were engaged by, among others, émigrés from Venetian colonies and borderland regions, redeemed slaves returning from the Ottoman Empire, converts from Islam or Judaism, and merchants and diplomats who regularly traveled across the Venetian-Ottoman frontier. I refer to these social actors collectively as trans-imperial subjects and trace their role in several sites in defining foreign and local, Muslim and Christian, Turk and Venetian, Levantine and European, and East and West in early modern Venice.7 Throughout, I capture the ways in which trans-imperial subjects straddled and helped broker linguistic, religious, and geopolitical boundaries across Venetian and Ottoman imperial domains.

CULTURE BROKERS

The figure of the culture broker has long intrigued social theorists. As early as the 1930s, Chicago School sociologists sought to understand the plight of the bicultural marginal man. By the 1950s, anthropologists were optimistic that Latin
have taken place between members of radically different societies and in the context of a dramatic power imbalance. But, as scholars of the Atlantic world increasingly emphasize, New World empires were themselves highly complex and multilayered, shaped in important ways by prior—and ongoing—inter-imperial rivalries in the Old World. It is on the proverbial center of the Old World, the Mediterranean of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that I focus here. By examining the links between shifting notions of East and West, specific groups of trans-imperial subjects, and their institutional settings, genres of writing, and matrices of competing interests, I underscore the role that intermediaries played in fixing the boundaries of the objects they are purported to mediate. Ultimately, I trace to colonization, state formation, and inter-imperial rivalry in the early modern Mediterranean some of the genealogies of our own analytical vocabulary of in-betweenness, transnationalization, diversity, and mixedness.

In focusing on trans-imperial subjects, I have two aims. On a conceptual level, I explore alternative ways for thinking about mediation, against the tendency to presuppose a priori clearly demarcated cultural units. On an empirical level, I " provincialize Europe"—conceptually as well as spatiotemporally—by exploring its articulation in relation to other religious, linguistic, and geopolitical categories (e.g., "Christendom," "Islam," "the Turk," "Franks," and "the Levant") and in specific institutional sites. In developing this frame, I have benefited from the shared epistemological insights of postcolonial critique and Subaltern Studies. Yet, as several scholars have underscored, these critical perspectives risk reaffirming an Occidentalist view of Europe as a preexisting, unproblematic, and coherent fact engaged in a variety of colonial projects elsewhere. In this book, I instead investigate several moments in Europe's becoming, in a region where distinguishing between "Europe" and "non-Europe" was (and is) politically fraught and highly contested.

Since the mid-1980s, interest in early modern cultural mediation has been driven by postcolonial scholars' reassessments of what was once called European discovery, as well as by anthropologists' and historians' interest in the genealogies of modernity and modernization. It is ironic that much of the debate about early modern encounters, although acknowledging its debt to Edward Said's pioneering Orientalism, has ignored the locus classicus of Orientalism—the Mediterranean—and focused instead on South and East Asia, the Pacific, and, most paradigmatically,

8. For an overview and specific references to theories such as marginal man, middleman minorities, and the ethnography of culture brokers in so-called plural societies, see Rothman (2010).

9. The literature on colonial intermediaries is vast. For some suggestive examples that address both European and other premodern imperial contexts, see Richter (1988); Austen and Derrick (1999); Robinson (2000); Cohen (2003); Jasanoff (2005); Montefalco (2005); Elton and Scovell (2006); Lawrence, Osburn, and Roberts (2006); Raj (2007); Flores (2009).

10. On the process by which interwar social science increasingly substituted culture for race, see Degler (1991); McKee (1993); Wolf (1994); Jacobson (1998).


12. In the famous words of Fredrick Barth, "categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on absence of mobility, contact and information but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories... Stable, persistent, and often vital important social relations are maintained across such boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses" (1969, 9–10). See also Lamont and Molinaró (2002).


14. See, for example, the cogent critiques in Carrier (1995); Cronin (1996); Bracewell (2005); Mishkova (2008).

15. Pioneering works by Caribbean scholars Fernando Ortiz (1995 [1940]) and Eric Williams (1994 [1944]) paved the way for much better-received studies by metropolitan scholars on the cultural dimensions of the colonialism/capitalism nexus in the Americas, including the historical forays of Eric Wolf (1982), Sidney Mintz (1985), and other anthropologists.
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the Atlantic. Early studies of interactions between Europeans and indigenous peoples have thus tended to emphasize the brief and circumscribed nature of first encounters, such as raids or exploratory voyages, and the contrasting and (presumably) mutually unintelligible epistemologies of the peoples these encounters brought into contact. Such studies were crucial for exposing the cultural specificity of European practices, deconstructing what earlier generations of scholars often took to be a universal rationalism. Yet the formulation of a sharp, preexisting, and absolute dichotomy between “European” and “non-European” epistemologies came at a cost. Empirically, the centrality of the Mediterranean as a template for early modern discourses of cultural difference has been relatively ignored. Conceptually, this dichotomy cannot account for the sustained nature of most colonial engagements and for the role of intermediaries in calibrating and recalibrating the boundaries of the very units they claimed to mediate. Indeed, the very adoption of the vocabulary of hybridity, indigeneity, and syncretism to describe cultural engagement has laced some postcolonial historiography with its own variety of cultural essentialism, implying that prior to any given encounter cultures were somehow homogenous, historically stable, and self-contained.

More recently, scholars have placed greater emphasis on the multifaceted, ongoing, and reciprocal nature of cultural mediation in early modern empires. Still the process by which the intermediaries themselves articulate imperial categories of difference is only rarely thematized. Indeed, a growing tendency among scholars of mediation is to accept intermediaries’ claims to be “in-between” at face value rather than to interrogate that very claim as itself a rhetorical move, part of the process of mediation. In paying closer attention to the perspective and practices of intermediaries themselves, I cautiously follow Georg Simmel’s definition

of the stranger as “a member of the group itself, an element whose membership within the group involves being outside it and confronting it,” while taking exception to the notion that the boundaries of any group are fixed and predefined. Indeed, rather than presupposing that trans-imperial subjects were positioned “in-between” a priori distinct societies, I prefer to focus on how trans-imperial subjects operated as members of multiple social formations and on how in their sustained interactions across linguistic, religious, and political lines they helped shape—and were in turn shaped by—shifting imperial boundaries.

A MULTICULTURAL MEDITERRANEAN?

The recent interest in cultural mediation in the Mediterranean is due in part to Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s magisterial The Corrupting Sea, which characterizes the Mediterranean as a “mediator and boundary, a zone of transition and agent of comparison and differentiation.” The debate sparked by The Corrupting Sea has productively refocused on the shared elements and continuity between the different imperial formations of the region while insisting on its highly fragmented nature, thus making it hard to speak of a unified all-encompassing cultural frontier. Ever since Fernand Braudel’s classic The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, first published in 1949, tropes of contact, circulation, and exchange have retained their popularity among Mediterranean historians. Yet Mediterranean historiography has rarely addressed the intermediaries themselves. To the extent that they have been noticed at all, intermediaries have been celebrated primarily for importing a set of refined intellectual or artistic objects (texts, artworks, styles, and techniques) from East to West. More recent scholarship, although rich in formal analysis, still tends to focus on specific canonical artwork and to bracket the interactive aspects of all mediation, ultimately producing more or less mechanistic accounts of artistic, intellectual, economic, or technological influence at the brainchild of individual genius. On the whole, these forays into questions of Mediterranean cultural mediation have yet to integrate more fully either Ottoman or nonelite semiotic practices into a broader system of relations.

