
LIVORNO AND THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

In March 1744 the War of the Austrian Succession grew into a maritime conflict between England and France that extended into the Mediterranean. Early that summer an English warship captured a vessel sailing a French flag from Smyrna to Livorno that belonged to the Francos, likely the wealthiest of the Sephardic families of Livorno with branches in London. Once news of the seizure of the ship reached the Tuscan port, Ergas and Silvera promptly informed Benjamin Mendes da Costa, another prominent Sephardic merchant in London, about what happened. In their letter they implored God to return the rich cargo, which in large part belonged to what they referred to as “our nation.”¹

Used in the Middle Ages in reference to foreign university students, foreign merchants or corporate representatives at political and ecclesiastical councils, the term *nation* in early modern Europe designated foreign and ethnoreligious communities on which sovereign authorities conferred a distinctive collective legal status that came with specific rights and obligations designed to integrate them into the fabric of local society and economy while setting them apart from the majority of the population. Jews were the only non-Christian nation granted the right to worship publicly in parts of Europe, although this and other rights were subject to local restrictions. For much of the sixteenth century secular and religious authorities as well as ordinary people were suspicious of the expression “the Portuguese nation” (or simply *nação*, in Portuguese) because they doubted that all the Portuguese living in Antwerp, southwestern France, and Italian cities such as Ferrara, Ancona, Venice, and Florence were really Catholic. Later in the century, the same expression became the official designation of newly formed Sephardic communities in Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam (see figure 2.1).

As Ergas and Silvera’s letter shows, Sephardic Jews appropriated the term



Figure 2.1. Capitals of the Western Sephardic diaspora in Europe and the Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

nation to distinguish themselves from the Ashkenazic Jews in central and eastern Europe, the Jews of Avignon, Italian Jews (*Lo'azim*) and Ashkenazic Jews in the Italian peninsula, Greek-speaking (Romaniote) Jews in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, Arabic-speaking Jews (*Musta'rabim*) in the Levant and North Africa, and even from the Sephardim who had settled in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the expulsion or soon afterward. These boundaries were not impenetrable. Ottoman Sephardim blended with Portuguese Jews in Venice. Italian rabbis led Sephardic congregations in Amsterdam and London. And yet social and symbolic boundaries erected barriers within Jewish society, too. The “men of the nation” (*homens da nação*) hardly concealed their sense of pride and superiority. Their self-perception had a socioeconomic component: they were “men of affairs” (*homens de negócios*) whose fortunes were linked to international commerce and finance. It was also grounded in what, for lack of a better term, is generally referred to as ethnic identity, which was tied to their (or their ancestors’) identification with Iberia.²

In the century before Ergas and Silvera commenced their activities, this diasporic nation underwent two profound and intertwined processes: both its internal organization and its external borders had become more clearly defined. *Nação* thus stood for the translocal identity (at the same time real and imag-

ined) that distinguished Iberian Jews from other Jews as well as for the legal and social arrangements that allowed Sephardim to exist in Christian societies. This chapter outlines the processes of institutionalization and distinction that characterized the Sephardic diaspora from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth as a way to illuminate the legal and social context in which its merchants engaged in cross-cultural trade. It begins by showing how various forces induced most New Christians outside Iberia to join the newly created Sephardic communities by the middle of the seventeenth century. In doing so, it sets the stage for understanding cross-cultural trade not only as a vehicle of endless boundary crossing but also as a set of relations between discrete communities.

While the institutional structures of the *nação* were being consolidated, the Sephardic world also grew increasingly fragmented. This chapter also examines the emergence and transformation of intra-Sephardic networks as seen by those based in Livorno. It thus not only counters the dominant narrative of the Sephardic experience in the West, which revolves around Amsterdam, but also illustrates the tension between a diaspora's ability to seize and create opportunities in changing geopolitical contexts and its need to adapt to structural changes that are beyond its control. I call attention to the intra-Sephardic networks that most interested the group of merchants to which Ergas and Silvera belonged. This evidence helps us understand that cooperation among coreligionists was not based on a vague sense of belonging to the same nation but was contingent on alliances built via marriage and economic specialization.

THE CONTOURS OF THE SEPHARDIC DIASPORA IN EUROPE

Before the Portuguese Inquisition was created in 1536, the Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism in 1497 suffered harassment and aggression. A particularly violent massacre of alleged Judaizers occurred in Lisbon in 1506. In spite of evidence that several New Christian families were only nominally Catholic, however, the Portuguese state did not embark on a systematic effort to impose religious conformity at first. Between 1497 and 1536 the lack of organized repression on the part of the Portuguese Crown made room for the existence and diffusion of crypto-Judaic practices by newly converted Jews. This unique religious experience marked profoundly the men, women, and children who lived through it, as well as their descendants, and shaped the collective identity of the Sephardic diaspora.

The ambiguous religious identity of Iberian Jews and New Christians, however, jeopardized the cohesion of the Sephardic world. Different religious iden-

tities would coexist within one family, whether by conviction or from expediency. Some of those who were forcibly converted in 1497 went on to live as faithful Catholics. Moreover, most of those who embraced Judaism after leaving Iberia lacked any knowledge of Jewish precepts and rituals (let alone Hebrew). A few rejected revealed religion altogether.³ Religious wavering, furthermore, inflamed Catholic authorities and troubled Protestants across Europe. Thus, after the late sixteenth century, external and internal forces sought to impose normative collective behaviors on members of the Sephardic diaspora in order to ease Christian-Jewish relations and enforce a modicum of orthodoxy among Sephardic communities.

