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The Roman Holy Office and the Christian East: Overview of Sources and New Research Perspectives

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Introduction

In addition to its original role of coordinating the various tribunals set up on the Italian peninsula to combat the spread of the ‘Lutheran heresy’, the Holy Office of the Roman and Universal Inquisition (established in 1542) soon became the supreme authority for the control of the Catholic faith, extending its jurisdiction to all matters of doctrine and morals. In this dual capacity, the tribunal often dealt with theoretical and practical issues related to the Christian East, although this aspect of its work has remained rather in the shadows.¹

Since the conference at the origin of this volume was conceived as a meeting place for two categories of scholars who would hardly have thought they had anything in common – historians of the Inquisition and Orientalists – I will try in this chapter to keep a foot in both camps. On the one hand, I will give an overview of the sources relating to Eastern Christianity in the archives of the Roman Inquisition. For several years, I have been conducting a systematic analysis of these sources, and I will present some case studies to illustrate their significance and the importance of the documentation in Oriental languages that can be found there. On the other hand, I will try to argue why it is important even for non-specialists to study the Inquisition’s attitude towards Eastern Christianity, insofar as it represented a challenge to the ecclesiological

¹ See my introductory essay to this volume for further remarks and historiographical considerations. The Open Access publication of this chapter was made possible by the ‘Microgrant’ funding granted by the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (CUP J93C22001380002).

and disciplinary model of the Counter-Reformation and by pointing out how the problems and difficulties raised by the spread of Catholicism in the East intersected with other controversies that shook the entire Catholic world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Sources for the History of Eastern Christianity in the Archives of the Roman Inquisition

Eastern Christians are present in the Roman inquisitorial documentation from the very beginning. In the first volume of the *Decreta*, the archival series that preserves the official acts of the Holy Office, we read that in January 1554 the Congregation mandated the administration of confirmation and sacred orders to an Ethiopian monk called ‘Giorgio’ (Giyorgis), who resided in Rome in the hospice of Santo Stefano dei Mori. Towards the end of the same year, the cardinals granted him permission to celebrate Mass in the ‘Chaldaic language’, which, in this context, refers to Ge‘ez, the Ethiopian liturgical language.² The inquisitors would not have been entirely unfamiliar with the individual in question, as he was the companion of a much better known figure, that Tasfa Seyon, or ‘Pietro Indiano’, celebrated for having promoted in Rome the first publication of the New Testament in Ge‘ez. Indeed, Tasfa Seyon was so intimate with the dynamics of the Roman Curia that he has been called ‘the most influential African in the sixteenth-century Catholic Church’.³ However, since Tasfa Seyon passed away in 1550, it is likely that Giorgio’s requests were granted due to the intercession of another influential Ethiopian named ‘Giovanni Battista Abissino’ (Yohannes of Cyprus), who had been in the service of Gian Pietro Carafa and who had continued to be his chaplain after the

² Vatican City, Archivio del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede (ADDF), Sanctum Officium (SO), *Decreta*, 1548–1558, fol. 127r (9 January 1554: ‘Fr. Georgius Ethiopus. Quod sacrista D. N. det sacramentum confirmationis quo caret, sacrosque ordinos secundum S. Ro. Eccl. ae ritus conferat omni meliori modo’), fol. 166v [=II, fol. 36v, old pagination] (12 December 1554: ‘Frater Georgius. Rev.mi dederunt licentiam celebrandi missam lingua Chaldaica’). On ‘Giorgio’/Giyorgis, and more generally on Ethiopians in early modern Rome, see now Samantha Kelly, *Translating Faith: Ethiopian Pilgrims in Renaissance Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 2024), p. 269.

³ Matteo Salvatore, James De Lorenzi, ‘An Ethiopian Scholar in Tridentine Rome: Täsfa Şeyon and the Birth of Orientalism’, *Itinerario*, 45:1 (2021), 17–46, at p. 18; see Matteo Salvatore, James De Lorenzi and Deresse Ayenachew, *The Many Lives of Täsfa Şeyon: An Ethiopian Intellectual in Early Modern Rome* (Cambridge, 2024).

election of the dreaded cardinal as Pope Paul IV.⁴ This is a first example of a very interesting phenomenon to which we shall return, namely the presence of Eastern Christians in the clientele of the cardinal inquisitors and their use in the service of the Holy Office as interpreters and mediators.

Going through the volumes of the *Decreta* that document the first half-century of the Holy Office's activity, I discovered a modest yet consistent occurrence of decisions concerning Eastern Christians. These individuals were the subjects of formal abjurations (a practice that would later be a matter of discussion, as we shall see), as well as dispensations and absolutions from canonical irregularities. Among those mentioned, one encounters both lesser-known individuals from humble backgrounds and well-known figures in scholarly circles. For instance, there is mention of the Chaldean archbishop Joseph Sulaqa, brother of the first Catholic patriarch, who held responsibility for the Christians of St Thomas of Malabar until 1562. At that time, he was compelled to abandon his diocese and travel to Europe due to accusations of 'Nestorianism' brought by the Portuguese authorities.⁵ Another notable figure is the Armenian Yovhannēs Terznc'i, who played a crucial role in printing some of the earliest books in the Armenian language in Rome and Venice, before being imprisoned by the Inquisition between 1582 and 1584.⁶

Regrettably, in the majority of cases, our investigations are hindered by the absence of trial documents, which were largely lost when the archive was returned from Paris (1815–17), where it had been transported at Napoleon's behest, as is widely known.⁷ This limitation can be partially overcome in two

⁴ Matteo Salvatore, 'African Cosmopolitanism in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Diasporic Life of Yohannes, the Ethiopian Pilgrim Who Became a Counter-Reformation Bishop', *The Journal of African History*, 58:1 (2017), 61–83, at p. 74; Elena Bonora, *Giudicare i vescovi. La definizione dei poteri nella Chiesa posttridentina* (Rome-Bari, 2007), p. 98. Indeed, the reordination of Fr. Giorgio is recorded also in a text by Yohannes himself: Kelly, *Translating Faith*, p. 267.

⁵ ADDE, SO, *Decreta*, 1567–1571, fols 148v, 149r, 154rv, 157r, 161v, 169r, 170r, 172r ('R. P. D. Ioseph Archiepiscopi Ninivensis', 1570); see Mecherry's chapter in this volume.

⁶ On Terznc'i, see Karapet A. Melik'-Ōhanjanyan, *Patmut'w'n Parēzi ew Vennayi* (Yerevan, 1966), pp. 7–36; Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Catalogue des "incunables" arméniens (1511/1695) ou Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne* (Geneva, 1986), pp. 28–9. I am currently preparing (in collaboration with Anna Sirinian) an edition of the documents relating to him.

⁷ John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (Binghamton, NY, 1991), pp. 23–45; Francesco Beretta, 'L'archivio della Congregazione del Sant'Ufficio: bilancio provvisorio della storia e della natura dei fondi d'antico regime', in Andrea Del Col and Giovanna Paolin (eds),

ways. The first is through the use of registers of sentences and spontaneous appearances, which, through a series of events, ended up in the library of Trinity College in Dublin. Although these registers primarily pertain to Eastern Christians who were tried for apostasy to Islam,⁸ occasionally other cases come to light. One such extraordinary account involves a Greek deacon from Lemnos who, after immigrating to Peru and marrying another Greek immigrant, in 1625 left his family and children in Cusco to come to Rome, seeking acquittal from the Holy Office.⁹ Another remarkable instance is the spontaneous appearance in April of the same year by a Wallachian monk, who had served as a personal assistant to the patriarch of Alexandria and later of Constantinople Cyril Lucaris. After being converted by Jesuit missionaries, he arrived in Rome to seek reconciliation.¹⁰ Lastly, there is the weird case of a 'Nestorian Chaldean' from Diyarbakir, who, when questioned by the inquisitor about his adherence to the erroneous Nestorian doctrine concerning the Trinity, replied: 'What is Trinity? I don't know anything about it'.¹¹

The second way of filling in the gaps in the Roman collection is to consult the documents kept by the local tribunals of the Inquisition scattered throughout Italian territory, with which the headquarters maintained constant, if not always systematic, correspondence. In fact, in several cases, local inquisitors sought guidance from the cardinals on how to proceed against specific

L'inquisizione romana: metodologia delle fonti e storia istituzionale (Trieste, 20009), pp. 119–44; Maria Pia Donato, *L'archivio del mondo. Quando Napoleone confiscò la storia* (Bari-Rome, 2019).

⁸ See for example Dublin, Library of Trinity College (TCD), MS 1227, fols 28r–29v (verdict against 'Giacomo figliolo del q. Aselbech da Cesarea in Armenia', 20 February 1582). A particularly interesting case of apostasy to Islam occurred in 1625, involving a Melkite merchant from Aleppo. Six years prior, he had publicly confessed his Catholic faith at the Holy Office. Later, he was captured by the 'Turks' near Thessaloniki and coerced into converting to Islam. He was eventually able to escape and find sanctuary in Venice, where he received reconciliation from Theophanes Xenakis, the Greek Archbishop of Philadelphia. However, upon being informed by a compatriot that this reconciliation was deemed invalid, he was compelled once again to seek acquittal from the Roman Holy Office. See TCD, MS 1244, fols 316v–318v (21 November 1625).

