

Portugal meets Italy: the Sephardic Communities of the Diaspora on Italian Soil (1496-1600)

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*Throughout the Mediterranean world, Sephardic Jews assiduously preserved the cultural legacy of medieval Iberia. [...] in Italy they adapted easily to the sophisticated ambience of the Renaissance*¹.

This study follows the itinerary of Portuguese Jews of the Diaspora to some of the then-city-states, principalities, dukedoms, and kingdoms of Italy between 1496 and 1600, or rather, from the time of their «expulsion» from Portugal (1496) and forced conversion to Christianity – namely, Catholicism (1497-1498) – to the period of maximum splendor which they enjoyed in their newly-adopted land (seventeenth century).

Generally speaking, the Jews of the Diaspora are commonly divided between *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim*². Leaving aside the for-

¹ Howard M. Sachar, *Diaspora. An Inquiry into the Contemporary Jewish World*, New York, Harper and Row, 1985, 230.

² As for the origin of this bipartite division within Judaism, perhaps the best explanation can be found in Cecil Roth's postulations:

Jewish literateurs of the Middle Ages identified Spain with the *Sepharad* of the prophecy of Obadiah (verse 20), where the exiles of Jerusalem had found refuge; and in consequence of this, southern Jewry in general ultimately came to be termed, somewhat loosely, *Sephardim*. [...] Germany was termed by the medieval Rabbis *Ashkenaz* (Gen. 10:3; Jer. 51:27); and hence the term *Ashkenazim*, in contradistinction to *Sephardim*, came to be applied to their descendants, and ultimately to northern Jewry as a whole. Though German Jewish life was strongest in the west, a chain of communities spread along the trade routes eastward and southward. [...] The record of the Jews of Bohemia and Hungary begins with this period, and it is known that they played an important part in commercial intercourse between western and eastern Europe.

Cecil Roth, «The European Age in Jewish History, (to 1648)», in Louis Finkelstein, ed. *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 3rd ed., 2 vols., New York, Harper and Row, 1960, 1: 250-249, 1: 221.

mer group, only because it falls outside the scope of this study, the *Sephardim* are a loose agglomeration of different (ethnic)/national peoples, conventionally divided into two major subgroups, the Western and the Eastern, the latter comprising the Italian Jews – also referred to as *Italkim* or *Italkian* group – and the Jews who lived, or still live today, in the vast territory that formed the former Ottoman Empire (1281-1924), particularly former Yugoslavia, the Balkans, Egypt, as well as present-day Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. The Western *Sephardim*, on the other hand, embrace(d) Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, Morocco, and England³.

³ Following are a few terms designating some geographical groups of the Jews of the Diaspora: i. *Ashkenazic*: relating to the Jews of Germany, Austria, the German canton in Switzerland, Central Europe, and their descendants in Central and Eastern Europe, and elsewhere in the world. Technically speaking, it is applied to Jews whose native tongue and/or place of origin are German and/or a German speaking area, a Slavic language and/or area, Romanian, Moldavian, Hungarian and/or Finno-Ugrian; ii. *Bani/Beni/Bnei Israel*: relating to the Jews of India and their descendants elsewhere in the world; iii. *Falashah/Beta Israel*: relating to the Jews of Ethiopia and their descendants elsewhere in the world; iv. *Italkian*: relating to the Jews of Italy, including the Italo-phone parts of Switzerland, Slovenia, Malta, southern France, Corsica, and their descendants elsewhere in the world; v. *Maaravic*: relating to the Jews of north-western Africa and their descendants elsewhere in the world; vi. *Sabra*: relating to the Jews from – i.e., born in – Israel; vii. *Sephardic*: relating to the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula (i.e., Portugal, Spain, and the former independent peninsular kingdoms before the 1492 unification of Castile and León) and their descendants elsewhere in the world; viii. *Temanic*: relating to the Jews of southern Arabia and their descendants elsewhere in the world; ix. *Yevanic*: relating to the Jews of ancient Mediterranean Greek-speaking regions, of the Balkans, of past and present Greece, and their descendants elsewhere in the world; x. *Zarphatic*: relating to the Jews of northern France and their descendants elsewhere in the world. Cf. David Fintz Altabé, *Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. Before and after 1492*, Brooklyn, Sepher-Hermon P, 1993; Richard David Barnett, and Walter Manfred Schwab, eds., *The Sephardi Heritage, vol. 2: Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal. The Western Sephardim. The History of Some of the Communities Formed in Europe, the Mediterranean and the New World after the Expulsion of 1492*, Grendon, Gibraltar Books, 1989; Solomon A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts. Part Two: The Plates*, London, Palaeographia, 1954-1957; Solomon A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts. Part One: The Text*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971; Lucien Gubbay, and Abraham Levy, *The Sephardim. Their Glorious Tradition. From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day*, London, Carnell, 1992; Joseph Abraham Levi, «*La ienti de Sion: Linguistic and Cultural Legacy of an Early 13th-Century Judeo-Italian Kinah.*» *Italica* 1 75 (1998), 1-21. 15-16, note 4; Joseph

The expulsion of the Jews from the newly-formed kingdom of Spain in 1492, as well as their 1496 expulsion and subsequent 1497-1498 forced conversion in Portugal, eventually set in motion the beginning of the Sephardic Diaspora which, given the Age of European Expansion overseas, also coincided with the dislocation of Sephardic Jews into old, new, near, remote, and/or exotic lands, in Europe itself, the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Americas. These two events led to the greatest Jewish migration in modern history, though they also triggered, and in some cases intensified even further, religious intolerance and outright acts of violence, thus «justifying» the ethnic and «racial» cleansing/discrimination against the «other» living in their midst, or rather, in Portugal, Spain, their New World possessions, as well as the rest of Europe.

In 1492 Spanish Jews entered Portugal, a country which shares with its neighbor a long tradition of Jewish presence – one which dates as far back as the first decades of the Common Era or, according to others, almost a millenium before the Common Era – though partaking with the rest of Christian Europe an increasing dislike for Jews, especially if the latter were wealthy merchants or, on the surface, appeared to be prosperous businessmen and shopkeepers⁴.

Though never segregated, during the first three centuries of the first millenium Portuguese Jews lived in *judiarias* – also spelled *judarias*, that is, Jewish quarters – and were free to perform (almost) any kind of profession. Most of them gravitated around the royal

Abraham Levi. «Afonso X, o Sábio, as ciências “islâmicas”, o papel de Afonso X na difusão dessas ciências e o “Liuro conplido en o[s] juízos das estrelas”. Possíveis conexões entre o “Libro conplido en los iudizios de las estrellas” e uma versão portuguesa do século XV escrita em caracteres hebraicos, o Bodleian Library MS. Laud Or. 310.», *Torre de Papel* 4 (1995), 119-191. 182-183.

⁴ There are conflicting reports suggesting that the first contingent of Jews arrived at the time of King Solomon (974-937) or perhaps during the time of the king of Babylon and of the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar II, (605-565), who in 587 before the Common Era destroyed Jerusalem, thus originating the (first) Diaspora of the Jewish people.

court, as physicians, cartographers, astronomers, businessmen, traders, and/or bankers. Down to the fifteenth century, Portuguese monarchs referred to their Jewish subjects as *judei mei*, or rather, my Jews. They thus enjoyed royal protection and autonomy in most matters of life, including the social aspect. Religiously speaking, instead, Jews were governed by the *arrabi-mor* – Medieval Portuguese for *rabi mor* or *rabino maior*, i.e., chief rabbi – who was appointed by the Portuguese crown and served as magistrate for the entire Portuguese Jewish community. The *arrabi-mor* had the power to appoint up to seven regional rabbis, namely, the *arrabi-menores*, namely, minor rabbis, one for each of the seven geographical areas which divide the country. Rather than being the chief rabbi for the entire nation, the *arrabi-mor* was more like the chief administrator who served the interests of his fellow Jewish citizens with the Portuguese Crown, which he served unconditionally. Starting with the fourteenth century Portuguese Jews were required by royal decree to reside in *judiarias*, or rather, Jewish quarters enclosed by walls and doors. However, despite the many restrictions imposed on them – like wearing a distinctive badge and not being able to remain outside of their quarters after the *toques das ave-marias*, (literally: the tolls of the Hail Mary, i.e., the toll of the *Angelus*) – Jews still enjoyed considerable freedom and prestige, a clear indication that, aside the occasional accusations for having caused the plague (as for the Black Plague of 1348) or for being ruthless usurers, these restrictive laws were seldom applied or enforced, mainly due to the economic contribution of the Jews to the welfare of the country. Ultimately, their safety and status as citizens depended upon their ties with the Portuguese crown:

Royalty depended on them for their expertise, as well as for substantial loans in periods of economic crisis. [...] Up to and including King Dinis' reign (1279-1325), they enjoyed considerable protection and favored treatment [...] their standing always proved to be relatively precarious, considering the delicate balance between the dominant forces in Portuguese society.

Thus Jews experienced frequent fluctuations in regard to their rights and liberties, and even suffered occasional pogroms⁵.

In 1492, as a result of their expulsion from Spain, between one hundred and twenty thousand and one hundred and fifty thousand Spanish Jews were allowed to remain in Portugal for a total of eight months, provided that they paid eight *cruzados* each (which equaled to one Venetian ducat) as well as the fourth part of all their valuable possessions. Those who had the means, apparently six hundred families, were also offered the option of paying one hundred *cruzados* for the right to permanent residence in Portugal. Artisans were particularly welcome, since they were seen as prospective skilled makers of weaponry. Six months later, in 1493, King João II (1481-1495), mainly pressured by Lisbon's commoners, enslaved all the adult Spanish Jews who were still on Portuguese soil and sent their underage sons and daughters, roughly seven hundred youths under the age of twelve or thirteen, to the newly-discovered islands of the São Tomé and Príncipe archipelago, in the Gulf of Guinea, West Africa, (ca. 1471), so that, together with the slaves from the adjacent coast, they could help populate this remote territory (1486 for São Tomé and ca. 1500 for the island of Príncipe)⁶.