Christian theology conceived the conversion of all non-Christians, including Jews (accused as they were of the murder of Christ), the primary mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Whether seeking to expand their power or because of heartfelt belief, political authorities often joined forces with the Church to pursue this objective. The arrival of Iberian refugees confronted Christian states and societies in Europe with a new issue. Drawing on canon law and doctrine, the Holy See regarded forced baptism as irreversible.⁴ This prescription had particular implications for Italian states that hosted a tribunal of the newly created Roman Inquisition (1542), including the Venetian dominions, the Tuscan grand duchy, the Papal State, and the duchies of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, and Mantua. In principle, Jews fell outside the Inquisition's jurisdiction because the Church regarded them as infidels rather than heretics and had no authority over the unbaptized. Anyone who was found to have been born or to have lived in Iberia after 1497 (when all Jews had to have been baptized) could legitimately be accused of apostasy, however. As apostates, New Christians in the diaspora were easy targets for Roman Inquisitors.

The consequences of Church doctrine potentially were explosive. The Holy Office had the power to investigate anyone who arrived from Iberia at a time when several Italian states were trying to attract Iberian refugees because of their perceived business skills and economic ties. The clash between secular and Church authorities reached a high point in Venice during the long trials of Henriques Nunes, also known as Righetto Marrano, who was arrested by the Inquisition of Venice in the fall of 1570, at the onset of the war against the Turks in Cyprus. Evidence gathered in Venice, Ferrara, Rome, and Lisbon disclosed that Righetto had traveled and traded across Europe and the Ottoman Empire presenting himself alternately as a Catholic or a Jew, depending on what was most expedient. After lengthy genealogical investigations that involved the cooperation of several Inquisition tribunals, the judges concluded that Righetto was born in Lisbon in the 1530s and thus guilty of apostasy. According to Brian

Pullan, who first examined this trial, the Righetto case had a decisive impact in shaping Venetian policy regarding New Christians and Jews of Iberian descent. In 1550 the republic had issued a decree expelling all marranos, but many continued to arrive in the city. Righetto's trial exposed the dangers of a policy of tacit toleration. Even the Jews who lived inside the ghetto felt threatened by the presence of New Christians. The representative (*console*) of Levantine Jews in Venice, Chaim Baruch, denounced Gaspare Ribeiro, the doyen of Portuguese New Christians living outside the ghetto, to the Inquisition; in 1580, he called Ribeiro "a Marrano, . . . one who sails with two rudders, because he is neither Jew nor Christian."⁵

In 1589, following Righetto's trials, the Venetian authorities issued new charters for Ponentine and Levantine Jews, that is, for Western (Iberian) and Eastern (Ottoman) Jews. In an unprecedented move, they ceased all background checks of newcomers as long as Iberian refugees lived within the walls of the ghetto and adhered to Jewish law.⁶ The decision was made after the Venetian ruling class, whose commercial interests lay primarily in the eastern Mediterranean, turned down Philip II's offer to subcontract the sale of Indian pepper in Europe in 1583 for fear of capitulating to the growing Spanish influence over the peninsula. The government admitted Sephardic Jews to Venice in the hope that they would help strengthen connections to Iberian markets and boost Asian imports.⁷

In other parts of Christian Europe, rulers found different solutions for accommodating Jews on new terms. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 and from the majority of French territories in 1394 (small Jewish settlements continued to exist only in Alsace and Avignon). Only in 1656 did Cromwell readmit Jews into England (by his own prerogative rather than by legislation).⁸ France followed a more ambivalent policy. Jealous of its autonomy, the Gallican Church prohibited the establishment of tribunals of the Roman Inquisition in its territories. In the mid-sixteenth century, Iberian New Christians began to cross the Pyrenees and settle in the coastal towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Saint-Esprit-lès-Bayonne, in parts of the interior of the region (Bidache and Peyrehorade), and as far north as Bordeaux. A few families stopped in Nantes, and others established an enclave in Rouen, on the road to the United Provinces. The French monarchy handled the situation by issuing *lettres patentes* to "Portuguese merchants" rather than to Jews, but it included a clause forbidding "any inquiry whatsoever into their lives."⁹ In 1684 Iberian merchants in Bordeaux were referred to as Jews in official French documents for the first time; yet for much of the eighteenth century, both public opinion and local authorities barely tolerated the open practice of Judaism.¹⁰

Protestant countries did not have an Inquisition, but the initial response to

Iberian refugees was lukewarm. Starting in 1580, the secular authorities in Hamburg welcomed Iberian refugees as New Christians owing to their commercial expertise, only to face the opposition of local merchants and the Lutheran clergy. Only in 1612 were New Christians admitted to Hamburg as Jews. Two smaller Jewish communities were then established in nearby Altona and Glückstadt, which were under Danish rule, in 1622.¹¹ Meanwhile, after the Union of Utrecht (1579) granted freedom of conscience throughout the United Provinces, small contingents of New Christians reached Amsterdam in the 1580s and 1590s. Most of them arrived from Portugal via Spain and France; some came from Antwerp after the city was recaptured by the Spanish in 1585; a few left Brazil, a Portuguese colony, for Holland. In Amsterdam they found an environment as secure as possible in Christian Europe, and many began to practice Judaism openly. A synagogue was inaugurated in Amsterdam in 1604, and by 1618 three distinct Jewish congregations existed in the Dutch capital. As they grew in number, refugees also sought to give themselves an institutional structure. In 1639 a united Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community began to operate under the leadership of seven lay syndics called *parnassim* (in Hebrew) or *senhores do Mahamad* (in a mixture of Portuguese and Hebrew).¹²

