

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Geographical mobility and community-building in seventeenth-century Palestine: insights from the records of Bethlehem's Catholic Parish<sup>†</sup>

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## Abstract

This article focuses on the role played by local mobility in processes of confession and community building, taking the Catholic population in seventeenth-century Palestine as a case study. Works on the Reformation in Europe have acknowledged a connection between the strengthening of confessional identities and geographical mobility. Through the analysis of the parish records of Bethlehem, the article reveals some characteristics of seventeenth-century Catholic mobility in Palestine and shows how this mobility was bound up with the consolidation of a tiny Catholic minority and the establishment of a sacramental network. From a larger perspective, this research suggests that mobility plays an important role in the development and consolidation of small communities in a context of competing religion. From a methodological point of view, it also shows the importance of microanalysis in understanding the geographical mobility associated with religious practices and allegiances.

## 1. Introduction

In the year 1646, in Nazareth, a girl named Barbara married a Catholic man from Bethlehem, Joseph, also known as ‘the doctor’s son’.<sup>1</sup> Barbara was the daughter of the dragoman (i.e. interpreter and gatekeeper) of the local Franciscan convent, Benjamin alias Gemini.<sup>2</sup> Like her father Barbara was a member of the Syrian Maronite Church, an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with Rome. After the wedding, Barbara left Nazareth and moved to Bethlehem – a distance of some hundred and twenty kilometres – with her husband. A few years later, in 1652, the names of Barbara and Joseph reappear in the Franciscans’ sacramental registers on the occasion of the baptism of their daughter Helena. The baptism took

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<sup>†</sup>This research has been funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions, Grant Agreement: 657118. I would like to thank Bernard Heyberger, Beat Kümin and Richard Smith for their helpful comments and encouragement, and the anonymous referees for their suggestions. A special thanks to Julie Marfany for her thorough work and suggestions.

place in Jerusalem, although, according to the record, the couple was still living in Bethlehem.<sup>3</sup>

The movements of this young couple may appear unremarkable to a historian of early modern Europe, a context in which people's short-distance mobility has been amply studied.<sup>4</sup> When seen in the context of current research on Christian migration in the Ottoman Middle East, however, this story turns into an important example of forms of mobility, such as marriage migration and movements between villages, that have so far been scarcely explored. Drawing on the reconstruction of stories like Joseph and Barbara's, this article addresses these forms of local mobility and discusses their role in processes of confession and community building in seventeenth-century Ottoman Palestine.

In the seventeenth century, Palestine and the whole Middle East were predominantly Muslim. The spread of Islam in the area had begun in the seventh century, with the Arab conquest and the defeat of the Byzantines. The life of those Jews, Samaritans and Christians who had resisted the spread of Islam was regulated by the *dhimma* system.<sup>5</sup> Under this system, these groups enjoyed a certain freedom of religion, provided that they paid the poll tax and acknowledged the superiority of Islam. Until the sixteenth century, Christians were mostly members of either the Eastern Churches or the Greek Orthodox one, and the only Catholics in the area were foreign merchants. The situation changed with the outbreak of the Reformation in Europe, which pushed the Catholic Church to gain new ground in the Levant. During the last decades of the sixteenth century, missionaries embarked toward Ottoman lands with the aim of encouraging local Christians' communion with Rome.<sup>6</sup> In Palestine, Catholicism spread among the local Christian population mainly thanks to the efforts of the Franciscans of the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae* (The Custody of the Holy Land), discussed below.<sup>7</sup> This was the name by which the Franciscan Province of the Holy Land was known for centuries.<sup>8</sup> It had been founded by St. Francis in 1217 with the aim of guarding the Holy Sites and providing spiritual assistance to Catholic pilgrims and merchants residing in the area.<sup>9</sup> From the last decades of the sixteenth century onwards, the friars began to pursue the 'reconciliation' of the local Christians. This process went hand in hand with the building of a Catholic community separated from the Orthodox one. At a time when the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Europe were struggling to build well-defined confessional identities, Rome's priority in the Middle East soon became the construction of a local Catholic identity and the establishment of confessional boundaries between those who were reconciled with Catholicism and the other Christian denominations.<sup>10</sup> The task was particularly necessary and at the same time challenging in an area such as the Middle East, where many Christian denominations shared sacred spaces, and sacramental sharing (*communicatio in sacris*) was widespread.<sup>11</sup>

Christian mobility has been amply explored by research on the religious history of the Middle East and on the changes in the presence and distribution of the Christian population from the Arab conquest onwards. These works have uncovered processes of urbanisation involving the Christian population in the whole Middle East.<sup>12</sup> Similar trends have also been described with specific reference to Palestine, and in particular, to the area around Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> The main reason underlying these movements was the desire on the part of Christian minorities

to join larger and wealthier communities. The centrality of urban areas – and in particular of Jerusalem – as poles of attraction both at a local and at a regional level is also emphasised in research specifically focused on the Catholic minority. Bernard Heyberger has comprehensively described movements from Damascus and present-day Lebanon to Jerusalem during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, I have reconstructed Catholics' movements from nearby Bethlehem towards seventeenth-century Jerusalem via an analysis of Jerusalem parish books<sup>15</sup> (see [Figure 1](#)). But what were the specificities of Catholic mobility in the first phase of the diffusion of Catholicism in the area? How were these characteristics related to the development of a parish system in the area? And what role did mobility play in the development of local Catholic communities separated from the Orthodox ones?

The article approaches these questions through an analysis of Catholics' movements between Palestinian villages in the seventeenth century. In doing so, it also addresses wider issues to do with the relationship between mobility and processes of confessionalisation. Thus, it contributes to current historiographical debates on the plurality of seventeenth-century Catholicism and on the global Counter-Reformation. Introduced in the late 1970s by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard, the concept of confessionalisation refers to the process by which both Catholic and Protestant churches, in cooperation with the developing states, built clearly defined confessional churches. They did so by fighting against medieval religious practices, enhancing conformity and social discipline among their flocks and fostering the development of strong confessional borders.<sup>16</sup> Over the years, many aspects of the confessionalisation paradigm have been criticised, such as the alleged uniformity of the early modern confessional churches.<sup>17</sup> With specific regard to the implementation of the Catholic Reformation (or Counter-Reformation),<sup>18</sup> studies of various areas have shed light on a variety of local outcomes resulting from numerous factors, such as the distance from Rome of the area in question and the political context.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to the work of scholars such as Simon Ditchfield,<sup>20</sup> the scope of this debate on the diversification of seventeenth-century Catholicism has recently acquired a global dimension as scholars have begun to explore the nature and consequences of the Counter-Reformation outside Europe.<sup>21</sup> This article contributes to this line of inquiry by discussing how the local context shaped the relationship between mobility and processes of confession and community building in seventeenth-century Palestine.

For a long time now, works on the Reformation in Europe have acknowledged a connection between the strengthening of confessional identities and geographical mobility.<sup>22</sup> Most works on the topic are concerned with long-distance and forced migrations, the integration of refugees and exiles into the receiving societies, and the development of new religious identities among persecuted minorities.<sup>23</sup> In Palestine, the building of a Catholic identity was entangled with the spread of Catholicism, the growth of a tiny Catholic minority and the establishment of a sacramental system separated from the Orthodox one. In addition, unlike in Europe, in Ottoman Palestine, none of the competing Christian churches was backed by a political power. So, the strengthening of confessional identities did not trigger political persecutions and forced migrations, but it did produce other forms of mobility, mostly within a relatively small area. These movements, aimed as they were at

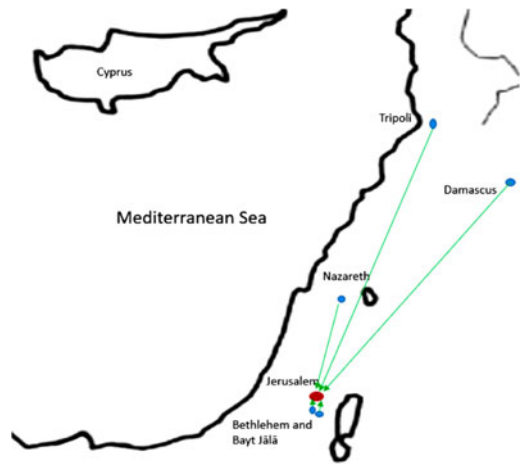


Figure 1. Catholic migration towards Jerusalem in the seventeenth century.

finding a suitable partner or at accessing the sacraments, were similar to those of the early modern European peasantry; yet, they were strongly connected with the processes of confession and community building.