On December 5, 1496, though reluctantly, King Manuel I (1495-1521), ordered that by November 1497 Jews, Muslims, *Moçárabes*, and *Mudéjares* were required to leave Portugal⁷. Among those

⁵ Eduardo MAYONE DIAS, *Portugal's Secret Jews. The End of An Era*, Rumford, R.I.: Peregrinação Publications, 1999, 11-12.

⁶ For more information on this subject, please see: Norman Simms. «Up From the Footnotes: The History of the Children of São Tomé», *Journal of Unconventional History* 9 3 (1998), 41-58; Norman SIMMS, «Forced Conversion and Abduction: The Children of São Tomé», in *Sects, Sex, and Identity. Selected Papers of the Jewish Studies Seminar, 29-31 August 1997*, Hamilton, New Zealand, Norman Simms, ed. Hamilton, N.Z.: Outrigger Publishers on Behalf of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Jewish Civilization, 1997, 35-52.

⁷ The *Moçárabes* were those Iberians who, since the Muslim occupation of the Peninsula, (711-1492), though inevitably being influenced by Islam, somehow managed to maintain their Christian faith (of Visigothic rite), their Romance vernaculars, as well as their

who succeeded in leaving was the famous rabbi, mathematician, and scientist Abraão Zacuto (ca. 1450-ca. 1522), who later died in Damascus⁸. Fearing the loss of precious capital and minds, instead of continuing with the expulsion King Manuel I soon opted for the forced (and symbolic) baptism of all Jews living in his country, thus in a sense eliminating the «Jewish question», a cause of discomfort between Portugal and Spain, at the time politically and familiarly tied to each other⁹. On March 19, 1497 all Jewish minors (the age limit was conveniently extended to twenty) were thus baptized and prohibited to leave, hence their parents had no option but to remain in Portugal and with them stayed their wealth:

The act of conversion was accomplished through deception, by assembling in Lisbon, the only officially-sanctioned port of embarkation, all those wishing to leave. Those assembled were then ceremonially baptized and declared citizens of the realm¹⁰.

Roman-Gothic culture and civilization, especially between the eighth and the eleventh centuries. The *Mudéjares*, instead, were those Iberian Muslims – of either European, Arab, or Berber origin – who after the Christian *Reconquista(s)*, succeeded in remaining in present-day Portugal and Spain without having to convert to Christianity and, most of all, succeeded in keeping some of their laws and customs. For more information on the Muslims expelled in 1497 as well as the *Aljamia* in Portugal, please see: L. PATRICK HARVEY, «When Portugal Expelled its Remaining Muslims. (1497)», *Portuguese Studies* 11 (1995): 1-14; L. PATRICK HARVEY, «*Aljamia* Revisited», *Portuguese Studies* 2 (1986), 1-14.

⁸ Abraham bar Samuel bar Abraham Zacut, also known as Abraão Zacuto, was born in Salamanca but could trace his origins to France, via Castile. The 1492 expulsion forced the Zacutos to migrate west and enter Portugal. Due to his superior expertise in scientific matters, Abraão Zacuto was used by the Portuguese crown in the preparation for the Vasco da Gama's voyage to India. In 1496, in Leiria, Portugal, Abraão Zacuto published the astronomical work *Almanach Perpetuum*, whose tables proved to be instrumental for Portuguese seafaring navigation.

⁹ King Manuel I's first marriage in 1496 was with Isabel – daughter of Isabella of Castile and Fernando of Aragon, and widow of the recently deceased heir to the throne Afonso – who died of child labor. His second wife was the Infanta Maria of Castile (1500). King Manuel I's third wife (1518) was Leonor of Austria, daughter of Felipe I of Castile (1506) and Juana of Aragon, and sister of King Carlos I of Spain (1517-1556), V King and Emperor of Germany (1519-1556).

¹⁰ Haim BEINART, *Atlas of Medieval Jewish History*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1992, 85.

In doing so King Manuel I triggered the creation of a new social, economical, and religious class within Portuguese society – namely, that of the New-Christian – one which will be instrumental for trade throughout the then-known world, particularly Holland, the Italian city-states, the Americas, the Ottoman Empire, and last but not least, Portuguese India. Before the 1496 expulsion and 1497 forced conversion to Catholicism, Portuguese Jews who voluntarily and willingly accepted baptism were called *Bons Cristãos*, or rather, Good Christians. On April 21, 1499, King Manuel I officially forbade New-Christians to leave Portugal, who by now were also nicknamed *Marranos* and/or *Conversos* (Converts)¹¹.

¹¹ *Marrano* is Medieval Spanish for swine, its Portuguese equivalent being *marrão*, *varrão*, *verrão*, *merrão*, and/or *borrão*. Both derive from the reconstructed Latin etymon **verranus*. The term was applied to Portuguese and Spanish Jews and their descendants who secretly continued to practice (a form of) Judaism after their expulsion from Spain (1492) and/or expulsion/forced conversion to Catholicism in neighboring Portugal, (1496-1497). Most likely the word was used pejoratively to humiliate the *anúsím*, plural of *anús*, i.e., those [Jews] who were forced to embrace Catholicism. At the same time, though, the term came to denote a Judaizing New-Christian, i.e., a Crypto-Jew. As for the term *Marrano*, most likely the term comes from a Semitic root, either Arabic – i.e., the trilateral form *HaRaMa*, particularly the II form *HaRRaMa*, with the double meaning of «consecrating to God» and of «forbidden thing/person» – or Hebrew, as in the term *bet-resb-mem*, i.e. «expelled». The same meaning can also be found in Syriac and Ethiopian. Furthermore, the Talmudic term *beb-mem-resb-HaMaRaH* means «a change of religion», i.e., «apostasy», plus the suffix *-nun*, denoting the person who does the action, which is very similar to *mem-resb-nun*, or rather, «to pretend», and *yod-oo-mem-resb-nun-yod yoomrani*, i.e., «a pretentious person», in other words, «an impostor». It seems obvious, then, that we are witnessing a case of contamination, where the only common denominator is homophony and not etymology. However, the designation *Marrano* was also used to humiliate Jews and Muslims alike, mainly when Iberian Christians wanted to emphasize the inferior status of their Semitic neighbors. Cf. Elkan ADLER, «Documents sur les Marranes d'Espagne et de Portugal sous Philippe IV», *Revue des Études Juives* 49 (1904), 51-73; Elkan ADLER, «Documents sur les Marranes d'Espagne et de Portugal sous Philippe IV», *Revue des Études Juives* 50 (1905), 53-237; Elkan ADLER, «Documents sur les Marranes d'Espagne et de Portugal sous Philippe IV», *Revue des Études Juives* 51 (1906), 97-120; 251-264; Charles DU FRESNE CANGE, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 1883-1887, 11 vols., Bologna, Forni, 1981-1982; Eytan BERMAN, «My Trip to Belmonte. A New Look at the Portuguese Marranos», in *Jews in Places You Never Thought of*, Ed. Karen Primack, Hoboken, Ktav, 1998, 64-76;

Otherwise known as *Anusim* (Hebrew for «the forced ones») and/or Crypto-Jews, the *Marranos* were the *Sephardim* (Iberian Jews) and their descendants who, especially over the first three centuries of the first millenium of the Common Era, were either forced to convert to Christianity, i.e., Catholicism, or felt that they had to convert in order to avoid persecution, expulsion, imprisonment, and, with the establishment of the Iberian Inquisitions – Spain (1478-

Jacques CUKIERKOM, and Robert H. Lande. «Searching for Brazilian Marranos. A Remnant Returns», in *Jews in Places You Never Thought of*, Ed. Karen Primack, Hoboken: Ktav, 1998, 100-112; Julio D’GABRIEL, «We Marranos of Brazil», in *Jews in Places You Never Thought of*, Ed. Karen Primack, Hoboken: Ktav, 1998, 112-116; Arturo FARINELLI. «Marrano», in *Studi letterari e linguistici dedicati a Pio Rajna. Nel quarantesimo anno del suo insegnamento*, Florence: Tipografia Enrico Ariani, 1911, 491-555; Francisco FERNÁNDEZ Y GONZÁLES, *Instituciones jurídicas del pueblo de Israel*, 1881, Valencia: Librería París-Valencia, 1999, 269; Thomas F. GLICK, «On Converso and Marrano Ethnicity», in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World. 1391-1648*, Ed. Benjamin R. Gampel, New York: Columbia UP, 1997, 59-76; Heinrich GRAETZ, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: aus den Quellen neu Bearbeitet*, 11 vols, Leipzig: O. Leiner, 1905, 8: 80-81; Lucien GUBBAY, and Abraham LEVY, *The Sephardim. Their Glorious Tradition. From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day*, London, Carnell, 1992, 9-11; *History of the Corporation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews «Sheharit Israel» of Montreal, Canada. One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Montreal*, Montreal: The Congregation, 1918, 7; 9; Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, «*La ienti de Sion*: Linguistic and Cultural Legacy of an Early Thirteenth-Century Judeo-Italian *Kinab*», *Italica* 1 75 (1998), 1-21, 15-16, note 4; Juan ANTONIO LLORENTE, *Historia de la Inquisición*, 10 vols., Madrid: Imprenta del Censor, 1822-1825, 1: 142; Menahem MANSOOR, *Jewish History and Thought. An Introduction*, Hoboken: Ktav, 1991, 545; David GONZALO MAESO, «Sobre la etimología de la voz “marrano” (Criptojudío)», *Sefarad* 15 2 (1955), 373-385; Israel SALVATOR RÉVAH, «Les marranes», *Revue des Études Juives* 118 1 (1959-1960), 29-77; Robert RICARD, «That Word Marrano», in *Jews in Places You Never Thought of*, Ed. Karen Primack, Hoboken: Ktav, 1998, 55-57; Cecil ROTH, «The European Age in Jewish History, (to 1648)», in Louis Finkelstein, ed. *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 3rd ed., 2 vols., New York: Harper and Row, 1960, 1: 250-249, 1: 221; Cecil ROTH, «The Religion of the Marranos», *Jewish Quarterly Review* 22 (1931-1932), 1-33; Cecil ROTH, *Historia de los Marranos*, trans. Aaron Spivak, Buenos Aires: Editorial Israel, 1941, 32-34; Renato TRAINI, Ed. *Vocabolario arabo-italiano*, 3 vols., 1966-1973, Rome: Istituto Per l’Oriente, 1993, 1: 208-210; Paul WEXLER, «Marrano Ibero-Romance: Classification and Research Tasks», *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 98 (1982), 59-108; Antonio ZANOLINI, *Lexicon chaldaico – Rabbinicum cum rabbinorum abbreviaturis*, Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1747, 276.