⁹ TCD, MS 1244 (*Liber sponte comparentium...MDCXXXV*), fol. 30rv (former 31rv), 'Ioannes filius q. Georgii...ex insula Lemnos in Arcipelago, diaconus professus', 18 February 1625.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 53rv (former 54rv), 'Pacomius filius q. Andreae Vlaci de Sigisora in Valacchia monacus ordinis S. Basilii', 4 April 1625.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, fols 264r–265r, 'Isac filius q. Abdi Sciami de Civitate Emet in Mesopotamia', 21 October 1625.

defendants, while in other cases Rome provided local tribunals with copies of documents in its possession, the originals of which no longer exist today. To give just one example, in the archives of the Inquisition of Pisa, which also had jurisdiction over the port of Livorno and its diverse population (Greek sailors, Armenian merchants, northern European corsairs, Turkish slaves...), it is possible to find very interesting files that complete the documentary traces remaining in the ADDF.¹²

Returning to the Roman documentation, a useful supplement comes from the *compendia* of decisions or legal documents that were later compiled by the officials of the Congregation for internal use. These compilations shed further light on the Eastern Christians mentioned in the decrees, as they often include instances where these individuals sought certificates of catholicity or letters of recommendation to facilitate their return home without further harassment. Among these volumes, housed in the extensive miscellaneous collection known as *Stanza Storica*, to which we shall return, the *Repertorium Decretorum Antiquiorum* is particularly useful: thanks to it, we can better understand what the main concerns of the Roman Inquisition towards Eastern Christianity at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries were. Given the concurrent activities of the Congregation for the Greeks, overseen by the influential Cardinal inquisitor Giulio Antonio Santori (1532–1602), it is unsurprising that the Holy Office was then mainly concerned with resolving practical matters related to the traditional areas of coexistence between Greeks and Latins. These areas included the ports of the Italian peninsula and its southern regions, the island of Malta, and the Aegean archipelago.¹³

In January 1593, it was confirmed that the Christians of the Greek rite could eat meat on Saturday only when they lived separately ‘in their towns,

¹² Between 1623 and 1624, for example, the Holy Office in Rome received several denunciations against Greeks living in Livorno. The accusations and preliminary interrogations of the witnesses were sent to the Inquisitor in Pisa, so that he could open formal trials on the spot: Pisa, Archivio Arcivescovile, *Inquisizione*, 8, fols 501r–502v; 9, fols 523r–536v.

¹³ On Santori (or Santoro), see John Krajcar, *Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santoro and the Christian East: Santoro's Audiences and Consistorial Acts* (Rome, 1966) and Saverio Ricci, *Il sommo inquisitore. Giulio Antonio Santori tra autobiografia e storia (1532–1602)* (Rome, 2002). Vittorio Peri devoted several works to emphasizing the importance of the ‘Congregatio pro reformatione Graecorum in Italia existentium’: see for example ‘La Congregazione dei Greci (1573) e i suoi primi documenti’, in Giuseppe Forchielli and Alphons M. Stickler (eds), *Collectanea Stephan Kutner*, vol. III (Bologna 1967) [= *Studia Gratiana*, III, 13], pp. 129–256, and especially *Chiesa romana e “rito” greco: G. A. Santoro e la Congregazione dei Greci (1566–1596)* (Brescia, 1975).

and houses'. Conversely, if they resided among Latins, they were required to conform to the practices of the Latin community in order to avoid causing scandal (*'ad evitandum scandalum debent se conformare cum Latinis'*). In the context of mixed marriages, a principle was established with long-lasting implications. It was determined that the Greek spouse should not be allowed to persuade the Latin spouse to change their religious rite. However, the reverse was considered acceptable, permitting the Greek spouse to adopt the Latin rite if they so chose.¹⁴ Regarding the adoption of the new Gregorian Calendar, the Holy See demonstrated flexibility in granting exceptions based on specific circumstances. Generally speaking, the continued use of the old Julian calendar was tolerated in certain regions, like Venetian Crete, the Ionian islands (1588), and the Aegean archipelago, where in 1602 the bishop of Tinos was explicitly permitted to do so *'ad tollendam confusionem et dissensionem cum his qui sunt ritus Graeci'* (to prevent confusion and discord among those who follow the Greek rite). On the other hand, the reformed calendar was expected to be implemented in places where Greeks constituted a minority, such as Italy and Malta. However, it is worth noting that in August 1596, the Inquisitor of Malta was reprimanded for demanding the abjuration of Greeks who adhered to the old calendar.¹⁵

A particularly contentious issue revolved around whether the Greek faithful under Catholic authority could receive the Eucharist in both kinds (bread and wine). This matter went beyond simple differences in religious rites or concerns about scandal. It was deeply influenced by the historical mistrust of the Roman Church about distributing the chalice to the laity, which had been further complicated by controversies with the Protestant world. The Congregation's view on this matter fluctuated. On 4 September 1603, a decree was issued prohibiting the granting of the Eucharist *sub utraque specie* (in

¹⁴ ADDE, SO, *Stanza Storica* (St. St.), M 3 g (*Repertorium Decretorum Antiquiorum*), p. 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185. The concession of 1588 was also the result of political pressure from the Republic of Venice, which feared that a change in the calendar would provoke clashes between its Greek and Latin subjects, 'because they would appear to be not only different in rite, but in religion' ('*parendole non più essere differenti di rito, ma di religione*'), thus exposing the legal fiction that allowed the existence of Orthodox Christians in the territory of a Catholic power: Vittorio Peri, 'L'"*incredibile risguardo*" e l'"*incredibile destrezza*". La resistenza di Venezia alle iniziative postridentine della Santa Sede per i Greci dei suoi domini', in Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, and Agostino Pertusi (eds), *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente* (Florence, 1977), vol. 2, pp. 599–625, at pp. 615–6.

both kinds) to the Greek laity in Italy, Sicily and Malta.¹⁶ However, shortly thereafter, on 28 July 1605, the same decree was revoked, allowing those who were accustomed to receive communion from the chalice to continue doing so. Here we enter the realm of ‘doubtful questions’, as evidenced by the fact that the preliminary material concerning these decrees is preserved in a volume dedicated to the Eucharist within the archival series called *Dubia circa sacramenta*.¹⁷

This series allows us to broaden our horizons beyond the traditional meeting grounds between Orthodox and Catholics mentioned so far.¹⁸ Indeed, the spread of Catholic missions in the Middle East and the progressive establishment of Uniate communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had some unexpected side effects. Eastern Catholics soon began to experience the contradictions inherent in their simultaneous Roman and Oriental allegiances, which gave rise to a wide range of practical and theoretical challenges. These challenges were rooted in the difficulty of maintaining a delicate balance between the formal adherence to ‘Eastern rites’ on one hand, and fidelity to

¹⁶ ADDE, SO, St. St., M 3 g, p. 210: ‘Die 4 Septembris 1603 lectis litteris Archiepiscopi Beneventi, et Episcopi Termularum, quibus significant laicos ritus Graeci in eorum dioecibus morantibus sumere Eucharistiam sub utraque specie, S[antissimi]mus mandavit scribi Ordinariis Italiae, Siciliae, et Melitae, ut omnino prohibeant in suis dioecibus Laicos ritus Graeci sumere Eucharistiam sub utraque specie, eisque significare, quod reliqui ordinarii id hactenus non tolerarunt, sed prohiberunt’. It should be noted that the matter was originally raised by a report on the reception of the Eucharist *sub utraque specie* among the Catholic Ruthenians: on the establishment of an Eastern Church united with Rome in the territory of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, see now Laurent Tatarenko, *Une réforme orientale à l’âge baroque. Les Ruthènes de la grande-principauté de Lituanie et Rome au temps de l’Union de Brest (milieu du XVIe siècle – milieu du XVIIe siècle)* (Rome, 2021).

¹⁷ ADDE, SO, *Dubia de Eucharistia*, vol. 1603–1788, fasc. 1, fol. 1r (‘Decretum revocatur, atque illis, qui ante decretum soliti erant Eucharistiam sumere sub utraque specie, conceditur in eodem ritu permanere; illi vero, qui iam ante decretum eucharistiam sumebant sub unica specie, iubentur servare solitum’), 33r (list of decrees). The dossier (fols 1r–36v) includes the information provided by nine bishops of southern Italy (dioceses of Larino, Benevento, Termoli, Cassano, Lecce, Otranto, Santa Severina, Cosenza, Rossano) and by the Inquisitor of Malta, as well as the petitions from a Greek archpriest of Lungro which led the pope to change his mind.

