Mediterranean Crossings

Sexual Transgressions in Islam and Christianity (10th-18th Centuries)

edited by Umberto Grassi

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via delle Alpi, 32
I-00198 ROMA
tel. 06 84 17 758
fax 06 85 35 39 60
www.viella.it

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Transgressive Sexualities, Gender and Conversion in the Mediterranean World: The Case of Susanna Daza

1. *Introduction*

The theme of religious conversion has played a central role in the history of interfaith relations and conflicts in the Mediterranean during the early modern period. Conversions were a feature of early modern Mediterranean and European societies to an extent unequalled since the time of the Christianisation of the late Roman empire.[1] In part, it was a matter of forced conversions, such as those of the Jews and Muslims of Spain.[2] Yet, beyond this, in a period characterised broadly by the redefinition of the spiritual and political boundaries of western Christianity, a substantial portion of the believers was also affected by conflicts provoked by the emergence of new Protestant confessions.[3] Voluntary conversions were numerous, and they were variously motivated. Of these, a significant part was comprised of Christians who converted to Islam. While in smaller numbers, the opposite movement from Islam to Christianity is also documented in the sources.[4]

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[1] Simon Ditchfield, Helen Smith, "Introduction", in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. 1-17: 1.

[2] The bibliography on Spanish *Judeoconversos* and *moriscos* is too vast to be summarised in a footnote. To mention just some of the recent contributions on Spanish religious minorities: *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity*, ed. by Mercedes García-Arenal, Leiden, Brill, 2016; David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2014; James Amelang, *Historias paralelas. Judeoconversos y moriscos en la España moderna*, Madrid, Akal, 2012; María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, Boston, Little Brown, 2012 (this book is controversial; for a review, see Mercedes García-Arenal, "Review to Menocal M. R., *The Ornament of the World*", *Speculum*, 79/3 (2004), pp. 801-804). Baer can be considered the founder of modern scholarship on Spanish Jews. His work was first published in Hebrew in 1945, but its impact is due to the Spanish translation: Yitzhak Baer, *Historia de los judíos en la España cristiana*, trans. by José Luis Lacave, Madrid, Altalena, 1981. Another benchmark is Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*, 3rd ed., Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1999. Some recent contributions: Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007; Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos. Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 2009; *Late Medieval Jewish Identities: Iberia and Beyond*, ed. by Carmen Caballero-Navas and Maria E. Alfonso, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Ángel Alcalá, *Los judeoconversos en la cultura y sociedad españolas*, Madrid, Trotta, 2011.

On the history of Moriscos, see the seminal work of Vincent Bernard, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *História de los moriscos: vida y tragedia de una minoría*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1978. A recent and fascinating collection of records is found in *This Happened in My Presence:*

Moriscos, Old Christians, and the Spanish Inquisition in the Town of Deza, 1569-1611, ed. and trans. by Patrick J. O'Banion, North York (Ontario), University of Toronto Press, 2017. See also: Javier Irigoyen-García, *"Moors dressed as Moors": Clothing, Social Distinction, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Iberia*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2017; Bernard Vincent, *Islam d'Espagne au XVI^e^ siècle: résistances identitaires des morisques*, Saint-Denis, Éditions Bouchène, 2017 (a collection of essays from the 1970s to 2016); *Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain: A Mediterranean Diaspora*, ed. by Mercedes Garcia-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, trans. by Consuela Lopez-Morillas and Martin Beagles, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2014; Trevor J. Dadson, *Tolerance and Coexistence in Early Modern Spain: Old Christians and Moriscos in the Campo de Calatrava*, Woodbridge (Suffolk) and Rochester (NY), Tamesis, 2014; Mercedes García-Arenal, Fernando Rodriguez Mediano, *Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada, and the Rise of Orientalism*, trans. by Consuela Lopez-Morillas, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2013. Increasing attention has been paid to the ties between moriscos and colonial history: Karoline P. Cook, *Forbidden Passages: Muslims and Moriscos in Colonial Spanish America*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016; Antonio Garrido Aranda, *Moriscos e Indios: Precedentes hispánicos de la evangelización en México*, Mexico, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2013; Louis Cardaillac, *Dos destinos trágicos en paralelo: Los moriscos de España y los Indios de América*, Jalisco, El Colegio de Jalisco, 2012.

[3] *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. by C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist and Mark Greengrass, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009; Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge (MA) and London, Harvard University Press, 2007; Keith P. Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early Modern France*, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2005. On the narrative of conversions: Abigail Shinn, *Conversion Narrative in Early Modern England: Tales of Turning*, New York and London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; Peter Mazur, Abigail Shinn, "Introduction: Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 17 (2013), pp. 427-436; Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2005; Patricia Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. For a global approach: *Conversion: Old World and New*, ed. by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, Rochester and New York, University of Rochester Press, 2003; and *Emotions and Conversion*, ed. by Jacqueline Van Gent and Spencer E. Young, special issue of the *Journal of Religious History*, 39/4 (2015).

[4] Bartolomé Bennassar, Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah XV^e^ -XVII^e^ siècles*, Paris, Perrin, 1991; Lucia Rostagno, *Mi faccio turco. Esperienze ed immagini dell'islam nell'Italia moderna*, Naples, Istituto per l'Oriente C. A. Nallino, 1983; Lucetta Scaraffia, *Rinnegati. Per una storia dell'identità occidentale*, Rome and Bari, Laterza, 1993; *Conversions islamiques. Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, ed. by Mercedes García-Arenal, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversion to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011; *Diaspora Morisca*, ed. by Giovanna Fiume and Stefania Pastore, special issue of *Quaderni Storici*, 144 (2013); *Religious Conversion: History, Experience and Meaning*, ed. by Ira Katznelson and Miri Rubin, Farnham,

Historians initially concluded that the phenomenon of conversion affected primarily men, in part due to their greater mobility, while women were believed to be more inclined to remain anchoured to their ancestral cultural and religious traditions. According to this interpretation, attachment to a spiritual and material heritage was the result of women's social and economic weakness, which led them to seek refuge in faith more than men were inclined to. Furthermore, their links with the domestic sphere secured them a central role in the transmission of the material culture of the communities to which they belonged, in whose daily life ritual was an integral part.[5]