The growing interest in cultural mediation in the Mediterranean has stimulated a reappraisal of the role of colonial ventures in the emergence of late medieval and

16. Margaret Hodge’s (1964) pathbreaking survey of early modern anthropology has little to say about European engagements with the Ottoman Empire, its people and institutions. Later discussions of early articulations of alterity similarly leave out the Mediterranean as a space of encounter. See Hodge (1964); Todew (1968); Bitter (1982); Tausig (1967); Trouillos (1991); Schwartz (1994).
18. See, for example, the ReEnlightenment Project statement, which defines mediation as “everything that intercedes, enables, supplements, or is simply in-between” (www.reenlightenment.org/reenlightenment-project-new-york-university-and-new-york-public-library). For a cogent critique of the spatial metaphor in-between as an apt description of the positionality of intermediaries and supportive economy thereof, see Trumbely (2000).
19. Wolf (1982); Greenblatt (1991); White (1991); Abercrombie (1989); Dubois (2004); Pardo (2004); Silverblatt (2004); MacCormack (2007); Raj (2007); Flood (2009).
20. See, for example, the ReEnlightenment Project statement, which defines mediation as “everything that intercedes, enables, supplements, or is simply in-between” (www.reenlightenment.org/reenlightenment-project-new-york-university-and-new-york-public-library). For a cogent critique of the spatial metaphor in-between as an apt description of the positionality of intermediaries and supportive economy thereof, see Trumbely (2000).
23. Horden and Purcell (2000, 25). This debate has fruitfully involved not only early modernists but classicists and anthropologists as well. For a sampling of their various positions, see Marino (2002); Pocchi (2003); Harris (2000); Brunnett (2007).
24. For a critique of this model of unidirectional importation of passive objects from East to West, see Grabar (2003).
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early modern Italian regional states. Here, too, a strong division of labor still obtains between the study of metropolitan political history, with some gestures to the important territorial dimensions of such polities, and the study of Italianate Mediterranean empires, including the Genoese, Pisan, and, of course, Venetian. To be sure, the economic, military, diplomatic, and administrative histories of specific colonies have been mapped out in great detail, particularly for the Crusades period and its aftermath. But medieval and, even more so, early modern Mediterranean history is still often written as case studies of specific colonies, in which metropolitan society, if it figures at all, is but a distant force. This compartmentalization has much to do with the more recent past of the region, where dozens of nation states have sought to resurrect “their” histories. As Benjamin Arbel notes, the long neglect of Mediterranean colonial history may also have much to do with the fascist legacy of Italy. Perhaps as a reaction to the unabashedly imperialist Italian scholarship of the interwar period, the history of Italian colonialism was avoided for many decades and has only recently received more critical attention. Be that as it may, a more integrative account of the place of the Mediterranean colonies within the early modern processes of state formation is yet to be written.

Colonial projects shaped Mediterranean metropolitan societies in fundamental ways. Not only did conquest place Catholic colonizers in control of sizable Eastern Christian, Jewish, and Muslim populations, but it also brought them to direct and sustained engagement with Mamluk, Ottoman, and other Islamicate societies, whose methods of managing religious and ethnolinguistic differences diverged significantly from those of Christian Christendom. Before their Atlantic counterparts, then, the medieval and early modern Mediterranean colonies served as important laboratories for the elaboration of ethnic difference.

Our growing appreciation of the sustained encounters in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean in general, and of the significant continuities between Venetian and Ottoman colonial regimes in particular, raises new questions about how relations between the two empires shaped Venetian society. Following Braudel’s lead, economic historians were among the first to explore the complexity of Venetian-Ottoman engagements and to emphasize the centrality of Venice in the trade system of the eastern Mediterranean. Although Braudel and his followers have sometimes been accused of cutting off Venice too sharply from transalpine Europe, other forms of insularity have plagued Venetian historiography with even greater consequences. Until fairly recently, historians of Venetian society and culture have focused on the city proper to the almost complete neglect not only of its Mediterranean colonies but of its Italian hinterland as well. This metropolitan focus was guided by historiographical fashions that privileged the study of urban economies over rural ones. It was also prompted by the lingering effects of the republican myth of Venice, which identified the glory of the city with its formidable civic institutions and rigid social hierarchies. This neglect went hand in hand with a periodization that emphasized the geopolitical alignment of the city with transalpine Europe as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although acknowledging cultural and institutional continuities with Byzantium, standard histories of Venice well into the 1980s still implicitly took the lagoon city to have always been part of a self-conscious West, a front line against a threatening, alien East. Such narratives, which presupposed the Catholicism and Europeanness of Venice, have made its wavering alliances with Rome and Istanbul, as well as its well-documented Lutheran sympathies, into historiographical “problems” that begged explanation.

25. References to works on specific colonies are scattered throughout this book. See also the specific contributions in Fernández-Armesto (1987); Balard (1989); Abulfaraj (1993); Balard and Ducellier (2002); Venn and Wernstein (2004); Fourrier and Gravouil (2006).
26. A notable exception is the pioneering work of the Freedman Thiriet (1921–1986), French Byzantinist, on the medieval Venetian maritime empire. For other integrative studies, see Balard (1978); Arbel (1996); and, more recently, O’Connell (2009).
29. Even as late as 1996, Kishner’s comprehensive historiographical collection of essays on The Origins of the State in Italy, 1500–1600, authored by leading Italian and U.S. scholars in the field, left entirely the role of Mediterranean colonies in the rise of the state.

32. See especially Tucci (1957); Lazzolo (1956); Lane (1973); Ashtor (1983); Arbel (1993a); Jacoby (1997). For a sustained, critical elaboration of Braudel’s notion of Mediterranean unity, see Horden and Purcell (2000).
33. Even a recent general survey of Venetian history, while decrying the insularity of Venetian historiography and aiming to “explain Venice on the basis of the places where it became Venice,” devotes only four pages specifically to the Venetian overseas empire (Crouzet-Pawan 2002, xi (quotation), 86–89). For a historiographical reflection on the relationship between metropolitan Venice and its mainland territories, see Castini (2002). For an earlier emphasis on the imperial dimensions of Venetian statecraft, and their significance for the power and endurance of the myth of Venice, see Mallett and Hale (1984, esp. 212). For a recent integrative study of Venice and its hinterlands in one analytical frame, see Appuhn (2000).
34. Cochrane and Kirshner (1975); Grubh (1986, esp. 73); Martin and Romano (2000).
35. Lane (1973); Mair (1981, 24).
36. The examples are too numerous to cite here and, in general, reproduce some version of the “clash of civilizations” narrative. See, for example, Fondazione “Giorgio Cini” (1971, 86).
How does the picture change by revisiting the relationship of Venice with both Byzantium and transalpine Europe? A growing consensus among historians, art historians, and historical geographers suggests that it was not until the seventeenth (and some argue, the eighteenth) century that Venice took its final, decisive “turn westward.” Several arguments have been marshaled to support this view: Venice’s lingering attachment to and affinities with Byzantium, and its keen interest in the aesthetic and intellectual traditions of medieval Islam, the notoriously undecided political and military stance of Venice toward the Ottoman Empire, the permeability of religious and social boundaries between Venetian and Ottoman colonial subjects, and Venetian merchants’ involvement in kinship and commercial networks that extended throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Of great significance here is also the recent recognition of the Ottoman centrality to sixteenth-century European intellectual and artistic life. Even a cursory look at mid-sixteenth-century Venetian political theory reveals the extent to which Ottoman statecraft—as perceived through the mediation of Venetian ambassadors’ reports and humanists’ historiographical writings—was at the heart of debates about military organization and recruitment, civil bureaucracy, and fiscal policy. Recent scholarship has also underscored how embedded the early modern Ottoman state was in inter-imperial systems. Rather than simply comparing early modern Ottoman and Western European states as if these were self-contained civilizations, Ottomanists now emphasize connectivity and convergence, and seek to understand how intensive and ongoing engagements with members of other societies (and of differentially situated members within Ottoman society) shaped emerging cultural categories of difference and sameness.