¹⁸ For a first recognition, see Giovanni Pizzorusso, ‘I dubbi sui sacramenti dalle missioni «ad infideles»: percorsi nelle burocrazie di Curia’, in *Administrer les sacrements en Europe et au Nouveau Monde: la curie romaine et les dubia circa sacramenta*, special issue of *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 121:1 (2009), 39–61; Maria Teresa Fattori (ed.), *Politiche sacramentali tra Vecchio e Nuovi Mondi, secoli XVI–XVIII*, monographic issue of *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 31:2 (2010).

the Tridentine ecclesiological and disciplinary model on the other. The issues that emerged were initially reported to the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, which was responsible for overseeing the missions, and then forwarded to the Holy Office for further doctrinal examination.¹⁹

As a result, the Roman Inquisition found itself inundated with inquiries regarding the validity of the distinctive practices observed by various Eastern Churches. These questions pertained to the administration of sacraments (different words, different matters, different ministers), the celebration of liturgy, the observation of feast days, and even dietary customs. For instance, the Roman authorities were called upon to determine whether the Ethiopian Church's practice of using a liquid extracted from dried raisins in the Eucharist, or the Armenian Church's avoidance of adding water to the chalice, constituted acceptable variations of the sacrament or were instead concessions to material circumstances and heretical concepts. They were asked whether it was acceptable for Greek priests, rather than bishops, to administer the sacrament of confirmation to infants, or whether Eastern converts to Catholicism had to be reconfirmed. Other issues that arose included the status of the married clergy in Eastern traditions, particularly the Chaldean practice that allowed for marriage even after priestly ordination. The evaluation of liturgies in which the consecration of the Eucharistic species was believed to occur at the moment of the Epiclesis rather than the memorial of the Institution (the words of the Last Supper) presented further dilemmas. How were Eastern converts to reconcile the respect for their original rites, theoretically demanded by Rome, with the presence of suspect elements in the Order of the Mass, such as the mention of saints considered heretics, or the commemoration of patriarchs not in communion with the Holy See? Not to mention the many doubts about the legitimacy and validity of marriages between Eastern Catholics and 'schismatics', or more generally about questions of marital discipline, prohibited degrees, divorce and second marriages.²⁰

¹⁹ On the respect for Eastern rites, see Aurélien Girard, 'Nihil esse innovandum? Maintien des rites orientaux et négociation de l'union des Églises orientales avec Rome (fin XVI^e-mi-XVIII^e s.)', in Marie-Hélène Blanchet and Frédéric Gabriel (eds), *Réduire le schisme? Ecclésiologies et politiques de l'Union entre Orient et Occident, XIII^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 2013), pp. 337-52. For a more detailed description of the information and decision-making process within the Roman Congregations, see Cesare Santus, 'Les papiers des consultants. Questions missionnaires et procès de décision au Saint-Office, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 130:2 (2018), 431-45.

²⁰ ADDE, SO, *Dubia de Baptismate* (1618-1698, 1700-1714, 1715-1740, 1741-1758... etc.); *Dubia de Confirmatione* (1606-1781); *Dubia de Eucharistia* (1603-1788); *Dubia de Matrimonio* (1603-1722, 1723-1739, 1740-1754, 1755-1758...

Moving away from the sacramental area, the large miscellaneous collection known as *Stanza Storica* contains a number of volumes explicitly dedicated to individual Eastern communities. Within these volumes, one can find records addressing a wide range of topics, such as requests for canonical dispensations and changes of rite, inquiries concerning the appropriate calendar for the dates of Christmas and Easter, as well as other issues such as the intricate matter of *communicatio in sacris*, that is the interaction between Catholics and non-Catholics in religious matters.²¹

This archival series also contains original documentation transmitted by the Holy See's diplomatic and missionary network, and it is within this collection that the most intriguing documents in oriental languages can be found. Due to the diverse nature of the issues addressed, the sources found here are of various types. For example, there is a Syriac report from 1611 providing details about the number of 'Nestorian' monasteries in Mesopotamia and the ecclesiastical organization of the Church of the East; some Greek letters sent by the Melkite patriarchs Ignatius III of Antioch and Theophanes III of Jerusalem to Pope Urban VIII, in response to Catholic attempts to capitalize on the dissent of some Orthodox prelates towards the attitude of Patriarch Cyril Lucaris; and even a sheet written in Armenian with over 50 seals. This document served as a denunciation to the Holy Office by the inhabitants of the city of Tokat, who in 1717 exposed the presence in Rome, as confessor of the local Armenians, of a bishop who pretended to be Catholic but was in fact a traitor and had collaborated with the 'schismatics' in the persecutions of Catholic converts.²²

etc.); *Dubia de Poenitentia* (1625–1770); *Dubia de Ordinibus Sacris* (1603–1699, 1700–1731, 1735–1779... etc.); *Dubia Varia* (1570–1668, 1669–1707, 1708–1730, 1731–1753... etc.).

²¹ By way of example, I give some of the titles of the volumes, which were often grouped thematically: ADDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, b, c, i, l, m (several volumes on issues concerning *communicatio in sacris* between Catholics and 'schismatics or heretics'); QQ 2 a, b (*De Ruthenis, Syris, Maronitis, Chaldeis aliisque Orientalibus*, 2 vols, 1595–1711, 1711–1778); QQ 2 c (*Circa Cophitos, Abissinos, Iacobitas, Nestorianos, Etyopos*, 1629–1805); QQ 2 f, g (*De Armenis*, 2 vols, 1642–1715, 1695–1742); QQ 2 h (*Circa Armenos, Graecos, Ruthenos, et missionarios orbis, reliquavero in regestio connotata cernuntur*, 1609–1735); QQ 2 i, l (*De Graecis*, 2 vols: 1613–1693, 1702–1743); QQ 2 m, n (*De Italo-Graecis*, 2 vols: 1602–1699, 1700–1742); QQ 3 a (*De Graecis, et Armenis Liburni degentibus ab anno 1623 ad 1699*); QQ 3 l (*De ritibus diversis ab Armenis observatis ab anno 169[6] ad 1742*); etc.

²² ADDF, SO, St. St., QQ 2 a, fasc. LVI ('Pro Caldeis, 1611'), fols 79r–90v (the Latin translation of this document, based on a text kept in the Vatican Archives, has been published by Samuel Giamil, *Genuinae relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam*

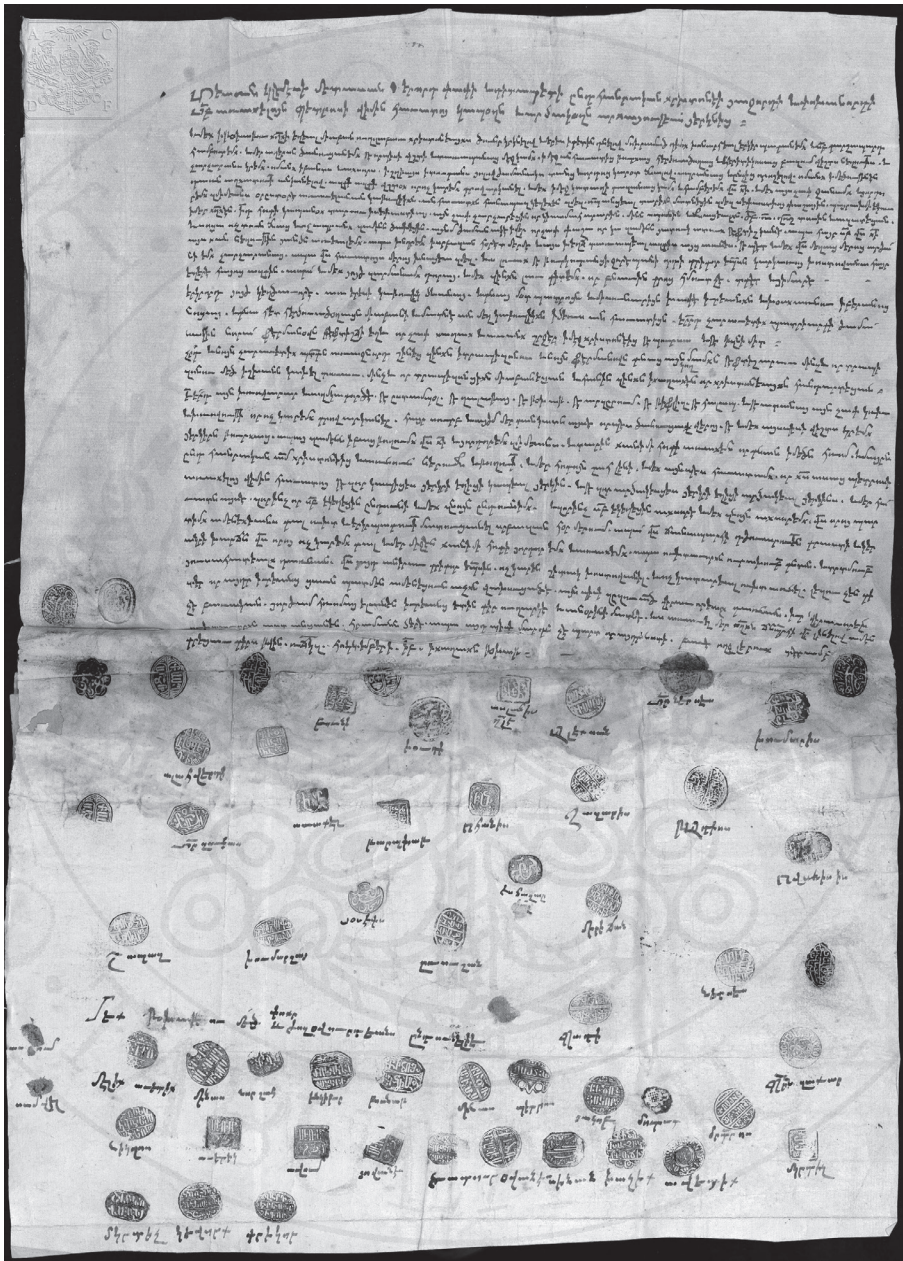


Fig. 2.1. Letter from the Catholic Armenians of Tokat to Pope Clement XI, denouncing the presence in Rome of an Armenian bishop who had persecuted Catholics in the past. ADFD, SO, St. St., QQ 2 g, fol. 30v. © Archivio del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede.