However, more recent studies have shed light on the phenomenon of female conversions, though they appear less frequently in the sources. Although women were more constrained in their movements, in the early modern period they still crossed the (geographical and cultural) boundaries that separated faiths. No less than men, they used the tool of conversion to improve their living, economic and material conditions. Some sought to escape oppressive or unsatisfactory familial control through apostasy, yet their emotional and sentimental relationships exerted a decisive influence on their decision-making processs. In most cases, given the universality of women's subordination across early modern societies, movement between religious and cultural spheres was almost always accompanied by their passage from one male protection network to another.[6]

The case presented here follows a different trajectory. Susanna Daza, a morisca (that is, a "new Christian" of Muslim origins) was tried by the Sicilian Inquisition for having first professed the Muslim and then the Jewish faith, yet without ever officially denying Catholicism. While her multiple conversions were triggered by her relationships first with a Muslim man and then with a Jewish partner, none of these ties were ever sealed by marriage. According to the sources, it seems that she was rather free in her sexual conduct throughout her life. Then, after her second relationship ended, she allegedly decided to integrate into her daily life religious practices from all of the faiths to which she had drawn close, thus creating a unique mosaic of symbolic and ritual gestures that were accompanied by her lukewarm and formalistic participation in the shared rites of the post-Tridentine Catholic liturgy.

It was perhaps her independence and lack of scruples that aroused the suspicions which led her to the inquisitorial court. The investigation into her life concluded in a condemnation to perpetual penitential isolation following an accusation of witchcraft. This final trial had been preceded by an initial judicial procedure in which her apostasy had already been investigated and rebuked.

Ashgate, 2014; *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Lure of the Other*, ed. by Claire Norton, London and New York, Routledge, 2017. For a contemporary perspective, see *Religious Conversions in the Mediterranean World*, ed. by Nadia Marzouki and Olivier Roy, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[5] For a historiographical appraisal, see Eric R. Dursteler, "To Piety or Conversion More Prone? Gender and Conversion in the Early Modern Mediterranean", in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. 21-40.

[6] See below, notes 38-50.

In addition to the relationship between gender and religious conversion, Susanna's story allows us to explore the phenomenon of multiple conversions, which was not uncommon in the early modern period. We will not only try to comprehend the motivations that drove her to embark on a religious path characterised by such experimentation and variability. We will also seek to understand the effects of these multiple transitions on her spirituality, interrogating the relationship between conversion and the development of indifferent or skeptical positions towards institutionalised religion.

2. *The first trial*

In the second half of the 16th century, Susanna Daza, a 40-year-old "moor"[7] woman and Christian convert (*cristiana de mora*) who lived in Palermo, denounced herself before the judges of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily. She said that she had gone to confession only to fulfill a formal obligation, without believing in the validity of the sacrament. For a long time, she had received communion in "mortal sin". Moreover, she reported that she had had sex with a "Turk" man for one and a half years. After breaking up with him – she reportedly said – Daza eventually decided to abandon the "Holy Catholic faith" and convert to the "wicked sect of Muḥammad", believing "in her heart" that she could also save her soul through Islam.[8] She had practiced the Muslim faith for six months, but then she started a relationship with a Jewish man and, following his advice, she turned to the "Law of Moses" for one month. From then on, she deemed Judaism the true religion. She maintained this certainty in the secret of her heart for eight years, confessing three times a year without revealing her apostasy to anyone. During this period, she developed a personal hybrid religion, privately praying "Turkish" prayers aloud "as the Turk had taught her" and celebrating Jewish rites as she learned from her other lover. She confessed to the judges that she would have liked to go to Barbary to freely profess her beliefs. She was finally reconciled to the Christian faith by a secret abjuration, without any public ceremony.[9]

3. *Social and political background, and the scattered evidence of a life's journey*

The first problem, in a case like Susanna Daza's, is to determine the social identity of the protagonist. This question has no simple solution, since the only available sources are the summary reports of the two inquisitorial processes – we will deal with the second later – contained in the *Relaciones de causas* of the Sicilian Inquisition, kept at the *Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid*. In fact, except for a few fragments, much of the material from this archival court is no longer preserved.[10] However, as Mary Elizabeth Perry noted in her analysis of a case based on equally vague sources, the problem of the limited nature of the documents available and their intrinsically biased nature is an element one must accept when writing the history of women in marginal conditions. Perry nevertheless defended the ability to conduct research with methodological rigour by reading texts "'against the grain', looking beneath surface meanings for subtexts and silences that can tell us more than the formulaic questions and responses that inquisitors sought and recorded in official male-centered documents". This work is possible if we use all of the information available to us regarding the larger context, in order "to recover some of the missing evidence".[11]

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[7] In the early modern period "moor" often meant Spanish Muslim, even though the term was occasionally also used with other meanings. Salvatore Bono, "Schiavi in Italia: maghrebini, neri, slavi, ebrei e altri (secc. XVI-XIX)", *Mediterranea*, 19 (2010), pp. 235-252: 238.

[8] Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid [AHN], Inquisición, L. 898, f. 530v.

[9] *Ibid.*, f. 531r. The case is also reported *ibid.*, ff. 613r-619r.

Indeed, Susanna's case should not be read in isolation. Her troubled life must be situated against the backdrop of an animated and culturally diverse society that, since the beginning of the 16th century, had been confronting the increasing control of the Spanish Inquisition. Due to its geographical position, Sicily was a crossroads in the Mediterranean in which "renegades" (Christians who embraced Islam), Muslims slaves (both converts and non),[12] Jews,[13] Eastern Christians[14] and Protestants from every corner of Europe lived side by side in a precarious but dynamic balance.[15] Moreover, a diversified popular culture was reflected in a large number of charges of unorthodox rituals and beliefs, which sometimes conflated with erudite speculation on natural philosophy, alchemy and necromancy.[16] Accusations of sexual and gender transgressions were equally frequent, and the inquisitorial sources attest to a great variety of transgressive beliefs about sexual behaviours.[17]