This analytical shift has wide-reaching implications for the study of migration in the early modern Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire can no longer be treated as an external force or at best as a marginal appendage to the grand narrative of European history. Nor can it be considered as a fixed, looming Other, whose outsider status was unmitigated and unchanging. Such a historiographical shift compels us to redraw the boundaries of our units of analysis. It suggests that the comparative study of the Ottoman Empire and other early modern polities should be supplemented by transregional studies that can take into account the actual movements across boundaries of both people and signifying practices. Integrating the Ottoman Empire into narratives of the early modern Mediterranean further requires a move beyond the paradigm of influence in conceptualizing the relationship between cosmographies and cultural practices that both define and demarcate political boundaries.

TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS

The prevailing image of Venetian society as composed of “three orders of inhabitants,” namely patricians, citizens, and plebeians, dates to the sixteenth century. Myth-making Venetian elites themselves created this rigidly oversimplified model. Like Frangipane and Croyate, this decidedly Veneto-centric model also defined different juridical and social categories in relation to a presumably stable metropolitan self. Such a vision ignores the many colonial subjects who sojourned in Venice, and whose status in the city was mediated by competing hierarchies of wealth, gender, age, and juridical standing. It also glosses over the dramatic changes over time in the qualities, requirements, and privileges associated with being Venetian. Most important, it is Veneto-centric in positing the city as a telos, as a point of (purposeful) arrival, when in fact for many it was one of several points of reference in complex life trajectories that straddled numerous locales, often across empires. To capture the inherent physical mobility and sociolegal ambiguity of such sojourners and their strategies in negotiating their multiple roles, I explore here how trans-imperial subjects straddled linguistic, religious, and political boundaries and, in the process, helped calibrate distinct categories of difference.

But what, exactly, are trans-imperial subjects? To better understand the concept, it is worth looking at each of its components in turn. The prefix trans- refers to the ways in which subjects regularly mobilized their roots “elsewhere” to foreground specific knowledge, privileges, or commitments to further their current

40. Brezweil (1972); Housley (1986); Greene (2000).
41. Kafadar (1986); Abul (1994); Imhaus (1977); McKeown (2000); Dursteler (2006).
42. Jardine and Brotton (2000); Mack (2002); MacLean (2005).
43. Libby (1978, 110); Valensi (1993); Mersov (2008). On Venetian military recruitment and organization modeled on contemporary Ottoman practices, see also Mallet and Hale (1984, esp. 50).
45. For a general introduction to the conceptual and methodological aims of braided histories and hisotrie croisèe, see Davis (2001) and Zimmerman (2008), respectively.
46. See, for example, Alpersi (1997, 2005).
47. Croce and Krishner (1975); Pullan (1999); Rabin (2006).
48. Put simply, Venice was for many centuries a Byzantine colony, an outpost in the westernmost fringes of the Eastern Empire. Only gradually and retroactively did the mythographers of the city come to celebrate it as independent from birth and as quintessentially republican.
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interests. The term further denotes the dispersion of kin and patronage ties across imperial frontiers, characteristic of many socially mobile families and individuals in the early modern Mediterranean, as well as a dual residence and/or extended sojourns in multiple locales.49

Following recent work in this field, imperial here points to the production and management of alterity as essential to early modern imperial regimes.50 Imperial also serves as a reminder of the claim made by several early modern sovereigns—not least of whom was Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Lawgiver—to universal God-sanctioned rule. The term thus highlights the significance of religious authority for legitimizing temporal power and for cementing lines of presumed political attachment and loyalty. In the context of the ongoing rivalry between the two Mediterranean claimants to universal empire, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, confessional affiliation became a key criterion of imperial classification, asserted with renewed vigor in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.51 Thus, imperial subjecthood increasingly came to imply certain religious as well as political bonds, potentially at odds with individuals’ actual juridical status. For example, for Ottoman Catholic subjects sojourning in Venice the perceived misalignment (from a Venetian perspective) between their political subjecthood and their confessional identity could provide ample grounds for insisting on their loyalty to the Venetian (Catholic) cause.

Finally, the term subjects evokes questions of subject position and subject-making, which have been at the heart of myriad imperial projects. The choice of “subjects” here, as opposed to “persons,” “selves,” or “individuals” is not accidental. It points to the entwinement of confessional and juridical affiliation in early modern constructions of subjecthood, and turns us away from a notion of autonomous individual self-fashioning outside of sociohistorical constraints. Further, attending to subjects rather than citizens is meant as a critique of a still-current historiographical teleology that seeks the precursors of modern citizenship in the early modern republican city states (of which Venice serves as a cherished prototype). The focus on subjects allows us to recognize the strong imperial (alongside oligarchic and republican) dimensions of Venetian governmental, and the ways in which decidedly colonial institutions, spaces, and genres constituted specific subject positions. It was precisely in this context that trans-imperial subjects qua

Venetian and Ottoman subjects played a vital role in shaping lasting juridical and ethnolinguistic categories.

The concept of trans-imperial subjects thus underscores the need to understand the perspective of those who were caught in the web of complex imperial mechanisms but who at the same time were essential to producing the means to calibrate, classify, and demarcate imperial alterities. In particular, it calls attention to how these subjects articulated the actual location of sociocultural boundaries, the prototypical centers of different categories, and the meaning of their own “in-betweeness.” In other words, rather than take the categories that subjects purported to mediate as an analytical a priori, the concept of trans-imperial subjects allows us to explore how these subjects themselves elaborated and naturalized certain key categories (e.g., “Christendom,” “Islam,” “the Turk,” “Franks,” and “the Levant”) and their boundaries. And, rather than anachronistically celebrate the early modern Mediterranean as a site of multiculturalism, the focus on trans-imperial subjects enables us to consider how both consciousness of alterity and the technologies for regulating it played out in the context of rivalry and tacit collaboration between Ottomans and Venetians.52