-1834) and Portugal (1536-1773) – trial, which most of the time meant torture and eventually death.

Minority groups as Portuguese Jews and *Conversos*, though all in their own way and time, were indeed instrumental in helping Europe cross over from the Dark Ages (476-1453) to the Modern Era (1453-1789). Without their presence and multi-faceted contributions to knowledge, the Portuguese Age of Discoveries, officially begun in 1415 with the siege of Ceuta, and the colonization of the Americas, to name only two of the most important events that had an everlasting impact on the future direction of the world, would have been virtually impossible at this point in time. Based upon their centuries-old expertise in and knowledge of trade, science, and technology – originated in India, the Middle East, and the Hellenic world, and transmitted to the West through the intermediary of Islam – Portuguese New-Christians and Jews of the Diaspora were able to create an atmosphere where the latest discoveries in science and technology could be used first by the Iberian kingdoms and then by the rest of Europe, thus opening the doors to the Modern Era. In doing so, Portuguese Jews and *Conversos* were relying upon the frequently too idyllically described *Convivência* (literally, Living Together) of their Iberian forefathers, a time in which, though not perfect, and often even undesired, there existed in the Peninsula a somewhat peaceful interaction between minority and hegemonic groups, i.e., Jews and Muslims, on one side, and Christians, on the other, especially during the reign of the king of Castile, Alfonso X, the Wise, (1252-1284)¹².

Jewish presence and active role in the process of transfer of

¹² For more information on this period, please see: Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, *An Edition and Study of the 14th-Century Italian Translation of Alfonso X, The Wise’s Libros del saber de astronomia*, 5 vols., Diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ann Arbor, UMI, 1993; Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, *Text and Concordance of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. 8174 Libro di sapere di astronomia, Alfonso X, El Sabio. (14th-Century Italian Translation by Guernuccio Federighi)*, Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1993.

knowledge is noticeable first in the East and then in the West, the latter comprising the *Maghreb*, Muslim Sicily¹³, and *al-Andalus*¹⁴, namely present-day Portugal and Spain:

The intellectual dependency of Muslim Iberia on the Levant made inevitable the reception of such advances in the west and the peculiar social configuration of *al-Andalus* facilitated their transmission to the Jewish and Christian worlds¹⁵.

Between 1492 and 1497 both Portuguese and Spanish Jews who managed to escape made their way to either North Africa (the Maghreb and Egypt) and southern France (Bordeaux and Bayonne), or to the Italian peninsula and the Ottoman Empire, particularly the Balkans, former Yugoslavia, and present-day Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. The Eastern Mediterranean soon became the area where most Iberian Jews settled and from where trade, social, and economical ties were established with the rest of the Mediterranean world, particularly Venice and North Africa. As for

¹³ Especially during the reign of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, (1220-1245/48). For example, from the University of Naples, founded by Frederick II in 1224, Islamic Aristotelianism entered the Italian Peninsula and thence the rest of Europe. Toledo and the Kingdom of Sicily were in fact the two main points from which Europe was introduced to the Oriental/Islamic culture, as well as Hellenic and ancient Greek, Middle Eastern, and Indian science and philosophy. Cf. Giorgio ABETTI, *The History of Astronomy*, trans. Betty Burr Abetti, London: Abelard-Schuman, 1952, 52-53.

¹⁴ *Al-Andalus* is the Arab designation for «Atlantis», instead of «Vandalisya», or rather, «the land of the Vandals». However, in Medieval Arabic *al-Andalus* meant «Spain», i.e., the Iberian Peninsula as a whole, not in the political sense, but rather, in its geographical meaning, comprising present-day Portugal, Spain, and, during more than seven hundred years, due to the ever-changing political events, almost never covering the same geographical-political areas:

Ándalus (vocábulo que designa o território da Península Ibérica ocupado pelos muçulmanos, cuja superfície variou ao longo dos séculos).

João SILVA DE SOUSA, *Religião e Direito no Alcorão*, Imprensa Universitária, 55, Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1986, 13.

¹⁵ Bernard F. REILLY, *The Medieval Spains*, Cambridge: CUP, 1993, 123.

the Italian peninsula, only Rome (including the Papal States) and Ferrara will be the receptacle of permanent Sephardic communities who came directly from Portugal and Spain. Temporary and, most of the time, individual or family nuclei were scattered through central and northern Italy, particularly in the Emilia Romagna and Marche regions, or in Pisa, Florence, Padua, and Venice:

A few of the exiles were dispersed in the provinces of Italy [...] in the city of Ferrara, in the districts of Romagna, the Marches of Ancona, the Patrimonium, and in Rome¹⁶.

They came attracted by the prospects of freedom of religion as well with the desire of establishing or continuing practicing their commercial enterprises. During the sixteenth century the words New-Christian or *Marranos* were solely used to denote Portuguese Jews and *Conversos* who arrived in Italy either directly from Portugal, most of the time via Spain, or from any place of the 1492-1496/97 Sephardic Diaspora. Most of them, were in fact tied to trade and the business world.

Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) believed that twenty years was enough time for the New Christians to fully adapt themselves to their new religion, after which time those who were still found practicing a «hybrid» form of Christianity or, even worse, showed any signs of (crypto)-Jewish adherence, were going to face severe consequences.

As it might be expected, a number of Portuguese New Christians kept the religious practices of their forefathers alive by performing them in secret, thus the expression crypto-Judaism. In other words, to the best of their knowledge and limited by the precarious conditions in which they were put, New Christians were inwardly faithful to Judaism whereas outwardly they practiced Catholicism. They thus strove to appear as *Bons Cristãos*, «Good Chris-

¹⁶ Alexander MARX, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore*, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1944, 86, 96.

tians», utterly devoted to the Church and the Crown but secretly rejecting parts if not all of the Catholic dogma.

In dealing with his Jewish/New-Christian subjects, King Manuel I was very ambiguous, thus leaving room for both protective measures and outright restrictions. His main goal was to see that they were fully integrated within Portuguese (i.e., Old Christian) society. In doing so, the king tried to forbid marriages among New-Christians. As a way of preventing *Marranos* from relapsing into Judaism, King Manuel I also restricted their travel outside of his kingdom.

Low Sunday of 1506, i.e., the first Sunday after Easter, Lisbon was the scene of very vicious and violent attacks against New-Christians, unparalleled in Portuguese history. Being instigated by Dominican monks, for three days and nights the populace lynched, killed, and burned at the stake almost two thousand Portuguese *Marranos*.

The following year, as a way of amending the atrocities performed against his New-Christian subjects, King Manuel I granted the *Marranos* the right to travel and, most of all, to conduct any kind of business abroad, though they were bound to use only Portuguese ships for any kind of transaction and freight movement within, to, and from Portugal and all the Portuguese possessions throughout the world.

As a way of avoiding a permanent Diaspora of New-Christians, and with them, of precious capital, the king tried to keep at least one member of the *Marrano* family involved in foreign trade in Portugal. These «living hostages» in a sense guaranteed the return of the New-Christians to Portugal and with them their lucrative business. New-Christians were now equal to Old-Christians and, for the duration of twenty years, they were not to be judged for their religious/ethnic background or alleged crypto-Jewish practices.

In 1516, mainly due to pressure from the Portuguese clergy, the nobility, and the overall feeling of the country, King Manuel I was

again faced with the Jewish question, namely, Judaizers and the secret practices of Judaism. The Portuguese monarch was thus forced to ask Pope Leo X (1513-1521) to establish the Inquisition in Portugal. But it was only with their respective successors – King João III (1521-1557) and Pope Clement VII (1523-1534) – that the Inquisition was officially allowed to operate in Portugal and all its possessions overseas, particularly in Portuguese India, (1560-1820). In 1536, the Portuguese Inquisition was in fact instituted, though only in 1547 it became fully functioning as a repressive institution aimed at eradicating all traces of Judaism from Portuguese soil¹⁷.

Due to the late establishment of the Inquisition, during the first half of the sixteenth century Portugal was the stronghold of crypto-Jewish presence, consisting mainly of exiles from Castile who, as it might be expected, «where more loyal to their past than those who had preferred to remain in Spain»¹⁸.