Sicily had been under the control of the Aragonese crown since the 14th century, and the authority of the Spanish Inquisition extended to the island in the early 16th century. In the Spanish European domains, and later in the colonies overseas, the Inquisition was a powerful tool by which to assert the political control of the centre over the peripheries of the Empire. When the rise of the Protestant Reformation provided the Inquisition with a pretext to reinforce its authority over Sicilian society, it had already almost succeeded in extirpating Sicilian Judaism through violent repression.[18] Growing attention was also directed towards Islam,[19] although political considerations led to the adoption of a more tolerant policy. After it had exhausted Charles V and troubled the reign of his son Philip II, the war against the Ottoman Empire remained a source of ongoing concern in western Christendom. It is not by chance that after the battle of Lepanto (1572) trials for crypto-Islamism rose steeply.[20]

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[10] Ferdinand IV of Naples (III of Sicily), at the request of the viceroy Domenico Caracciolo, marquis of Villamarina, considered the Holy Office an anachronism and decreed its suppression on 16 March 1782. In the opinion of the "enlightened" intellectuals of the time, it was the end of a history of infamy, and as such Caracciolo wanted to destroy its legacy, ordering on 27 June 1783 that the archives of the Inquisition be destroyed. Evidence of the court's activity is therefore almost exclusively comprised of the collections of reports sent regularly by local inquisitors to the headquarters in Spain. Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, "Sicilia", in *Dizionario Storico dell'Inquisizione*, ed. by Adriano Prosperi, Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, Pisa, Edizioni della Normale, 2010, pp. 1421-1423: 1422-1423.

[11] Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Finding Fatima, a Slave Woman of Early Modern Spain", *Journal of Women's History*, 20/1 (2008), pp. 151-167: 153.

[12] Francesco Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia. I fatti. Le persone*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1997, pp. 341-375.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 275-308.

[14] AHN, Inquisición, L. 898, f. 290r ("renegades" from Moscow); f. 290v (from Sclavonia); ff. 566v-567r (Pedro alias Norces, a Greek Christian, "son of Greek or Armenian parents who were among those who were used to give their children as a tribute to the Great Turk").

[15] Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 309-340.

[16] See Maria Sofia Messana, *Inquisitori, negromanti e streghe nella Sicilia moderna (1500-1782)*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2007.

[17] Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 385-388.

Islamic presence on Sicilian soil was conspicuous throughout the 16th century. The remarkable system of coastal fortifications (improved in the 1940s) did not prevent North African corsairs from preying on the Sicilian coasts. At the same time, Muslim merchants challenged the kingdom's prohibitions on selling their products on the island and participating in local fairs. For their part, not all Sicilians lived in fear of raids. Some, pursuing the "Turkish dream", crossed the sea and voluntarily denied the Christian faith in search of better economic and social opportunities.

On the other hand, the close contact with Islam led to a large number of captives being poured into the main ports on the island, in particular at Palermo, Messina and Trapani. The slaves were then sold to other Italian and European merchants or purchased by local notables, ecclesiastics and artisans. The island was also frequented by Muslim brokers who dealt with the exchange and redemption of their co-religionists, although many of the slaves decided to remain on the island, where they married and established roots.[21] However, it was not only Muslim slaves that lived in Sicily. A large number of moriscos also moved there from Spain. First there were those who came from the southern region of Granada – survivors from the morisco Rebellion of Alpujarra (1568-1569) – and then later, when Susanna's destiny had already been decided, exiles from the mass deportations that culminated in the moriscos' final expulsion from Spain between 1609 and 1614.[22]

What were the institutional attitudes towards this diverse Islamic presence on the island? There were substantial reasons that justified the inquisitorial tribunal's adoption of a strategy of lenient negotiation rather than repressive control. The majority of inquisitorial cases that focused on Islamic beliefs involved "renegades"

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[18] Francesco Renda, *La fine del giudaismo siciliano*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1993.

[19] Maria Sofia Messana, "La 'resistenza' musulmana e i 'martiri' dell'Islam: moriscos, schiavi e cristiani rinnegati di fronte all'inquisizione spagnola di Sicilia", *Quaderni Storici*, 42/3 (2007), pp. 743-772.

[20] Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, p. 351.

[21] Bruno Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati. I moriscos e l'Italia*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2017, pp. 126-127.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 752. On the moriscos in the Italian peninsula after the expulsion, see Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*. See also Fiume, Pastore, *Diaspora Morisca*.

(840 defendants).[23] The phenomenon was so widespread that, after much discussion, the inquisitors decided to punish those who voluntarily accused themselves before the court with only a light spiritual penitence. This decision aimed explicitly to favour the return and reintegration of Christians from Muslim-majority countries.[24] Despite the resolution agreed upon in January 1571 to absolve those who spontaneously denounced themselves, we know that only 46% were absolved, while 34% were obliged to abjure, 13% received various penances and 0.1% were eventually sentenced to death.[25] At the same time, the condition of Muslim slaves living in Sicily was determined by the nature of diplomatic relations with Islamic authorities. During the ongoing war against the Ottoman empire, political and religious institutions, and religious orders, often negotiated the exchange of prisoners with their adversaries.[26] The harsh treatment of Muslim slaves could thus affect the condition of Christian slaves still held in Islamic lands.

The liberation of converted slaves was a thorny problem, and their position was widely discussed within theological circles. The instances were manifold yet local responses differed. Generally, minors and those who had been forced to apostatise were to be reintegrated into the Catholic faith and freed. However, research has shown that this did not always happen. Liberation was not automatic, and clarifying whether or not they had been baptised was the crucial element in determining whether it would be implemented or not.[27] Given the absence of an institution comparable to the many Houses of Catechumens established elsewhere in the Italian peninsula from the mid-15th century on, it is not easy to know how the conversions of Muslim slaves took place in Sicily.[28]

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[23] Bennassar, Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah*.

[24] Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 352-359.

[25] Messana, "La 'resistenza' musulmana", p. 746.

[26] Giovanna Fiume, *Schiavitù mediterranee. Corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2009, p. xv.

[27] Not that conversion was the only way they could get freedom. In fact, they could also be freed if they purchased their own freedom, paying a sum to their master with the money they earned by working in their free time or receiving alms. Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*, pp. 229-250. On Bologna, see Raffaella Sarti, "Bolognesi schiavi dei 'turchi' e schiavi 'turchi' a Bologna tra Cinque e Settecento: alterità etnico-religiosa e riduzione in schiavitù", *Quaderni Storici*, 36/2 (2001), pp. 437-473: 454; on Naples, Peter A. Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563-1667", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 13/1 (2009), pp. 25-48: 41-48; on Sicily, see Renda, *L'Inquisizione in Sicilia*, pp. 349-350.