The concept of trans-imperial subjects also serves to remind us of the often forgotten degree of institutional overlap between the imperial domains these subjects straddled. For example, certain notions of membership and belonging that trans-imperial subjects helped shape in early modern Venice paralleled in important ways contemporary Ottoman understandings of how a foreigner could be transformed into a subject through extended residence, local marriage, and religious conversion.53 Such correspondences demand that closer attention be paid to the politics of comparison inherent in the claims that trans-imperial subjects made about the commensurability (or incommensurability) of political systems and social practices.54

Seen in this light, the much-celebrated multicultural Mediterranean begins to look like an early modern “native category,” albeit by another name.55 A multiplicity of languages, customs, and religions has been a long-standing trope in representation and self-representation of Mediterranean societies, indeed, in the very essentialization of Mediterraneanness.56 It is evident—as in Corrêa’s pithy description with which I began—in a range of early modern genres, including

49. For a case study illustrating the strategic dispersion of family members across the Venetian-Ottoman frontier, see Wright (2006). For a general discussion of strategies of mobility and employment across political boundaries in the early modern Mediterranean, see Greene (2007).
50. Subrahmanyan (1997); Mulhoon (1999); Barkey (2008).
52. On the Ottoman and Habsburg empires as composite monarchies, see Adanır (2003); Goffman and Stoop (2004); Subrahmanyan (2006). On diversity in the Mediterranean, see Horoden and Parcell (2000, esp. 396–400).
53. For a discussion of these processes and the changing vocabulary used by Ottoman statecraft for dealing with foreigners, see Goffman (2007, 63–65).
54. On imperialism and the politics of comparison, see Stoler (2001).
56. Of the earliest modern scholars to propose the Mediterranean as a coherent field of historical inquiry, George Sarton (1936), focused precisely on its supposed “unity in diversity.”
travel narratives, costume albums, cartographic compendia, missionary and diplomatic reports, and bilingual dictionaries. Such genres, intended for publics both at home and abroad, affirmed multiplicity both within and across empires.

As this list of genres suggests, conceptions of borders and boundaries developed not only on the geopolitical frontier. Administrators and travelers played an important role in bringing metropolitan discourses of governmentality to the borderlands, but they also promoted the circulation of texts, objects, and people that ensured the material presence of the borderlands in the metropole. Corry’s description of ethnic multiplicity in Venice is echoed in a recent review of Venetian historiography, which suggests that Venice is now often celebrated as a “multicultural metropolis,” where “diverse ethnic subcultures of Greeks, Germans, Jews, Turks, and Armenians lived[ed] in relative harmony.”

I posit the Venetian metropole not as a beacon of multicultural tolerance but as a node in a much broader trans-imperial field of power. From this perspective, the city of Venice cannot be detached from the larger region in which early modern categories of difference were formed and transformed, and which spanned Venetian and Ottoman, colonial and metropolitan territories alike. By situating trans-imperial subjects in this field of power, I call attention to the enduring relevance of both for any analysis of early modern processes of cultural boundary-making.

In focusing on trans-imperial subjects, it is obviously not my intention to suggest that subjects whom I define as trans-imperial were somehow conscious of such a category, let alone their membership therein. Nor do I wish to dispense with any particular subjects—colonial, metropolitan, or trans-imperial—as possessors of a priori knowledge of the Venetian-Ottoman field as a whole. On the contrary, I see the productive role of trans-imperial subjects precisely in their ongoing engagement with multiple institutions and perspectives. Trans-imperial subjects played a vital role as imperial boundary-markers. Markets here is to be understood in both its senses: as agentic subjects who (re)established boundaries through their practices and as objects used by others to assert their respective domains of authority. Indeed, trans-imperial subjects both participated actively in the calibration of certain concepts and were embedded in structures, institutions, and genres that constrained their action and gave it shape. As I suggest in the following pages, viewing early modern empires from the emergent perspectives of those crossing and transgressing imperial lines is analytically productive—but not because imperial centers were necessarily weak or inchoate. Rather, their articulation and consolidation depended precisely on the semiotic labor of those who moved across them, whether physically or vicariously, through texts.

Trans-imperial subjects made repeated claims to knowledge and membership of an elsewhere. Yet, for their claims to be heard, they already had to possess knowledge of and exercise some form of membership in Venetian metropolitan institutions. It was this unique position that allowed them to perform mediation in the first place. But the concept of trans-imperial subjects raises further questions. To the extent that such subjects operated within complex and shifting political and sociocultural contexts, how were their trajectories and categories constitutive of broader discourses about place, subjecthood, and social membership? How do their performances of mediation challenge not only a bifurcated vision of metropole and colony, self and other, but the very mapping of social position onto space? Venice and Istanbul, two important nodes of early modern diplomacy and trade, can be understood only as nested in wider networks of kinship and religious ties, as well as circulating texts, people, and commodities, through which categories of inclusion and exclusion were formed and transformed. That trans-imperial subjects were central to processes of boundary-making in the early modern Mediterranean underscores the extent to which systems of meaning-making in the region interpenetrated and overlapped over their long histories. Understanding the specific trans-imperial trajectories of early modern mediation thus helps document the emergence and consolidation of boundaries that became so natural over time that their very historicity is sometimes forgotten.

Studying the relationship between early modern trans-imperial subjecthood and emergent, localized forms of imperial classification and boundary-making, from the bottom up requires attending to the complex and often conflicting objectives of trans-imperial subjects themselves. To this end, I divide the book into four thematic parts: the first three each charts the trajectory of a specific trans-imperial group (commercial brokers; religious converts; and dragomans, diplomatic interpreters) and the fourth addresses their multiple interactions. Throughout the book, I trace how trans-imperial subjects participated in specific Venetian institutions, thereby helping to articulate competing claims about what is “East” and what is “West” and how to tell them apart. I examine not only the elaboration of cultural categories but the ways in which people occupied distinct institutional roles between two imperial centers, how they practiced civic membership and localness.

57. See, especially, Wilson (2005, 2007). Consciousness of this sort was not a unique development of the early modern period, of course, yet its coupling with particular imperial regimes of subject-making is significant. These arguments are postulated suggestively, but briefly, in Subrahmanyan (1997).
58. Martin and Romano (2000, 8).
SPACES OF ENCOUNTER

Recent developments in early modern historiography have allowed scholars to refocus on oral face-to-face interactions and the written genres associated with them as prime sites of knowledge production and sociopolitical contestation. Once relegated to the status of popular curiosities—the proper domain of folklorists and antiquarians—gossip, rumor, petitions and supplications, unauthorized (and often unattributable) copies of official documents, pamphlets, and broadsheets are now receiving careful attention from historians interested in the rich social texture of political interaction. These historians have shown that speech and its control were central to how early modern knowledge regimes operated, how power was consolidated and contested.\(^\text{59}\) Debates about the origins of modern publics have benefited from studies of associational life in early modern Italy, which have emphasized gathering places, such as the piazza, or main thoroughfare, as sites of interaction for people of different estates, through which notions of belonging and foreignness were negotiated (see the frontispiece).\(^\text{60}\) As Christopher Black notes, Tomasso Garzoni’s Piazza Universale (1585), with its listings of all possible occupations and gradations of social status, is emblematic of this growing recognition of space as constitutive of new kinds of public.\(^\text{61}\) The chapters of the present book build on this rich scholarship on the relationship between emerging publics and the early modern state.\(^\text{62}\) Taking my cue especially from recent studies of the interface between orality and literacy, I consider market squares and the halls of government as crucial sites of sociopolitical interaction in Venice, Istanbul, and their extensive borderlands.\(^\text{63}\) In focusing on these paradigmatic spaces of encounter, I am able to see how multiple interactions among trans-imperial subjects, local elites, and Venetian and Ottoman state institutions did not simply reflect the preexisting classificatory systems of officialdom but played an active role in shaping these very systems and their hegemonic categories.