One of the ways of avoiding the Inquisition was escape. The Portuguese Jews who were able to leave the country followed the route of their predecessors. Most of the Portuguese New Christians of the Diaspora who decided to settle in Europe, chose the northern route, eventually establishing residence in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Hamburg, London, and Rotterdam, to name just the most prominent centers. A few also settled as far north as Denmark and Sweden and as far west as Poland. The *Sephardim* who migrated to former Yugoslavia, the Balkans and, by way of North Africa, to the Levant, all under the control of the

¹⁷ Besides Lisbon, the Portuguese Inquisition had also branches in Évora, Coimbra, Porto, Lamego, and Tomar.

¹⁸ Jonathan IRVINE ISRAEL, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism. 1550-1750*, Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989, 25. See also: João LÚCIO DE AZEVEDO, *História dos Cristãos Novos Portugueses*, 1922, Lisbon: Livraria Clássica Editora A.M. Teixeira, 1975, 109, 120; Amílcar PAULO, *Os criptojudens*, Porto: Athena, 1969 [1970], 33-40; Israël SALVATOR RÉVAH, «Les marranes», *Revue des Études Juives* 118 1 (1959-1960), 29-77. 45-53; Yosef H. YERUSHALMI, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso. A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*, 1971, Seattle: U of Washington P, 1981, 31-47.

Ottoman Empire, established themselves mainly in Aleppo, Constantinople, Smyrna (Izmir), Salonika, as well as present-day Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Instead of being labeled *Sephardim*, these Iberian Jews of the Diaspora were known as *Frankos* – also spelled *Francos*, that is, Franks – a known euphemism for northern/north-western Europeans.

During 1497-1500, as well as the first decades of 1530 and 1580, that is, when the Portuguese Inquisition intensified its attacks, Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* arrived in the thousands; however, given their diverse cultural origins and political-historical vicissitudes, they never fully assimilated with their coreligionists of the area. Furthermore, given that most of them were forced to be crypto-Jews, they were now very adamant in their adherence to the religion of their forefathers:

[...] the subsequent Portuguese migration was of considerable importance as it remained culturally and linguistically distinct from the Spaniards throughout the Near East. Separate Portuguese synagogues arose not only in Salonika and Constantinople but throughout the Near East including Syria, Lebanon, and the Holy Land. [...] The Portuguese friar Pantaleão d'Aveiro, who toured the Holy Land in 1580s, found that the Portuguese Jews, whom he considers very numerous, having formerly been Christians themselves, were the most vehement critics of and – to his horror – scoffers at Christianity in the Levant¹⁹.

Once free from the danger of being exposed as crypto-Jews, and only when the laws of the host country allowed it, these Iberian Jews of the Diaspora, who called themselves *Gente da Nação* – or rather, People of the Nation – publicly returned to Judaism without

¹⁹ Jonathan IRVIN ISRAEL, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, 1985, Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989, 26. Also see: Pantaleão de Aveiro, *Itinerário da Terra Sancta e todas as suas particularidades*, Lisbon, 1600, 226, 302, 307 verso, 309, 326 verso; Amnon COHEN, and Bernard LEWIS, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978, 156, 158, 160; Abraham GALANTÉ, *Hommes et choses juifs portugais en Orient*, Istanbul, 1927, 5-7.

any fear of retaliations, as in the case of Holland and, to a lesser degree, England²⁰. Portuguese-Jewish presence was in fact so pervasive, covering a vast geographical area embracing four continents – from Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East, to the Americas, India, and South-East Asia – that soon the term Portuguese became synonymous with Jewish, especially within the context of trade:

Indeed, they were so widespread throughout Europe [and beyond] that Portuguese Christians complained that when they traveled abroad, people assumed they were Jewish²¹.

Just like the Netherlands, the self-governing city entities of present-day northern and central Italy, like Ancona, Ferrara, Florence, Genoa, Livorno, Mantua, Modena, Padua, Pisa, Turin, and Venice, as well as the kingdom of Naples, Rome and the Papal States, were relatively friendly towards the Jews residing in their territories, be they local or foreign, provided that they paid their taxes and did not disrupt the overall peace of the state²². The same would apply to Portuguese Jews and *Marranos*:

²⁰ Though New Christians were allowed to reside in the Netherlands, King Charles I of Spain (1517-1556) and V of Germany (1500-1556), who also ruled over the country, readily instituted the Spanish Inquisition so that he could put an end to all crypto-Jewish practices. With the Union of Utrecht (1597), *Marranos* and openly-declared Jews gradually began professing their religion openly and publicly. Jews were officially expelled from England in 1290, being readmitted only in 1656.

²¹ David FINTZ ALTABÉ, *Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. Before and After 1492*, Brooklyn: Sepher-Hermon P, 1993, 54.

²² The Papal States were small independent states covering a geographical-political area in the Italian peninsula that, approximately during the years 756-1870 – i.e., until the adhesion of Rome to the Italian Republic, (1861) – belonged to papal sovereignty. Geographically speaking this territory was situated in the central part of the Italian peninsula. Obviously, its temporal-spiritual center was Rome, with its *Patrimonium Petri*, which, during the centuries, grew considerably, also thanks to the donations from Christian emperors and believers residing on Italian soil as well as elsewhere in Europe.

There was hardly a city in Italy that did not have a Portuguese *converso* community. They were particularly numerous in Ferrara, Ancona, Pisa, Naples, and Venice, slipping from one to the other when their presence was no longer welcome²³.

As for the expelled Iberian Jews, a few made their way to Naples where a few decades prior a contingent of Sephardic Jews also enjoyed protection by the king of the Two Sicilies, i.e., King Alfonso I of Aragon and Sicily (1442-1458), and the local Jewish communities. King Alfonso's successor, Ferrante I, (1458-1495), though solely guided by economic factors, treated these Iberian emigrants very favorably. In 1469, and again in 1491, he in fact issued a decree granting all foreign Jews residing in his kingdom the same privileges which his Jewish subjects enjoyed²⁴. Needless to say, their freedom had a price: 1,800 ducats in exchange for the right of (permanent) settlement in his territory. They were thus considered full citizens of the land, entitled to assistance and care, especially after the 1492 expulsion from Spain²⁵. Among the most notable exiles to settle in Naples were Isaac Abrabanel, (1430-1508), his sons Judah, also known as *Leone Ebreo il filosofo* (Leon the Jew, the Philosopher), Joseph, and Samuel, as well as their uncle Jacob Abrabanel.

Iehuda Leão ben Isac Abrabanel (ca. 1465 – ca. 1521) was a wealthy physician who in 1483 left Portugal for Spain, where he remained nine years, before continuing unto Italy in 1492. His brother Samuel was highly regarded among the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. In fact Samuel Usque calls him «tremagisto», that is, «three times master», great in Law, Nobility, and Richness (*Consolacão*, III: 35). Judah's father, Isaac Abrabanel, took refuge in To-

²³ David FINTZ ALTABÉ, *Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. Before and After 1492*, 54.

²⁴ Cf. Nicola FERORELLI, *Gli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana al secolo XVIII*, Turin: Il Vessillo Israelitico, 1915, 71; Cecil ROTH, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946, 269-288.

²⁵ Nicola FERORELLI, *Gli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana al secolo XVIII*, 79.

ledo following the conspiracy against the Portuguese monarch, King João II. After being in Naples, Messina, Corfù, Monopoli, Genoa, Venice, Florence, and a few other Italian cities, Judah eventually settled in Padua. He is famous for his *Dialoghi d'amore* (Love Dialogues) written in 1535 and published in Rome. In 1484, Joseph Abrabanel, Isaac's nephew and son-in-law, also left Portugal for Spain. Between September 1492 and December 1494, Isaac Abrabanel was in Naples, holding an important position at the royal court. In 1495, he visited Palermo, Messina, and Corfù. Between 1496-1502, Isaac resided in Monopoli. Only in 1503 he was able to reach Venice where he soon established commercial ties between this city and Portugal. The ever-enticing spices were in fact at the core of any trade at the time. Unfortunately, his political maneuvering did not lead to anything. Isaac thus spent the remainder of his life devoted to his writings, particularly the exegesis of the first four books of the Pentateuch.

In 1593, the Grand Duke of Livorno, Fernando I opened his doors to all the Jews of the Diaspora, granting them: immunity from any persecution; pardon for crimes committed or allegedly committed in other countries prior to their entry in his territory, as in the case of new-Christian apostasy; no taxation; the right to vote; and, most importantly, the right to practice their faith in public without fear of retaliations. Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* thus began arriving in great numbers, soon contributing to the makeup of the local Jewish communities, covering areas as far as Pisa. Aided by the Portuguese Jews who came from Venice, the Sephardic community of Livorno soon became the prominent Jewish center of the entire southern part of Europe, only rivaled by Amsterdam in the North. The *Santa Esnoga* (Holy Synagogue) of Livorno became the home of the *Nazione Ebraica*, (Jewish Nation), a mixture of Portuguese and *Italkian* Jews. Undoubtedly, Portuguese Jews and New-Christians contributed to the transformation of Livorno into one of Europe's most active cities and commercial centers of Europe.

From Livorno spices, corals, soap, silk and woolen clothes made their way to the rest of the then-known world. Expatriated Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam also founded academic circles where poetry as well as science were being discussed and analyzed. In a little over four decades the *Nação Portuguesa* (Portuguese Nation) went from one hundred souls to seven thousand members. The Portuguese language was in fact the *lingua franca* of trade, being used in all transactions, down to the eighteenth century, when it was finally supplanted by Italian²⁶. Most of the books, religious as well as secular, were printed in either Portuguese or Spanish, with an occasional Italian edition/translation.