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Sephardic Jews remained a sporadic presence across Europe, but wherever they were welcomed, their legal status and social acceptance improved steadily. As Jonathan Israel has argued, economic considerations converged with the intellectual and political climate that emerged from the French Wars of Religion (1562–98) to produce a new set of policies that he labeled “philosemitic mercantilism,” as well as broader attitudes favorable to the presence of Jews in Christian Europe.¹³ These policies and attitudes made local societies more familiar with Iberian Jews but also led to the erection of boundaries between Jews and Christians. Cultural hybridity and forms of religious syncretism characterized the lives of individual Sephardim, particularly in the first few generations and in regions such as Central and South America, where the pressure of the Inquisition was uneven, or in the southwest of France, where the Inquisition was altogether absent. But cultural hybridity aroused more suspicion than admiration.

Ironically, the interests of disparate groups—Christian secular authorities, the Catholic Church, Jewish lay and religious community leaders—converged in favor of stabilizing normative community life in the Sephardic diaspora. The aggressive Inquisitorial persecution of New Christians in Italy led many Iberian Jews to establish themselves in the ghetto and progressively erased many traces of the marrano past. In Amsterdam, too, secular authorities understood toleration for the Jews in ways that are reminiscent of post-Reformation confessiona-

lization policies, which implied the permanence and separation of religious denominations. For rabbis, there was little alternative but to accommodate the profound acculturation to Christian mores of their congregations, in particular, their most affluent members.¹⁴ For their part, lay leaders of Sephardic communities worked to facilitate the transition of New Christians to normative Judaism.

Beginning with the creation of a Sephardic charitable fund in Venice in 1613 that provided poor converso maidens and orphans with dowries, other institutions for aiding the poor were created across the diaspora. Their goal was two-fold: to help destitute New Christian young women marry Jewish men and to strengthen an exclusive, translocal sense of collective identity rooted in Iberia. The Venetian dowry fund only subsidized women of Iberian descent regardless of their residence ("poor Hebrew girls, Portuguese or Castilian on the father's or mother's side").¹⁵ Its Dutch analog, the Santa Companhia de dotar orfãos e donzelas pobres, created in 1615, catered exclusively to "orphans and poor maidens of this Portuguese nation, and the Castilian, among residents [in the region stretching] from St. Jean de Luz to Danzig, including France, the Netherlands, England and Germany."¹⁶ Livorno followed in 1644 with the *Hebrà para cazar orfãos e donzelas*. In principle, any Jewish woman was entitled to receive subsidies from this fund, but between 1670 and 1704 only 10 percent of its beneficiaries were Italian or Ashkenazic, and another 14 percent were Sephardic women from outside Livorno.¹⁷ Private donors betrayed similar preferences in their bequests. In Venice, the affluent Isaac Carvaglio endowed a trust in 1697 to subsidize the poor and honorable daughters of respectable fathers of the Portuguese and Spanish nation ("putte onorate, povere, figlie de buoni padri della mia nazione portoghese o spangola").¹⁸

Iberia was a source of pride as well as trouble for the Sephardim of Europe. A cultural association with the golden age of Iberia conferred a much-sought-after pedigree on the Sephardic commercial elite. But the Sephardic oligarchy was especially vigilant about regulating more tangible relations with Iberia. Travel to the "lands of idolatry" (as Sephardim called the Iberian peninsula), whether prompted by commercial ventures or by attempts to proselytize marranos and conversos, was not only dangerous because of the Inquisition but also despised by coreligionists as a potential sign of religious wavering. After 1644, the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam prohibited those who traveled to Spain or Portugal from holding office or leading prayers for a period of four years.¹⁹ The Livorno *Hebrà* considered any board members who traveled to Spain or Portugal to be dead, although it permitted their sons or close male relatives to take their place. In 1654 the Jewish community of Livorno decreed that anyone who traveled to Iberia under a Christian name be excluded for two years from read-

ing the Sefer Torah in synagogue and holding office. These rules were rigorously enforced, and temporary excommunication (*herem*) was often the consequence for those who did not comply.²⁰

Fluid religious identity, in short, remained a marker of the experience, history, and outward perception of the Sephardim of Europe throughout much of seventeenth century, if not longer. But the secure presence of the Sephardic diaspora in both Catholic and Protestant countries was predicated on the severance of ties to its marrano past and the institutionalization of newly founded Spanish and Portuguese Jewish congregations. Sephardic merchants, interested as they were in creating a secure environment in which to prosper, were among the supporters and beneficiaries of this process of institutionalization. The surveillance that they, as community leaders, exerted on their fellow coreligionists' orthodoxy increased their credibility in the eyes of Christian merchants. This basic fact is essential to understanding economic cooperation between partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera and non-Jews. The solidification of Jewish-Christian boundaries could thus facilitate rather than impede the development of cross-cultural trade.

In Amsterdam freedom of conscience had as much leeway as was conceivable in early modern Europe (Spinoza was not the only Sephardic Jew who regarded Jewish law and revealed religion with skepticism). The leaders of the Portuguese and Spanish nation, however, urged the adoption of the core tenets of normative Judaism as the community's public image. In London, where the Jewish population was significantly smaller than in Amsterdam and Jewish organizations were considerably younger, this process of institutional consolidation was slower and more uneven because several affluent Iberian merchants continued to live at the margins of Jewish society in order to bolster their social standing.²¹ In the Italian peninsula, complexities and contradictions did not disappear from the individual and collective identities of Sephardim. But as the case of Livorno testifies, forces both inside and outside the diasporic nation led the vast majority of New Christians to accept the authority of Jewish religious and lay leaders.