Explicitly public spaces of encounter are of key significance for this study, but so too are homes and other sites that have retroactively been classified as private.\(^\text{64}\) Studies of modern empire have shown that imperial subjecthood was characterized by the importance of the intimate as “a social and cultural space where racial classifications were defined and defied, and where relations between colonizer and colonized could powerfully confound or confirm the strictures of governance and the categories of rule.” Early modern households were similarly central for the articulation of categories of difference, albeit with other valences. This is especially true of certain kinds of composite, “patrimonial households” that combined domestic and bureaucratic functions, and often brought into regular contact members of different social groups, conjoined in a hierarchical structure.

In addition to marketplaces, courtrooms, and the halls of government, I highlight the importance of composite households as spaces of encounter in their own right. Composite households brought into sustained interactions a variety of subjects across juridical, ethnolinguistic, religious, gender, and age divides, thus producing the intimate ties on which trans-imperial networks often relied. The Venetian diplomatic and commercial spheres illustrate this point. They were among the primary sites where trans-imperial subjects interacted with one another, with Venetian and Ottoman metropolitan elites, and with a broad cross-section of the populations of the two empires. The commercial sphere encompassed—and was constituted through—residential homes, their attics and kitchens, as much as through city squares and markets. Similarly, the household of the Venetian bai (or resident consul) in Istanbul functioned not only as a node for the circulation of political information but also as the place of residence and primary socialization for a diverse group of boys and men, including both Venetian citizens and colonial and Ottoman subjects.\(^\text{65}\)

This book, I thus consider how interactions between trans-imperial subjects and Venetian and Ottoman elites coalesced around spaces that could serve simultaneously for both domestic and public social functions, such as embassy compounds, brokers’ households, patrician palaces, the “Turkish” Exchange House, and the Holy House of Catechumens. In thinking about such sites of interaction between trans-imperial subjects and their interlocutors, it is essential to recognize that households were not understood by their members as inherently private. As feminist critics have argued, the notion of separate public and private spheres fails to explain the historical complexity and variety of understandings of both categories, particularly before the nineteenth century.\(^\text{66}\) Rather than as fixed properties of certain sites or practices, public and private may better be understood as relative positions reproduced recursively across a continuum of sites.\(^\text{67}\)

\(^{59}\) Davis (1987); Cristellon (2003).

\(^{60}\) Black (2001, 79).

\(^{61}\) On early modern urban public space, see, for example, Ingenni (1985); Davis (1994); Trexler (1994); Chittolini (1995).

\(^{62}\) See, especially, De Vivo (2007); Horodowich (2008); Ghobrial (2010).

\(^{63}\) Stoler (2001, 831). See also Taylor (1992); McElnock (1993); Chatterjee (1999); White (2000).

\(^{64}\) The bai was the resident Venetian commercial representative in the Byzantine (and later Ottoman) Empire and the consul of the Venetian merchants residing there. In practice, he often functioned as Venetian ambassador to the Porte. On the bai and his household, see Bertele (1932); Dursteler (2006).

\(^{65}\) Davidoff and Hall (1987); Fraser (1991); Vickery (1998).


By going beyond representations and juridical definitions of citizenship and subjecthood to study how people inhabited different roles spatially and temporally, I underscore the extensive interaction and interdependence between Venetian and Ottoman societies. By attending to the domestic arrangements of trans-imperial subjects, I show how central the household actually was to the contestation and transformation of early modern notions of foreignness. Patrician officialdom (and many modern economic historians) understood commercial brokers as agents of the state, operating in an anonymous marketplace composed of discrete actors. Challenging such an understanding, in the first part of the book I explore how trans-imperial brokers and their clients often acted in concert, forging ties across linguistic, religious, and political boundaries. Similarly in part II, I show how religious conversion, often understood by historians as a process of profound transformation of the self and the utmost expression of modern individuality, operated rather as a highly public form of juridical subject-making in early modern Venice, elaborated by specific institutions that produced converts as social types. In part III, I attend to the making of a cadre of Venetian diplomatic interpreters in both Istanbul and Venice and underscore the extent to which political loyalty depended on the channeling of affect in the domestic sphere. Finally, in part IV, I consider several key moments in the institutionalization of Ottoman difference in seventeenth-century Venice. By paying close attention to specific interactions among commercial brokers, converts, interpreters, and the Venetian Board of Trade over the taxation of Ottoman merchants and their confinement to a particular institutional home, I suggest how linguistic (in)competence became a marker of foreignness and what this tells us about shifting conceptions of difference and sameness across a broad political, confessional, and ethnolinguistic spectrum that encompassed Venetian, Ottoman, and even Safavid territories and subjects.

**Scope, Chronology, and Genres of Documentation**

In an effort to understand how trans-imperial subjects inhabited composite households and moved across them, I examine here a watershed period in the history of the Mediterranean, roughly the century from the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 to the end of the War of Crete in 1669. Traditionally, Venetian historiography has focused overwhelmingly on the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, an era that was seen as the heyday of Venetian political institution-building as well as an artistic Renaissance. In this framework, the Battle of Agnaddello (1509) in which the League of Cambrai dealt a decisive blow to Venetian forces and occupied—for a short period only—large parts of the Venetian mainland empire, was often noted as a defining turning point in Venetian history. The reconsolidation of Venetian rule on the Terraferma in the wake of the War of the League of Cambrai spelled a radical transformation of the Venetian patriciate, its refashioning as landed aristocracy and withdrawal from its previous point of pride, the Levant trade. Agnaddello also signaled for many the imminent decline of Venice, leading to the initial articulations of the myth of Venice as a more-or-less conscious ideological response by Venetian political and intellectual elites. An eerily parallel periodization long dominated Ottoman historiography, in which the death of Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver (the Magnificent) in 1566 conveniently marked the passing of the glorious classical age of the empire.

The reigning interpretation of the second half of the sixteenth century as the starting point of the imminent decline and fall of both the Venetian and Ottoman empires authorized a prolonged historiographical neglect of the seventeenth century. More recently, however, historians have revisited the seventeenth century to reassert Venetian centrality in the forging of an emerging European public. New scholarship also suggests that early modern Ottoman society was not (as previously held) fundamentally insular, regressive, or too preoccupied with its Safavid opponents to the east to concern itself with its neighbors to the west. Rather, the very emergence of an Ottoman classical synthesis during the long reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520–1566) is now attributed to an intense engagement by a range of Ottoman elites with a variety of Hellenistic, Byzantine, humanist, and Tridentine intellectual traditions, which were essential to the empire’s transformations in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries focuses almost exclusively on changing banking and shipping methods. Combined, the chapters in which these four centuries are addressed (among other periods) take up only one-fourth of the volume. Another major synthesis, David Chambers’s *The Imperial Age of Venice* (1970), is explicitly limited to the two centuries from 1380 to 1580, so that the loss of Cyprus serves as a synecdoche for the end of the Venetian Empire as a whole. For a critique of the “decline and fall” paradigm in Venetian historiography implicit in these and many other works, see Cochrane and Kishner (1975).