[28] The Houses of Catechumens were institutions that aimed to provide support and education to Jews and Muslims willing to renounce their faith and embrace Catholicism. The first House of Catechumens was founded in Rome by Paul III under the influence of Ignatius of Loyola in 1543. The example was followed in the early modern period by many other Italian cities. On the Roman House of Catechumens, see Wipertus Rudt de Collenberg, "Le baptême des musulmans esclaves à Rome aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. I. Le XVIIe siècle", *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 101/1 (1989), pp. 9-181; on the Este's domains, Matteo Al-Kalak, Ilaria Pavan, *Un'altra fede. Le Case dei catecumeni nei territori estensi (1583-1938)*, Florence, Olschki, 2013; on Bologna, Sarti, "Bolognesi schiavi dei 'turchi'"; on Naples, Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency'"; on Turin, Luciano Allegra, "Modelli di conversione", *Quaderni Storici*, 26/3 (1991), pp. 901-905.

Although it is quite likely that she had a slave background, we still know nothing of Susanna's past: who she was; where she was born; if she was a slave from North Africa or a Spanish morisca escaping persecution; if she converted to Christianity during her life or if she was born to morisco parents. All of these questions are destined to remain unanswered.

4. *Gender and conversion*

Everything we know about her begins with her "abjuration" of Catholicism and her "return" to the Islamic faith. However, her case allows us to reflect upon the ways in which gender relations affected the dynamics of religious conversion in early modern Mediterranean society, which was characterised by a high degree of contamination and miscegnation. As we have already noted, the historiography on religious conversion has long considered women to be less prone than men to change their faith. Women's greater religiosity has been attributed to multiple factors, ranging from their social, economic and political vulnerability, to their structural position within society and to the peculiar characteristics of their socialisation.[29]

The example of the moriscas has drawn particular attention. As historical research in the last decades has shown, women played a crucial role in Spanish morisco communities. After their forced conversion, men lost their public roles as religious leaders within their social groups. As long as every public profession of faith could lead to an inquisitorial trial, the private domain of the house became crucial for the transmission not only of the religious beliefs of crypto-Muslims, but also of their material and cultural heritage.[30] This forced secrecy opened new opportunities for women. That the Inquisition imposed specific restrictions on female cultural practices is evidence that their role was acknowledged, and feared, by Catholic authorities.[31] In fact, many moriscos put on trial by the Inquisition noted that they had learned Arabic – a language they were not allowed to speak – from a female member of their family.[32] While men often adopted Christian-style clothing, women frequently continued to wear the traditional Muslim garb.[33] However, as Bruno Pomara Saverino noted in a recent study on moriscos in Italy after the expulsion, it seems that morisco women, in their state of exile, showed more pragmatism, flexibility and propensity for religious change than did men.[34]

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[29] Dursteler, "To Piety and Conversion More Prone?", pp. 24-25.

[30] Bernard Vincent, "Las mujeres moriscos", in *Historia de las mujeres en Occidente*, vol. 3, ed. by Arlette Farge and Natalie Zemon Davis, Madrid, Taurus Ediciones, 1992, pp. 585-595; Ronald E. Sturtz, "Morisco Women, Written Texts, and the Valencian Inquisition", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32/2 (2001), pp. 421-433; Mary Elizabeth Perry, *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 1-18; Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Moriscos, Gender, and the Politics of Religion in 16th- and 17th-Century Spain", *Chronica Nova*, 32 (2006), pp. 251-266; Renée Levine Melammed, "Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in Sixteenth-Century Spain: A Study of Parallels", *Jewish History*, 24/2 (2010), pp. 155-168.

[31] Galia Hasenfeld, "Gender and Struggle for Identity: The Moriscas in Sixteenth-Century Castile", *Medieval Encounters*, 7/1 (2001), pp. 79-100: 97.

[32] García-Arenal, *Inquisición y moriscos*, p. 25.

Attitudes towards religious preservation were, thus, not shared by all. Historical studies have revealed how female conversions took place in the most diverse circumstances. Some women were motivated by the desire to remain caregivers (domestic slaves, concubines, wives). Others decided to abandon their family and children, in search of social promotion or an improvement in their economic condition.[35] New emotional relationships could play an important role in these choices. Even in Susanna's case, her two conversions to Islam and Judaism were motivated by sentimental ties, before she eventually adopted a hybrid approach to her faith. Hers was certainly not an isolated episode. Numerous testimonies have been brought to light by the most recent historiography.[36] Marianna di Fiori, for example, was a Jewish woman from Poland who immigrated to Italy from Gdansk via Tripoli, in a tormented succession of events that included a period of slavery. A convert to Catholicism, Marianna was later accused of apostasy and of returning to Judaism. If her choices appear to have been dictated mainly by her desire for social integration, freedom and survival, her affection for a man had also played an important role. The witness Angelo Balbi gave the following testimony concerning his conversations with Marianna: "She told me that she had the intention of becoming a Christian because she liked him [Giovanni, (her husband: editor's note)]" and "I have talked several times to this woman, who told me that she wants to go to Rome and find her Christian husband, to whom she is drawn by feelings of affection".[37]

Mixed marriages, and any conversions associated with them, were kept under close surveillance in early modern Mediterranean society. However, although cross-faith sexual intercourse was prohibited by Christian theology and law, some interactions were tolerated to the degree that they contributed to maintaining the imbalance in power relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims. The problem of cross-faith sexuality was regulated in different ways in the three religious traditions, but there were similar dynamics in the Jewish and Islamic contexts. In general, *sharīʻa* accepted a man's marriage with a free *kitabiya* (a Christian or Jewish woman) but not with a "heretic" or a polytheist. However, there were controversies among the main legal schools about the legitimacy of marrying a slave *kitabiya*. At the same time, *dhimmi* wives – Jews or Christian women living under *dhimma*, that is, the treaty regulating the rights and duties of non-Muslims in Islamic countries – enjoyed fewer civil and legal rights than their Muslim counterparts. There were contrasting opinions about whether they should be permitted to go to church, eat pork and drink wine, and some authors, driven by fears and anxieties related to religious impurity, ultimately criticised the practice of mixed marriages. On the other hand, Muslim women were never allowed to marry outside their faith, and Jewish and Christian men were strictly forbidden from marrying Muslim women. According to the Maliki school, a male *dhimmi* who wed a Muslim woman and consummated the marriage was liable for the death penalty, since he had broken the conditions of the *dhimma*. Conversion did not make an illegal marriage legal if it had not taken place before the wedding.[38]

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[33] Vincent, "Las mujeres moriscos", pp. 589-590. For further reading on morisco women, see James B. Tueller, "The Assimilating Morisco: Four Families in Valladolid", *Mediterranean Studies*, 7 (1998); Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Behind the Veil: Moriscas and the Politics of Resistance and Survival", in *Spanish Women in the Golden Age*, ed. by Magdalena S. Sanchez and Alain Saint-Saens, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1996, pp. 37-53.