SEPHARDIM IN TUSCANY

The grand dukes began to issue safe-conducts to Portuguese New Christian merchants and scholars so that they could reside in Florence as early as 1545, knowing that they might practice Judaism secretly. In the corporatist society of early modern Italy, the Tuscan authorities issued charters to specific individuals or groups. Levantine Jews, identified as those of Iberian descent who resided in the Ottoman Empire, were invited to Tuscany in 1549. Like Venice, Florence

wanted to capitalize on the first sign of crisis in Ottoman commercial power by attracting these groups of traders.²² Between 1551 and 1563 more charters targeted other merchant communities from the eastern Mediterranean, including Armenian, Greek, and Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.²³ In 1576 Grand Duke Francis I (r. 1574–87) conferred with Philip II about the possibility of issuing a safe-conduct specifically designed for Levantine Jews willing to come to Livorno.²⁴

In the meantime, ostensibly to appease Pope Pius V while courting New Christians, the Medici made life more difficult for the Jews who had been living in Tuscany for centuries. First, in 1567, the grand dukes ordered them to wear a yellow badge. Then, between 1571 and 1573, they forced all Jews living in Tuscany (about seven hundred of them, mostly dispersed in small towns) to resettle in the newly created ghettos of Florence and Siena.²⁵ In Pisa, home to a small Jewish settlement since the Middle Ages, the local synagogue was shut down in 1570 and the Sephardim were invited to settle in town two decades later.²⁶ For their perceived usefulness to rebuilding international commercial ties, Christian authorities treated Sephardic Jews as a distinct group from the beginning and kept them apart from local Italian Jews.

The livornine of 1591 and 1593 were tailored to the needs of foreign rather than Italian Jews and brought to fruition the Medici's long-standing commitment to attracting Portuguese exiles to Tuscany.²⁷ In more explicit terms than those expressed by the Venetian charter of 1589, the Medici prohibited the Inquisition of Pisa from interrogating the newcomers as long as they ceased to practice Catholicism.²⁸ Although this stipulation did not always protect Sephardim from intrusions by the Inquisition, it did accelerate the disappearance of marranism.²⁹ Whereas Portuguese New Christians entered Tuscan society as Catholics between 1545 and 1591 and mingled with the local elite (especially in Florence), after 1591 they came to Pisa and Livorno mostly as Jews. The rabbinic and Jewish lay authorities in Livorno began to send recent immigrants who needed to be circumcised to North Africa before accepting them as members of the community.³⁰ The 1634 departure of António Dias Pinto, a Portuguese New Christian who had become an influential judge but finally left Florence for the ghetto of Venice, is taken to mark the end of any significant presence of Portuguese marranos professing to be Catholic in Tuscany.³¹

When Abraham Ergas settled in Pisa as a Jew in 1594, he was part of a small group of Iberian émigrés. More arrived as Livorno consolidated its position in the western Mediterranean and anti-Jewish persecution intensified in Iberia (especially during the period of the Spanish rule of Portugal from 1580 to 1640).³² The Navarro, Jesurum, and Franco Albuquerque families were among those who

came in the 1620s and 1630s.³³ Immigration required continued surveillance by Jewish and secular authorities alike. As late as 4 June 1655 the Venetian consul noted a Dutch ship sailing from Malaga to the Tuscan port whose only cargo consisted of forty passengers of “the kind of Christians who become Jews as soon as they arrive here.”³⁴ Only two months earlier, when the statutes of the Jewish congregation of Livorno had been drafted, they had prohibited all Jews from talking to people who disembarked from ships arriving from Iberia in order to avoid arousing the Inquisitor’s suspicion.³⁵

Precisely at the time when marranism ceased to be a pressing concern of Tuscan authorities, the last two Medici rulers, Cosimo III (r. 1670–1723) and Gian Gastone (r. 1723–37), began to display less benevolent attitudes toward religious minorities than had their predecessors.³⁶ By then, however, the Jewish presence in Livorno was secure, and the livornine were never revoked. Until its abolition in 1782 the Inquisition of Pisa continued to intrude on the lives of Livorno Jews, but the Medici and the Habsburg grand dukes sought to contain its power.³⁷ In 1730, after being accused of apostasy and arrested by the Inquisition, Jacob Gutierrez Pegna, a resident of Livorno, obtained his release thanks to the intervention of secular authorities.³⁸ In November 1736, officers of the Inquisition stormed into the house of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio in the middle of the night and threatened his grandchildren, as well as the women and servants in the house, but did not prosecute any of them further.³⁹

Giangastone de’ Medici, more famous for his indolence than for his initiative, continued to sponsor diplomatic interventions favoring the arrival of more Portuguese New Christians in Livorno. In the 1720s the Iberian Inquisitions unleashed the last and probably the most violent of their campaigns to eradicate all traces of New Christians.⁴⁰ Several communities in the diaspora came to the rescue of their coreligionists in Iberia. London Jews as well as British diplomats and merchants assisted fleeing marranos and smuggled their Brazilian gold and diamonds out of Portugal.⁴¹ Sephardim in Livorno also grew apprehensive about the fate of their coreligionists. By 1724 they had engaged the highest Tuscan authorities, including Secretary of State and Minister of War Carlo Rinuccini, in a plan to provide shelter to Iberian exiles.⁴² At the end of May 1726, at least three families of Portuguese New Christian merchants obtained safe-conducts to come to Livorno.⁴³ Though limited in scope, this operation showed the Medici’s continued commitment to “philosemitic mercantilism” and had an impact on both the local community and the diaspora. In 1729 Rinuccini invoked the safe-conducts that had been issued a few years earlier in order to defend Jacob de Morais, a Sephardic Jew who had prospered in Livorno as a silk manufacturer and merchant and who was haunted by the Inquisition of Pisa.⁴⁴ In January 1731,