During this time of religious persecution, Ferrara was a known haven for many Sephardic Jews. Upon their arrival in Ferrara, the Usques openly declared their ties with Judaism, thus becoming active members of the Sephardic and *Italkian* communities. In Italy the Usque brothers established the Sephardic printing press, though it is still not clear if Samuel and Abraão were either brothers or close relatives. The first publication in Spanish published by the Usques is of 1553, followed by the Jewish version of the Spanish Bible, prayer books for the Sephardic communities of the Diaspora, and, in 1554, Bernardim Ribeiro's *Menina e Moça*²⁷.

The Usques were originally from Spain. Abraão Usque, whose secular name was Duarte Pinhel, wrote in Portuguese, whereas Samuel expressed himself better in Spanish. The Usques must have left for Italy in or around 1545, escaping the Portuguese Inquisition,

²⁶ The last-known document written in Portuguese is of 1821, a re-edition of an earlier publication governing the proper institution of the dowry.

²⁷ Bernardim Ribeiro (ca. 1475-ca. 1544) was a Portuguese poet and lyric writer, accredited for having introduced bucolic poetry to Portugal. His work is a happy combination of three novelistic trends: the sentimental, the pastoral, and the chivalrous. His most famous work is *Menina e Moça*, by far the best example of sixteenth-century Portuguese sentimental novel. Cf. Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, «Bernardim Ribeiro», in *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Portuguese and Brazilian Literature*, Mónica Rector, and Fred Clark, eds. 2 vols, Brucoli Clark Layman, Detroit: Gale Thomson, 2003, volume 1, *Portuguese Literature*, 259-267.

perhaps with a copy of Bernardim Ribeiro's work still in manuscript form. They eventually took refuge in Ferrara where Abraão opened a private printing shop. Between 1551-1557 Abraão and Samuel published many books and treatises on Jewish matters, religious as well as secular, including philosophical essays.

In 1495, the French invasions of Naples ended this brief, yet unparalleled time of tolerance. On October 26, 1496, Jews were officially expelled from the kingdom. However, a few Sephardic Jews were asked, or rather, forced to remain and/or to return and establish loan offices, obviously taxed. Jacob Abrabanel and his nephew/son-in-law, Samuel, were also appointed chief loan officers. In 1525, the Portuguese David Ibn Yahia, rabbi of the exiled Iberian communities, gave a detailed account of daily life on Italian soil²⁸. Only sixteen years later, namely in 1541, Jews were finally expelled from the kingdom of Naples, though a few, most of whom of Iberian origin, succeeded in remaining at Empoli²⁹.

In November 1492, Duke Ercole I d'Este allowed twenty-one Iberian Jews, expelled from Genoa, to enter and establish themselves in Ferrara³⁰. Among the notables stand out rabbi Santo Abennamias, his Hebrew name being Shem tov Nahmias, as well as two very famous physicians, Ferrer el Levi and Rabbi David Marich³¹. Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* enjoyed protection under

²⁸ Alexander MARX, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore*, 155-166; *Hebrew Union Collection Annual* 1 (1904), 605-616. Descendants of the Yahia family are today known in Italy as the Jacchia. As their Portuguese predecessors, they are also famous for their scholarly achievements and prominence within the local Jewish community.

²⁹ Cf. Cecil ROTH, *History of the Jews of Italy*, 281-288; I. Sonne, *From Paul IV to Pius V*, Jerusalem, 1955, 216-220.

³⁰ The Este family governed over Ferrara (thirteenth-sixteenth centuries) as well as Modena and Reggio Emilia (thirteenth-eighteenth centuries), the latter cities with important Jewish communities in their midst. For more information on the Este, particularly as it pertains to their ties with the Jewish communities of the time, please see: Andrea BALLETTI, *Gli ebrei e gli estensi*, Reggio Emilia: Anonima Poligrafia Emiliana, 1930; Cecil ROTH, *History of Italian Jews*, 187-189.

³¹ Leonello MODONA, «Les exiles d'Espagne a Ferrare en 1493», *Revue des Études Juives* 15 (1880-1892), 117-121.

Ercole I, Alfonso I, and Ercole II d'Este, son of Alfonso I and Lucrezia Borgia. Their favorable attitude towards the Jews appears to be a family tradition. Their ancestor and founder of the dynasty, Duke Borso I, also sought and obtained from Pope Paul II (1464-1471) full absolution for all Jews residing in his territories. Mantua was also a chosen site for many Sephardic Jews who «preferred to move to the territories of rulers who were better disposed, like the Gonzaga»,³² (1328-1708):

[...] dal momento che i ferraresi erano negati al commercio, il duca aveva ritenuto opportuno concedere agli «hebrei hispani» la licenza di intraprendere tutte le altre attività mercantili e artigianali [...] Liberi di professare la loro religione, gli ebrei avrebbero dovuto osservare soltanto un po' di prudenza e discrezione. «I documenti della Cancelleria del duca non usano infatti i termini ufficiali di *conversos*, *christiani novi*, o marrani, come invece fanno a Venezia, Anversa e Roma: sia ebrei che marrani, a Ferrara sono tutti chiamati «hebrei hispani?»»³³.

In 1524, for example, Portuguese New-Christians were allowed to settle in Ferrara and return to their ancestral faith freely. During the entire sixteenth century this city was the most important center of Jewish life, where freedom of religious expression also contributed to the creation of a free printing press in Hebrew and/or in Romance languages printed in either the local vernacular or in Hebrew characters³⁴. This climate of religious tolerance continued even when the duchy of Ferrara fell under papal dominion in 1593. This was because most of the Portuguese New-Christians were already first-generation Portuguese Jews, hence they were born into the Jewish faith. Having never been baptized they were thus by law

³² Atilio MILANO, «Italy», in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols, Jerusalem: Keter, 1972, 9: 1115-1132, 1123.

³³ Edgarda FERRI, *L'ebrea errante: Donna Grazia Nasi dalla Spagna dell'Inquisizione alla Terra Promessa*, Milano: Mondadori, 2000, 71.

³⁴ Cf. Cecil ROTH, «The Marrano Press at Ferrara, 1552-1555», *Modern Language Review* 38 3 (1943), 307-317; Cecil ROTH, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 313-315.

immune from the Inquisitions, Portuguese as well as Italian. Samuel Usque's fierce and unparalleled critique of the Inquisition, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel*, (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel, 1553, translated as *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel. Third Dialogue*, 1964), the 1553 Ferrara Bible, and the 1554 publication, in Portuguese, of Bernardim Ribeiro's *Menina e Moça*, ([Story of the Young and Innocent] Maiden and Lass), are just a few examples of the intellectual fervor which the Italian duchy enjoyed during the time³⁵.

Among the most prominent Portuguese names of seventeenth-century Florence are António Dias Pinto, a well-known jurist teaching Canonical Law at the University of Pisa, and the two jurists Francisco Jorge and Duarte Pereira, the latter also known as Judah Lombroso.

As a whole, the millennium that goes from the fall of the Western Roman Empire, (ca. 450 of the Common Era), to the Renaissance, (fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries), was a revival of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning – which eventually marked the transition from Medieval to Modern times. Of all places in Europe, this gradual but very active social ferment originated in Italy during the fourteenth century³⁶. Up until this time, and well

³⁵ Considered by many as the most important Jewish literary piece ever written in Portuguese, this pastoral novel is centered around the lament of shepherds and their speculations on a possible consolation from all the sufferings that befell upon the Jews. For the critical edition of Samuel Usque's work, please see: Samuel USQUE, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel*, Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989; Samuel USQUE, *Consolação às tribulações de Israel*, Joaquim Mendes dos Remédios, ed. 3 vols, Coimbra: Francisco França Amado, 1906-1908; Samuel USQUE, *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel. Third Dialogue*, ed., and trans. Gershon I. Gelbart, New York: Bloch, 1964. For a commentary on Samuel Usque's role as an historian, please see: Abraham AARON NEUMAN, *Samuel Usque: Marrano Historian of the Sixteenth Century*, Philadelphia: [s.n.], 1946.

³⁶ Regarding the notion of Italy/Italian, we would like to point out that:

[...] Italy and Italian are here used in their geographical-historical meaning, comprising the Italian Peninsula proper, Sicily, Sardinia, and other regions and/or cities once part of the Roman Empire, and now politically not part of Italy, e.g., Nice, Pola, Spalato, just to name a few which, off and on, throughout the centuries, shared the same fate of their Italian counterparts.

into the following century, the *Italkim* – numerically and ethnically speaking still a minority – managed to keep their multi-faceted cultural traditions and, of course, their ancestral faith³⁷. In fact, aside the Judeo-Greek communities, the *Italkim* are to be reckoned as the oldest Jewish settlement in Europe.

Though in the Peninsula for already a long time now, almost a millennium for some, hence being Italian and Jew was inevitably the same, some *Italkim* could trace «their origins to lands as far apart as Spain [Portugal] and Turkey»,³⁸ or, as Tullia Zevi also pointed out, the Italian Jews: «have always managed to keep under the same communal roof *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim*, natives rooted in Italy and Jews from other lands, who brought with them the wealth of their specific cultures»³⁹.

On Italian soil, as well as elsewhere in Western Europe, Jews successfully managed to create small but well-organized systems which, as an umbrella, encompassed and covered each individual, the local *Italkian* community, and their needs, providing all the necessary help and assistance required for growth and, most of all, subsistence, secular as well as religious:

Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, «*La ienti de Sion: Linguistic and Cultural Legacy of an Early Thirteenth-Century Judeo-Italian Kinalb*», *Italica* 1 75 (1998), 1-21. 14. In other words, the concept of Italy/Italian is a modern notion, dating back only to the end of the nineteenth century, with the unification of the Italian peninsula, (1861).