[34] Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*, p. 248.

[35] Dursteler, "To Piety and Conversion More Prone?", p. 28.

[36] Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011; Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria*, Turin, Einaudi, 2012; Dagmar Freist, "One Body, Two Confessions: Mixed Marriages in Germany", in *Gender in Early Modern German History*, ed. by Ulinka Rublack, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 275-304.

[37] Kim Siebenhüner, "Conversion, Mobility and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600", *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 5-35: 27.

Conversely, within Christianity any kind of sexual intercourse between "believers" and "unbelievers" had been strictly forbidden since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).[39] Sexual intercourse with "unbelievers" was regarded as a source of pollution. Moreover, civil and religious institutions feared that acquaintance with non-Christians could lead to apostasy. Despite this severe prohibition, research on the Iberian world has proven that not only sexual relationships with slaves, but also concubinage with non-Christian women, was tolerated and largely practiced.[40] Prostitution also played a central role in the exchange of female bodies between the male members of the three religious groups.[41]

In this context, the relationship between female conversion, the religious and secular institutions delegated to govern it and the informal networks through which men exercised their control over women, was extremely complex. Many women sought shelter in the religious and civic institutions of foreign countries in order to escape the authority exercised over them by their families. As Marina Caffiero showed, in many cases Christian authorities were keen to contribute to the integration of new converts by easily granting dispensations that allowed them to annul previous marriages and create new families.[42] However, in some circumstances patriarchal authority was stronger than religion, and the authority of former male relatives prevailed over the interest of the Church in making new acolytes. For example, starting in 1408, Venice, which was tied to the Ottoman empire by economic and political interests, negotiated a number of agreements with Ottoman authorities to resolve certain border incidents. As a result, powerful Ottoman households sometimes managed to recover women who had played the card of conversion to free themselves from their familial bonds.[43] Even when they succeeded, women needed to find protection – that is, new forms of subordination – under a new male authority.[44] As has been shown by studies focusing on the religious conversion of Jewish and Christian women to Islam in the Ottoman Empire, this dynamic seems to have been identical on both shores of the Mediterranean Sea.[45] In some cases, therefore, the constraint of patriarchal power seems to have exerted a greater weight than religious belonging in determining institutional attitudes towards the conversion of women.

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[38] Ragnhild J. Zorgati, *Pluralism in the Middle Ages: Hybrid Identities, Conversion, and Mixed Marriages in Medieval Iberia*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 104-106.

[39] Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, p. 232.

[40] Zorgati, *Pluralism in the Middle Ages*, pp. 129-139.

[41] An exchange that, however, as David Nirenberg has pointed out, was crucial for maintaining the boundaries separating Jews, Muslims and Christians: David Nirenberg, "Religious and Sexual Boundaries in the Medieval Crown of Aragon", in *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Interaction and Cultural Change*, ed. by Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2000, pp. 141-160; David Nirenberg, "Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain", *American Historical Review*, 107/4 (2002), pp. 1065-1093; David Nirenberg, "Love between Muslim and Jew in Medieval Spain: A Triangular Affair", in *Jews, Muslims and Christians in and around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie*, ed. by Harvey J. Hames, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2004, pp. 127-155.

It seems that the conclusive and dramatic outcome of Susanna's story is due to the fact that she did not follow any of the traditional pathways that, at the time, allowed a woman who crossed the boundaries between faiths to reach a form of social inclusion, even if it was partial or instrumental. In fact, she not only contravened the rules of the Church through multiple apostasies, but she also rejected the social script which dictated that the change of religious identity be accompanied by acceptance within a new male protection network to which she was to be subordinate. Furthermore, it does not appear that she was a prostitute, at least not one over whose activities the authorities could exercise control.[46] The way in which Susanna allegedly used her body thus seems to question not only the division between faiths, but also the patriarchal order that dominated both Catholic and Muslim societies. Her relationships with men were apparently unstable, and she does not appear to have maintained a singular allegiance to any male partner or protector. As shown by her second trial – which we will analyse soon –, it seems that she had an iron will when she set her eyes on a partner, no matter how risky and forbidden the object of her desires was. At least, this was what seemed to concern the judges about her moral conduct.

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[42] See Marina Caffiero, "I sottili confini tra tolleranza e intolleranza. Dispense matrimoniali e matrimoni 'misti' come strumenti di controllo e di integrazione delle minoranze a Roma in età moderna", *Storia delle donne*, 11 (2005), pp. 193-211.

[43] Stephen Ortega, "'Pleading for Help': Gender Relations and Cross-Cultural Logic in the Early Modern Mediterranean", *Gender and History*, 20/2 (2008), pp. 332-348: 338. On religious conversions in Venice, see also E. Natalie Rothman, "Becoming Venetian: Conversion and Transformation in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 21/1 (2006), pp. 39-75.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Marc Baer, "Islamic Conversion Narratives of Women: Social Change and Gendered Religious Hierarchy in Early Modern Ottoman Istanbul", *Gender and History*, 16/2 (2004), pp. 425-458.