Gabriel Lopes Pinheiro, a Sephardic merchant from London who was active in the trade with Livorno, Portugal, and the Indies, requested safe-conduct to move to the Tuscan port; it was granted on condition that he give proof of his material well-being.⁴⁵

These episodes reveal how flows of personnel and information continued to circulate between Iberia and the Sephardic diaspora. They also tested the effectiveness of the legal frameworks designed to accommodate Iberian Jews in Livorno. No specific legislation passed after the livornine of the 1590s had sought to define whether different magistrates were in charge of resident and foreign Jews and whether New Christians could be tried by the local Jewish court. All ambiguities came to the surface when these safe-conducts were being issued in the 1720s.

In a letter dated 11 May 1725, the governor of Livorno informed Florentine officials of a conflict between the city's secular and Jewish courts about jurisdiction over Jews and crypto-Jews who traded under Christian names—a practice to which the Medici never objected. The Jewish tribunal of Livorno conceded to the prince jurisdiction over the “Jews who live in hiding in Portugal, Spain, and other places where they are not permitted to be openly Jewish” but claimed for itself jurisdiction over “foreign Jews who live as Jews in places where they can practice Judaism openly,” even if they brought their case to court using a Christian pseudonym.⁴⁶ The truth is that it was not always easy to categorize newcomers and transient people as either New Christians or foreign Jews. In 1721, for example, a certain Paolo Antonio Castro of Genoa, who used the Jewish name of Gabriel Arias in Livorno, brought charges against some Sephardic merchants of Livorno before Florentine courts as a Christian; his adversaries wished to avoid the trip to Florence and have the lawsuit adjudicated by the Jewish tribunal in Livorno.⁴⁷ The jurisdictional disputes continued for eight years, until Rinuccini conceded jurisdiction over “foreign Jews” to the Jewish court in 1733. By surrendering additional power to this corporate tribunal, the Tuscan authorities gained yet another tool for facilitating the transition of New Christians to Judaism at a time when a renewed influx of refugees from Iberia threatened to destabilize Jewish-Christian relations once again.

The commitment of Tuscan rulers to aid Jews in Livorno, combined with the port's importance in the Mediterranean trade, bore fruit. In the two centuries after the issuance of the livornine, the resident Jewish population of Livorno grew at a fast pace. In 1601 the city housed a mere 134 Jews. Only twenty-one years later their number had climbed to 711, which amounted to more than 7 percent of the city's population (see table 2.1). In 1643 the community counted about 1,250 members. A half-century later it had reached 2,397. Still further ex-

Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Jewish population</i>	<i>Percentage Jewish</i>
1591	530 ¹ / c. 700 ²		
1592	900 ³ / 1,140 ⁴		
1601	3,118 ⁵ / 3,710 ⁶	<u>134</u> ⁷	c. 3.92
1604	8,663 ⁸	c. 200 ⁹	
1609	5,046 ¹⁰		
1613		c. 300 ¹¹	
1616	7,509 ¹²		
1622	9,103 ¹³ / 10,545 ¹⁴	<u>711</u> ¹⁵	c. 7.23
1633	8,642 ¹⁶	c. 700 ¹⁷	
1640		1,500 ¹⁸	
1642	11,954 ¹⁹ / 12,978 ²⁰	<u>1,175</u> ²¹	c. 9.42
1643	11,597 ²²	1,250 ²³	
1645	10,079 ²⁴	1,723 ²⁵	
1655		3,000 ²⁶	
1672	18,146 ²⁷		
1689	20,654 ²⁸	3,500 ²⁹	
1692		1,250 ³⁰	
1693	17,709 ³¹	<u>2,397</u> ³²	13.53
1727–28		10,000 ³³	
1738	30,897 ³⁴	<u>3,476</u> ³⁵	11.25
1758	32,717 ³⁶	<u>3,687</u> ³⁷	11.26
1761	34,538 ³⁸	7,000 ³⁹ / 1,256 families ⁴⁰	
1767	30,000 / 44,000 ⁴¹	3,800 ⁴²	
1778	36,595 ⁴³	c. 4,000 ⁴⁴	
1787	37,977 ⁴⁵	<u>4,350</u> ⁴⁶	11.45
1793	41,278 ⁴⁷		
1807	64,095 ⁴⁸	<u>4,697</u> ⁴⁹	7.28
1808	62,377 ⁵⁰	<u>4,963</u> ⁵¹	7.95
1809	50,671 ⁵²	<u>4,753</u> ⁵³	9.38
1813	48,630 ⁵⁴		
1833		4,833 ⁵⁵	
1834	66,463 ⁵⁶	<u>4,701</u> ⁵⁷	7.07
1841	78,435 ⁵⁸	<u>4,771</u> ⁵⁹	6.08

continued . . .

Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841 *continued*

Note: This table summarizes most available figures. The most reliable data or estimates regarding the Jewish population are underscored. The figures for the total population usually include residents of the area of Livorno, not only those who lived within the city walls. This fact suggests that the percentage of Jews among the latter group might have been higher. Percentages are given only when data are fairly reliable.

¹Fasano Guarini 1978: 62, 1980: 199.

²R. Toaff 1990: 119.

³Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.

⁴R. Toaff 1990: 119.

⁵Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 28) gives a total of 4,985 inhabitants, including soldiers, in Livorno and its environs.

⁶Fasano Guarini 1978: 62.

⁷R. Toaff (1990: 119). Pardi (1918: 28) erroneously gives a figure of 114. Bachi (1938: 283) repeats the mistake. Fasano Guarini (1980: 199) quotes a figure of 124.

⁸Pardi 1918: 32. Vivoli (1842, 3: 64, 237) estimates 8,000 inhabitants in 1604 and 5,000 in 1606.

⁹R. Toaff 1990: 279.

¹⁰Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.

¹¹R. Toaff 1990: 279.

¹²Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Another document counts 8,300 residents (Fasano Guarini 1978: 62).

¹³This figure excludes 642 soldiers (Pardi 1918: 34; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199). Di Porto (1980: 239) gives a figure of 9,714 with no documentary reference.

¹⁴Fasano Guarini 1978: 62. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives credence to the highest of all figures: 14,413.

¹⁵Pardi 1918: 34; Bachi 1938: 283; A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64; R. Toaff 1990: 119; Israel 1998: 93; Fasano Guarini 1980: 202.

¹⁶Repetti 1835, 2: 780; Pardi 1918: 35; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives a figure of 12,978, but see note 20 to this table.

¹⁷Repetti 1835, 2: 780; Pardi 1918: 35; R. Toaff 1990: 119; Fasano Guarini 1980: 202.

¹⁸A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64; Israel 1998: 93.

¹⁹Pardi 1918: 37; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 37) and Di Porto (1980: 239) report a figure of 12,302 on the basis of a different document.

²⁰R. Toaff (1990: 119) repeats the same data for 1632 and 1642. It may be a typo. See also Israel 1998: 93.

²¹Pardi 1918: 37; Bachi 1938: 283; Di Porto 1980: 239. Fasano Guarini (1980: 202) and R. Toaff (1990: 121) write 1,115. It may be a typo.

²²Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 37) counts 11,657 civilians.

²³R. Toaff 1990: 121; Israel 1998: 93. Fasano Guarini (1980: 202) gives this figure for 1645.

²⁴Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.

²⁵Di Porto 1980: 239.

²⁶A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64. Israel (1998: 93) says that the Jewish population increased “probably to over 2,000 by 1655.”

²⁷Pardi (1918: 38–39), who suggests that only 17,000 people lived within the city walls. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives this figure for 1674.

²⁸Pardi 1918: 41; Di Porto 1980: 239.

²⁹Di Porto 1980: 239. Both Pardi (1918: 41) and Toaff (1990: 121) refute the figure of 5,000 (Pera 1888: 140) for the year 1689.

³⁰Repetti 1835, 2: 780, quoted by R. Toaff (1990: 121), who refutes this figure.

continued . . .

Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841 *continued*

³¹This is Pardi's (1918: 45) estimate for 1694.

³²Livi 1918–20, quoted in R. Toaff 1990: 121. This estimate was calculated by Livi on the basis of the data about births and deaths kept by the Jewish nation. Only a few of these registers survived World War II.

³³Vivoli 1842, 4: 388.

³⁴Pardi (1918: 44–49) gives precise figures for the solely Catholic population and estimates for the total population for the years 1694–1766.

³⁵Bachi 1938: 283; R. Toaff 1990: 123; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.

³⁶Pardi 1918: 49.

³⁷R. Toaff 1990: 123; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.

³⁸Pardi 1918: 50.

³⁹Gorani 1986: 100.

⁴⁰Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982: 52.

⁴¹Gorani 1986: 100.

⁴²Repetti 1835, 2: 871; Pardi 1918: 51–52.

⁴³Pardi 1918: 54.

⁴⁴Estimated by Pardi (1918: 54), who refutes the guess of 8,000 included in the parish registers.

⁴⁵Pardi 1918: 56.

⁴⁶Pardi 1918: 54. This estimate concurs with the figures of 4,302 (Filippini 1990: 123) and 4,327 (Filippini 1997: 1054) for 1784.

⁴⁷Pardi 1918: 60. Guarnieri (1962: 133) offers a higher figure of 51,505.

⁴⁸Pardi 1918: 67.

⁴⁹R. Toaff 1990: 124; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.

⁵⁰Pardi 1918: 67.

⁵¹Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117. Elsewhere Filippini (1982: 26) argues that the 1808 census underestimated the number of Jews, which might have been as high as 5,338.

⁵²Pardi 1918: 68–69.

⁵³Filippini 1982: 26; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.

⁵⁴Pardi (1918: 70) counts 44,130 Catholic inhabitants of Livorno and its environs plus an estimated 4,500 Jews.

⁵⁵Bachi 1938: 283.

⁵⁶Pardi 1918: 81; Guarnieri 1962: 133.

⁵⁷Luigi Serristori, *Statistica dell'Italia* (Florence: Stamperia Granducale, 1842, 173), quoted in Bachi 1938: 238n2.

⁵⁸Pardi 1918: 85.