This article reconstructs Catholics' geographical mobility in semi-rural Palestine, focusing on the area around Bethlehem and relying on data extracted from sacramental records. Bethlehem was one of the largest villages of the district of Jerusalem and according to an Ottoman survey, in 1690–1691, the Christian inhabitants of the village were 650 in number and constituted the majority of its population.<sup>24</sup> Bethlehem parish records have never been studied systematically, but they are a valuable source for understanding the parish's development and demography, as well as Catholics' geographical mobility; most importantly, they allow me to see the relationship between the two.<sup>25</sup>

In this case, the use of a micro-historical approach has many methodological advantages.<sup>26</sup> For example, by unveiling local phenomena that would otherwise elude us, it allows us to test the validity of general paradigms and explore the local manifestations of wider historical events. Indeed, this small-scale analysis sheds light on the existence of unstudied movements between villages, related to the administration of sacraments or the desire to find a suitable partner. Although the dataset is not big enough to allow for statistically significant quantitative analysis, the gathered data do question the centrality of Jerusalem and the importance of urbanisation processes as postulated by previous studies on Christian mobility in the Ottoman Middle East, and they enrich a historiography that has traditionally centred on household and long-term mobility.

Taking an analysis of Catholic mobility as a starting point, the article argues that the movements between villages are consistent with the development of new poles of attraction and the establishment of a Catholic sacramental system resulting from the expansion of Catholicism. The data also strongly suggest that in a context in which confessional identities were being strengthened, and similarly to confessional migration in Europe, local mobility not only resulted from, but also actively contributed to processes of confession- and community-building. Finally, in the

wider framework of the current debates on the global Counter-Reformation, this article argues that the local context shaped not only the nature of reformed Catholicism outside Europe but also the relationship between mobility and confessionalisation.

What follows describes the development of the parish of Bethlehem and then discusses two types of mobility: mobility with the aim of receiving sacraments and marriage mobility. Before I proceed, however, let me introduce the sources and the methodology of this research.

## 2. Sources and methodology: Family reconstruction through the parish book of Bethlehem

The sacramental registers of the parish of St. Catherine in Bethlehem are one of the most complete collections of parish records from Palestine.<sup>27</sup> The first volume, '*Registrazioni miste*', records baptisms starting from 1619, and burials and nuptials from 1633 and 1652, respectively.<sup>28</sup> A second series of books starts in 1669 and extends well into the eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

Palestinian parish records furnish more or less the same information as their European counterparts. Sacraments are registered in small paragraphs, each recording the date and the place in which the sacrament was administered; the name of those who received it and usually the name of his/her parents. In addition to this basic information, other data more directly relevant to each sacrament are also recorded, complying with the prescription of the Council of Trent. In the case of baptisms, for example, records often mention the godparents' names and their birthplace. The *libri defunctorum* (burial registers) often give details on the age of the deceased and whether or not he/she had received the last sacraments. Following the Tridentine prescriptions, the *libri coniugatorum* (marriage registers) usually report the names of the two witnesses and of the parish priest who celebrated the nuptials, and any dispensations required for consanguinity and affinity. They also mention the witnesses' places of origin, and occasionally their family ties to the groom or the bride. Generally speaking, the records became more standardised with the passing of time; nonetheless, the presence or lack of certain details, such as wives' and mothers' patronymics or the birthplace of the people mentioned, also varied depending on the parish priest who was in charge of the recording. This also affects the length of the paragraphs, which is usually between four and eight lines. The number of sacraments recorded in each page, therefore, greatly varies as well.

A wide range of different techniques has been used to analyse parish books, such as aggregative analysis of parish registers<sup>30</sup> and family reconstruction or reconstitution. In order to study individuals' mobility, this research uses the technique of family reconstruction: the process of linking together (parish) records of baptisms, marriages and burials,<sup>31</sup> gathered, in this case, from the above-mentioned sacramental registers of Bethlehem and sometimes crosschecked with data extracted from those of Jerusalem and from 'mixed volumes'.<sup>32</sup> These record sacraments administered in different parishes and were common before the 1670s, when Catholic communities were few in number.

Many scholars have pointed out the time-consuming nature of family reconstruction.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Palestinian parish registers, this shortcoming is accentuated by the specific characteristics of Palestinian parish records, as compared to European ones. Firstly, the use of nominal information to link records relating to the same individual, the procedure that characterises family reconstruction, is affected by the lack of surnames. In seventeenth-century Palestine, people were mostly identified by the patronymic (*nasab*) alongside their given name.<sup>34</sup> In some cases, however, patronymics are not mentioned. This is especially common with individuals coming from Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr and might be linked with the small size of these Catholic communities and the fact that they had been in existence for a relatively short time.<sup>35</sup>

Leaving aside the problem of surnames, Christian names, too, may cause problems. The friars used to give converts a new name; sometimes the second name was the Italian or Latin translation of the earlier Arab one, while at other times, it was a name linked to the Catholic European tradition, such as Franciscus. This practice contributed to distinguishing Catholics from the other Christian denominations and was part of a wider process of westernisation of habits, which would become more evident in the following century. Going back to the analysis of sacramental records, the presence of two names is problematic because they were used interchangeably in entries to refer to the same person. In this respect, the entries of Friar Franciscus from the Province of Granada, who was parish priest in the 1690s, are particularly telling, as he often writes down both names. Referring to the daughter of Giamino from Nazareth, for example, he records both Helena and Qudsia as names; in another entry, next to the name Zaituna, he writes the translation Oliva (Italian for 'olive').<sup>36</sup>

In addition to those spelling inconsistencies that are common in early modern sources, further problems are created by the fact that the language of the local Christians was Arabic. Some of the names were Muslim, derived from the *Qurʾān*, such as Gazale,<sup>37</sup> and even when names were rooted in the biblical tradition, they were Arabic versions of biblical or Christian names, primarily written in Arabic characters. The friars therefore had to transcribe the name in Latin characters, and this process generated ambiguities. Moreover, since many of the Franciscans were Italian, local names were often italianised.

For all these reasons, in most cases, the identification of individuals was only made possible by crosschecking the name of the spouse and some additional information, such as the name of the grandfather or an epithet (*cognomen*), such as 'Il Dottore', or 'Matar'. Epithets run through family members and allow the reconstruction of family genealogies, but unfortunately, they are common only for those families who had already been Catholic for some generations and – as shown by Jacob Norris – represented the core of the Catholic community in Bethlehem.<sup>38</sup> This additional information was mostly recorded by parish priests – especially from the 1680s onwards – who probably felt the need to better identify the parishioners. However, sometimes they were clearly added at a later stage, on the left side of the entries.<sup>39</sup>

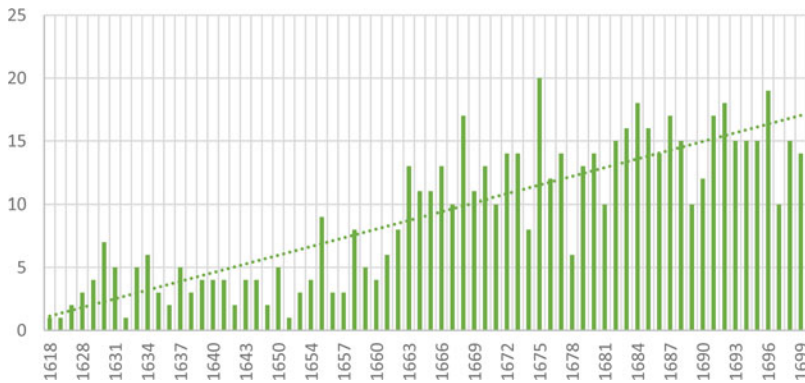
Leaving aside the difficulties in identifying individuals, the use of the technique of family reconstruction is also affected by the fact that especially in the first decades of the parish's existence the recording is not fully reliable and consistent.

Despite these problems, thanks to the information provided by different books, it has been possible to shed light on a number of mobility patterns and to gather some interesting insights on the demography and the development of the Bethlehem parish of St. Catherine.

### 3. The historical context: the development of the Franciscan parish of Bethlehem

In Palestine, the arrival of the Crusaders and the establishment of the Latin kingdoms in the eleventh century led to the first establishment of a Catholic episcopal hierarchy, with responsibility for the care of souls organised by parishes, which in turn belonged to dioceses. With the fall of the kingdom of Jerusalem (1291), however, this organisation collapsed and the regular clergy left. Since their return to the region in the fourteenth century, the Franciscans had had a few parishes in the Syro-Palestinian region, mostly in places with a well-established presence of European merchants and diplomats. However, because of the lack of local Catholics, and therefore a small number of followers, dioceses were never established again. In the seventeenth century, the progression of the friars' missionary activity led to the establishment of a complex system for the administration of the cure of souls, whose centre was the convent of St. Saviour in Jerusalem. This process was strengthened by the converts' adoption of the Latin rite<sup>40</sup> – prompted by the friars, despite the protests of *De Propaganda Fide*.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *Propaganda* asserted the legitimacy of Oriental liturgies and rites and prevented those who had been reconciled by missionaries from adopting the Latin ones.<sup>42</sup> New Catholics would therefore generally become part of the newly established Catholic Eastern Churches, which retained their own liturgical tradition and organisation and were led by local clergy. This was not the case with those reconciled by the Franciscans. In fact, as a consequence of the adoption of the Latin rite, they were instead integrated into a new sacramental system established by the Franciscans.