[46] On the unstable distinction between formal and informal prostitution, see Ruth M. Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

5. *Shifting identities*

As we have already mentioned, research on religious conversion has played a central role in studies on both social ties and conflicts between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the early modern era. Focusing attention on the boundaries between the faiths (and their permeability) allows us to understand how the same cultural differences were structured within different social groups, thereby helping us investigate the relationship between the phenomenon of cultural crossing and the strengthening of the sense of belonging in a community. In fact, it was not isolation that created group identity but the complex interactions with "others" and the reactions, even those that were defensive, to their influence.[47]

Understanding the reasons for conversion is a crucial element. A taxonomy of possible causes includes: physical security; the desire to gain and maintain civic or cultural inclusion and the toleration, perhaps also the affection, of the cultural majority; collective decisions; the desire to create a syncretic amalgamation, avoiding an absolute choice. More than one of these reasons could exert influence at the same time.[48] In Susanna's case, the last element seems to have been preponderant.

However, the use of the term syncretism is not neutral. If in using it we wish to indicate the "blending of elements from different religious traditions", this definition, as Tijana Krstić recently noted, "has come under heavy criticism in recent years from many quarters of academia because it presupposes purity of religious traditions and ignores precisely the longue durée interaction and elaboration of common cultural material".[49] Krstić invites us to analyse the points of contact that, from the outset, brought the major Mediterranean monotheistic faiths closer, including the common cultural heritage of the classical world, in particular the Greek. Conversely, defining this kind of religious commingling in terms of syncretistic solutions stems directly "from the Christian conceptualization of orthodoxy", above all when one implies that these solutions were the result of "imperfect" conversions.[50]

In Susanna's case, in the few fragments upon which we can reflect, the aspect of doctrine seems relegated to a secondary, background position, compared to that of the materiality of religious practice.[51] In such episodes, it appears that the profound link between belief and "historically contingent social practices" facilitated "a process of social, political or religious acculturation" that enabled crossings "which did not need a comprehensive relinquishing of previous identities".[52] We can refer to this phenomenon as an example of religious

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[47] Rubin, Katznelson, *Religious Conversion*, pp. 12-13, with reference to Fredrik Barth, "Introduction", in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, ed. by Fredrik Barth, Bergen and Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

[48] Rubin, Katznelson, *Religious Conversion*, p. 14.

[49] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, p. 16.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[51] See *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. by David Morgan, London and New York, Routledge, 2010.

[52] Norton, *Conversion and Islam*, p. 1; Mills, Grafton, *Conversion: Old World and New*.

"adhesion", that is, the process by which a new religious affiliation is added to another as a supplement, without constituting a radical fracture with a previous identity or leading to sudden and traumatic changes in space or community affiliation.[53] In the instance of multiple conversions, in which the subject returned to the faith they had previously abandoned, "even the return to tradition, however, was a return with a difference, a return to an 'invented tradition' no less than a received one".[54] In general, the experience of multiple conversions ultimately led to a profound change in religious attitudes.[55]

This phenomenon has radically marked the history of the Iberian world in the early modern period. Iberia has always played a central role in the history of the cross-cultural interactions between Muslims and Christians in the medieval and early modern worlds. Despite the ongoing wars carried on by Christian armies against the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus, Jewish and Christian minorities were governed by their own laws and authorities in medieval Muslim Spain, and similar patterns of cohabitation survived the so-called Christian Reconquista. Though marked by recurring outbreaks of violence,[56] this experience represents the most enduring historical example of cultural coexistence in the Mediterranean region after antiquity.[57] The situation, however, began to deteriorate around the 14th century and came to an end in the 15th, when the Catholic monarchy gained control of the whole Iberian Peninsula with the conquest of the Muslim emirate of Granada (1492). The Jewish minority first, and later the Muslim one, was forced to convert to Christianity. The entire history of early modern Spain is the history of those traumas.[58] The political option of mass conversion generated an ongoing conflict between the Christian majority and the morisco population. Religious issues were often interwoven with economic and social claims. Moriscos were forced to give up not only their beliefs, but also their language, clothes, make-up, hairstyles, habits and diet. Every manifestation of cultural diversity could be seen as potential proof of religious and social transgression. This conflict came to an end in 1609 when King Philip III made the radical decision to definitively expel the moriscos from Spanish soil.[59]

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[53] Rubin, Katznelson, *Religious Conversion*, pp. 14-15. See also Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion, from Alexander to Augustine of Hyppo*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1993.

[54] Michael Heyd, "'Double Conversions' in the Early Modern Period: The Road to Religious Scepticism?", in *Religious Conversion*, pp. 233-259: 234. See also Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2000.

[55] Heyd, "'Double Conversions'", p. 253.

[56] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

[57] The idea of *convivencia* in medieval Spain was forged by Américo Castro, *España en su historia: christianos, moros y judíos*, Buenos Aires, Losada de Argentina, 1948. For a critical re-reading of the historiography on *convivencia* see: Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea", *Religion Compass*, 3/1 (2009), pp. 72-85; Maya Soifer, "Beyond Convivencia: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain", *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 1/1 (2009), pp. 19-35.

[58] Mercedes García-Arenal, "Creating Conversos: Genealogy and Identity as Historiographical Problems (after a recent book by Ángel Alcalá)", *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 38/1 (2013), pp. 1-17: 1. See also Mercedes García-Arenal, "Introduction", in *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity*, ed. by Mercedes García-Arenal, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2016, pp. 1-19: 2.

Forced conversions stimulated religious dissimulation, fostering skepticism towards institutionalised religion. Most *conversos*, both Jews and Muslims, did not experience a clear, new religious identity, but rather ambivalence and tensions. They often adopted hybrid solutions[60] and developed fluid and shifting identities.[61] Moreover, mass conversions raised doubts even among Christians.[62] Paradoxically, by trying to pursue the strategy of assimilation, Catholics created their own internal enemies and became trapped in a growing anxiety rooted in the fear of infiltration.[63] The policy of *limpieza de sangre* ("blood purity"), pursued by retracing the genealogy of moriscos and conversos so as to exclude them from guilds, confraternities and certain labour activities, led to profoundly cynical positions. The proto-racialisation of religious identities in early modern Spain represented a blatant failure of the Church in asserting belief in the universal benefits of Catholic baptism.[64] The case of Susanna, in which multiple conversions did not lead her to the adoption of any single stable religious identity, seems to confirm this attitude. If it did not show her skepticism, it at least attests to her indifference in matters of faith and, moreover, testifies to the tendency to rely on individualistic positions rather than search for new and conclusive forms of social, cultural and religious affiliation.