The most abundant and intriguing documentation, both from a historical and linguistic standpoint, pertains to the professions of faith. The question of how individuals who converted from the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches should be received into the Catholic faith was placed at the intersection of the judicial and doctrinal aspects of inquisitorial activity. From a theoretical perspective, the procedure to be followed depended on the status accorded to Eastern Christians not united to Rome, a rather problematic issue about which the Holy Office itself had considerable reservations. Thus, at the beginning of its activity and throughout the sixteenth century, the Roman Inquisition often demanded a formal abjuration of schism and heresy from those Eastern Christians who spontaneously presented themselves before the tribunal.²³

While in the peripheral courts this procedure remained in use for a long time,²⁴ in Rome it was gradually replaced by a simple profession of the Catho-

et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam (Rome, 1902), pp. 108–115); QQ 2 i, fasc.V ('De Patriarcharum Graecorum Unione cum Ecclesia Romana. Acta nonnulla adversus Cyrillum Patriarcham Constantinopolitanum. 1626'), fols 28r–29v; QQ 2 g, fasc. IV ('Armenorum Eudoxensium quaerelae contra Gregorium Gargare Ep.um Armenae Nationis Romae Confessarium designatum. Repulsae. 1717, 1718'), fol. 30r (the Holy Office did not follow up on the accusations).

²³ See for example the case of the Greek 'Antonio, figliolo del q. Nicolò Epifanio da Pera' (Constantinople), who on 2 August 1582 solemnly abjured for believing all that the Greeks believe, namely 'che io non fossi obligato à render obedientia al Papa; che lo Spirito Santo procedesse dal Padre solamente, et non dal figliuolo; che non si ritrovasse il purgatorio per purgare l'anime di defunti; et che li sacerdoti che fussero in peccato mortale non potessero consecrare' (TCD, MS 1227, fol. 136r). In the already evoked *Repertorium Decretorum Antiquiorum*, under the label 'Graeci' one can read: 'Concilium Tridentinum damnavit quinque errores Graecorum: primo de Azimo, et fermentato; 2^{um} de primatu Petri; 3^{um} de Purgatorio; 4^{um} de processione Spiritus Sancti, et de Visione Beatorum; et ideo abiurent de formali tales Graeci talia asserentes, et credentes – 25 Augusti 1608 in causa Mathei monaci' (ADDF, SO, St. St., M 3 g, p. 389; the final reference points to the trial of the Greek monk 'Matteo Calvopulo', discussed by Vincenzo Lavenia, 'Quasi haereticus. Lo scisma nella riflessione degli inquisitori dell'età moderna', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 126:2 (2014), pp. 307–24).

²⁴ As late as 1631, Greeks appearing before the Holy Office in Malta were made to abjure *de formali* with the pope's consent: ADDF, SO, St. St., QQ 2 i, fasc. IX, fols 79r–89v, fol. 87v: '14 Augusti 1631. SS.mus mandavit ei rescribi, ut recipiat spontaneam comparitionem Graecorum schismaticorum Melitam accedentium, illosque abiur[ar]e faciat de formali ... antequam admittantur ad curam animarum curet ut faciant professionem fidei, et observentur'. But see also the abjurations of the Greek Orthodox soldiers of the Venetian fortress of Palmanova, published by

lic faith, except in the case of Eastern Christian apostates to Islam. The first formulae had been drawn up at the behest of Gregory XIII and probably under the coordination of Cardinal Santori, who was then responsible for matters relating to the Christian East: a formula originally conceived in 1575 for Greeks living in Catholic countries was published in 1582, while another for the Oriental Orthodox appeared in Arabic in 1580 and in Armenian in 1584. Both found concrete application in 1595, in the context of the 'Union' with the Ruthenian and Coptic Churches.²⁵ From 1619 onwards, the profession of Catholic faith was required not only from those who were openly considered 'schismatics and heretics', but also from all Eastern clergy ordained by 'suspect' bishops.²⁶

At the same time, Catholic missionaries working in the Levant began to collect creeds from the local clergy, which sometimes followed the model required by Rome, but in other cases deviated significantly from it and so required special scrutiny about their validity.

The archives of the Holy Office therefore contain both standardized texts signed on the spot and original, more elaborate texts sent by letter. One example of the first is a form printed by the *Typographia Medicea* in 1595, which was used in Rome in 1612 by the Archdeacon Adam, an envoy of the Patriarch of the Church of the East Elias VII. As for the latter, the same patriarch composed a creed that deviated significantly from Roman models, as it makes a comprehensive effort to demonstrate the compatibility of the East Syriac tradition with the Catholic faith.²⁷ Additional professions of faith by notable

Giuseppina Minchella, «*Porre un soldato alla inquisizione*». *I processi del Sant'Uffizio nella fortezza di Palmanova, 1595–1669* (Trieste, 2009), for example pp. 336–9 (abjuration of 'Radogna Ugarovich', 1655).

²⁵ On the elaboration of the formulae see Aurélien Girard, 'Comment reconnaître un chrétien d'Orient vraiment catholique? Élaboration et usages de la profession de foi pour les Orientaux à Rome (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles)', in Marie-Hélène Blanchet and Frédéric Gabriel (eds), *L'Union à l'épreuve du formulaire: Professions de foi entre Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (XIII^e–XVIII^e siècle)* (Leuven, 2016), pp. 235–58; Laurent Tatarenko, 'Confesser l'Union: les professions de foi des évêques ruthènes des XVI^e–XVII^e siècles', *ibid.*, pp. 207–34. For an example of how confessions of faith spread in the East among Catholics and (Oriental) Orthodox, see Anna Ohanjanyan, 'Creedal Controversies among Armenians in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 27 (2020), 7–69.

²⁶ ADDF, SO, St. St., QQ 2 i, fasc. III, fol. 14r ('Graeci ordinati ab Episcopis suspectis de Schismate tenentur Fidei Professionem emittere in S. Officio. 1619').

²⁷ ADDF, SO, St. St., QQ 2 a, fasc. II, fol. 44r (Rabban Adam); fasc. LVI, fols 18r–22r, 63r–70v (Elias VII). Among the documents in this rich dossier are the originals