⁵⁹Sercia Gianforma 1990, appendix.

pansion continued in the eighteenth century: 3,476 Jews were counted in 1738, 3,687 in 1758, and 4,350 in 1787. Meanwhile, Livorno's total population grew from less than one thousand in 1591 to more than 40,000 by the late eighteenth century. Throughout the period from 1642 to 1787, Jews made up a minimum of 9.5 percent and a maximum of 13.5 percent of the city's total resident population. (These percentages may have been higher within the city walls because figures for the total population do not always distinguish between city and district dwellers.) In this respect Livorno was exceptional among European towns and cities during the early modern period. Only in the Ottoman city of Salonica did Jews ever make up a majority of the population.⁴⁸

Livorno was thus the second largest Sephardic settlement in the West after Amsterdam. In Italy, Rome housed the only other Jewish population comparable in size to that of Livorno, but its Portuguese component was considerably smaller. The population of the Venice ghetto, home to numerous and prosperous Sephardim, reached its zenith of 3,000 before the plague of 1630–31, and then it declined steadily.⁴⁹ Sephardic immigration to Amsterdam peaked in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, after Venice was engaged in a destructive war with the Ottomans (1645–69), New Christian financiers abandoned Madrid, and the Dutch lost northern Brazil to the Portuguese in 1654. The Spanish and Portuguese synagogue of Amsterdam may have enlisted as many as 4,500 members in the 1680s and possibly more around 1735, although in the meantime, Ashkenazic immigrants began to outnumber the Sephardim.⁵⁰ In 1695, London counted only 548 Sephardim (about twenty of them prosperous merchants) and 203 Ashkenazim. By the 1740s, the English capital was home to 6,000 Jews. This number grew to 15,000 in the following half-century, but most of them were Ashkenazic. The Sephardim in London numbered 1,050 around 1720 and a little more than 2,000 in the 1720s and 1730s, after refugees from Portugal arrived.⁵¹

The other Sephardic centers in Europe never had as large a population as did Livorno, Venice, or Amsterdam. The Sephardic population of Hamburg grew to a maximum of about 600 (plus 200 Ashkenazim) in the 1660s.⁵² In France, Portuguese New Christians numbered between 200 and 300 in 1637. These settlements grew in size after Judaism was permitted, with Bayonne housing 1,100 Jews in 1728 and Bordeaux housing 1,500 in 1751.⁵³ In the Dutch and English Caribbean, Sephardic communities experienced a more rapid growth than in Amsterdam and Livorno during the eighteenth century but were still smaller than those in the Old World. The island of Curaçao was home to about 600 Sephardim in 1702 and as many as 1,095 (5.2 percent of all inhabitants) in 1789.⁵⁴ The Jewish population of Surinam, a small Dutch colony north of Brazil, peaked at 1,350 in 1791 and included about 870 Sephardim. In Jamaica, Jews numbered between

700 and 800 in 1735 and 900 by 1770. In Barbados there were about 400 Jews in 1750.⁵⁵ Sephardic settlements in North America never reached comparable sizes, though they included some wealthy merchants.

FROM IBERIA TO NORTHERN EUROPE

Demographics provides a measure of Livorno's nodal position in the early modern Sephardic world. At the same time, Sephardic commercial networks that centered on Livorno evolved in response to the greater attractiveness of other European centers for Iberian Jews. In the mid-seventeenth century, when Dutch Sephardim turned away from the Mediterranean and Iberia and invested primarily in the Atlantic trade and in plantations (in particular, sugar), their coreligionists in Livorno strengthened their own position in the Mediterranean.⁵⁶ During the second half of the seventeenth century, they loosened their connections to Spain but not to Lisbon. The most prosperous group of Livorno Sephardim, the one to which Ergas and Silvera belonged, worked to develop connections between the Levant and northern Europe (first in Amsterdam and later in London). In the eighteenth century Jewish merchant families of the middle ranks, in contrast, focused their efforts on the trade between North Africa and southern Europe.

Personal, cultural, and economic ties between the diaspora and Iberia became weaker after Olivares fell from power, but they never dissolved completely. In 1644 a New Christian merchant in Malaga was brought before the Inquisition because he owned a Hebrew book printed in Livorno.⁵⁷ The first generation of refugees took pains to pass on to their children objects that they had brought with them and that symbolized a deep attachment to the homeland. Thus, in 1653, Raphael Belilios, who in Portugal was called Filipo Terço, left to his two daughters the silverware that had come with him from Lisbon to Venice.⁵⁸ Despite the risks and stigmatization that came with being associated with Iberia, testaments drafted in Livorno by Sephardic men and women of all social strata in the second half of the seventeenth century testify to the uninterrupted personal and economic liaisons between those who left and those who stayed.⁵⁹ In 1662 Rachel Gutierrez Pegna allocated part of her fortune of more than ten thousand pieces of eight to her mother, husband, and one sister, all of whom were living in Spain.⁶⁰ In 1683 Daniel Ribeiro Henriques left a weekly allowance to his niece Rachel, to be paid unless her brothers, who were living in Spain, came to Italy or sent her money.⁶¹ One year earlier, the merchant Daniel Ergas Mendes required that ten pieces of eight be given to anyone of "his lineage and his father's household" who arrived from Spain.⁶² Information about these kinship ties to Iberian

New Christians sometimes were released to the highest tribunals of Florence. During a legal case concerning the inheritance of one Rachel, widow of Daniel Coen del Lara, a copy of her last will, drawn up in the Jewish community in 1684, was transmitted to the prince's chancellery. She had relatives in Iberia and wanted to include among her heirs those who might come to Livorno and revert to Judaism.⁶³