6. *The second trial: Susanna, the witch*

In 1582, Daza voluntarily confessed further infractions. Deceived by the Devil – she reportedly said – she finally decided to completely give up the sacramental confession. Madly in love with a man she could not have, she invoked the Devil out of desperation. According to her deposition, she repeated three times "Come Devil, come Satan, come Lucifer, your greatness of Hell, help me with this need of mine, shall I have this man whom I desire".[65] While she was performing this rite, the man she loved (a friar) magically appeared before her and asked for her body and soul. She consented and denied the Christian faith, allegedly by saying: "I renounce Jesus Christ and all the Christian deeds, baptism, all Christian ceremonies, and I give myself, body and soul, to the Devil and his devotees, and I will not leave them, even in the afterlife".[66] She sealed her promise with her own blood and finally had sex with the friar. From then on, she had never confessed, believing the Devil able to fulfill all of her desires. She reported to the judges that every now and then during Communion she hid the particle to commit outrageous acts of blasphemy later, such as introducing the holy host into her vagina before having casual sex with men.[67] This time, the reaction of the inquisitors was merciless, and Daza was sentenced to spend the rest of her life segregated in a monastery in perpetual spiritual penance.[68]

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[59] See above, note 2.

[60] García-Arenal, "Introduction", p. 2.

[61] Stefania Pastore, "Doubt in Fifteenth-Century Iberia", in *After Conversion*, pp. 283-303: 285.

[62] Mercedes García-Arenal, "*Mi padre moro, yo moro*: The Inheritance of Belief in Early Modern Iberia", in *After Conversion*, pp. 305-335: 305.

[63] García-Arenal, "Creating Conversos", p. 18.

[64] García-Arenal, "*Mi padre moro*", pp. 324-325.

[65] AHN, Inquisición, L. 898, f. 531r: "ben demonio ben stanas, ben Lucifer grande del infierno y ayudame en esta necesidad y hazme aver este hombre que deseo".

Susanna's disposition, which, from the elements at our disposal, seems to have stood out because of her independence and lack of scruples, could have aroused suspicions and antipathy in her neighborhood and led someone to raise the accusation of witchcraft against her, although material reasons unknown to us (a rivalry in love, an unpaid debt) may also have contributed. However, we also cannot exclude *a priori* that Susanna herself was familiar with popular magical practices.

In premodern societies, the occult touched every aspect of everyday life, from the structures of the universe to the social and natural order, and even the humblest and most regular tasks of daily life. Belief systems mixed elements of official Christianity, Christianised magical traditions and also, albeit marginally, practices that were totally disconnected from the dominant religion.[69] As Richard Kieckhefer had already noted in 1976, although the idea of the demonic contract was a construct that ecclesiastical judges imposed on witchcraft cases, many complaints seem to have started "from below", in the wake of the widespread popular fear that some subjects who had extraordinary powers could actually harm individuals or communities.[70] Women were particularly suspect.[71] Many

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66. *Ibid.*: "yo reniego de Jesu Xro y de todas sus obras y del baptismo y todas las cerimonias delos xrianos y me doy en anima y cuerpo al demonio y sus sequazes delos quales viva y muerta no me apartare dellos".

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid*, f. 531v.

69. See Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual Magic in Pre-Modern Europe*, London and New York, 2000. Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

70. Richard Kieckhefer, *Early European Witch Trials: Their Foundation in Popular and Learned Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

71. The first readings that critically articulated the gendered dimension of the witch hunt matured in the context of the political activism of first-wave feminism: Matilda J. Gage, *Women, Church, and State: The Original Exposé of Male Collaboration against the Male Sex*, Waterton (MA), Persephone Press, 1980 (or. ed. 1893). This historiographical synthesis on women history and witchcraft relies upon Alison Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Europe", in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. by Brian P. Levack, New York, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 449-467. These interpretations were articulated again in the waves of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s: Andrea Dworkin, "Gynocide: The Witches", in Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating*, New York, Dutton, 1974, pp. 118-50; Mary Daly, "European Witch Burnings: Purifying the Body of Christ", in Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1978, pp. 178-222. Although these initial investigations were not written with the greatest degree of accuracy in terms of their historical reconstruction, recent studies have successfully integrated a gender approach, feminism and

explanations have been given for the phenomenon: some, drawing on psychology, have recalled the emotional tensions aroused by women who, no longer in their reproductive age, were believed might attack younger fertile women out of jealousy; others claimed that suspicions were directed towards older women because, in pre-modern societies, those in this age group were attributed greater prestige and power; and still others underlined how the gendered expectations of society required a woman, especially if she was poor and needed support, to express an attitude of docile gratitude towards the community, one which those accused of witchcraft had quite often not shown throughout their lives.[72]

In Susanna's case, anxieties over gender were probably compounded with deep-rooted suspicions towards moriscas and Jewish-conversos, particularly because of her double conversion. Indeed, the acquaintance of Christians with Jews was often associated with the practice of magic.[73] The stereotype of the Jewish sorcerer and necromancer dated back to the Middle Ages. They were held responsible for ritual homicides and the profanation of the holy host. Yet, beyond the rhetoric of Christian polemicists, in their daily lives common people within Christianity often turned to Jews as mediators with the occult.[74] The obscurity of the Hebrew language exercised a powerful force of attraction over those who were susceptible to magical beliefs. Alongside a learned tradition of studies on the Jewish Kabbalah, many books with spells and incantations circulated, which were written with deformed and often nonsensical Hebrew characters.[75]

The association between Islam and magical practices also had roots in the central centuries of the Middle Ages. The first theories of diabolical magic initially developed in response to concerns raised by the spread of magical knowledge that had its origin in secret cults, in the underground world of necromantic practices that was developing within the Church.[76] A significant part of the classical cultural heritage that, with the rebirth of the 12th century, had been brought to light through texts preserved in the Islamic world, included works of magic. They were mostly astrological and alchemical texts, but also included treatises of spiritual magic centered on the manipulation of supernatural entities that ecclesiastical authorities undoubtedly identified as demons. It was, therefore,

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methodological accuracy: Elspeth Whitney, "International Trends: The Witch 'She'/The Historian 'He'. Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts", *Journal of Women's History*, 7 (1995), pp. 77-101. See also: Willem de Blécourt, "The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period", *Gender & History*, 12 (2000), pp. 287-309.