Those parishes that already existed, which up to then had been almost exclusively devoted to the spiritual care of Catholic foreigners, each acquired a second parish priest in charge of the local, Arab, population.<sup>43</sup> In addition, new parishes were founded. The parish of Nazareth was created in 1620, and later on, the friars established parishes in Jaffa (1654) and 'Ayn Kārim (1674).<sup>44</sup> When compared to their European counterparts, Palestinian parishes had some specific features – such as the lack of clear territorial boundaries and the lack of parish fees – which were a consequence of the political and religious context.<sup>45</sup> Their demographic growth is well documented and has already been studied by scholars, mainly through the reports sent by the *Custos* (the head of the Custody of the Holy Land) to *Propaganda Fide*. According to one of these letters, for example, in 1664, the parish of Jerusalem numbered 68 souls, St Nicodemus in Ramla, 60, Nazareth 24 and Bethlehem 128.<sup>46</sup> By 1702, the number of Catholics in Bethlehem had grown to 325.<sup>47</sup> More details on the process are provided by parish books. If we consider [Figure 2](#), we can see how the number of baptisms grew in Bethlehem in the course of the century. Until 1669, the yearly average was 5.28 baptisms, increasing up to 14.4 in the years between 1669 and the end of the century.



**Figure 2.** Number of baptisms in Bethlehem (1618–1699).

Note: Total number of baptisms: 636.

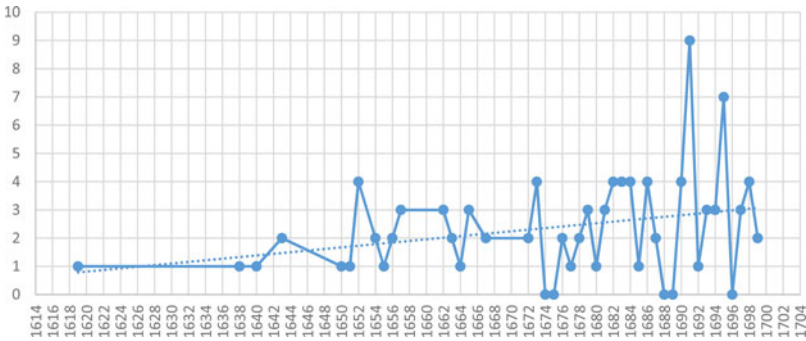
Sources: ASCTS, *Cura Custodiale, Registros miste*, vol. 1 (1555–1671), ‘Battesimi in Gerusalemme, Betlemme e Ramleh’ (9 luglio 1617–24 Agosto 1671, ff. 1r–28r.); ASCTS, *Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registros miste, Liber baptizatorum* 13 May 1618 to 12 May 1699, ff. 1–52; ASCTS, *Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Regstrum baptizatorum* (1669–1721).

The growth of the Catholic community in the town is confirmed by the data regarding marriages (Figure 3).

The development of the parish of Bethlehem was completed by the creation of two small Catholic ‘pockets’ in neighbouring Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr. These both belonged to the parish of Bethlehem (as there was no parish church in either, their inhabitants are mentioned in the Bethlehem sacramental books). According to the books and to the correspondence between the *Custodia* and Propaganda Fide, the spread of Catholicism in Bayt Jālā started in 1676–1677.<sup>48</sup> The presence of Catholics in Bayt Saḥūr is mentioned for the first time in a letter to Propaganda Fide in 1692,<sup>49</sup> but in the Bethlehem parish records, the baptism of a child from the village was recorded as early as 1683.<sup>50</sup>

The parish records also provide evidence of the problematic implementation of reformed Catholicism in Bethlehem. Indeed, the first decades of the existence of the Bethlehem parish were characterised, on the one hand, by difficulties in establishing a Catholic community separate from the other denominations, and on the other by the ongoing development of a parish organisation complying with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent. The latter element is well exemplified by the increasing definiteness of the role of the parish priest over the century. Until the 1670s sacraments were frequently administered by the Guardian of the convent – who would often also retain the office of parish priest – and sometimes by the Guardian of Jerusalem, the *Custos*. In those cases in which baptisms were administered by other priests, the record says that they had been received in a delegation from the Guardian of Bethlehem. In August 1670, for example, baptisms were administered by the Maronite presbyter Giorgio whom, according to the records, the Guardian had charged with the care of souls during the plague, ‘peste grassante’. In July 1672, baptisms were still administered by Bernardino da Movano, ‘Parish priest and Guardian of this convent of St Catherine’. However, during





**Figure 3.** Number of marriages in Bethlehem (1619–1699).

Note: Total Marriages: 179.

Sources: ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1 (1555–1671), ‘Nota di quei che si sono coniugati in matrimonio in queste nostre chiese da’ frati nostri in tempi diversi’ (15 February 1618, 21 July 1671, ff. 82r–87v); ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1 (25 December 1616 to 20 December 1671), *Liber matrimoniorum* (07 February 1652 to 25 December 1669, ff. 71–94); ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 2, *Registrum coniugatorum et defunctorum* (ab anno 1669–1735), *Registrum coniugatorum* (28 August 1672 to 19 June 1735, ff. 1–68); missing years: 1674, 1675, 1688, 1689, 1696.

the 1670s things slowly started to change. According to the book of baptisms in October 1672 Dioniso da Cutro was appointed parish priest by the *Custos*, Theofilo da Nola.<sup>51</sup> From this moment on, sacraments were mostly administered by the parish priest, who would also record them. In those cases in which sacraments were administered by another priest, or by the Guardian,<sup>52</sup> the recording is often followed by the sentence ‘in absentia parochi’ or by a note stating that the parish priest was ill.<sup>53</sup> In many cases, records also specify that the priest in question had been authorised by the parish priest, and sometimes the records are signed by the latter.<sup>54</sup> This is remarkable, because up until 1672 authorisations had been given by the Guardian. The definition of the role of the parish priest went hand in hand with a growing formalisation of the recording procedure. Not only did records become more and more standardised and complete: whereas earlier recordings had been filed at a later stage, after the 1670s, in line with the prescription of the Council of Trent, sacraments were registered and signed by the parish priest immediately after administration.

In this first century of its existence, the life of the Bethlehem parish was also characterised by the difficult development of a Catholic community separated from the Orthodox one. In the wake of the confessionalisation processes in Europe, the implementation of confessional boundaries between the newly established Catholic community and the other Christian denominations soon became a priority for the Church of Rome. Nonetheless, it was not easy to accomplish in a context in which Catholic clergy did not have secular power, different denominations competed to gain followers, and sacramental sharing was a well-established practice.<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century, Franciscans, along with other missionaries, struggled to discipline the behaviour of their flocks and to foster the development of a Catholic identity and sense of belonging: returns to one’s former church and

hidden conversions remained common, with new converts wavering between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.<sup>56</sup> These widespread practices were encouraged by the friars' conflicts with the Orthodox religious authorities,<sup>57</sup> which were particularly harsh in Bethlehem, and by the new converts' wish to avoid conflict with their former coreligionists. Moreover, despite Rome's protests, *communicatio in sacris* and mixed marriages were common practices well into the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Did the features of the newly established parishes outlined here influence Catholic mobility? And if so, in what ways?

Elsewhere I have argued that the spread of Catholicism may initially have strengthened the existing migration flows from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, slowing down the development of a Catholic community in the former.<sup>59</sup> In fact, both Jerusalem parish records and Franciscan chronicles suggest that especially up to the 1660s the new Catholics moved to the Holy City in order to avoid 'persecutions' on the part of the former coreligionists. Such a picture, however, is enriched by the data extracted from the sacramental records of Bethlehem: these suggest that the characteristic features of the local parish life in this period also resulted in other forms of mobility, which were not necessarily permanent.

#### 4. Mobility linked to the receipt of sacraments and the development of new poles of attraction

Parish books suggest that on occasion, in the first few decades, since the spread of Catholicism began, Catholics went to Jerusalem from other places to receive sacraments.