³⁷ Though numerically insignificant, hence the term minority, the *Italkim* were most of all spread over a wide geographical area, which included the Peninsula proper as well as the islands of Sicily and Sardinia:

A small Jewish population of no more than forty thousand people was scattered in at least five hundred miniscule groups, perhaps even many more, among an overall Italian population of some eight million.

Robert BONFIL, «The *Book of the Honeycomb's Flow* by Judah Messer Leon: The Rhetorical Dimension of Jewish Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Italy», *Jewish History* 6 1-2 (1992), 21-33, 21.

³⁸ Robert BONFIL, «Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century», *Jewish History* 3 2 (1988), 11-30, 11.

³⁹ Tullia ZEVI, «Foreword», in Vivian B. Mann, ed. *Gardens and Ghettoes. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1989, xii-xiii, xiii.

At the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th centuries, the «Holy Community» of the Jews of Western Europe appears as an organization which bound the community together in affairs of religion, politics, social and communal activities, economics and law⁴⁰.

At the dawn of the first millennium and in the early Middle Ages, southern Italy is the irradiating place for Jewish culture. However, things begin to change. At the end of the thirteenth century, persecution in the Kingdom of Naples⁴¹ left many Jews with either conversion to Christianity or exile, i.e., migrating north: Rome, Central and Northern Italy. After a century, Jewish life in Southern Italy, except for Sicily, was almost entirely eradicated, having lost its past splendor and fame, alas never to be regained. From now on, Jewish settlements are to be found in Rome and to its north.

In the meantime, the great trading cities of central and northern Italy begin to free themselves from the remote indirect control of the German Empire⁴², thus managing to organize themselves into semi-autonomous independent states. The Jews residing here, to the north of Rome, are mainly merchants and traders, especially in the great Italian maritime republics, such as Pisa and Genoa. Before the thirteenth century, however, only to a few Jews permanent or temporary residence to the north of Rome was allowed⁴³. This attitude was the result of fear of economic competition rather than a religious bias. Gradually, though, in the following two centuries things lead to a change, to the invitation of Jewish settlements within their cities, due partly to the Catholic Church. For a long time the Church had been very adamant in its crusade against Christian usury:

⁴⁰ Yitzhak FRITZ BAER, «The Origins of the Organization of the Jewish Community in the Middle Ages», *Zion (Tsiyon)* 15 (1950), 1-41, [in Hebrew], iii [in English].

⁴¹ Under Angevin rule, 1266-1302.

⁴² I.e., the early Hapsburg, (1273-1308), and, later, the Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburg, (1438-1806).

⁴³ E.g., Milan, Ferrara, Bologna, Forlì, Padua, Perugia, Urbino.

[...] according to the Vulgate version of the New Testament, Jesus enjoined his disciples to lend, expecting nothing (in Greek actually means, «never despairing»). As a result of all this, the Church developed a passionate opposition to the idea of «usury», as it was called, however small the rate might be (the term means simply the charge made for the «use» of money)⁴⁴.

The same could be said for Jewish religious law on the subject of usury. In fact the Talmud – «dealing with a close-knit agricultural community»⁴⁵ – equals usurers to murderers; moreover, charging interest on any kind of loans is also strictly forbidden. However, both the Church and the many Italian city-states were in desperate need of capital, or rather, of outside investments. The *Italkim* were therefore encouraged and, in some cases, forced to take up such an activity and to charge an interest rate. It was precisely at this point that many central and northern Italian cities, city-states, and principalities began to invite Jewish loan bankers. Jewish founders of banks were readily issued a *condotta*, i.e., privilege, so that during a fixed amount of time, they could establish a Jewish community and live among Christians without fear of persecutions or restrictions. The need for capital was great, and Jewish moneylenders served the purpose. Needless to say, most of the considerable profits accumulated by them found their way back into the local Christian community and, of course, the Church:

In order to pay the overwhelming taxation levied upon them, the Jews were compelled to raise yet further the inevitably high rate of interest which they charged; their enforced rapacity led to resentment and riot; and insecurity

⁴⁴ Cecil ROTH, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 104. Actually the interpretation is based upon a faulty rendering of the Greek:

[...] for some time past a theological (not, it is important to note, humanitarian) objection had developed in ecclesiastical circles to the institutions of interest or “usury” – based partly on an erroneous interpretation of a familiar passage in the teachings of Jesus (Luke 6:35), partly on the doctrines of Aristotle. Slowly, this came to be enforced, first against churchmen, and then against the laity.

Louis FINKELSTEIN, ed., *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 229.

⁴⁵ Cecil ROTH, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 104.

raised the rate still higher. More and more the attacks upon them tended to be economic in origin, however much the ostensible pretext was religious⁴⁶.

In fact, the *Italkim* were oftentimes compared to sponges: first they had to be filled up with money, and then they had to be squeezed dry. Furthermore, the higher-than-usual number of *Italkim* residing amongst their fellow Italians was also cause for concern:

The infusion of larger numbers of Jews into these regions evoked hostile reactions from elements of the local populace as well. The concentrated and conspicuous presence of Jewish moneylenders was particularly offensive to churchmen, especially members of the Franciscan order⁴⁷.

Ironically, when later the Church and the local city-states started to practice usury on their own, through the establishment of special institutions, instead of calling it by its name, used an euphemism, and renamed it *Monti di Pietà*, i.e., Mounts of Piety, or rather: «public free-loan associations with the avowed purpose of eliminating Jewish usury in Italy altogether»⁴⁸. However, these money-lending activities forced upon the *Italkim* eventually contributed to even more negative sentiments against them by the local population, which inevitably led to rioting, persecutions, and, legally speaking, the enforcement and/or enactment of new and stricter laws against Jews residing in the Peninsula, unless the Italian city-state or region in which the *Italkim* sojourned was governed by a sole autarchic figure:

[...] the republics tended to look upon the Jews with disfavor, and if economic circumstances compelled their admission it was usually not for long. The absolute rulers, less swayed by religious fanaticism and more objec-

⁴⁶ Louis FINKELSTEIN, ed., *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 229-230.

⁴⁷ David B. RUDERMAN, «At the Intersection of Cultures: the Historical Legacy of Italian Jewry», in Vivian B. MANN, ed. *Gardens and Gbetos. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, 13.

⁴⁸ David B. RUDERMAN, «At the Intersection of Cultures: the Historical Legacy of Italian Jewry», in Vivian B. MANN, ed. *Gardens and Gbetos. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, 13; Louis FINKELSTEIN, ed. *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 239.

tive in their political outlook, were more tolerant, and the ubiquitous, versatile, experienced Jewish banker was often a welcome figure for his own sake at their courts⁴⁹.

Thus the end of the thirteenth century is the turning point for such «internal Diaspora». The *Italkim* move North. They make their appearance in central and northern Italy, living in close contact with the Christians in the cities as well as in the countryside.

From 1492 down to 1570 the Italian Peninsula was the scene of Jewish migrations, internal as well as external Diasporas, that eventually led to a massive restructuring and changes in the «religious practices and attitudes» of the *Italkim*. These transformations effected the demography as well as the social-cultural makeup of Italian Jewry who, though never a monolithic group, had managed to keep a cultural Italic common denominator. Ultimately, the dawn of the fifteenth century witnessed:

[...] the emigration of French exiles, the southerly movement of German Jews, the continuous migration of Italian Jews from the center of the peninsula northward, and, finally, the arrival of refugees from Spain [and, later, Portugal]⁵⁰.

Already towards the end of the thirteenth century and definitively during the first decades of the fourteenth the Jewish communities residing in Italian soil saw themselves completely involved in the system of money-lending, both on a small- and large-scale level. Given the papal prohibition against usury and money-lending practiced by Christians, Jews were thus gradually pushed into this profession, either willingly or unwillingly. At around the same time, many Italian Jews from Rome, the kingdom of Naples, and the regions to its immediate south, including Sicily, began to migrate

⁴⁹ Cecil ROTH, *The History of the Jews of Italy*, 115.

⁵⁰ Robert BONFIL, «Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century», *Jewish History* 3 2 (1988), 11-30, 27, note 2.

North, particularly to the prosperous principalities, duchies, and city-states of Ferrara, Genoa, Livorno, Mantua, Modena, Perugia, Pisa, and Venice. Soon after *Ashkenazi* Jews, French Jews, and Moroccan Jews also entered the Italian Peninsula, thus joining their Italian coreligionists in the profitable business of money-lending and establishing banking institution from which they could perform all kinds of monetary transactions.

It is against this background that the Iberian Diaspora to the Italian Peninsula should be placed and analyzed. Regardless of their Iberian origin, the *Italkim* called their Portuguese and Spanish coreligionists *Ponentini* – i.e., those who came from the West, or rather, those who came from the land where the sun sets – if indeed they had arrived directly from the Iberian Peninsula. On the other hand, if they had entered Italy from the Ottoman Empire they were nicknamed *Levantini*, in other words, those who came from the East, where the sun rises:

Hundred of thousands of obstinate Jews, known as *Sephardim*, a word of ancient Semitic derivation denoting Spain, were scattered to every corner of Europe and the Levant. Many of these gradually sifted down through northern Europe into the warmer and more welcoming climate of Northern Italy [...] The Sephardic Jews who came directly to Italy from the Iberian peninsula came to be referred to as *ponentini*, meaning western or setting, whereas those Jews who had lived or sojourned in Greece or Turkey before settling in Italy, were known as *levantini* meaning eastern or rising⁵¹.

In the sixteenth century, the Italian peninsula was politically-geographically divided into three major areas: the Papal States, which ruled central Italy, including Rome; the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, (1503-1707), which, though officially part of the Aragonese crown, belonged to Spain; and Northern Italy, a mosaic of independent or semi-independent city-states, principalities, and/or dukedoms:

⁵¹ Driscoll P. DEVINS, *Home of the Living. A Venetian Cemetery*, Verona: Trinton P. CIERRE Edizioni, 1991, 17.

