

Social Relations of Greeks with
Dalmatians and Albanians
in 17th Century Venice

Definition of city:

“A human settlement where you probably meet strangers”.

Richard Sennett

- Priority to the concept of social interaction

Greek, Dalmatian and Albanian immigrants in Venice. During 17th Century, these immigrants formed a multi-ethnic, lower class community through marital and friendship networks. This community was not the creation of a single institution (for example, that of fraternity), but it was the outcome of the social interaction that took place in the neighborhoods of Castello.

Sources:

- Church registers of the parishes of Castello
- Fedi di liberta (certificates of Curia Patriarchale that every foreigner needed to obtain in order to get married in Venice).

Greeks, Albanians and Dalmatians, before their arrival in Venice, had already entered into close relations in the dominions of Serenissima:

- Albanians and Dalmatians went in Crete as soldiers (Cretan war, 1645-1669)
- Greeks went in Pola and Istria as refugees and joined the local community after the fall of Crete to the Ottomans in 1669
- Dalmatians in the Peloponnese during the seventh Venetian-Turkish War (1684-1699)
- Dalmatians were the most populous group rowing in Venetian galleys together with the Greeks.

The names and places of origin of some immigrants display the geographical mobility within the area of Stato da Mar:

- Nicoletto Albanese da Napoli di Romania
- Violante, daughter of Leccha Isii Albanese di Candia
- Mattio Susich da Corfu, born in Cherso
- Nicolo Popovich di Castel Nuovo, born in Candia

“Che gia vinti anni in circa mentre era in questa città di Venetia si maritò con un alfiero di nation Albanese al quale non mi arricordo il nome, ma forse era Greco et non Albanese”.

Elisabetta Bortolomeo da Padova, 1663

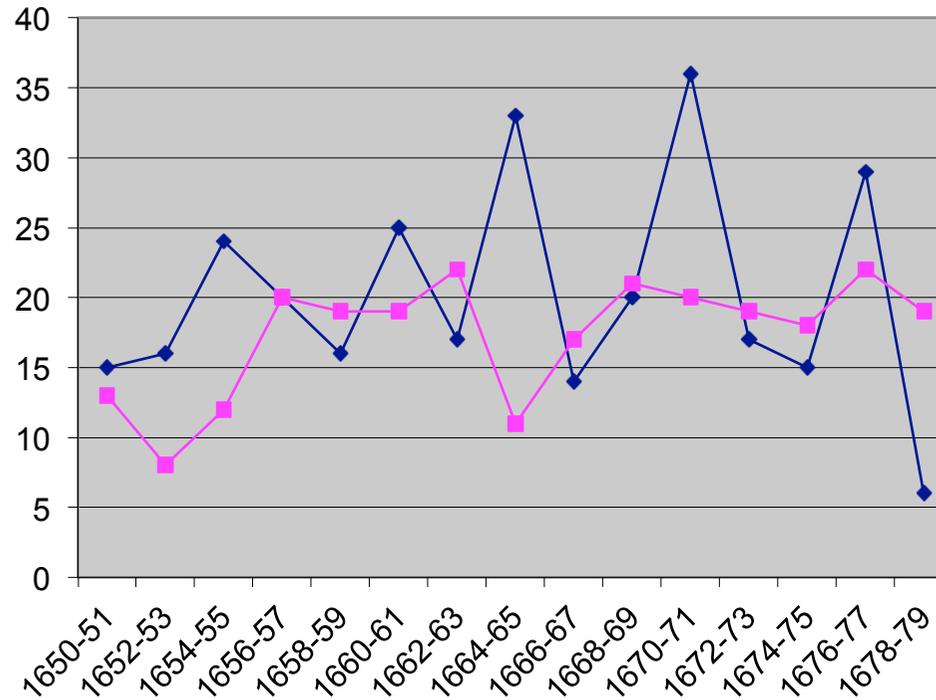
Ha continuato viaggiare sin hora come io per Levante e Puglia, ritrovandosi più volte ne medesimi lochi, con occasione di carico o discarico, praticandosi familiarmente insieme. Quì poi, a Venetia più tempo si siamo praticati stando sempre in questi contorni di Castello, mangiando e bevendo insieme come fratelli, conversando con altri nostri communi amici, Greci e Schiavoni, e conferendo meco li suoi interessi.

Kostantis from Crete referring to Antonio from Zara, 1665

Through the testimonies of the Fedi di liberta, we presume that the biographies of many Greek men and women of Venice are almost identical to those of Albanians and Dalmatians. The narration of a Greek witness in Curia Patriarchale for Maddalena Milevich from Cataro, could refer to any Greek woman of Venice:

Et era puttella che faceva de servitii per le case. Siamo stati sempre e stiamo vicini, ne mai si siamo partiti di detta parrochia [di San Martin], et ogni settimana la vedo, et è donna del mondo. (1654)

Table with the number of Greek marriages from the register of San Giorgio dei Greci (red line) and from catholic parishes of Castello (blue line) 1650-1679



“Giovanni asked me in Greek, so that [the wife] would not understand [what we said], because she was Dalmatian, if I saw anything on the horizon. So I suspected that something bad was about to happen as I had heard that Maria had offended him many times”. When they reached four miles from the coast, Giovanni shot Maria in the neck with a pistol and cut her head off. Then he threw her body into the sea. To the Greek sailors of the ship who asked him what had happened to his wife, he replied: "I ripped the mask out from her face”

Qui a Venetia più tempo si siamo praticati stando sempre in questi contorni di Castello, mangiando e bevendo insieme come fratelli, conversando con altri nostri communi amici e marinari che hanno anco viaggiato.

(Antonio Bocovich di Cataro about Giovanni di Candia, 1665)