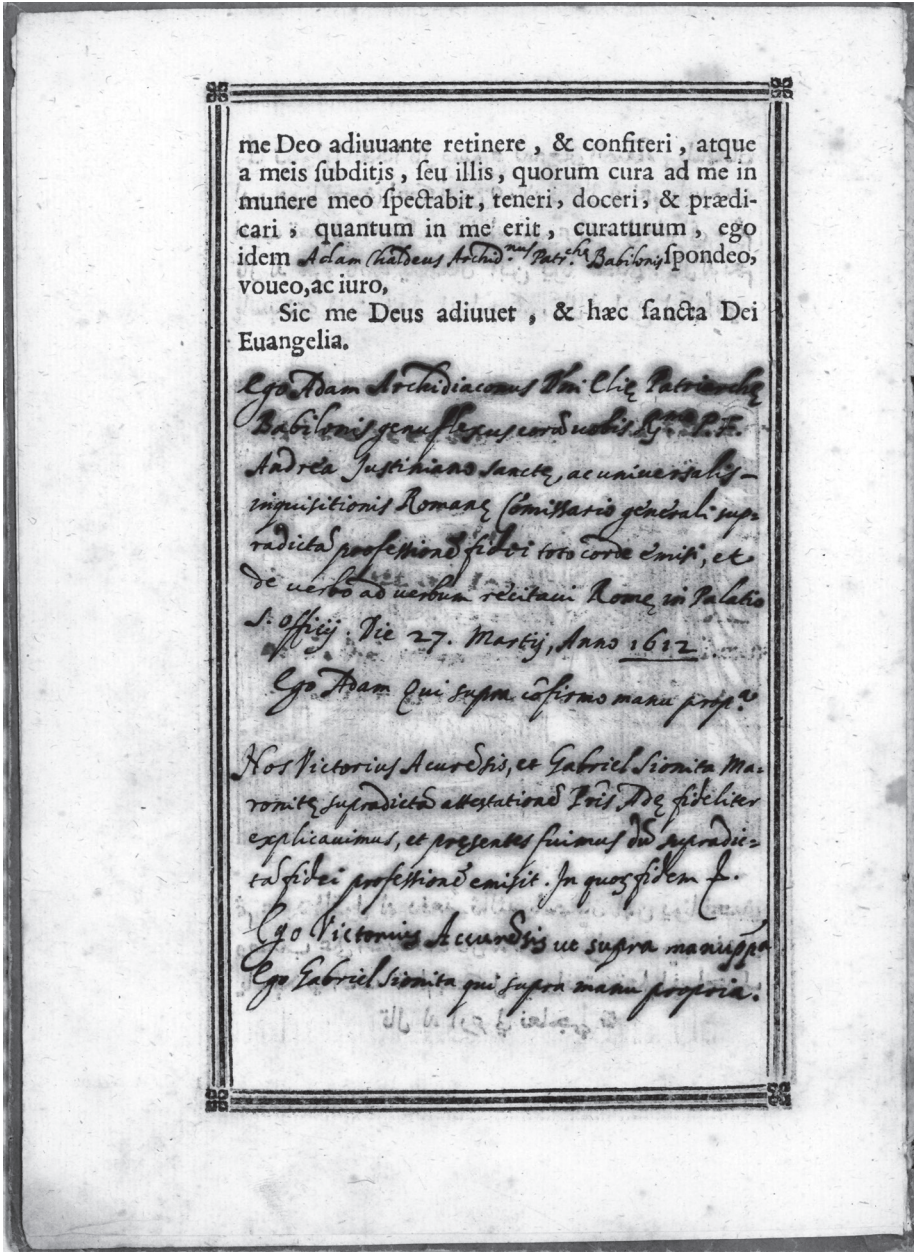


Fig. 2.2. Final pages from the printed booklet *Breuis Orthodoxae fidei professio, qua ex praescripto Sanctae Sedis Apostolicae ab Orientalibus ad Sacrosanctae Ecclesiae unitatem uenientibus facienda proponitur iussu Sanctissimi Domini Nostri D. Clementis Papae VIII. Excussum Romae in Typographia Medicea Anno a Natiuitate domini M.D.XCV.* This form was used on 27 March 1612 for the profession of faith of the East Syrian monk Adam, sent as a delegate by Patriarch Elias VII. On the left page, the blank

figures include one written in Arabic by the Melkite Patriarch Macarius III ibn al-Za‘im, and another in Latin (accompanied by original seals) signed by Andreas Akhijan, the first Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church (1665). Both were deemed acceptable, but the Holy Office consultants took care to specify that the missionaries would still have to convince the two prelates to also sign the standard formula, established during the pontificate of Urban VIII and later translated in several oriental languages: a Greek version was published in 1634, an Armenian one in 1642, while the Arabic, Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac script) and Slavonic texts appeared in 1648. According to the Holy Office, the formula approved by Rome was necessary because it contained ‘the rejection of the Eastern heresies and other things necessary for those regions’ – in other words, the profession of faith *included* the abjuration, albeit without the legal formalities with which the latter was usually celebrated in inquisitorial courts.²⁸

According to Cardinal Francesco Albizzi, former Assessor of the Holy Office, it was under Pope Alexander VII that the procedure for admitting Eastern Christians to communion with Rome was further refined. In his important work *De inconstantia in iure admittenda vel non* (1683), discussing the status of ‘schismatics’, Albizzi almost incidentally recalled that ‘Eastern

of which Pietro Strozzi published a Latin translation in 1617: Pietro Strozzi, *De dogmatibus Chaldaeorum disputatio* (Rome, 1617), pp. 4–18; other Latin translations of documents of which the Holy Office contains the original Syriac text have been published by Giamil, *Genuinae relationes*, based on material preserved in the Vatican archives. On relations between Rome and the Chaldean Church, see in general Giuseppe Beltrami, *La Chiesa Caldea nel secolo dell’Unione* (Rome, 1933); Heleen Murre van den Berg, *Scribes and Scriptures: The Church of the East in the Eastern Ottoman Provinces (1500–1850)* (Leuven, 2015).

²⁸ ADDF, SO, St. St., QQ 2 a, fasc. XXV, fols 242r, 245v, 248v. See also José M. Floristán, ‘Profesión de fe de Cosme Maurudes, obispo de Citio (Chipre) [1674]’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 72 (2006), 349–81; Girard, ‘Comment reconnaître un chrétien d’Orient’, pp. 247–51; Silvano Giordano, ‘La *Professio Orthodoxae Fidei ab Orientalibus facienda* elaborata da Urbano VIII’, in Nicolae Bocşan *et al.* (eds), *Confessional Identities in Central-Oriental Europe in the 17th–21th centuries* (Cluj, 2009), p. 95–111. On the value of the different formulae, see also what Pope Benedict XIV wrote: *Benedicti XIV Papae Opera inedita*, ed. Franz Heiner (Freiburg of Brisgovia, 1904), pp. 55–9. In the records of professions of faith made before the Holy Office (see below) it appears that different formulae were used with schismatics and with Eastern Christians who were already Catholic, but this point requires further study. I must add that in the volume that collects the spontaneous appearances and abjurations of Protestants before the Roman Holy Office in the years 1839–43, there are some cases in which the pre-printed abjuration form was also used for ‘schismatic Greeks’ (with the appropriate corrections): ADDF, SO, St. St., M 4 m, unpagued.

Christians are received [into Catholic communion] with the profession of faith alone, according to the formulae prescribed by the Supreme Pontiffs Clement VIII and Urban VIII; nor have I ever seen any of them, though denounced, being punished by the Holy Office'. However, he added, these converts still had to be absolved from the excommunication and censures they had automatically incurred as a result of their schismatic status. We know that the Eastern clergy also required absolution from any canonical irregularities that had arisen from receiving sacred orders without the authorization of the Holy See; without it, they could not lawfully exercise their ministry, as it had been clearly stated in Clement VIII's Instruction for the Italo-Greeks.²⁹ For his part, Albizzi referred to an inquisitorial decree of 7 October 1655 on the question of the reconciliation of schismatics.³⁰ On that day, in fact, the pope had to ratify the decisions of the Holy Office in a specific case concerning a certain Benedict, Greek Archbishop of Seleucia, who had been arrested by the Inquisition more than a year earlier. Initially armed with a letter of recommendation signed by sixteen Orthodox metropolitans and ratified by the patriarchal seal of Constantinople authorizing him to beg money in Europe to ransom his relatives (who had apparently fallen prisoner to pirates

²⁹ *Perbrevis Instructio super aliquibus ritibus Graecorum ad RR. PP. DD. Episcopos Latinos, in quorum civitatibus vel dioecibus Greci vel Albanenses Graeco ritu viventes degunt* (Rome, 1596), p. 5 ('Circa Sacramentum Ordinis'). It should be noted that this text provided that 'ordinati ab Episcopis Schismaticis, correcti, vel emendati reconciliandi sunt, et absolventi, cum poenitentiis salutaribus, dummodo errores, vel saltem schisma ordinatoris, abiurent in iudicio, vel publice, vel secreto pro qualitate facti'.

³⁰ Francesco Albizzi, *De inconstantia in iure admittenda, vel non* (Amsterdam, 1683), ch. X, § 24: 'hodie, exceptis Orientalibus, nulli fere inveniuntur Schismatici, qui in Sancto Officio compareant, ideo Orientales recipiuntur sola fidei professione emissa, iuxta formulas a Summis Pontificibus Clemente VIII et Urbano VIII praescriptas: nec vidi ullum unquam ex his quamvis denunciatum, et praesertim in Sancto Officio puniri... Sed quia irrepserat abusus ut Orientales Schismatici facta fidei professione dimitterentur, absque absolutione ab excommunicatione, fuit resolutum sub die 7 Octobris 1655 coram s. mem. Alexandro VII ut omnino absolventur a praedicta excommunicatione, et cum illis super quacumque irregularitate dispensaretur...'. In an earlier writing composed to refute Paolo Sarpi on the prosecution of the Greeks of Venice by the Inquisition, Albizzi seems to argue a different thesis, emphasizing that those who contradict the points of the Union of Florence are always chastised by the Holy Office: 'Non s'ammettono i Greci che dimorono in Sicilia, e nel Regno di Napoli, all'essercitio de loro Ordini o de loro riti, se prima non s'uniscono con la Sedia Apostolica, per mezzo della professione della fede stabilita e da Gregorio XIII e da Urbano VIII abiurando lo scisma, e l'heresie'. This sentence, however, could be understood as considering the profession of faith as equivalent to abjuration. Cf. Lavenia, 'Quasi haereticus'.