As in the German Empire, the fragmentation of the country into city states and independent duchies meant that Jews could always find somewhere to take them in. If one state expelled them, they would be welcomed in another⁵².

Italkim, Ashkenazim, Sephardim, North African Jews, and French Jews all contributed to the multi-composite nature of Italian Jewry of the time. Portuguese Jews and *Conversos* were thus the latest stratum added to the mix. Needless to say, this living together was not always happy or desired, thus causing understandable rivalries and religious disputes:

The new Italian communities became more international in flavor, and understandably the process of political and social self-definition and differentiation that these increasingly complex communities underwent was sometimes accompanied by considerable stress, internal conflict, and even bitter struggles over religious and political authority⁵³.

In 1541, the physician Amato Lusitano, (1511-1568), a Portuguese Jew of the Diaspora living in Antwerp since 1534, accepted a teaching post at the University of Ferrara⁵⁴. His autopsies perfor-

⁵² Elena ROMERO CASTELLÓ, and Uriel MACÍAS KAPÓN, *The Jews and Europe. 2,000 Years of History*, 1994, Edison, N.J.: Chartwell Books, 2000, 62.

⁵³ David B. RUDERMAN, «At the Intersection of Cultures: The Historical Legacy of Italian Jewry», in *Gardens and Ghettos. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, 13.

⁵⁴ Also known as João Rodrigues de Castelo Branco, Amato Lusitano was born in Castelo Branco and studied Medicine in Salamanca. At the age of eighteen Amato Lusitano was already practicing Medicine. In 1521, Amato Lusitano returned to Portugal but a few years later, in 1534, for fear of anti-Semitic persecution, left for Antwerp. Amato Lusitano is famous for having detected the existence of valves in human veins, thus opening the door for further investigations on blood circulation. Amato Lusitano wrote all his treatises in Latin where he reports his observations and theories. He was fluent in Greek, Latin, and Arabic. Amato Lusitano was a firm believer in the direct observation of pure facts. During the latter years of his life, fearing for his safety, Amato Lusitano eventually moved to Salonika, one of the major Portuguese-Jewish centers in the East, where he later died. Between 1549-1561 Amato Lusitano wrote *Centuria*, a seven-volume work where he expounds his medical theories based on his first-hand observations of human bodies.

med on real human corpses and his lectures on Anatomy were so renowned that even the Church and the Portuguese Crown were willing to close an eye to his Jewish background. On many occasions Amato Lusitano was in fact asked by Pope Julius III, (1550-1555), his sister, Ms. Ciochi del Monte, as well as the Portuguese ambassadors to the Holy See, to cure them from their illnesses. By 1551 Ferrara had a Portuguese-Jewish cemetery; needless to say, the city had become the center of Portuguese presence in Italy, also owing to the migration of refugees from Ancona. In 1574, an anonymous complaint to the Portuguese Inquisition mentions at least thirty family members of Portuguese-Jewish origin residing in Ferrara. Their presence is put to an end in 1581 when Rome finally succeeded in forcing the city-state to take some action against them. A few remained, some were imprisoned, and the rest migrated north-east, making their final halt in Venice. In the seventeenth century Ferrara still had more than one thousand Portuguese Jews in its midst.

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century Ancona and later Ferrara became the receptacles of a sizeable number of Portuguese New-Christians. Given its geographical position, strategically located halfway between Venice and the Balkans/Ottoman Empire, the city of Ancona, in itself an important port on the Adriatic coast, was mostly appealing to the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly Portuguese Jews and *Marranos*. Politically speaking, Ancona was part of the Papal States, therefore before establishing long-term residence there Jews had to seek approval from papal authorities⁵⁵. Having been in Ancona for already seventeen years, in 1547 Portuguese Jews finally received permission from Pope Paul III (1534-1549) to reside in his territories. Pope Julius III (1550-1555) continued this policy of tolerance towards the Jews. Now more than ever Ancona prospered economically as well as socially and the

⁵⁵ The Papal States comprised the following present-day Italian regions: Campania, Emilia Romagna, Marche, and part of Umbria.

Sephardim partook in this affluence. Unfortunately, Pope Paul IV (1555-1559) ordered severe persecutions and *autos-de-fé* against all Jews living in his territories. In 1556, he devoted all his energies to the Roman Inquisition – established by the then Cardinal Caraffa, future Paul IV, in 1542 – accusing the Jews of supporting the Protestant cause throughout Europe. With his July 12, 1555, Bull, *Cum Nimis Absurdum*, (For inasmuch it is Absurd [that Jews should be permitted to live among Christians in the same neighborhoods]), Pope Paul IV required that all Jews be confined strictly in ghettos and forced to wear a special headgear:

They were henceforth to live segregated from all other persons in a special street or, if they were too many for this, in a special quarter, which was to be cut off from the rest of the town and to have only one single entry and egress. They were to be allowed no more than one synagogue in each city, all other having to be destroyed and no new ones tolerated henceforth. They were no longer to possess real estate [...] They were to wear the distinguishing badge of shame to mark them off for contumely from others – a yellow hat in the case of men, some other prominent token (in practice a veil or kerchief) for women. [...] the account-books were henceforth to be kept in the Italian language and writing (not in Hebrew letters as hitherto)⁵⁶.

Furthermore, Jews could not any longer employ Christian servants and attend universities; Jewish doctors were banned from treating Christian patients; Jewish retailing and banking were severely restricted, thus the only allowed activities were secondhand trade of merchandise and, of course, peddling.

On April 30, 1566, Pope Paul IV ordered all Portuguese Jews and *Conversos* who settled in Ancona arrested and sentenced as criminals. Fifty were imprisoned and twenty-four men and one woman were burned at the stake. Almost three hundred Portuguese *Marranos* were imprisoned without due trial. Ironically, Portuguese Jewish presence came to an end as a result of an economic

⁵⁶ Cecil ROTH, *History of the Jews of Italy*, 295.

embargo on the port of Ancona devised by the New-Christians Grácia Nási Mendes (ca. 1510-1569) and her nephew José Nási (ca. 1524-1579)⁵⁷. With the help of the Ottoman Empire the Portuguese succeeded in imposing a boycott of the city and conveying all

⁵⁷ Grácia Nási was born in Portugal in ca. 1510. Of New-Christian family she was baptized as Beatriz de Luna. In 1518 Grácia married the New-Christian Francisco Mendes – also known as *O Grande Marrano*, i.e., the Big Marrano – a prominent merchant and banker with numerous branches throughout Europe, particularly Holland, the headquarters being in Anverse. Francisco came from an old Iberian-Jewish family, the Mendes-Benveniste, who can boast among his ancestors court physicians and rabbis, in Castile as well as Aragon. With the death of her husband in 1537, Grácia settled in Holland where she began her anti-Inquisition campaign. Her passionate desire to help exiled Portuguese New-Christians took her first to Venice, where she was eventually denounced for her crypto-Jewish faith, and then to Ferrara, where she finally returned to Judaism and adopted the name Grácia Nási. Towards the latter part of her life, in 1553, Grácia finally settled in Constantinople dedicating the rest of her life to helping the Portuguese and Spanish communities of the Diaspora. Her nephew and son-in-law, José Nási, was also of a *Marrano* family, his Christian name being João Micas. In Holland, José studied at the University of Louvain and worked at one of the family banks. Before joining his aunt in Constantinople, José also lived in France. In Istanbul José's reputation soon reached the ears of the authorities, particularly the attributes regarding his moral integrity. Sultan Süleyman II, The Magnificent, (1494-1566), who acceded in 1520, in fact nominated José Duke of the Isle of Naxos and, thanks to his aunt's intercessions, entrusted him with the construction of a rabbinical school on the Isle of Tiberius, which was completed in 1565. On Tiberius José also planted mulberry trees, instrumental for the establishing of the silk industry. José kept his title until his death in 1579. His legacy was continued by another Portuguese Jew, Ibn Yaish, also known as Salomão Abenais, a very wealthy merchant of the area. For more information on Grácia Nási and José Nási, please see: Elizabeth STORR COHEN, and Ottavia NICCOLI, eds. *Rinascimento al femminile*, Rome, Laterza, 1993; Dahlia GOTTAN, *Retratos de mujeres judías del renacimiento*, Madrid: Organización Internacional de Mujeres Sionistas, Departamento de Educación, 1991; Aron DI LEONE LEONI, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese negli stati estensi, per servire a una storia dell'ebraismo sefardita*, Rimini: Luisè, 1992; Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, «A mulher sefardita das diásporas ibéricas: ponte entre culturas», *Faces de Eva* 9 (2003), 35-58; Joseph ABRAHAM LEVI, ed. *Survival and Adaptation. The Portuguese Jewish Diaspora in Europe, Africa, and the New World*, New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 2002; Gad NASSI, Rebecca TOUEG, and Dahlia GOTTAN, *Doña Gracia Nasi*, Tel-Aviv: Women's International Zionist Organization, Department of Education, 1991; Rebecca TOUEG, and Dahlia GOTTAN, *Jewish Women in Post-Biblical Sources*, Tel-Aviv: Women's International Zionist Organization, Department of Education, 1988; Guido NATHAN ZAZZU, *E andammo dove il vento ci spinse:*

business transactions to the nearby port of Pesaro⁵⁸. Alas, along with the Christians, also the Jews living in Ancona, most of whom were traders relying on overseas commerce, suffered from this economic drawback. As a way of recovering from their huge losses, Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* decided to leave Ancona heading North: i.e., Ferrara and, when this city was annexed to the Papal States in 1593, Venice, by far the most important center of Jewish culture – *Italkian* as well as *Sephardim* – in the entire Italian peninsula.