In the 1650s, a couple who lived in Ramla, Deodato *filius* Abraham<sup>60</sup> and his wife Maria, went twice to Jerusalem to baptise their children; in the same period, another couple from the town did the same.<sup>61</sup> Ramla was located on the road between the harbor town of Jaffa and Jerusalem, at a distance of 38 km from the latter. The local Franciscan house usually hosted pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. In the seventeenth century, the village was inhabited by a small French merchant community,<sup>62</sup> and, according to Franciscan sources, by Maronite Catholics.<sup>63</sup>

Catholics from Nazareth, too, undertook the journey to Jerusalem (over a hundred kilometers) to receive the sacraments. This is the case with Beniamino f. Giamino, the dragoman of the local Franciscan convent, who had his daughter Tecla baptised in Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> In some cases, the trip to Jerusalem may have been necessary because of the lack of a baptismal font. This, however, was not always the case. The first baptism recorded in Bethlehem dates back to 1619, but in the following decades, the children of some couples who lived in Bethlehem were baptised in Jerusalem. I have already mentioned Joseph, the son of the 'Doctor', and his wife, who in 1647 had their daughter Helena baptised in Jerusalem, though the same record attests that they were inhabitants of Bethlehem. In 1637, to give another example, Nicholas, the firstborn of Thomas son of Musa and Cara from Bethlehem, was baptised in Jerusalem.<sup>65</sup> A second daughter of the couple would later be baptised in Bethlehem.<sup>66</sup> In 1656, the baptism of Philippus son of Michael and Helena, both living in Bethlehem, is recorded in the books of the village but, according to the book, it was administered in

Jerusalem by the Guardian of the St. Saviour's convent, Mariano Morone da Maleo.<sup>67</sup> The reasons why these baptisms were celebrated in Jerusalem may be varied: a short-term migration, the temporary absence of the parish priest or a special celebration in the Holy City. However, it seems no coincidence that such cases were more common before the 1670s, in a phase when parish life was not yet fully organised, with borders between parishes not clearly defined and a lack of appointed parish priests. Accordingly, with the passing of time, such occurrences became less common.

Another reason that might explain why the inhabitants of Bethlehem went to Jerusalem to receive sacraments may be the already-mentioned hostility of the Orthodox religious authorities and the atmosphere of semi-secrecy that characterised the first decades of parish life in Bethlehem. This hypothesis is corroborated by marriage records. In 1646 Maria f. Giorgio, known as Barbon, and Joseph Marangone f. Giob, an Orthodox who was secretly Catholic, got married in Jerusalem, though they were both from Bethlehem.<sup>68</sup> In 1672, to take another example, Demetri f. Salomone from Bethlehem and Caterina f. Aaiax, from Bayt Saḥūr, 'belonging to the Greek nation', got married in Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup> The reason for these couples' decision not to marry in their native parish of Bethlehem may have been to do with the spouses' (formal) affiliation to the Greek Orthodox community. During the seventeenth century, despite the ban imposed by the Roman Congregations, mixed marriages were sometimes tolerated by the Franciscans and other missionaries as a necessary evil. However, they were strongly opposed by the Orthodox religious authorities. Consistent with this opposition, the entry recording the above-mentioned wedding of Demetri and Caterina explains that even though the bans had already been made in June, the wedding had to be postponed to avoid the 'mutterings of the Greeks'.<sup>70</sup> In 1673, the nuptials of Giorgio f. Elias with the newly converted Anna, to take another example, took place in Bethlehem, but without bans and in a private house, 'to avoid scandal'.<sup>71</sup>

The data analysed so far suggest that between the 1620s and the 1670s, the characteristic features of the first phase of the development of a parish system pushed many Catholics to move within Palestine to receive the sacraments. Whether to avoid conflicts with the Orthodox community or because of a loose parish organisation, Catholics from Ramla, Nazareth and Bethlehem went to Jerusalem to get married and to baptise their children, with the Holy City having a central role as a sacramental centre. Contrary to the urbanisation processes described by previous historiography, due to its temporary nature such a form of mobility did not threaten the development of local Catholicism. On the contrary, by allowing the administration of sacraments by a Catholic priest, it helped the growth of a local community separated from the Orthodox one, strengthened confessional identity and encouraged the development of a sense of belonging. In this sense, therefore, this local mobility performed the same function that confessional migration, and the very notion of exile, had in post-Reformation Europe.<sup>72</sup>

The link between Catholics' movements and the development of a parish system is confirmed by an analysis of how mobility patterns changed in the following decades. Towards the end of the century, the number of Catholics who moved to get married or baptise their children did not diminish, but mobility patterns altered. The importance of Jerusalem as a sacramental centre seems to have decreased,

consistent with the increasing organisation of parish life in some places, such as Bethlehem. Further changes resulted from the establishment of new Catholic communities.

Following the spread of Catholicism in Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr, Catholics from these places begin to appear in the registers of the parish of Bethlehem, where they went to receive the sacraments. The first baptism of a child whose parents lived in Bayt Saḥūr, a little girl, Salayha f. Naslaha, daughter of Masleh f. Nazar and Catherina f. Salem, occurred in 1683.<sup>73</sup> In the following decade, the 1690s, 12 children of couples living in Bayt Saḥūr were baptised in Bethlehem. In December 1691, the parish priest of Bethlehem baptised three children from three different couples all living in Bayt Saḥūr – Maria f. Ganem, Servus Christi f. Nazar, Issa f. Mansur. Less than a year later, in April 1692, the children of two more couples from the village were baptised in Bethlehem on the same day.<sup>74</sup> Couples from Bayt Jālā, too, baptised their children in Bethlehem. The first instance occurred in 1676: it is the baptism of the twins Dominicus and Franciscus, sons of Khalil and Helena, inhabitants (*degentes*) of 'Botticella'.<sup>75</sup> More baptisms of children of Bayt Jālā followed.<sup>76</sup> Records of burials of inhabitants of these two villages also appear in the Bethlehem books: one, for instance, follows the death of a 10-month old girl from Bayt Saḥūr, in 1683.<sup>77</sup> In all these instances, records correctly state that the Catholics belonged to the parish of Bethlehem, while specifying that they were living in Bayt Saḥūr or Bayt Jālā.

This small-scale analysis reveals the existence of a remarkable level of mobility within the area around Bethlehem, resulting from the spread of Catholicism. It also suggests that in seventeenth-century Palestine the diffusion of Catholicism facilitated the birth of new poles of attraction, in this case Bethlehem, to which Catholic mobility from the neighbouring area was directed. The importance of Bethlehem as a sacramental centre is also testified to by the presence in the town's sacramental books of entries recording the baptisms of children of 'Ayn Kārim. A first entry of the *Liber baptizatorum* mentions the baptism of Johanes f. Zacharia, born in April 1681. The date of the baptism is not reported, and the record is not signed.<sup>78</sup> A few years later, another entry mentions the baptism of Johannes f. Michael, administered in 1684 in 'Ayn Kārim by the Guardian of the local convent.<sup>79</sup> Besides confirming the importance acquired by Bethlehem as a sacramental centre, these entries raise questions about the position of 'Ayn Kārim within the Catholic ecclesiastical organisation and its link with the parish of Bethlehem. Previous scholarship suggested that the parish in 'Ayn Kārim had already been established in 1674; nonetheless, the baptism records rather seem to suggest that in the 1680s, the Catholic community of 'Ayn Kārim depended on the parish of Bethlehem, as was the case with Bayt Saḥūr and Bayt Jālā. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the second record mentioned was signed by the Bethlehem parish priest, Michael Rure.<sup>80</sup>

Such a complex situation may have resulted from the very origin of the Catholic community of 'Ayn Kārim. According to the Franciscan accounts, the establishment of the local convent (1676) was followed in 1681 by the arrival of four dragomans with their families, all from Bethlehem. Apparently, their migration was mediated by the intervention of the friars, who experienced difficulties in persuading them to move.<sup>81</sup> Dragomans were very important figures in Franciscans' lives in

the Middle East. They were the convents' interpreters and gate-keepers, and they fulfilled many additional functions. In 'Ayn Kārim, besides serving the friars, the newly arrived dragomans and their families also constituted the first nucleus of a local Catholic community. The Bethlehemite origin of the inhabitants of 'Ayn Kārim and the ties with the hometown might explain their presence in the sacramental registers of Bethlehem.

Whereas the inhabitants of Bayt Saḥūr and Bayt Jālā would depend on the parish of Bethlehem for a long time, the parish of 'Ayn Kārim would be fully functional already by the beginning of the eighteenth century. Despite the differences, all these cases strongly suggest that the funding of new Catholic communities led to new patterns of mobility. Research on early modern migration has already shown that migration patterns changed over time and were influenced by numerous factors.<sup>82</sup> In seventeenth-century Palestine – the evidence suggests – the geography of Catholics' mobility was shaped by the interaction of the increasing strength of parish organisation on the one hand, and the establishment of new Catholic communities on the other. Whereas towards the 1670s the progress of parish organisation decreased Catholics' movement towards Jerusalem, the spread of Catholicism in the same period brought about new geographical patterns in the direction of Bethlehem. These findings are confirmed by the analysis of another form of migration revealed by sacramental registers: marriage mobility.

## 5. Mobility and marriage

Barbara was not the only daughter of Benjamin from Nazareth who married someone from Bethlehem. Her sister Maria, too, married a man from Bethlehem, Musa f. Isa, dragoman of the local convent.<sup>83</sup> Like her sister, after the wedding, Maria moved to her husband's hometown. She appears in the local sacramental registers first as godmother in 1658,<sup>84</sup> and again in 1659 for the baptism of her daughter Anna.<sup>85</sup>

European parish books have been amply used to study village exogamy.<sup>86</sup> Although in-village marriages were generally preferred, marrying outside the village community could be necessary because of narrow marital markets. According to Matthijs Kalmijn, the size of the community, the extent of multiple group affiliation among individuals and the degree of residential segregation played a critical role in determining the opportunities available to prospective brides and grooms.<sup>87</sup> As for the Ottoman Empire, scholarship on marital preferences and on marriage-related geographical mobility is thin. Existing works suggest a preference for marriages between cousins<sup>88</sup> and proximity among the involved families in terms of shared living spaces, culture, class identity and religion.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, exogamous marriages were very common among both the Muslim population and Orthodox Christians. Among the latter, they were encouraged by the rules prohibiting marriages between cousins up to the seventh degree.