while fleeing from Crete in the context of the Candian War), Benedict had come to Rome in the summer of 1653 with the hope of filling the vacant post of ‘ordaining bishop’ in the church of the Greek College. In the eternal city, however, he had become the subject of a series of complaints from fellow countrymen, concerning promised and unpaid salaries, but also accusations that he had not been sincere in his profession of Catholic faith. On 7 October 1655, the pope examined the acts of his trial and decided that, ‘according to the style of this Holy Tribunal’, Greek Orthodox who converted to the Catholic faith were not required to formally abjure, but rather to make a profession of faith using the formula devised by Urban VIII; however, as Benedict was strongly suspected of having persisted in the errors of the Greeks even after his profession, and also of having adhered to Calvinist doctrines during a stay in Germany, he was condemned to abjure *de vehementi* and to be held in the prisons of the Holy Office, where he eventually died.³¹

In the following years, the issue ended up also affecting another Eastern Christian community. In 1689, a dispute arose between the Inquisitor of Pisa Cesare Pallavicino and the Armenian missionary Tommaso Israelita over the

³¹ ADDF, SO, *Decreta* 1654, fol. 62v, 71v, 78r, 169v; *Decreta* 1655, fols 140r, 141v (‘Sanctissimus auditis votis quoad schisma, ac haereses, aliosque errores, quibus Graeci schismatici solent esse infecti, et dictus Archiepiscopus ante emissam hic in Urbe professionem erat infectus, censuit attono stylo huius Supremi Tribunalis non teneri abiurare, cum fecerit fidei professionem iuxta formam praescriptam a S. Mem. Urbano VIII’), 175r. Forty years later, the concept was reiterated in a response to Propaganda: ‘Nel 1693 si trattò in questo S.O. la questione: “Se i Vescovi Scismatici oltre alla professione della fede debbano abiurare lo scisma, e gli errori dei Greci” e gli E.mi Inquisitori Gen.li nella Feria IV 25 Aprile 1696 decretarono tanto per i Vescovi quanto per altri: iuxta inventa in Actis S.O. sufficit professio Fidei in manibus delegati (cum absolute a schismate aliisque erroribus) per S. Congreg. S.O. et SS.mus annuit.’ (ADDF, M.D. 1879, n° 2, ‘Relazione...del P.M.F. Enrico Ferrari’, pp. 10–11). On ‘Benedictus Hierosolymitanus Archiepiscopus Seleucia’ see also the documents in Vatican City, Archivio Storico della Congregazione de Propaganda Fide (APF), *Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali* (SOCG), vol. 22, fol. 173r; *Acta*, vol. 22, fol. 118r (13 October 1653, § VII) and Peter Schmidt, ‘De Sancto Officio Urbis. Aspekte der Verflechtung des Heiligen Offiziums mit der Stadt Rom im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert’, *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 82 (2002), 404–89, at pp. 439–40. The 1653 ‘letter of recommendation’ is still preserved, together with another parchment signed by Patriarch Paisios of Constantinople, in the ADDF. The two documents were published by Luca Pieralli, ‘Benedetto, metropolita di Seleucia negli anni della guerra di Candia’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 66 (2000), 394–418; see also Vera G. Tchentsova, ‘Le clergé grec entre Rome et Moscou au XVII^e siècle au prisme des archives italiennes et russes’, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique moderne et contemporain*, 8 (2023), 217–61.

treatment of Armenian merchants arriving in Livorno. After some hesitation, the Congregation decided that in order to avoid scandal in the Armenian community, it was not necessary to receive the ‘schismatics’ before the local tribunal of the Holy Office for a public and formal abjuration (as the inquisitor demanded), but that a simple profession of faith in the hands of the missionary (albeit in the presence of a notary and witnesses), immediately followed by absolution, would be sufficient.³²

As an increasing number of Eastern Christians travelled to Rome seeking absolution or dispensations, or simply for devotion and pilgrimage, by the mid-seventeenth century a series of special registers were prepared to keep track of their professions of faith before the Roman Holy Office.³³ These volumes are a mine of information, since they contain the biographical details (name, patronymic, age, place of birth, profession or status) and often the personal signature in various oriental languages of more than 3,000 people over an almost uninterrupted period of 150 years (1655–1807). On the basis of this documentation, I am building up a prosopographical database of Eastern Christians who appeared before the Inquisition. This systematic filing provides fascinating insights into the communities most influenced by Catholic missions, the annual influx of Eastern Christians to Rome, peak periods of arrival, and the primary departure points in the Levant. Moreover, the cataloguing of their original subscriptions makes it possible to obtain textual samples that may also be of interest to Orientalists, especially when searching for dialectal varieties and oral usages that clearly differ from the classical or ecclesiastical language in which the professions of faith were written.³⁴

³² In previous years, there had been much discussion in the Roman Holy Office as to whether the Armenians in Livorno could abjure secretly in the hands of the local missionary without appearing before the inquisitor: see ADDE, SO, St. St., QQ 3 a, fasc. V–VIII, especially fols 571r–595v (592rv, 25 May 1689).

³³ ADDE, SO, St. St., P 4 e (*Professiones Fidei annorum 1655 ad 1714. Pro Armenis. Jo. Lupus S. Rom. [Inq.] Notarius*, actually covering only the years 1655–73); RR 3 d (Eastern Christians’ professions of faith for the years 1675–1710); RR 3 a (*Professiones fidei ab 1715 ad 1732*); RR 3 b (*Professiones fidei Orientalium ab anno 1733 usque ad annum 1750*); RR 3 c (*Professiones fidei Orientalium ab anno 1751 usque ad 1807*). Some additional professions can be found scattered in other volumes (e.g. RR 3 e, QQ 2 i); for the period before 1655, in addition to the documents kept at Trinity College (e.g. TCD, MSS 1233 and 1242), the ‘libri extensorum’ can be used (L 3 a; Q 1 a–l).

³⁴ For additional information and some general remarks based on a first sample of 700 entries over the period 1655–1705, see Cesare Santus, ‘Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-collectors and “Refugees” in Early Modern Rome’, in Emily Michelson, Matthew Coneys Wainwright (eds), *A Companion to Religious*

The process of reception and confessional control described above could only take place thanks to the mediation of interpreters who questioned *sponte comparentes* about their origins and confessional affiliation and confirmed that they truly understood the meaning of the profession of faith. The interpreters themselves came from various backgrounds. Some were students of the Pontifical Colleges in Rome, while others were Eastern prelates or even lay individuals who had sought refuge from the confessional troubles of the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to a combination of linguistic skill and ecclesiastical patronage, many of them succeeded in being employed by the Holy Office, which regularly made use of their services. This phenomenon became particularly prominent in the eighteenth century, but the need for such individuals was recognized much earlier. As early as 1575, Giovanni Domenico Traiani emphasized the necessity of interpreters when advocating for the establishment of a Greek college in Rome.³⁵ Two decades later, the Armenian Giacomo Schender (or Scander) from Diyarbakir was officially appointed as *familiarem et domesticum Sancti Officii*, with all the privileges that entailed, for the ‘many and diverse services you have rendered for a long time, especially in interpreting the spontaneous appearances of Armenians, whose language is unknown to us’.³⁶ The role of these Eastern employees of the Roman Curia became

Minorities in Early Modern Rome (Leiden, 2021), pp. 237–71, as well as the map of places of provenance published in Virginie Baby-Collin, Stéphane Mourlane, and Sophie Bouffier (eds), *Atlas des migrations en Méditerranée. De l’Antiquité à nos jours* (Arles, 2021), Fig. 10.3.2.

³⁵ Giovanni Domenico Traiani, *Breve discorso sopra l’aiuto spirituale et riduzione di Grecia, 1575*, memorial addressed to the Congregation of the Greeks, edited by Peri, ‘La Congregazione dei Greci (1573)’, p. 208: ‘D’avantaggio è accaduto in Roma qualche volta venire Janizzari o rinegati per riconciliarsi, o Greci per confessarsi o pigliare il Giubileo o indulgenze, o dimandare li Albanesi vescovi, né vi si trovar persone idonee per tali vescovati, o chi caticezzasse, addottrinasse, confessasse o servisse per buono inteprete nell’Inquisitione, o dasse ad intendere l’indulgenze o Giubileo. Tal che si può dire quel che scrive un padre de nostri da Candia a simile proposito: *Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis. Et pur Roma caput est et magistra veritatis et gentium*’.