Unlike her sister cities in Italy, Venice offered the Portuguese Jews and (former) *Marranos* freedom of worship and a relatively safe place where they could establish permanent residence: i.e., the ghetto, or rather, a separate section of the city, away from the city proper⁵⁹. The Venetian ghetto soon became the model for many Sephardic communities of the Diaspora, from Amsterdam, London, and North Africa to the Balkans and the Americas. The ghetto was composed of *Sephardim*, who in their turn were divided into *Ponentini* – (Westerners), or rather, Portuguese and Spanish Jews who arrived from the West – and *Levantini*, (Eastern), i.e., Sephardic Jews who came to Venice from the East, mainly from Constantinople, Corfù, and Salonika. Both groups were deeply involved in Venice's lucrative maritime trade. Their synagogue was in a sense a manifesto to their role and prestige within Venetian society. Rabbis, doctors, philosophers, writers, scientists, as well as wealthy merchants all contributed to the renaissance of Portuguese Jewry outside of

la cacciata degli ebrei dalla Spagna, Genoa: Marietti, 1992; Abraham GALANTÉ, *Don Joseph Nassi, Duc de Naxos*, Istanbul: Societ  Anonyme de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, 1913.

⁵⁸ For a view of *comverso* commercial activities before the boycott, please see: Viviana BONAZZOLI, «Ebrei italiani, portoghesi, levantini sulla piazza commerciale di Ancona intorno alla met  del Cinquecento», in *Gli Ebrei a Venezia, secoli XVI-XVIII*, Gaetano Cozzi, ed. Milan: Edizioni di Comunit , 1987, 727-770.

⁵⁹ The word ghetto apparently was first used in 1516 in Venice. One of the city's islands had an old foundry, which was called in Venetian *gheto*. There are, however, many controversies as to the veracity of this account and the exact etymology of the word ghetto. In all likelihood the Venetian *gheto* derives from the Latin *jacto*, i.e., «throwing» or rather, «I throw». Its equivalent in standard Italian is *getto*.

Portugal. By 1541, the *Ponentini* and the *Levantini* were in the *Ghetto Vecchio* while the *Ghetto Nuovo* was set aside for the increasing number of *Ashkenazim* of German, Hungarian, Romanian, and/or Slavic stock who were starting to make of Venice their new safe haven. Of all the «foreign» Jews residing in Venice, the Portuguese and Spanish exiled soon became the most numerous and, due to their expertise in trade, the most prosperous, mainly thanks to their commercial ties with the Ottoman Empire:

Sapevano leggere e scrivere; ma pi  colti di tutti erano i mercanti [Sephardic], il cui principale lavoro era prestare denaro in cambio di pegni⁶⁰.

Venice's role as the center of Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* was however being challenged by Livorno, soon to be followed by Pisa, Modena, and Reggio Emilia. Charts were quickly drawn by their respective rulers in order to attract *Ponentini* to settle in their dominions, continue performing their business transactions as usual and, at the same time, also enjoy full religious freedom, including the right to erect new synagogues⁶¹.

On July 10, 1593, with the *Livornina* Chart, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I declared the city-port of Livorno a free zone, a place where people from all religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds could live and work freely without fear of persecutions, including the Inquisition(s). In other words, it protected:

[...] men of the East and West, Spaniard and Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Hebrews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians and others. [...] We moreover desire that [...] none shall be able to make any inquisition, in-

⁶⁰ Edgarda FERRI, *L'ebrea errante: Donna Grazia Nasi dalla Spagna dell'Inquisizione alla Terra Promessa*, 103.

⁶¹ For more details, please see: Andrea BALLETTI, *Gli ebrei e gli estensi*, Reggio Emilia: Anonima Poligrafia Emiliana, 1930; Umberto CASSUTO, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze nell'et  del Rinascimento*, 1918, Florence: Galletti e Cocci, 1965; Cecil ROTH, «A Marrano Martyr at Rome», in *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnow*, Berlin, 1930, 180-186; Cecil ROTH, «I Marrani in Italia: nuovi documenti», *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* (1933-1934), 419-443.

quiry, examination or accusal against you or your families, although living in the past outside our Dominion in the guise of Christians⁶².

It is obvious, then, that the Grand Duke of Livorno was specifically inviting into his territories Portuguese and Spanish *Marranos* who by this time were already residing in nearby city-states, principalities, and Papal State possessions, namely: Ancona, Ferrara, Pisa, and Venice. In doing so Ferdinand I was following in the footsteps of his father, who extended similar privileges to Ottoman Muslims in 1551, as well as other rulers of the Peninsula, among whom stand out Duke Ercole II d'Este and the duke of Savoy who, in 1550 and 1572 respectively, guaranteed protection towards the *Marranos* who chose to live in their midst. In less than fifty years Livorno saw its Jewish population grow in numbers never-before seen, soon rivaling Amsterdam for prestige as well as economic weight. Economically speaking, then, Livorno also became one of the major trading centers of the Mediterranean, the linking point between northern and western Europe, from one side, and North Africa and the Levant, from the other:

Above all, the Jews of Leghorn were merchants and industrialists. The Mediterranean coral trade, the manufacture of silk and soap, were almost entirely in their hands. So powerful an influence did Leghorn exert in Mediterranean commerce that in Tunis the Livornese (Leghorn) Jewish trading colony maintained its own synagogue, the largest in the city⁶³.

Due to the overwhelming presence of Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* in the area, Portuguese became the official *lingua franca* for the entire Mediterranean basin area – from the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic to the Ionian and the Aegean – as well as the trading cen-

⁶² Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, *Livornina*. July 10, 1593, in Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews of Italy*, 346.

⁶³ Howard M. SACHAR, «Italian Twilight», in *Farewell España. The World of the Sephardim Remembered*, Nova Iorque, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, 228-2??, 231.

ters of northern Europe, position which it held down to the middle of the nineteenth century, when all trade transactions gradually stopped being conducted solely in Portuguese.

The Sephardic synagogue of Livorno, for example, soon became the most elegant in the entire peninsula, surrounded by equally important printing press (in Hebrew as well as in the Romance vernaculars) and rabbinical schools. Religiously speaking, Portuguese had to compete with Spanish as the sacred language of the Sephardic communities in Italy. Services were conducted in either or both the Iberian languages; burial tombstones also bore witness to this predilection for the Sephardic element. Judeo-Portuguese and Judeo-Spanish secular hold on local *Italkian* traditions and values was also pervasive and all-encompassing, imposing itself over the local and foreign Jewish communities for a little over two hundred years, i.e., approximately until 1715, when it was finally supplanted by Italian:

So high was their cultural standard, and so strong their assimilatory capacity, that they succeeded in absorbing the later immigrants – even the Italians [...] who – [...] embraced their ritual, made use of their language, and adopted their customs⁶⁴.

Until the end of the Renaissance (1450-1570), the three branches of Judaism residing in Italian soil, namely, the Sephardic/Oriental, the *Ashkenazi*, and the autochthonous *Italkim*, usually referred to as the *tre nazioni* (the three nations), lived side by side with each other, at times interacting, but most of the times being at odds with one another. During the last two decades of the sixteenth century, though, some signs of fusion and assimilation appeared. In a short time these diverse Jewish peoples finally seemed to converge into mainstream Italian Jewry. Once the linguistic barrier was broken, the cultural and ritual differences soon followed suit:

⁶⁴ Cecil ROTH, *History of the Jews of Italy*, 346.

Once Italian replaced the languages brought along by the Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Oriental Jewish immigrants, the original distinctions disappeared; all the Jews living in the country became Italian Jews, and as such contributed to the emergence of a distinct Italian Jewish culture⁶⁵.

During the first decades of the seventeenth century a few European centers, particularly those connected to international trade, saw an unparalleled increase in Jewish population. Cities like Amsterdam, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Prague, and Venice, as well as the Italian principalities of Livorno and Mantua, were literally being inundated by Jewish merchants and their families. Most of them were Portuguese Jews and/or former Portuguese New-Christians who, while living in the Ottoman Empire, reverted to Judaism without fear of retaliations⁶⁶. In 1629, Portuguese New-Christians were finally allowed to travel without any restrictions. Portuguese Jews in Italy thus followed the fate of their Italian coreligionists not only in matters of faith but also in an economical sense: trade and business with the rest of the world. Given its central position in the Mediterranean, the city-states of the Italian peninsula encouraged their Jewish citizens to establish commercial ties with the East, mainly the Ottoman Empire, and the West, or rather, the Iberian peninsula and northern Europe, as well as the South-West. North Africa and, beyond the sea, the Americas were thus further places where *Italkim* and Sephardic Jews of the *Nação Portuguesa* (Portuguese Nation), took their economic expertise and their incredible surviving skills. Italian and Portuguese Jews both contributed to the passage from Renaissance Europe, initiated by the Italian city-states, to the modern age of mercantilism, only possible with the aid of the Portuguese New-Christians. It was in fact from cities like Livorno,

⁶⁵ Raphael PATAI, *Tents of Jacob. The Diaspora – Yesterday and Today*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971, 403. See also: Moses A. SHULVAS, «The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy», *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1951), 3-24, 11, 13.

⁶⁶ Joseph NEHAMA, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, 7 vols., in 6, Salonika: Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique, 1931-1936, III, 57-58.

Venice, and Ferrara that Portuguese Jews and *Marranos* reached the New World, thus opening new doors for international and transatlantic trade, which continued uninterrupted for three centuries.

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