Frontiere aperte: Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia. Giuseppina Minchella.
I libri di Viella 185. Rome: Viella, 2014. 384 pp. €35.

Frontiere aperte offers a comprehensive synchronic social and cultural history of the Stato da Mar on the frontiers of the Venetian Republic and its dynamic relationships with the city, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. These overseas territories, which changed names and hands, sometimes at the cost of many lives, comprised a fluid collection of Venetian settlements, mainly walled ports along Venetian trade routes on the Adriatic, Mediterranean, Cretan, and Aegean Seas that surround the Balkins.

Minchella posits a multiplicity of jagged, intersecting frontiers between groups, including Venetians, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Morlachs. She presents the movement across these frontiers as "hybrid religious behavior," which prompted an English woman to suggest that "one would go to mosque on Friday and to church on Sunday" (173). Minchella shows how, as a result of military and economic encounters in the Levant, these frontiers became labile and ambiguous. In Venice, authorities tried three methods to define frontiers and to secure them. Venice subjected Catholic residents to a network of competing Inquisitions, including its own, the papal or the Holy Inquisition, and other local ones. Their purpose was to root out any forms of religious syncretism, not only Catholics who engaged in Jewish practices, but also bigamy, witchcraft, blasphemy, homosexuality, and Protestantism, as well as Islam. Venice also established ghettos as a form of internal exile to separate Jews from Catholics, but unsuccessfully tried to impose them on Muslims. Finally, Venice established a halfway house, the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, to shelter converts to Catholicism, including Jews and Muslims, from their previous co-religionists and to enable them to receive intensive indoctrination. Using a rich array of sources, including inquisitional dossiers and diplomatic dispatches, Minchella establishes the basis for analyzing several categories of frontier contamination in the Levant.

Catholics, including clergy and soldiers, converted to Islam, sometimes several times, to escape persecution, enslavement, and extortion by Turks or to enjoy the benefits of being Muslim, which were often more generous than those offered by Orthodox authorities. Orthodox Christians also converted to Islam or fled to Islamic rulers because they did not want to live under Catholic rule: "Better the turban of the Turks than the mitre of the Latins" (166). Minchella asserts that Orthodox Christians hated the Latin rite more than they did that of the Muslims or the Jews, so after a Latin rite was held in a church, the Orthodox considered it profaned and had to reconsecrate it (261).

The authorities in Venice dealt with great ambiguity with converts to Islam who returned to Venice and to Catholicism. Instead of welcoming them, the Inquisition saw their conversions as voluntary, hence heretical, and subjected them to investigations. At the same time, these lapsed converts were important sources of information about the Turks, another example of the jagged frontiers. Frontiers were also opened when

Venetians brought home captive Muslims, usually as servants and slaves who converted to Catholicism, but they still lived in the liminal state of crypto-Islam.

Catholic authorities also feared conversions of Catholics to Orthodoxy and tried to undermine Orthodoxy by limiting the ordination of priests and blocking the publication of books. Paradoxically, many of the books used in the Orthodox rite were published in Rome and Venice. In Venice itself, the Inquisition was afraid of the influence of crypto-Orthodoxy and investigated suspects, often Catholic women in mixed marriages or in the employ of Orthodox men. At the same time, despite concerns of religious contamination, Catholics tried to bridge the gaps with the Orthodox to cement alliance against the Turks, and the Venetian government allowed an Orthodox presence and religious practice. Thus, in conclusion, the fear of the blurring of boundaries caused the Venetian Catholic authorities to be vigilant against crypto-Muslims and crypto-Orthodox, as well as crypto-Jews, examples of the open frontiers that Minchella claims would later be known as cultural relativism and religious syncretism. I hope that this excellent work will soon be translated into English for the benefit of a wider audience of scholars dedicated to early modern Italian, Ottoman, and Balkan history; relations between Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Catholics; and especially the Stato da Mar.

HOWARD TZVI ADELMAN, *Queen's University, Kingston*