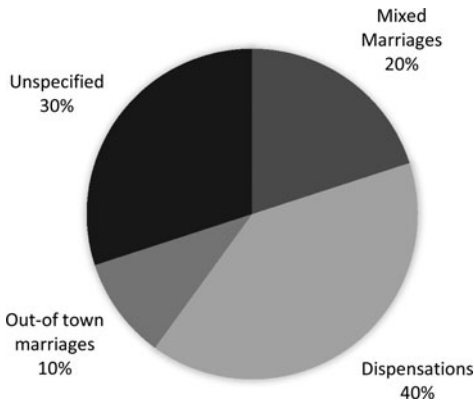
As to the newly established Catholic communities in Palestine, the Catholic Church was less strict than the Orthodox ones on this matter, allowing as it did marriage from the fifth degree of consanguinity upwards. However, Rome's opposition to interdenominational marriages made the search for a suitable partner in small communities difficult. Other factors to be considered were the preferences

regarding social status and the extent of family ties between the community's members. With regard specifically to Bethlehem, the difficulty in finding a suitable Catholic wife was lamented by the *Custos* in a letter to Propaganda Fide advocating a more forbearing attitude toward mixed marriages.<sup>90</sup> Consistently, such marriages are frequently mentioned in Bethlehem's sacramental records.<sup>91</sup> Even more common were requests for dispensation from the impediment of *consanguinity* or *affinity*. According to the *Liber Coniugatorum*, dispensations were awarded in 36.8 per cent (28 out of 76) of the total number of marriages celebrated in the town between 1672 and 1669 (see Figure 4).<sup>92</sup> They were granted by the *Custos* and were usually for a third and fourth degree of consanguinity, and sometimes for more than one side of the family. Finally, some of the inhabitants of Bethlehem married outside the town.

Like in Europe, out-of-village marriages were celebrated in the bride's parish, but then the couple moved to the groom's.<sup>93</sup> In 1663, for example, Andrea f. Franciscus from Bethlehem married Elena f. Iamino from Jerusalem.<sup>94</sup> The wedding was celebrated in the city, but was recorded in Bethlehem, where the couple settled afterwards and had their first son baptised.<sup>95</sup> More common, according to the records, were marriages between men from Bethlehem and women from Nazareth, where the development of the Catholic community was much slower than in Bethlehem or Jerusalem, and therefore the chances of finding a suitable partner lower. I have already mentioned the case of the sisters Maria and Barbara. In 1663 Giorgio f. Giorgio from Bethlehem married Nassaria from Nazareth, and in 1665 David married Hana f. Michael 'ex civitate Nazareth'.<sup>96</sup> In 1665 Maria and Catherina, both from Bethlehem, married two men from Nazareth, Jacob f. Musa and Ebrahim f. Michael.<sup>97</sup>

With Catholicism spreading around Bethlehem during the 1670s and 1680s, Bethlehemite men would frequently marry women from the neighbouring Bayt Saḥūr and Bayt Jālā, both much closer than Nazareth. I have already mentioned the marriage of Demetrius f. Salomon and the newly converted Caterina from Bayt Saḥūr, which was celebrated in Jerusalem in 1672.<sup>98</sup> To take another instance, in 1694, another convert from the same village, Maria f. Salem, married a man from Bethlehem.<sup>99</sup> Women from Bethlehem, too, married men from neighbouring places, though instances are less numerous: in 1677, for example, Hanna f. Salomon married Michel f. Issa from Bayt Jālā.<sup>100</sup> The *Registrum Coniugatorum* also records marriages between the inhabitants of Bethlehem, and its surroundings, and 'Ayn Kārim. In 1700, Francesco, alias Razggi, f. Giorgio from Bayt Jālā married Elisabetta f. Chalil Macaron from 'Ayn Kārim, where the marriage was celebrated.<sup>101</sup> Other marriages between Catholics living in 'Ayn Kārim and those of the Bethlehem cluster would follow in the upcoming years, confirming the tight ties between the two Catholic communities.<sup>102</sup>

In a context of competing religions and building of confessional identities, in most cases, out-of-village marriages allowed individuals to find a partner of the same denomination and therefore to avoid mixed marriages. This, however, was not always the case, as according to the *Registrum Coniugatorum*, not all the spouses from Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr were Catholic. This may have been the case because, due to the conflicts between the Catholics and the Greek Orthodox community of Bethlehem, mixed marriages were easier if celebrated out of town.



**Figure 4.** Percentage of dispensations, mixed and out-of-town marriages in Bethlehem (1669–1699). Note: Total number of marriages between 1669 and 1699: 76.

Source: ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. 2, *Registrum coniugatorum* (11 May 1669 to 21 August 1721); missing years: 1674, 1675, 1688, 1689, 1696.

When seen in the framework of previous research on Christian mobility, an analysis of marriage mobility as reported by Bethlehem sacramental registers sheds light on previously unknown forms of mobility between non-urban centres. It also confirms the existence of an intense level of movement within the Bethlehem area. In the context of the ongoing development of Catholic communities in the area, out-of-village marriages were encouraged by the communities' small numbers and – in the case of out-of-village mixed marriages – by the conflicts with the Greek Orthodox community. At any rate, whether mixed or not, these nuptials contributed to strengthening the Catholic presence in Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr, especially when they involved Catholic women from Bethlehem, who would move to the husband's hometown.

The data on marriage mobility also confirm what has been said about the change in mobility patterns during the century under consideration. The lack of evidence of marriages between the inhabitants of Bethlehem and Nazareth from the 1670s onwards strongly suggests that such marriages may have been affected by the spread of Catholicism in Bayt Saḥūr and Bayt Jālā. Since Nazareth was 120 km from Bethlehem, it is possible that, given the choice, the inhabitants of Bethlehem were keener to marry within a short distance from their hometown. This would also be consistent with the findings of studies on early modern Europe, according to which most exogamous marriages involved short-distance mobility, that is within 20 km.<sup>103</sup> However, the presence in the Bethlehem registers of the inhabitants of 'Ayn Kārim, which was closer to Jerusalem than to Bethlehem, reminds us that geographical distance was only one of the factors that shaped geographical mobility, whether to receive sacraments or to find a suitable partner. In fact, the consistent presence of the inhabitants of 'Ayn Kārim in the sacramental records of Bethlehem suggests that mobility patterns also reflect the strength of the network of ties between Catholic communities.

What role did the Franciscans play in the shaping of this geography of Catholic mobility? The arrival in the village of 'Ayn Kārim of dragomans who had been prompted by the friars is not the only case in which Franciscans encouraged and directed the movement of dragomans at a regional and local level. In the 1620s a dragoman from Aleppo was employed at the convent of St. Saviour in Jerusalem.

According to the Chronicles, in 1621, the Guardian had turned to the consul of Aleppo for a good interpreter; as a result, Battista was sent to Jerusalem.<sup>104</sup> Such cases contribute to defining the role played by Franciscans in shaping internal mobility. They also tally with numerous items of evidence concerning friars encouraging converts' migration from Bethlehem towards Jerusalem, and even across the Mediterranean, in order to avoid returns to the former faith.<sup>105</sup> In other instances, the friars' role may have been less direct, for example, that of organising an out-of-village marriage. In any case, mobility seems to have been one of the means by which the friars fostered the development of local Catholicism.

## 6. Concluding remarks

Starting from an analysis of data extracted from the parish records of Bethlehem, this research has reconstructed Catholics' movements between villages in seventeenth-century Palestine. As well as revealing previously unknown forms of local mobility, this small-scale analysis has also enriched and questioned well-established historiography on Catholic and Christian geographical mobility in the Middle East and has addressed from a local perspective wider historical events, thus contributing to scholarly debates on the effects of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations outside Europe and on the plurality of early modern Catholicism.

In the context of existing scholarship on Christian mobility, firstly, the data gathered here reveal the existence – alongside traditional long-term household mobility – of short-term movements undertaken to receive the sacraments and to be wed; secondly, from a geographical point of view, they question the centrality of Jerusalem, revealing a substantial level of movement between Palestinian villages and towns. Some of these movements are attested within the Bethlehem cluster, others between Bethlehem and places located further afield, such as 'Ayn Kārim and Nazareth. These forms of mobility, this article has suggested, are tightly related to the ongoing consolidation of a Catholic minority and the development of a Catholic identity and sacramental system, separated from the Orthodox one. Members of small developing communities with a still embryonic parish system moved to receive the sacraments, to avoid conflicts with former co-religionists, and to find a suitable partner. The close relationship between geographical mobility and the spreading and consolidation of religious communities is also confirmed by the changes in mobility patterns. Towards the 1670s, the strengthening of parish organisation reduced the number of people who moved to Jerusalem from Bethlehem and Nazareth to receive the sacraments. These forms of mobility did not disappear, but from the 1670s onwards the greater geographical diffusion of Catholicism added further complexity to the geography of Catholics' mobility, stemming from the development of other sacramental centres. This is the case with Bethlehem, where people went to receive sacraments both from the neighbouring villages of Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr and from 'Ayn Kārim (Figure 5).