68. After invading the mainland territory of Venice, the forces of the League of Cambrai defeated the Venetian forces near Agnaddello on May 14, 1509. This prompted the temporary loss of virtually all Venetian possessions on the Italian peninsula and led to continued warfare in the Venetian and Milanese hinterlands throughout the next decade.

69. The economic crisis, from which Venice never fully recovered, was due, according to that school of history, to its inability to compete effectively with the Portuguese in the Asian spice trade and to the “betrayal” of the patriciate, which transferred its investment from trade to agricultural enterprise on the mainland. For a critique, see Grubb (1986, esp. 62–63).

70. For a useful review of the literature, see Inanik and Kafidur (1993); Pezin (2004); Woodward (2008). See also Textor (2009) for a different grounding of the prevailing periodization.

71. On the importance of Venice to the emergence of Europe-wide publics, see, among others, Inglis (1997, 2001, 2002); Wolff (1997); Mau (2007); De Vivo (2007); Horodowich (2008).
of Venice to preserve its territorial integrity and commercial supremacy in the Mediterranean prompted a closer realignment with transalpine Europe.

The same century witnessed the ambiguous embrace by both Venetian and Ottoman political elites of projects of social disciplining and doctrinal orthodoxy that were the hallmark of the Age of Confessionalization. The myriad processes that historians have dubbed confessionalization, including the ideological hardening of religious boundaries and the growing collaboration between Church institutions and centralizing territorial states, combined to heighten individuals’ consciousness of the need to align their religious and political affiliations.

Although the fine points of doctrine and liturgy were of little interest to most trans-imperial subjects, strong confessionalizing tendencies on both sides of the frontier decisively shaped their interactions with a range of institutions and their ability to intervene in evolving discourses about the relationship between piety and statecraft.

The period 1570–1670 marked not only Ottoman maritime expansion at Venetian expense but also a watershed in how the Ottoman state and society were represented in Venetian print—and, given the predominance of the Venetian printing press, in European print culture more broadly. What was once seen as a fearsome but imitable model of monarchy had become a tyrannical and despotic anti-Europe worthy only of rebuke. This transformation, I suggest, was informed in part by the sustained interaction of metropolitan elites in both the Venetian and Ottoman imperial centers with a range of trans-imperial subjects.

Thus, in this book I do not simply trace the genealogies of representations of the Ottomans to specific groups of trans-imperial subjects. Rather, I chart a gradual shift over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from an essentially juridical-commercial discourse of difference to a predominantly ethnolinguistic and religious one, informed by practices of conversion that intimately linked political subjecification with confessional membership. Rather than viewing religious and ethnic identities as primordial, I show how both confessional membership and linguistic (in)competence were articulated in specific institutional spaces (but

72. On the expansion of Ottoman cultural horizons during Suleyman’s reign and in the post-Suleymanic period, see Fieischer (1966); Akan (1995); Dankoff (2004); Hagen (2004); Casale (2010); Krtić (2011). See also Peerce (2004, 22) and the bibliography therein.
73. On the political and military repercussions of Lepanto, see Hess (1972). On some of its ideological dimensions, see Stouraitis (2003). Papers by Bronwen Wilson, Helena Szep, and Iain Fenlon in a panel on “After Lepanto, Martyrdom and Memory” at the 2006 annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America indicate new scholarly attention to the reverberation of this battle in Venetian visual arts, music, and liturgy.
74. On the consequences of this changing perception from an Ottomanist perspective, see Murphy (1993).
75. Goffman (1998); Eldem (1999); Greene (2002); Fusaro (2003). Brandel (1972, 291) already cautioned against the idea of an absolute Venetian economic decline in the early seventeenth century.
76. On the transition from Venetian to Ottoman rule on Cyprus, see Kyriis (1989); Jennings (1993); Costantini (2004). On this process on Crete, see Bierman (1991); Greene (2000).
77. For clear overviews of the historiographical debates on early modern confessionalization, see De Boer (2001); Boetticher (2004); Brady (2004). See also the extensive 2005 H-Net forum on the topic, www.h-net.org/german/discuss/Confessionalization/Confess_index.htm.
79. On the changing representations of the Ottomans in early modern Venetian print culture, see Valensi (1993); Soykut (2001); Ćirkvenk (2002); Höfert (2003); Rubiès (2005); Meserve (2008).
not in others) as grounds for specific concessions, as part of broader claims to belonging and foreignness. This shift took place through myriad local processes of boundary-marking undertaken by subjects across Venetian and Ottoman domains. These microhistorical processes, in turn, both contributed to and were constrained by the changing relationship between the Venetian and Ottoman polities in a wider Mediterranean context. The interplay between these differing levels of analysis informs the book throughout.

My focus on the period 1570–1670 is also warranted by the survival of consistently comprehensive documentation from a range of institutional archives. Petitions to the Venetian Senate, which form the documentary base for much of the discussion in chapters 1, 5, and 7, are preserved systematically only from 1563. Fairly complete transcripts of trials by the tribunals of the commercial brokers' guild, the subject of chapter 2, survive only from 1590. The same is true for notarial and baptismal records from the archives of the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, a major institution for the conversion of Jews and Muslims in early modern Venice and the subject of chapter 4. The genres of renegades' reconciliation depositions in front of the Holy Office (Inquisition) and convents' ex-voto matrimonium, introduced and analyzed in chapter 3, are typical products of post-Tridentine Catholic reform from the second half of the sixteenth century onward. And although both dragomans and commercial brokers were active in Venice much earlier, most of the texts they composed survive only from the 1570s onward. In addition, over half of the archival corpus of earlier dispatches from the maritime colonies of Venice was destroyed by fire in the 1570s.

Of these wide-ranging genres of documentation, petitions (It. suppliche) are of special importance. These served as the main vehicle through which early modern subjects engaged officialdom. Particularly in imperial societies such as Venice with its vast territories, complex sociojudicial hierarchies, and diversified institutional practices, it was the malleability, contestation and recalibration of conceptual categories that typified practices of petition writing by trans-imperial subjects and others. The fact that supplicants did not necessarily pen their own petitions but sometimes employed the services of experienced scribes should not be seen as a problem. On the contrary, this study uses petitions not in an attempt to recover authentic subaltern "voices" but to understand how categories were articulated through the ongoing interaction between subjects and the chanceries of officialdom. That the composition process involved other actors proficient in the genre does not fundamentally change the premises.

Another aspect of Venetian officialdom should be mentioned in this context. To preserve its authority, the Venetian oligarchy relied on a republican myth, predicated on the double notion of "a unified civic-minded patriciate, guardian of the common good" and "a populace actively involved and fiercely loyal." This tension between oligarchic and republican assumptions about the relationship of the state with its subjects made supplication a powerful vehicle for articulating different (and at times conflicting) expectations about the role of a patrician ruling caste. Genres such as petitions perpetuated the idea of the patriciate as the benevolent and attentive custodian of the state, but also placed specific claims on this benevolence. A careful reading of these petitions shows not simply their usefulness for hegemonic elites but, rather, how they functioned as interactive instruments for the elaboration of specific subject-positions and their concomitant claims and counterclaims.