³⁶ ADDE, SO, St. St., L 3 a, fol. 1129rv, ‘*Litterae familiaritatis S.ti Officii pro Iacobo q. Schender de Mesopotamia*’, 31 May 1595 (‘Considerantes quod tu, Iacobus quondam Schender de Mesopotamia, in Armenia maiori, Urbis incola, multa et diversa servitutis dicto Sancto Officio diu praestitisti et adhuc impendis obsequia, praesertim in interpretandis, et explicandis orientalium, et illarum Armeniae maioris partium hominum ad hoc S. Officium sponte comparentium dictis, et confessionibus, quorum loquela nobis obscura, et incognita est... Iacobum praedictum ex nunc in Familiarem et domesticum dicti S. Officii tenore praesentium recipimus gratiose, coeterorumque familiarium dicti Sancti Officii domesticorum numero, et consortio

1034

Sacerdos fami lantatis s. officij pro Jacobo g. Schender de Mesopotamia dell'impotemia

Frater Albertus Tragagliolo de Florentiolo ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum
 sacre Theologie Magister officij sancte Romane et Universitatis
 Inquisitionis Commissarius generalis. Vnicuique, et singulis
 presentes nras vras inspecturis, et auditis salutem, et bene-
 ram in Dno caritatem. Considerantes quod Jacobus
 quondam Schender de Mesopotamia, in Armenia nra, dicit
 multa, et diuersa seruitutis dicto sancto officio diei
 presbiterij et ad huc impendit obsequia presertim in interpretan-
 di, et explicandis dictis, et confessionibus orientalium, et illarum
 Armeniarum, partium omnium ad hoc s. officium sponte con-
 parentium dictis, et confessionibus, quoniam loquela vobis
 penitus obuia, et incognita est. Ideo predictus
 meritum ~~bonum~~ intuitu, ac repute specialis secreti
 Honorum et Honorum omnium sancte Romane ecclesie
 Cardinalium in vniuersa Republica christiana generalium
 Inquisitionum eodie in generali congregatione dicti
 sancti officij de prelo salutis, et benevolentiam,
 qua personam euidem Jacobo, dictum sanctum offi-
 cium prosequitur per operis affectum sentiat, et
 cognoscat, et inquam Jacobum ^{cum} in familiaribus
 et domesticum dicti s. officij tenore sententiam reci-
 pinus gratiose, coeternisq; familiarium dicti s.
 officij domesticorum numeris, et consortio fauorabiliter
 ascribimus, et aggregamus: Volentes et deinceps
 quibuscuq; privilegij, honoribus, immunitatibus,
 libertatibus, exemptionibus, gratijs, favoribus, com-
 ditatibus, et prerogatiuis, quibus ceteri familiares

4129

Fig 2.4. Concession to the Armenian interpreter 'Iacobo Schender de Mesopotamia' of the status of 'familiar of the Holy Office', with related privileges. The document is signed by Friar Alberto Tragagliolo, Commissioner General of the Holy Office, 31 May 1595. ACDF, SO, St. St., L 3 a, fol. 1129r. © Archivio del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede.

increasingly important in the early modern period, as they were essential in enabling Rome to control the circulation of people and information with the Middle East. To this day, however, we know very little about them. As elsewhere, only a thorough and systematic search of the Inquisition's archives will shed new light on this question.³⁷

Reassessing the Role of Eastern Christianity in Early Modern Catholicism

Having presented some of the inquisitorial documentation about Eastern Christianity, I would like to conclude by briefly discussing why it should be of interest and what new avenues of research might be pursued. First of all, I believe that studying the inquisitorial attitude towards Eastern Christians exposes many of the contradictions and ambiguities of early modern Catholicism. Earlier I noted that the Catholic apostolate in the East had the effect of inundating the Roman Congregations with problematic questions, ranging from highly specific cases of conscience to questions of a more general nature. Initially, the papacy embraced this phenomenon, positioning itself as

favorabiliter ascribimus, et aggregamus'). For an example of his role as an interpreter in a profession of faith, see BAV, MS Arm. 13, fol. 30r. On the Inquisition's *familiares*, see Dennj Solera, «Sotto l'ombra della patente del Santo Officio». *I familiares dell'Inquisizione romana tra XVI e XVII secolo* (Florence, 2019). Greek interpreters at the service of the Inquisition are evoked by Schmidt, 'De Sancto Officio Urbis', 459–60; according to Thomas Mayer, the notary of the Roman Holy Office between 1624 and 1654, Giovanni Antonio Tommasi, was an 'Italo-Greek' from the diocese of Otranto, but according to Schwedt's prosopography he is more likely to have been Roman: Thomas F. Mayer, *The Roman Inquisition: A Papal Bureaucracy and Its Laws in the Age of Galileo* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), p. 29; Herman H. Schwedt, *Die Römische Inquisition. Kardinäle und konsultoren 1601 bis 1700* (Freiburg, 2017), pp. 591–2.

³⁷ See Cesare Santus, 'The Roman Curia and the Eastern Churches, 1500–1800: Diplomacy, Cultural Policy, Mission, and Confessional Control', in Donald Prudlo (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Roman Curia* (Leiden, 2025), pp. 284–301, and *idem*, 'Giuseppe Simonio Assemani consultore del Sant'Uffizio', in Željko Paša (ed.), *Actes du congrès "L'Orient chrétien dans l'Occident latin". 300e anniversaire de la Bibliotheca Orientalis d'Assémani (1719–2019)*, monographic issue of *Parole de l'Orient* 47 (2021), 175–90. More generally, Thomas Glesener has recently provided an excellent example of how princely courts (in this case, the Spanish Monarchy) could employ the linguistic expertise of Eastern Christians for administrative and even policing tasks: 'Gouverner la langue arabe. Miguel Casiri et les arabisants du roi d'Espagne au siècle des Lumières', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 76:2 (2021), 227–67.

the sole authority capable of rectifying the perceived ‘errors’ and ‘abuses’ of the Christian East. However, as time passed, this became increasingly difficult, unveiling a host of irresolvable topics that jeopardized Roman certainties.

One illustrative example is the question of how to reconcile opposing views about the authority and jurisdiction of Eastern bishops. Some consultants of the Inquisition believed that such prelates had lost their jurisdictional power due to their status as schismatics and heretics. Conversely, there were others, including the renowned Cardinal Albizzi, who argued for the full maintenance of both the power of order and the power of jurisdiction within the Eastern hierarchies, ‘*quia Schismatici Orientales sunt ab Ecclesia tolerati*’. The majority position held that ‘schismatic’ Eastern bishops were validly ordained but could not legitimately exercise their powers. However, the intricacy of the problem was such that Pope Clement XI refrained from making a definitive decision, leaving the question unresolved for centuries.³⁸ As Christian Windler astutely observes, the Inquisition frequently employed ‘practices of non-decision’ (*Praktiken des Nichtentscheids*), not only in situations involving theoretical questions that were challenging to resolve, but also in cases where a theoretically correct solution would be hard to implement or might undermine the reputation and authority of the Holy See as a teacher and guardian of truth.³⁹

The Christian East was perceived as a problem by some Catholics because it presented an ecclesiological, liturgical, disciplinary, and in some cases even theological model that differed from that of the Roman Church, especially after its Tridentine codification. This difference, however, could not simply be condemned or ignored, for two reasons. Firstly, Eastern peculiarities were based on the preservation and transmission of an ancient heritage, the value of which was recognized even by Rome. In presenting itself as the legitimate successor of the early Apostolic Church, Rome emphasized the commonalities it shared with Eastern churches as a means to distinguish itself from Protestant ‘innovations’.⁴⁰ Secondly, the existence of a certain plurality was part of the

³⁸ See the discussion in Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie. Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)* (Rome, 2019), pp. 177–80.

³⁹ Christian Windler, *Missionare in Persien. Kulturelle Diversität und Normenkonkurrenz im globalen Katholizismus (17.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Cologne, 2018), pp. 607–25.

⁴⁰ Antoine Arnauld, Pierre Nicole, *La perpétuité de la foy de l’église catholique touchant l’eucharistie* (3 vols, Paris, 1669). See Alastair Hamilton, ‘From East to West: Jansenists, Orientalists, and the Eucharistic Controversy’, in Willemien Otten *et al.* (eds), *How the West was Won: Essays on Literary Imagination, the Canon, and the Christian Middle Ages for Burcht Pranger* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 83–100; Cornel

universalist ambitions of Catholicism. Embracing the plurality of Eastern traditions allowed the Church to demonstrate the richness and breadth of its global membership, as well as its ability to unite diverse communities under a shared faith.⁴¹

However, this necessary coexistence of uniformity (in adherence to Tridentine principles and obedience to Rome) and pluralism (in the existence of different ways of being ‘Catholic’) inevitably led to some short-circuits. One such example was the contradiction between the recognition of multiple legitimate ‘rites’ within the Catholic Church, which the Holy See encouraged Eastern Christian converts to preserve, and the specification that the Latin rite was to be regarded as superior and ‘safer’ (*tutior*) than all others. This claim, periodically reaffirmed by the Holy Office and papacy, notably by Pope Benedict XIV, stemmed from the Latin rite’s status as the particular rite of the Church of Rome.⁴² The disputes on this point between the Eastern Catholics, who stressed the need to preserve their tradition, and some European missionaries, who were concerned about the orthodoxy of these rites and advocated for

Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns: The French and British in the Mediterranean, 1650–1750* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 124–34; Margarita Voulgaropoulou, ‘Orthodox Confession-Building and the Greek Church between Protestantism and Catholicism: The Mission of Marquis Nointel to the Levant (1670–1673)’, in Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds), *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries* (Piscataway, NJ, 2022), pp. 521–62.