In the following centuries, this process would continue, consistent with the progress of the diffusion of Catholicism. From the 1680s on, the data suggest that the development of new communities led to an increase in short-distance mobility, because long-distance travel was no longer necessary either to find a Catholic



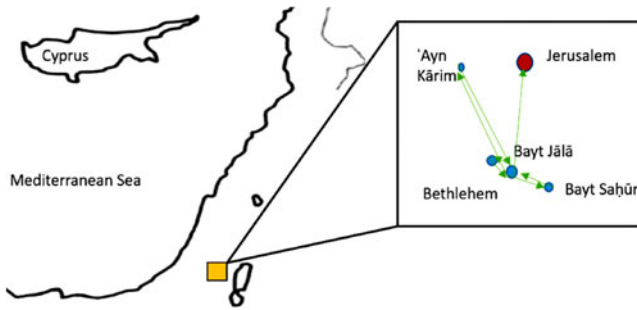


Figure 5. Catholic mobility between towns and villages in the district of Jerusalem (1670s–1700).

partner or to receive sacraments. Concerning marital behaviour, for example, the spread of Catholicism towards Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr probably contributed to the decreased number of marriages contracted between the inhabitants of Bethlehem and those of faraway Nazareth. Alongside distance, other factors that may have influenced geographical mobility were the ties between communities and the role played by the friars as facilitators of inter-parish mobility. In this respect, the case of 'Ayn Kārim is a conspicuous example, but it is very likely that the friars also shaped the mobility related to the administration of sacraments and played a role in arranging out-of-village marriages. By doing so, and more generally by directing the movement of their followers, the friars facilitated both the spread of Catholicism and the growth of local communities, as well as the development of a local form of Catholicism. In fact, this analysis suggests that while the movements to receive the sacraments and marriage mobility in semirural Palestine were a consequence of the ongoing strengthening of confessional borders between Christian denominations, they also contributed to the development of a Catholic identity and sense of belonging. They did so by lowering the occurrence of mixed marriages, the recourse to non-Catholic priests to administer the sacraments, and therefore sacramental sharing. In so doing, therefore, they contributed to the creation of confessional boundaries.

Set as it is in an ampler range of historiographical inquiries on early modern Catholicism outside Europe, this research strongly suggests that the characteristics of the local context not only shaped the local ecclesiastical organisation but also influenced the relationship between the strengthening of confessional identities and geographical mobility. In fact, in Palestine movements between towns and villages seem to be a local variation of confessional migration, as described by works on post-reformation Europe. In this respect, this research also enriches a historiography mostly concerned with long-distance migration by emphasising the role played by local mobility in processes of confession- and community-building. Finally, from a methodological standpoint, the article shows the importance of microanalysis and of focusing on a small area in understanding geographical mobility associated with religious practices and allegiances.

## Notes

1 Archivio Storico della Custodia di Terra Santa, Jerusalem (from now on ASCTS), Curia Custodiale, Sacramenti. Registrazioni miste, vol. I, f. 84. Throughout the article, names are spelled as in the Franciscan sources, unless otherwise stated.

2 The term ‘dragoman’ usually refers to the European consuls’ official translators, whose patents were issued by the Ottoman authorities. In Franciscan sources, however, the term refers to those who worked for the friars and had closer ties with the convents. See Jacob Norris, ‘Dragomans, tattooists, artisans: Palestinian Christians and their encounters with Catholic Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, *Journal of Global History* 14, 1 (2018), 68–86, at 74.

3 ASCTS, Curia Custodiale, Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. I, f. 18.

4 See for example, Jan de Vries, *European urbanization, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1984); Peter Clark and David Souden eds., *Migration and society in early modern England* (Totowa, 1988); Peter Clark, ‘The migrant in Kentish towns, 1580–1640’, in Peter Clark and Paul Slack eds., *Crisis and order in English towns 1500–1700: essays in urban history* (London, 1973); Peter Laslett and John R. Harrison, ‘Clayworth and Cogenhoe’, in H. E. Bell and Richard L. Ollard eds., *Historical essays 1600–1750, presented to David Ogg* (London, 1963).

5 Yohanan Friedmann, ‘Dhimma’, in Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, III* (Leiden, 2012), consulted online on 04 January 2020 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_26005](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_26005); see also Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the functioning of a plural society* (New York, 1984); Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab world* (Cambridge, 2001).

6 On Catholic missions in the seventeenth-century Middle East: Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique* (Rome, 1984); Charles Frazee, *Catholics and sultans: the Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923* (Cambridge, 1983), 67–150; Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab world*, 68–97; Robert M. Haddad, ‘Conversion of the Eastern Orthodox Christians to the Unia in the 17th and 18th century’, in Michael Gervers and Ramzi J. Bikhazi eds., *Conversion and continuity: indigenous Christian communities in Islamic lands, eighth to eighteenth centuries* (Toronto, 1990), 449–59. On Egypt: Febe Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford, 2011) and Alastair Hamilton, *The Copts and the West, 1439–1822: the European discovery of the Egyptian church* (Oxford, 2006); on the following centuries: Helen Murre-Van den Berg ed., *New faith in ancient lands: Western missions in the Middle East in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (Leiden, 2006).

7 On Franciscan missions in Palestine: Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*; Felicity Tramontana, *Passages of faith. Conversions in Palestinian villages* (Wiesbaden, 2014), 32–39, 97–110; Norris, ‘Dragomans, tattooists, artisans’, 68–86. Lucette Valensi, ‘Inter-communal relations and changes in religious affiliation in the Middle East (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries)’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, 2 (1997), 251–69. According to the 1922 population census of Palestine (table XIV), Catholics were in Jifnā an-Naṣārā, al-Tabieh, ‘Abūd, Silwān (16 Catholics) ‘Irṭās (29 Catholics), Ramallah, Kufr al-Malik, and Bir Zei. See J. B. Barron ed., *Palestine: report and general abstracts of the census of 1922*, Government of Palestine 1922, table XIV. On the topic, see also Victor Guérin, *Description géographique historique et archéologique de la Palestine* (Paris, 1878); Albert Socin, ‘Alphabetisches Verzeichniss von Ortschaften des Paschalik Jerusalem’, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 2 (1879), 135–63.

8 Administratively, the Franciscan order is divided into provinces, made up of several convents and headed by a provincial minister.

9 See Paolo Pieraccini, *Cattolici di Terra Santa (1333–2000)* (Firenze, 2003), 13–20.

10 Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 8, 253–6; Bernard Heyberger, ‘Frontières confessionnelles et conversions chez les chrétiens orientaux (xvii<sup>e</sup>–xviii<sup>e</sup> siècles)’, in Mercedes Garcia-Arenal ed., *Conversions islamiques* (Paris, 2001), 245–58. On the relationship between the issues raised by the Reformation and the missionary activity toward Orthodox Christians, see also Felicity Tramontana ‘“Né si potevano castigare per la libertà del loco e il dominio che vi è.” Cattolici e protestanti nell’Impero Ottomano attraverso i *dubia* e le *facultates*’, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* 129, 1 (2017), 201–13.

11 Sacramental sharing refers to both the practice of giving the sacraments irrespective of denomination and to the practice of, say, being baptised in one faith or denomination and married in another.