[72] Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Gender". See also Lyndal Roper, "Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany", in Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, pp. 199-225, and Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 2004; Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, London, Harper Collins, 1996.

[73] Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi*, pp. 121-180.

[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123. See: Federico Barbierato, *The Inquisitor in the Hat Shop: Inquisition, Forbidden Books and Unbelief in Early Modern Venice*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012.

[76] R. Kichard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 153.

no coincidence that the fear of diabolical magic first manifested itself in areas of intense contact with Islamic culture.[77]

In the early modern period popular magical practices transmitted by moriscos gave rise to suspicion among Catholic authorities. In the 17th century, the main accusations against Sicilian moriscos were magic, bigamy, heresy, blasphemy and resistance to the Holy Office.[78] Morisco women were often accused of transmitting love magic, and many charms for capturing the person one loved circulated in *aljamiado* literature.[79] Suspicions about these practices survived for a long time. In 1611 in Genoa, Antonio Quintini's *Relazione di quello che trattavano i moreschi di Spagna* was published, a text that unabashedly praised the Spanish king's decision to expel the moriscos and celebrated the "glorious victory against the enemies of the faith".[80] The author sustained his anti-morisco hatred by citing the instance of a Valencian woman who Botero had already mentioned in "Part Five" of his *Relazioni Universali*.[81] A witch and clearly obstinate, the woman had been accused of having lived according to the "Mohammedan" law and for the murder of three men. Sentenced to death, she was nevertheless spared after she promised to reveal secrets of public interest of which she claimed to be aware. According to the narrative, she revealed the correspondence between Algiers and the "moors" of Valencia, which would have disclosed how the latter were planning a revolt using the weapons and armies of the Muslim sovereign. The letters would then have testified to the king's willingness to grant the moriscos all the goods stolen from Christians through plunder and invasion, with the sole provision that they spare women's lives. They, confirming the stereotype of the polygamous Muslims' lust, would have been the prize for their victory, with five women for each soldier. The moriscos, according to Quintini, would have subverted all the rules of Christian society. Work on holidays would have been blessed and the murder of the "cristianos viejos" would have secured "plenary indulgence" for the perpetrators. A baker from Zaragoza, the fanciful story continues, would have been forced to hide the crucifix in a pastry and cook it in the oven. The text reports the horror aroused by the cry of the Messiah that emerged from the burning oven while blood flooded the kitchen. The moriscos would have washed the heads of the newly baptised children in an attempt to erase the effects of the sacrament.[82]

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[77] Michael D. Bailey, "Diabolic Magic", in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by David J. Collins, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 361-392: 363-364.

[78] Messana, "La 'resistenza' musulmana", pp. 753-754.

[79] Perry, *Handless Maiden*, p. 56. *Aljamiado* refers to the transliteration of romance languages in Arabic characters. On morisco women and witchcraft, see also Hasenfeld, "Gender and Struggle for Identity", p. 93. More broadly on moriscos and witchcraft: Ana Labarta, "Supersticiones moriscos", *Awrāq*, 5-6 (1982-1983), pp. 177-178.

[80] Antonio Quintini, *Relazione di quello che trattavano i moreschi di Spagna contro la Maestà del re Cattolico don Filippo III*, Genoa, Pavoni, 1611, p. 2, cit. in Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*, p. 46.

[81] Giovanni Botero, *Le relazioni universali*, Venice, i Giunti, 1640 (or. ed. Rome, 1591), vol. 3, pp. 76-77, cit. in Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*, p. 46.

[82] Quintini, *Relazione*, pp. 3-8, cit. in Pomara Saverino, *Rifugiati*, pp. 45-48.

Although the pamphlet was subsequent to Susanna's conviction, it collects a long-term history of anti-Islamic prejudices that likely influenced the judges' attitudes towards her.[83] The accusation of witchcraft seems to have embodied all of the fears that a woman like her, with her ethnic and cultural background and her unrestrained sexual conduct, aroused in the populace and within ecclesiastical hierarchies. However, we must not exclude *a priori* that her disposition led her to a real interest in the occult. Someone could have introduced her to magic, although there is absolutely no evidence of any relationship between her training in the mysteries of the occult, her morisco background and her relationship with a Muslim and then a Jewish man. She might have worked out the rituals she performed by gathering scattered fragments of disparate knowledge collected randomly from acquaintances, neighbours or some of the many swindlers that took advantage of the credulity of people at that time. We cannot uncover the realities that underlay her choices. What we do know is that she did not comply with any of the conditions of the time that could make a foreigner, especially a woman, acceptable to society. Furthermore, in her case the changes of faith do not seem to have been functional to the construction of new networks of social integration.[84] Susanna's story seems rather to confirm how, in a society marked by religious conflict and the constant renegotiation of boundaries between faiths, some subjects opted for original integrations that ultimately undermined the doctrinal assumptions of the institutionalised religions.

However, the instability of Susanna's religious allegiance did not result in a completely skeptical approach. Apparently, her relationship with the supernatural continued to play a role in her life during her multiple conversions. We can assume that she was not completely aware of the doctrinal differences between the faiths she moved through, or of those between them and the various forms of magic and superstition that played such a crucial role in early modern society. Her experience invites us to rethink the rhetoric of conversion developed in confessional narratives. In Catholic contexts, this rhetoric was sometimes imposed on common people by means of institutional intervention. The latter could be implemented either via the educational efforts of the many Houses of Catechumens that took in converts to Catholicism in post-Tridentine Italy, or through the repressive action of inquisitorial tribunals. The everyday experiences of people like Susanna, however, prove that the process was not always clear-cut or traumatic and that it could sometimes be the result of individualised rearrangements and negotiations. Despite the efforts of religious and secular institutions to establish orthodoxy, in part by emphasising the rhetoric of conversion as a radical shift, people used their creativity to adapt religion to their needs, navigating across fluid and uncertain religious boundaries and refusing to crystallise their experiences into predetermined sexual or confessional scripts.

(*Translated by Kalina Yamboliev*)

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83. See Lavenia's chapter in this volume.

84. On the acceptance of strangers, see Simona Cerutti, *Étrangers: étude d'une condition d'incertitude dans une societé d'Ancien Régime*, Montrogue, Bayard, 2012.