Of special interest are collective petitions, in which signatories claimed to speak on behalf of an entire group and therefore delineated the authorized boundaries of the group. Given the saliency of ethnic boundary-marking to both early modern Venetian statecraft and modern scholarship, petitions written on behalf of ethnic collectivities offer a particularly illuminating genre through which to examine the calibration and recalibration of ethnonomic and geopolitical categories. By observing how certain categories emerged and proliferated in both the petitions and the texts produced by officialdom, we can examine how increased visibility naturalized and authenticated authors' claims to speak on behalf of certain collectivities while other categories of groupness became obsolete.

In paying close attention to petitions submitted by trans-imperial subjects and the responses they received from specific magistrates, I also seek to challenge the image of institutional continuity produced by Venetian documentation procedures. The following chapters show how institutional change sometimes coincided with the transformation of classificatory schemes to facilitate the emergence of new categories, such as the "Levantines." My analysis is premised on the idea

82. The first extant Venetian ex-voto matrimonium are from 1592; very few reconciliation depositions by Christians of Muslim background survive from before the seventeenth century.
86. In the absence of any detailed study about the provenance, education, and work practices of early modern Venetian scribes, this crucial dimension of Venetian governmental remains to be explored. For useful insights on the procedural aspects of petitioning the Venetian government, see the appendix "Suppliche in Venice" in Davis (1991, 181–95).
that, to be successful, supplicants already had to partake in the ongoing constitution of the Venetian social order. Whether juridical subjects of the Venetian state or not, the ostensible foreignness of trans-imperial subjects was undermined already at the moment of its enunciation.

To understand how paternalism, republicanism, and citizenship itself were redefined through the interaction—which petitions both produced and presupposed—between supplicants and ofﬁcialdom, in part I, “Mediation,” I focus on petitioning and related practices among trans-imperial subjects active in the Venetian commercial sphere. I explore their growing role in institutionalizing how foreignness was brokered. I also identify an important juridical moment in the articulation of discourses about Ottoman difference at the height of Venetian commercial triumphalism in the mid-sixteenth century. In chapter 1, I consider the commercial activities of a range of trans-imperial subjects, including converts, returnees from Ottoman captivity, and Jewish, Armenian, and Greek commercial brokers in Venice. I examine the development of commercial brokerage itself as a key link between the state and the marketplace, as well as between local and foreign. After outlining the emergence of the brokers’ guild and confraternity, I analyze how differently positioned trans-imperial subjects petitioned to become brokers, what audience they imagined for their petitions, and what notions of Venetian society they invoked in them. In chapter 2, I then look at the trials of unlicensed brokers heard by the tribunals of the brokers’ guild. By unpacking the arguments put forth by trans-imperial defendants and their accusers, I trace competing notions of what constituted foreignness and how it could be mediated (and mitigated) through brokerage. Brokers and merchants were linked through trans-imperial bonds of affection and patronage that followed neither juridical definitions of belonging nor the ethnic solidarity presupposed by much modern scholarship.

In part II, “Conversion,” I connect a second, religious moment in the discourses about Ottoman difference to the multiple processes of confessionization and (re)secularization of statecraft across the Mediterranean at the turn of the seventeenth century. Whereas commercial brokers blurred the line between the Ottoman foreign and the Venetian local, religious converts, despite their precarious position in society, became ideological signs of the potential transformation of foreigners into Venetian subjects. Yet, in an effort to transform Muslims and Jews into proper subjects of the Serenissima, converts’ Venetian patrons were constrained to acknowledge their protégés’ lingering ties to their former communities. In chapter 3, I examine different genres of converts’ life narratives to suggest the contrasting ways in which Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant converts to Catholicism articulated the process of conversion and the converted self and how they envisioned the relationship among religious conversion, juridical subjecthood, and political loyalty. In chapter 4, I explore converts’ long trajectories after baptism through a detailed study of a charitable institution for the conversion of Muslims and Jews to Catholicism, the Pietà Casa dei Catecumeni (Holy House of Catechumens), established in Venice in 1557. I show how baptized Muslims and Jews, two paradigmatic others of the Venetian state, became constitutive elements of long-standing Venetian networks of patronage that often extended to the Venetian maritime colonies and beyond the Ottoman frontier. In chapters 3 and 4, I explore how conversion operated as a project of metropolitan subject-making in the context of both the strained Venetian-Ottoman relations in the post-Tridentine era and the ongoing Venetian-Ottoman rivalry. The project of conversion that was elaborated in partnership among lay members of charitable institutions, the Holy Office, Jesuits, and the Venetian state helped specify the religious domain as fundamental for the proper constitution of new Venetian subjects and, therefore, as a prime locus of Ottoman difference.

In part III, “Translation,” I trace a third, ethnocultural moment in discourses about Ottoman difference, concurrent with the political-economic shift of Venice from a commercial to a territorial state in the 1630s. This period saw the consolidation of dragomans (diplomatic interpreters) as specialized professional intermediaries between Venetian and Ottoman political elites. Indeed, the age of dragomans coincided with Ottoman imperial expansion at Venetian expense in the eastern Mediterranean. As ethnocultural and religious categories came to correspond less and less with juridical status and political alliance, new categories referring to Ottoman subjects proliferated in the discourses of Venetian ofﬁcialdom. These categories are linked to the rise of speciﬁc cadres of diplomatic and commercial dragomans in the Venetian state bureaucracy. In chapter 5, I examine the emergence of the office of dragomans, ﬁrst in the Venetian ballo’s house in Istanbul and then in Venice. Through a close reading of dragomans’ petitions and the oﬃcial responses to them, I trace recruitment, training, and employment of this cadre and underscore the inherent tension between loyalty and transcultural competence in Venetian dragomans’ careers.

Finally, in part IV, “Articulation,” I examine the interactions among Venetian dragomans, commercial brokers, converts, and Ottoman missionaries and state oﬃcials. I explore how trans-imperial trajectories and social ties combined with inter-imperial institutional milieus to produce new categories of ethnocultural diﬀerence and how such categories entered oﬃcial genres of the Venetian state, giving them unprecedented saliency. In chapter 6, I follow the shifting Venetian tax legislation to show how fiscal policy coalesced with the interests of speciﬁc dragomans and brokers to articulate new ideas about linguistic incompetence as
the quintessential property of foreign and, especially, Ottoman and Safavid merchants. I further illustrate how, by assuming the linguistic helplessness of certain foreign merchants, Venetian officials reinforced the association of brokerage with bilingualism and thus ultimately furthered the claim of converts, redeemed slaves, and other bilingual trans-imperial subjects to be ideal intermediaries between supposedly mutually unintelligible and clearly demarcated groups. In chapter 7, I then trace the genealogy of the categories “Turks” and “Levantines” to institutionalized practices of mediation in the commercial sphere and explore how the defining properties and prototypical centers of these categories shifted, both over time and synchronically, from one institution to another. Using case studies of two petitioning campaigns, one over the taxation of “Levantine” merchandise and the other over the forced relocation of Ottoman and Safavid Muslim merchants to a designated exchange house, I document how the categories “Venetian” and “Ottoman,” “European” and “Levantine,” were picked up and recalibrated within specific institutions in Venice and beyond.