- 12 Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab world*, 55. See also Bakhit Adnan, 'The Christian population of the province of Damascus in the sixteenth century', in Braude and Lewis eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. II, 19–66.
- 13 Amnon Cohen and Bernard Lewis, *Population and revenue in the towns of Palestine in the sixteenth century* (Princeton, 1978), 32–3, 86, 90; Oded Peri, 'The Christian population of Jerusalem in the late seventeenth century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, 4 (1996), 398–421, at 410.
- 14 Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 275.
- 15 Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 126–7.
- 16 The confessionalization paradigm, as elaborated by Schilling and Reinhard, was based on the concept of *Konfessionsbildung* (confession building) developed in the late 1950s by Ernst Walter Zeeden, to which they added a strong social and political dimension. See Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Reformation, counter-reformation, and the early modern state: a reassessment', *The Catholic Historical Review* 75 (1989), 383–404; Heinz Schilling, *Religion, political culture and the emergence of early modern society: essays in German and Dutch history* (Leiden, 1992); see also Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'The concept of 'confessionalization': a historiographical paradigm in dispute', *Memoria y civilización* 4 (2001), 93–114.
- 17 See, for example, 'Forum: religious history beyond confessionalization', *German History* 32, 4 (2014), 579–98; Walter Ziegler, 'Kritisches zur Konfessionalisierungsthese', in Peer Frieß and Rolf Kießlin eds., *Konfessionalisierung und Region* (Konstanz, 1999), 41–53; Mark Foster, 'With and without confessionalization. Varieties of early modern German Catholicism', *Journal of Early Modern History* 1 (1997), 315–43.
- 18 See Hubert Jedin, 'Catholic-reformation or counter-reformation', in David Luebeck ed., *Counter-reformation: the essential readings* (Oxford, 1999), 21–4. On the Catholic reformation see, for example, Michael Mullett, *The catholic reformation* (London, 1999); Robert Bireley, *The refashioning of catholicism, 1450–1700: a reassessment of the counter reformation* (Washington, DC, 1999).
- 19 See, for example, Marc R. Forster, *Counter-reformation in the villages: religion and reform in the bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720* (Ithaca, NY, 1992); Marc Venard, *Le temps des confessions: 1530–1620/30* (Paris, 1992); Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz im 16. und in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 2000).
- 20 Simon Ditchfield, 'De-centering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and peoples in the early modern world', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 (2010), 186–208.
- 21 See Karen Melvin, 'Globalization of reform', in Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen and Mary Laven eds., *The Ashgate research companion to the counter-reformation* (Ashgate, 2013), 391–405; Alison Forrestal and Seán Smith, 'Re-thinking missionary Catholicism for the early modern era', in Alison Forrestal and Seán Smith eds., *The frontiers of mission: perspectives on early modern missionary Catholicism* (Leiden, 2016).
8. Concerning the Middle East, well before the global Counter-Reformation became a field of inquiry, Heyberger shed light on the effects that the Counter-Reformation had in the area. He convincingly argued that confessionalization in Europe influenced Rome's attitude toward the relationship between Catholics and Orthodox Christians in the Middle East. See *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 8, 253–6 and 'Frontières confessionnelles et conversions chez les Chrétiens orientaux (xvii<sup>e</sup>-xviii<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in Mercedes García-Arenal ed., *Conversions islamiques* (Paris, 2001), 245–58. On the Middle East, see also Beat Kümin and Felicita Tramontana, 'Catholicism decentralised: local religion in the early modern periphery', *Church History*, 2020 (forthcoming).
- 22 Heinz Schilling, *Peregrini und Schiffchen Gottes: Flüchtlingserfahrung und Exulanten-theologie des frühneuzeitlichen Calvinismus*, in Ansgar Reiss et al. eds., *Calvinismus: Die Reformierten in Deutschland und Europa* (Berlin, 2009), 60–168; Henning P. Jürgens and Thomas Weller eds., *Religion und Mobilität. Zum Verhältnis von raumbezogener Mobilität und religiöser Identitätsbildung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Göttingen, 2010); Alexander Schunka, 'Konfession und Migrationsregime in der Frühen Neuzeit', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35 (2009), 28–63; Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (Oxford, 2019); David van der Linden, *Experiencing exile: Huguenot refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700* (Ashgate, 2015).
- 23 Heinz Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten im 16. Jahrhundert: ihre Stellung im Sozialgefüge und im religiösen Leben deutscher und englischer Städte* (Gütersloh, 1972); Alastair Duke, *Reformation and revolt in the low countries* (London, 1990); Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch revolt: exile and the development of reformed protestantism* (Oxford, 1992); Jesse Spohnholz, *The tactics of toleration: a refugee community in the age of religious wars* (Newark, NJ, 2011); Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch revolt and Catholic exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2014).

- 24 Peri, 'The Christian population of Jerusalem in the late seventeenth century', 40.
- 25 On the meaning of the term 'parish' in the Palestinian context, see below.
- 26 On microhistory, see Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in Peter Burke ed., *New perspectives on historical writing* (State College, PA, 1993), 93–113; Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it', *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993), 10–35. More recently on the use of a microhistorical approach, see Francesca Trivellato, 'Is there a future for Italian microhistory in the age of global history?', *California Italian Studies* 2 (2011), 1; John-Paul Ghobrial, 'The secret life of Elias Babylon and the uses of global microhistory', *Past and Present* 222 (2014), 51–93; John-Paul Ghobrial, 'Introduction: seeing the world like a microhistorian, and moving stories and what they tell us: early modern mobility between microhistory and global history', *Past and Present* 242, Issue Supplement 14 (2019), 1–22; John-Paul Ghobrial (ed.), *Global history and microhistory*, Issue supplement 14 of *Past and Present* 242 (2019).
- 27 On the Bethlehem sacramental registers and in general on the archive of Custody of the Holy Land, see Andrea Maiarelli and Narcyz Klimas, *L'archivio storico della custodia di Terra Santa, 1230–1970* (Milano, 2012).
- 28 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registros miste, vol. 1 (25/12/1616–20/12/1671). The volume is divided into parts according to the sacrament registered. I have used *Liber baptizatorum* (13/05/1618–12/05/1699, ff. 1–52); *Liber defunctorum* (07/08/1633–01/11/1638, ff. 53–67); *Liber matrimoniorum* (07/02/1652–25/12/1669, ff. 71–94).
- 29 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721); ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registros miste, vol. 2, *Registrum coniugatorum et defunctorum huius parochiae S. Caterinae...* (ab anno 1669–1735), *Registrum coniugatorum* (28/08/1672–19/06/1735, ff. 1–68) and *Registrum defunctorum* (07/10/1669–18/01/1735, ff. 1–95). I have used these volumes mostly up to the year 1700. For this research, I have also used: ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registros miste*, vol. 1 (1555–1671), see below note 20, and ASCTS, Parrocchie, Gerusalemme, S. Salvatore, Sacramenti *Liber baptizatorum* (1669–1718).
- 30 The best-known example is E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981).
- 31 See also E. A. Wrigley et al., *English population history from family reconstitution, 1580–1837* (New York, 1997), 12–6.
- 32 ASCTS, Curia Custodiale, Registros miste, vol. 1 (1555–1671). In particular, I have used the following parts: 'Battesimi in Gerusalemme, Betlemme e Ramleh' (9 luglio 1617–24 Agosto 1671, ff. 1r–28r.) and 'Nota di quei che si sono coniugati in matrimonio in queste nostre chiese da' frati nostri in tempi diversi' (15/02/1618, 21/07/1671, ff. 82r–87v).
- 33 Andrew Hinde, *England's population: a history since the Domesday survey* (London, 2003), 167.
- 34 On the naming system in the Arab world, see Jacqueline Sublet, *Le voile du nom. Essai sur le nom propre arabe* (Paris, 1991); Mohammed Hocine Benkheira, Avner Giladi, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, Jacqueline Sublet, *La Famille en islam: D'après les sources arabes* (Paris, 2013); Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic names: an introduction* (Edinburgh, 1989).
- 35 See, for example, ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 64, 65 ('Michael di Botticella', Bayt Jālā).
- 36 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 75 and 76. Westernized names became widespread among Eastern Christians in the nineteenth century.
- 37 Italianization of the Arab Ghazāl.
- 38 Norris, 'Dragomans, tattooists, artisans', 74.
- 39 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 27, 36.
- 40 The liturgies and forms of worship employed by the Roman Catholic Church in the West.
- 41 Established in 1622, the Roman congregation De Propaganda Fide was in charge of all the Catholic missionary activity in those places in which there was no established Church hierarchy.
- 42 Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 235. Eastern Catholic Churches are formed of Eastern Christians who have left their mother church to join the Catholic communion. They are in full communion with Rome but have retained their own liturgy and organization.