⁴¹ Gigliola Fragnito and Alain Tallon (eds), *Hétérodoxies croisées: catholicismes pluriels entre France et Italie, XVI^e–XVII^e siècles* (Rome, 2015); Simon Ditchfield, ‘Decentering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101:1 (2010), 186–208; Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Europe, 1592–1648: Centre and Peripheries* (Oxford, 2015). On polycentricity and diversity within early modern Catholicism, see now Andreea Badea, Bruno Boute, and Birgit Emich (eds), *Pathways through Early Modern Christianities* (Cologne, 2023), especially the chapters by Birgit Emich and Christian Windler (who promotes the concept of ‘composite Catholicism’).

⁴² It is enough to compare these statements taken from the same bull of Benedict XIV: ‘Non modo opus non esse, ad Orientales et Graecos in viam unitatis revocandos, ut laedantur ipsorum Ritus, aut corrumpantur; quandoquidem id semper alienum fuit ab instituto Sedis Apostolicae’; ‘Cum Latinus ritus is sit, quo utitur Sancta Romana Ecclesia, quae mater est et magistra aliarum Ecclesiarum, reliquis omnibus ritibus praeferrere debet’ (*Allatae Sunt*, 1755). The concept of *praestantia ritus latini* had already been evoked in *Etsi pastoralis*, 1742: ‘Ritus enim Latinus propter suam *praestantiam*, eo quod sit ritus Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae omnium ecclesiarum matris et magistrae, sic supra Graecum ritum *praevalet*...’ (my emphasis). See Natale Loda, ‘Dal ritus alla Chiesa *sui iuris*: Storia e problemi aperti (I parte)’, *Ephemerides Iuris Canonici*, 52 (2012), 173–210, at p. 186.

their Latinization, ultimately exposed another, greater contradiction – that of an authority that defined itself as both local and universal. The Roman Pontiff embodied the particular tradition of the Latin Church while simultaneously serving as the shepherd and regulator of all Christian believers. Not just one body and two souls, as Paolo Prodi famously put it, but at least three souls: Sovereign of the Papal States, Bishop of Rome and Patriarch of the West, and Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic, that is, universal Church.⁴³

The tension between local and universal authority became an increasingly pressing issue, not least because the growth of the Eastern Catholic Churches coincided with a time of increasing centralism in the assertion of papal power.⁴⁴ Problems were not resolved by the turning point of the Second Vatican Council either: when in 1965 Pope Paul VI decided to create the Melkite, Maronite and Coptic Catholic Patriarchs Cardinals, in order to overcome their resistance, he ensured that they did not receive a title linked to a suburbicarian diocese. While the Sacred College thus seemed to have lost its ‘Roman’ origins for good, the question of their ecclesiastical rank in a hierarchy originally conceived as Latin remained open. Patriarch Maximus IV Sayegh obtained that the Eastern Patriarchs kept separate seats at the Council sessions, without mingling with the Cardinals, so as not to give the impression that the granting

⁴³ Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls. The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987; or. ed. *Il sovrano pontefice*, 1982). The title ‘Patriarch of the West’ was adopted for the first time in 642 and was officially renounced by the Papacy in 2006 as ‘outdated’ and ‘unclear’ (Pontifical Council for the Commission of Christian Unity, *Press release regarding the suppression of the title ‘Patriarch of the West’ in the Annuario Pontificio’ 2006*). In 2024, the title was reintroduced in the Pontifical Yearbook: the choice was explained by linking it to Pope Francis’ emphasis ‘on the importance of synodality and ecumenical concern, which urges us to keep looking back to the first centuries of Christianity, when there were still no dogmatic disagreements between the churches’ (Nikos Tzoidis, *Agenzia Fides*, 11 April 2024).

⁴⁴ During the First Vatican Council it was sanctioned that ‘the Roman Church possesses a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other church, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman pontiff is both episcopal and immediate. Both clergy and faithful, *of whatever rite and dignity*, both singly and collectively, are bound to submit to this power by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience not only in matters concerning faith and morals, but also in those which regard the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world’. See *Pastor Aeternus*, 1870, chapter III, in Norman P. Tanner, Giuseppe Alberigo, *et al.* (eds), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London, Washington DC, 1990). See for example the conflicts that arose within the Armenian Catholic Church under the papacy of Pius IX and the patriarchate of Andon Hassoun (Anton Hasunean): Salim Dermarkar, *Arméniens et catholiques, de l’émancipation au schisme: une identité contrariée au temps de l’éveil des nationalités* (Paris, 2022).

of the cardinalate was seen as a 'promotion'; but failed to get the Eastern Patriarchs to take precedence over the other Cardinal Bishops.⁴⁵

Let me return to the specific role of the Holy Office. The records of the Roman Inquisition, by their very nature, present the scholar with a perspective in which the Christian East is an integral part of early modern global Catholicism. The consultants of the Holy Office, responsible for offering expert opinions on complex matters, often drew upon analogies from diverse contexts to address uncertain questions. In the compilation of decrees that constitute inquisitorial jurisprudence, there is no distinction based on geographical context or chronology. The volumes in the ADDF are organized thematically rather than according to a geographical criterion, distinguishing them from the records of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*). As a result, both the staff of the Holy Office at the time and contemporary historians working with its documentation are confronted with intriguing connections. The problems of mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants are compared with those of Catholics and Orthodox, while reflections on the legitimacy of an Eastern convert continuing to participate in the liturgies of his Church of origin are juxtaposed with questions of whether a Chinese or Indian neophyte could continue to practise the rites in honour of Confucius or bear the marks of caste distinction. As I have argued elsewhere, I believe as such that it is necessary to promote a comprehensive view that takes into account the interconnections between the various missionary controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even to go further than that.⁴⁶

Another significant point is that the consultants at the Holy Office who dealt with Oriental matters also examined European theological disputes such as Quietism or Jansenism, which demonstrates the overlapping concerns and

⁴⁵ 'Déplacer les trois nouveaux Patriarches-Cardinaux [...] pour les mettre parmi les Cardinaux, c'est marquer sensiblement que le Cardinalat a été pour eux une élévation de rang, une promotion [...] Devant le monde catholique et surtout devant les observateurs orthodoxes, il faut maintenir la tradition antique qui veut qu'après le Primat de Pierre et de ses successeurs le patriarcat continue de représenter un sommet dans l'Église [...] mettre les Patriarches parmi les Cardinaux, dans les réunions solennelles du Concile, risque d'être interprété comme un absorption du patriarcat par le cardinalat. Et il faut à tout prix éviter de donner cette impression' (Letter to Pericle Felici, 7 May 1965, quoted in Piero Doria, *Il contributo del patriarca Maximos IV Saigh e della Chiesa greco-melchita al Concilio Vaticano II* (Todi, 2023), pp. 53–65: 65). See Paul VI's *motu proprio Ad purpuratorum patrum collegium* (11 February 1965).

⁴⁶ See Cesare Santus, 'L'adoration de Naaman. Pour une histoire croisée des querelles des rites', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 116:3–4 (2021), 804–30; *idem*, 'Les papiers des consultants'.

engagements of the Holy Office when addressing theological and ecclesiastical issues across different regions and contexts. While the role of Eastern Christianity in the seventeenth-century polemical disputes between Protestants and Catholics is relatively well known, there is still much to explore regarding the later correspondence of Armenians and Melkites with Italian Jansenists, their interactions with French Gallican circles, and the development of an Eastern Catholic ‘antiromanism’. These areas of study hold great potential for shedding light on the evolving dynamics of Eastern Christianity within broader theological and ecclesiastical debates.⁴⁷

However, the most promising and innovative lines of research should focus not only on the influence of European Catholicism on Eastern Christianity but also on the reverse flow, while seeking to understand why the challenges posed by the existence of Eastern Catholicism have been marginalized in both ecclesiastical and scholarly debates. From this perspective, studying the Inquisition’s attitude towards the Christian East allows for the inclusion of the latter in a truly interconnected history of early modern Catholicism.

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⁴⁷ Ernesto Codignola, *Carteggi di giansenisti liguri* (Florence, 1941–2), vol. 3, passim; Francesca Piselli, ‘Giansenisti’, *ebrei e ‘giacobini’ a Siena. Dall’Accademia ecclesiastica all’Impero napoleonico (1780–1814)* (Florence, 2007), pp. 32–43; Aurélien Girard, ‘Le jansénisme et le gallicanisme sont-ils des « articles d’exportation » ? Jalons pour une recherche sur le parcours et la doctrine de Ġirmānūs Ādam, archevêque grec-catholique d’Alep au tournant des XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles’, in Véronique Beaulande-Barraud and Benoît Roux (eds), *Église, Mémoire(s), Éducation, Mélanges offerts à Jean-François Boulanger* (Rennes, 2014), pp. 135–54; Mariam Kartashyan, ‘Ultramontane Efforts in the Ottoman Empire during the 1860s and 1870s’, *Studies in Church History*, 54 (2018), 345–58; Dermakar, *Arméniens et catholiques*. On the Holy Office’s fears of the spread of Jansenism in Asia, see also Paolo Aranha, ‘L’Inquisizione Romana e l’Asia nella prima età moderna’, in Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche, *L’Inquisizione Romana: Nuove ricerche, nuove prospettive* (Rome, forthcoming).

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