By looking at how specific trans-imperial groups articulated categories for discussing what is properly Venetian or Ottoman, and by examining how juridical, religious, and ethnonlinguistic categories intersected with assumptions about gender, estate, age, and profession, I show the multivalence of claims about difference within specific institutional sites. I underscore how, by positing cultural difference, early modern trans-imperial subjects also positioned themselves within an emergent set of relations between Venice and Istanbul, which were themselves nested in the more complex networks of relations that we now call the Mediterranean world.
Afterword

Although beyond the scope of the current work, the strong intellectual and biographical links between the subjects studied here and their eighteenth-century successors should be acknowledged. The practices of mediation, classification, and demarcation elaborated by early modern trans-imperial subjects constituted important elements in the genealogy of Enlightenment anthropology and the nascent discipline of Orientalism. In particular, eighteenth-century Orientalists, who articulated taxonomies of Mediterranean peoples based on language, ritual, and custom, relied in many ways on the efforts of their trans-imperial forebears in the previous two centuries to institutionalize their specialized knowledge of things Ottoman in several European metropoles. The scientific study of Ottoman culture depended, quite literally, on the development of commercial and diplomatic institutions that facilitated the production and circulation of specific kinds of knowledge across linguistic and political boundaries.

This raises important questions about the location—geographical, textual, and material—of the knowledge produced by trans-imperial subjects, that is, about how the practices and categories they calibrated circulated further and what roles these channels of circulation might have played in the emergence of various publics keenly interested in things Ottoman. The narrative genres most frequently engaged in by trans-imperial subjects—petitions, diplomatic and administrative reports, and court depositions—all circulated only in manuscript and were addressed to a circumscribed readership among primarily metropolitan political and economic elites. Yet, if we consider the interface between the manuscript production of early modern state officials and the thriving printing press, it becomes clear that their significance extended much further. Beyond their intended addressees, both manuscript and printed texts often reached broader publics across political and linguistic frontiers. Indeed, the popularity of print culture depended to no small extent precisely on the access it offered to knowledge of distant places and peoples, previously reserved to a smaller group of elite interlocutors. How trans-imperial subjects tapped into the proto-ethnographic curiosity promoted by print culture, nourished it, and participated in shaping its contours is the next step in understanding the role they played in constituting the early modern categories "East" and "West."

1. For a compelling illustration of the special place of Venetian Dalmatia in Enlightenment anthropology, see Wolff (1998, 2005).
The designation trans-imperial subjects already points to these subjects’ potential mobility well beyond the Venetian and Ottoman empires. Such subjects and their practices of mediation, classification, conversion, and translation traveled from Venice and the Italian peninsula to the Atlantic seaboard powers, whose interactions with Mediterranean societies increased dramatically precisely during this period. There they interacted with other social groups and their cultural categories. Of particular interest in this context is the merging of notions of Ottoman and Muslim alterity with conceptions of race, religion, and indeed civilization, developed in the wake of European imperial expansion and missionary efforts in the Americas, Africa, and South and East Asia. At the same time, the well-attested presence in south and southeastern Europe of trans-imperial subjects from the Venetian-Ottoman borderlands (including many descendants of the Latin families of Pera and the colonial nobility of Venetian Istria and Dalmatia) calls for further investigation into their role in the articulation of Occidentalist, proto-nationalist, and anti-Ottoman discourses there. To address these questions, a broader comparative framework is needed that will engage not only Venetian archival and narrative sources but Ottoman ones as well. Such a framework will allow scholars to develop a more finely tuned picture of the multiple interactions among various trans-imperial cadres, their intellectual genealogies and milieus, and their links to other groups in Ottoman society and beyond.

As we have seen, dragomans’ notions of loyalty and competence, commercial brokers’ understandings of foreignness and locality, and converts’ and their patrons’ ideas about converthood, personal transformation, and indeed Christian subjectivity itself were all shaped by and in turn helped shape Venetian institutions. These ideas were also informed by subjects’ prior life trajectories and the cultural categories they had acquired in diverse Ottoman and Venetian milieus. Recent Ottomanist scholarship on early state-formation, on tensions between metropolitan and provincial administrative and legal practices, and on the processes of religious conversion in the Balkans, Istanbul, and the Arab provinces have already alerted us to some of the rewards of approaching the Ottoman archives from a comparative perspective. Bringing the Ottoman archives to bear on broader early modern historiographical debates continues to challenge and refine our conceptual vocabulary for understanding practices of imperial subject-making and the maintenance of social boundaries. Integrating the Ottomans more fully into early modern historical narratives is a crucial antidote not only to visions of European pre-Enlightenment innocence but also to equally problematic and Eurocentric postcolonial assumptions about a linear European imperial expansion as the main driving force of early modern history.

Further, it would be useful to explore the applicability of the concept trans-imperial subject to other kinds of intermediaries and intermediary practices in the Venetian-Ottoman borderlands, as well as to other periods and regions. Much is to be gained by thinking of the early modern Mediterranean world as cohering around a set of genres and institutions that are dialogically related in complex ways and that defy classification along simple political lines. This book has focused on the commercial and diplomatic spheres and their paradigmatic trans-imperial subjects—primarily brokers, converts, and their patrons, and dragomans. But other institutions, genres, and social groups clearly played important roles in constituting Mediterranean spaces of encounter as well. The growing scholarship on pilgrims, travelers, scholars, missionaries, merchant diasporas, mariners, soldiers, slaves, servants, and itinerant laborers in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean has already provided ample materials for conceptual synthesis. Such synthesis would not only refine the concept trans-imperial subject but help give better chronological precision to the semiotic contributions made by the specific groups I have studied in this book.

Finally, the concept trans-imperial subjects raises important questions about prevailing notions of early modern coloniality, citizenship, and subjecthood more generally. To the extent that trans-imperial subjects operated within a multiplex sociopolitical context, how were their trajectories and categories constitutive of broader discourses about place, subjecthood, and social membership? How do their performances of mediation challenge not only a bifurcated vision of metropole and colony, self and other, but the very mapping of social positionality onto geographical space? Venice and Istanbul, the two important early modern centers of cultural production examined here, can only be understood as nodes along mutually constituted networks of trade, kinship, religious ties, circulating texts, and migration, around which categories of inclusion and exclusion were formed. The centrality of trans-imperial subjects to processes of boundary-making in the early modern Mediterranean underscores the extent to which sociocultural systems in the region interpenetrated and overlapped over their long histories. Understanding the trans-imperial dimensions of early modern cultural mediation thus helps document the emergence of boundaries now so ingrained that their very historicity is often forgotten. It also calls into question the motivations of those who benefited—and still do—from naturalizing the boundaries that, at the beginning of the period under study, were anything but natural.

3. For illuminating examples of such trans-imperial subjects in an early modern Iberian context, see Al-Hajari (1997); García-Arenal and Wiegens (2003).
4. On the changing scales of Venetian cartography of “the East” in the wake of European Atlantic expansion, see the suggestive comments in Lestringant (1994, 1–5).