- 43 Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 275. This happened, for example, in Bayruth, Bethlehem and Acri. The engagement of an Arab priest was often made necessary by the Franciscans' lack of the linguistic competences necessary to deal with an Arab population.
- 44 Paolo Pieraccini, *Il ristabilimento del patriarcato latino di Gerusalemme e la Custodia di Terra Santa: la dialettica istituzionale al tempo del primo patriarca Mons. Giuseppe Valerga (1847–1872)* (Cairo, 2006), 53, but see below.
- 45 Kūmin and Tramontana, 'Catholicism decentralised: local religion in the early modern periphery'.
- 46 Archivio della Sacra Congregazione De Propaganda Fide, Rome (thereafter, ASCPF), Scritture originali riferite ai congressi generali (thereafter SOCG), vol. 242, f. 62v. On the growth of Catholic communities in Palestine, see Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*; Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 86–110.
- 47 ASCPF, SOCG, vol. 542 f. 502v.
- 48 ASCPF, SOCG, vol. 518, f. 345r.
- 49 ASCPF, Scritture riferite ai congressi (thereafter SC), Terra Santa e Cipro, vol. III, f. 215 v. On the spread of Catholicism in Bayt Jālā and Bayt Saḥūr, see Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 106.
- 50 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum Baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 38.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 29, 32, 33, 35.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 43, 49.
- 55 Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 385–98, 511–50. On the development of the Catholic community in Bethlehem also see Norris, 'Dragomans, tattooists, artisans', 68–86.
- 56 Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 99–101.
- 57 On the topic, see Constantin A. Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans 1516–1831* (Jordanville, 2016); Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*.
- 58 *Ibid.* On the *communicatio in sacris* in the Middle East, see also Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie. Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero Ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)* (Rome, 2018).
- 59 Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 125–8.
- 60 In Franciscan registers, the patronymic is expressed by the Latin *filius/filia* (thereafter f.) followed by the genitive.
- 61 ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1, 18.
- 62 Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman century: the district of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Albany, 1996), 162, 164.
- 63 See Mariano Morone da Maleo, *Terra Santa nuovamente illustrata* (Piacenza, 1669), 60.
- 64 ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1 (25/12/1616–20/12/1671), 12.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 68 18/11/1646, see ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1, 84.
- 69 'Ritu et natione grecam', ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 2, *Registrum coniugatorum* (28/08/1672–19/06/1735), 1.
- 70 'Murmur grecorum', *ibid.*
- 71 'Ab [sic] scandala vitanda', *ibid.*, 3.
- 72 Schilling, *Niederländische Exulanten*; Duke, *Reformation and revolt in the low countries*; Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch revolt*; Spohnholz, *The tactics of toleration*; Janssen, *The Dutch revolt*.
- 73 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 38.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 62, 63.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 26. In Franciscan documents, Bayt Jālā is usually called 'Botticella'.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 33, 55, 67.
- 77 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 2, *Registrum defunctorum* (07/10/1669–18/01/1735), 10.
- 78 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 34.

- 79 05/11/1684. See ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Battesimi, *Registrum baptizatorum* (11/05/1669–08/12/1721), 43.
- 80 *Ibidem*.
- 81 See Leonhard Lemmens OFM., *Collectanea Terrae Sanctae ex archivio Hierosolymitano deprompta*, in G. Golubovich ed., *Biblioteca bibibliografica della Terra Santa*, 2nd series, vol. 14 (Florence, 1933), 52: 'Il che ci è costato non poca fatica ridurre detti turcimanni a prendere abitazione in detta villa ('Ayn Kārim)'.  
 82 Peter Clark and David Souden, *Migration and society in early modern England* (Hutchinson, 1987); Richard M. Smith, '55 years since Laslett's 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe': What have we learned about pre-modern geographical mobility?', paper presented at the 16th Warwick Parish Symposium 'Parish and Migration', 12/05/2018. I am grateful to Prof. Smith for letting me read the paper.
- 83 ASCTS, Cura Custodiale, *Registrazioni miste*, vol. 1, 83.
- 84 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni Miste, vol. 1, (25/12/1616–20/12/1671), *Liber baptizatorum*, 20.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 86 Cathy Day, *Wiltshire marriage patterns 1754–1914: geographical mobility, cousin marriage and illegitimacy* (Cambridge, 2013), 201; G. A. Harrison and A. J. Boyce (eds.), *The structure of human population* (Oxford, 1972).
- 87 Matthijs Kalmijn, 'Intermarriage and homogamy: causes, patterns, trends', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), 395–421, at 404. See also Marco H. D. van Leeuwen and Ineke Maas, 'Endogamy and social class in history: an overview', in Marco H. D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas and Andrew Miles eds., *Marriage choices and class boundaries: social endogamy in history* (Cambridge, 2005), 1–23, at 5–10.
- 88 Margaret L. Meriwether, *The kin who count: family and society in Ottoman Aleppo 1770–1840* (Austin, 1999). Among the anthropological literature on the topic, see Ladislav Holý, *Kinship, honour and solidarity: cousin marriage in the Middle East* (Manchester, 1989).
- 89 Meriwether, *The kin who count*, 134; Maria N. Todorova, *Balkan family structure and the European pattern: demographic developments in Ottoman Bulgaria* (Washington, 1993), 46–56; Judith E. Tucker, *In the house of the law* (Berkeley, 1998), 168. See also Beshara Doumani, *Family life in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 2017).
- 90 ACPF, SOCG, vol. 104, f. 118v.
- 91 See above.
- 92 Dispensations are mentioned already in the mixed volume, on burials and weddings, starting in 1619 (up to 1667). According to this register, whose recording is less accurate than the following one, dispensations were awarded in 20% of the 29 marriages recorded.
- 93 G. A. Harrison, *The human biology of the English village* (Oxford, 1995), 43; Malcom Kitch, 'Population movement and migration in pre-industrial rural England', in Brian Short ed., *English rural community: image and analysis* (Cambridge, 1992), 62–84, at 72.
- 94 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni Miste, vol. 1 (25/12/1616–20/12/1671), *Liber matrimoniorum*, 77.
- 95 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni Miste, vol. 1 (25/12/1616–20/12/1671), *Liber baptizatorum*, 38. The number of marriages between the Catholics of Bethlehem and women from Jerusalem is surprisingly low. This may be because, according to the *Custos*, women born in the city were used to staying at home, while in Bethlehem men needed women who could work in the fields. See ACPF, SOCG, vol. 104, f. 118v.
- 96 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni Miste, vol. 1 (25/12/1616–20/12/1671), *Liber matrimoniorum*, 77 and 79.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 78 and 79.
- 98 ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. 2, *Registrum coniugatorum* (28/08/1672–19/06/1735), f. 1.
- 99 *Ibid.*, f. 16 and 19.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 101 The marriage was celebrated on 14/4/1700. The entry also specifies that the wedding took place with the authorization of the parish priest of Bethlehem, to which one of the spouses belonged. ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. 2, *Registrum Coniugatorum* (28/08/1672–19/06/1735), 20.

102 This is the case, for example, in the wedding between Pietro f. Salomone from 'Ayn Kārim and Marta f. Giorgio from Bethlehem, which took place on 15/02/1716. ASCTS, Parrocchie, Betlemme, Santa Caterina. Sacramenti, Registrazioni miste, vol. 2, *Registrum Coniugatorum* (28/08/1672–19/06/1735), 36.

103 See for example Kitch, 'Population movement and migration', 75–6. According to Kitch, the average was five kilometres, and 86% of out-of-village marriages were within 19 km.

104 P. Verniero di Montepeloso OFM, *Chroniche o annali di Terra Santa*, in Girolamo Golubovich ed., *Biblioteca bibliografica della Terra Santa*, 2nd series, vol. 7 (Florence, 1930), 21.

105 Tramontana, *Passages of faith*, 126–7.

### French Abstract

#### **Mobilité géographique et construction d'une identité communautaire en Palestine au XVIIe siècle: l'apport des registres paroissiaux catholiques de Bethléem**

S'attachant au cas de la population catholique présente en Palestine au XVIIe siècle, cet article est consacré au rôle joué par la mobilité géographique dans les processus de construction d'une identité confessionnelle et communautaire. Les travaux sur la Réforme en Europe s'accordent à reconnaître un lien entre renforcement des identités confessionnelles et mobilité géographique. Grâce à l'analyse des registres paroissiaux de Bethléem, certaines caractéristiques de la mobilité catholique du XVIIe siècle en Palestine sont mises en lumière. L'auteur montre comment cette mobilité était liée à la consolidation d'une minuscule minorité catholique et à la création d'un réseau sacramental. Dans une perspective plus large, cette recherche suggère que la mobilité joue un rôle important dans le développement et la consolidation des petites communautés dans le contexte d'une religion entrant en concurrence. D'un point de vue méthodologique, l'étude fait ressortir également l'importance de la microanalyse pour comprendre la mobilité géographique associée aux pratiques et allégeances religieuses.

### German Abstract

#### **Geographische Mobilität und Gemeindebildung in Palästina im 17. Jahrhundert: Erkenntnisse aus den Akten der katholischen Gemeinde Bethlehems**

Dieser Aufsatz dreht sich um die Frage, welche Rolle die lokale Mobilität im Prozess der Konfessions- und Gemeindebildung spielt, und wählt dafür die katholische Bevölkerung in Palästina im 17. Jahrhundert als Fallstudie. Arbeiten zur Reformation in Europa haben einen Zusammenhang zwischen der Bekräftigung konfessioneller Identitäten und geographischer Mobilität aufgezeigt. Aus der Analyse der Pfarrregister Bethlehems ergeben sich einige Charakteristika der katholischen Mobilität in Palästina im 17. Jahrhundert. Der Aufsatz zeigt ferner, wie eng diese Mobilität mit der Konsolidierung einer winzigen katholischen Minderheit und der Bildung eines sakramentalen Netzwerks verknüpft war. Aus einer übergreifenden Perspektiv deutet diese Forschung darauf hin, dass der Mobilität für die Entwicklung und Festigung kleiner Gemeinden im Kontext konkurrierender Religionen eine wichtige Rolle zukommt. Aus einem methodologischen Blickwinkel zeigt sich außerdem, wie wichtig die Mikroanalyse ist, wenn man die mit religiösen Praktiken und Loyalitäten verknüpfte geographische Mobilität verstehen will.