Seventeenth-century testaments of Venice Sephardim are yet more forthcoming about their investments in Iberia and their connections with New Christian correspondents. Shortly after he arrived in Venice, the first member of a merchant dynasty whose other members were soon to follow him into the ghetto, Abraham Baruch alias Diogo Nunes dictated his last will in 1625. It tells us that three of his brothers were still living in Portugal as New Christians and one had left for the "Indies"; he had a sister married to a nephew of his in France and one married to a New Jew in Livorno, and his trade involved large imports of sugar from Brazil, which he kept in the house of the Spanish and Portuguese consul in Venice, Giorgio Cardoso.⁶⁴ In 1635 Abraham Cabib, born João Lopes Gomes in the small town of Trancoso in northern Portugal, dictated his last will in Portuguese in the Venice ghetto. He had four sons: one living in Madrid, one in Brazil, and two in Venice.⁶⁵ In 1691 the wealthy Baruch Carvaglio brothers claimed to have suffered "severe damage" as a result of their affairs in Lisbon.⁶⁶ In 1697 Abraham Henriques Franco declared that he had invested 3,900 pieces in the Spanish galleys that departed from Seville for Cartagena de India every summer ("Galeones de Nueva España") together with his commercial partner in Iberia ("en partes de Ponente"), Pedro Henriques Marques, to whom his daughter was married.⁶⁷

After the 1690s Iberia is mentioned less and less often in the bequests of Livorno Sephardim. By then, most New Christian merchants and bankers had fled, and growing numbers of Sephardim, including some from Livorno, flocked to Amsterdam or invested their capital there. Of the 2,579 Sephardic men and women who married in Amsterdam between 1598 and 1699, 53.7 percent were born abroad. Of these, only 9.7 percent came from Italy. Restrictions on the lives of New Christians in Iberia and France explain the high proportion of arrivals from these regions (31.3 percent came from Portugal, 16.5 percent from Spain, 18 percent from France, 6.9 percent from Hamburg, 3.7 percent from transatlantic colonies, 1.1 percent from the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, and 0.8 percent from London).⁶⁸ No single motive can be detected for the emigration of Sephardim from Venice and Tuscany, but the high proportion of men to women among them and the timing of their marriages in Amsterdam (peaking in the last two decades of the seventeenth century) suggest that economic betterment

might have been the motivation for both wealthy and lower-class Sephardim. Many may have indeed been in dire condition: the Amsterdam Sephardic congregation denied Italian Sephardim full membership in 1697 because too many destitute people allegedly moved to the Dutch capital for the sole purpose of receiving charity.⁶⁹

The last wills of Livornese Jews in the second half of the seventeenth century show how the most well-off among them sought to strengthen their ties to Amsterdam and to London. In 1646, drafting his testament in Livorno, Abraham de Paz named among his heirs his first-born son, now in Amsterdam, another son in Smyrna, and his son-in-law in Livorno; he also enumerated creditors in Genoa, Florence, Venice, Amsterdam, Smyrna, Constantinople, and Tunis.⁷⁰ In 1651 Lopo Soares, a New Christian from Viseu in northern Portugal, also known as Joseph Soares, dictated his last will in Smyrna. A translation was registered in the chancellery of the Jewish nation of Livorno three years later because Lopo had named executors there as well as in Amsterdam, Venice, and Florence. His investments included a deposit of one thousand guilders in the Dutch East India Company and a deposit of forty-three hundred scudi in the Monte del Sale of Florence.⁷¹ In the same year, Solomon Jesurum in Pisa left three hundred ducats' worth of silks and linens to his uncle in Amsterdam.⁷²

The Baruch Carvaglios were among the first to build personal and financial ties not only to Livorno and Amsterdam but also to London. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Sarah and Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio of Venice married Moses Attias in Livorno and Jacob Nunes Herniques in Amsterdam, respectively.⁷³ In 1661 Isaac Baruch Carvaglio was already trading with London from Venice.⁷⁴ By 1687 all of David Baruch Carvaglio's maternal aunts lived in London.⁷⁵

To merchants such as Ergas and Silvera or the Baruch Carvaglios the English capital offered several attractions: it continued to be an outlet for Levantine goods and Italian fine textiles as well as a supplier of colonial goods for the Mediterranean; it was a place to subscribe to competitive marine insurance policies and buy bonds and stocks; and finally, by the late seventeenth century, London had emerged as the world's leading market for rough diamonds. In the 1750s, the brothers Abraham and Moses Baruch Carvaglio of Livorno held twenty-two hundred pounds' worth of investments in the Bank of England (which normally yielded a 3 percent yearly interest rate) and one thousand pounds' worth of stocks in the English East India Company (for a total equivalent to about fourteen thousand pieces of eight).⁷⁶ The Franco family of Livorno was even more aggressive in exploiting the potential of London for the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds. Moses Franco Albuquerque, an impor-

tant merchant, silk and coral manufacturer, and banker, sent his son Jacob to London, where he died in 1777 having amassed a large fortune working with his brothers Raphael, who remained in Livorno, and Samuel, who moved to Bombay in 1743 and then to Madras in 1749, where he died in 1763.⁷⁷ Families such as the Levi Sonsinos, Supinos, and Montefiores emulated the Francos.⁷⁸ And those who were not immediately successful in resettling their scions in London, such as the Ergases, took advantage of the English financial market. At his death in 1747 Moses Ergas, son of Rabbi Manuel, owned four thousand pounds' worth of stock in the English East India Company (the equivalent of about seventeen thousand pieces of eight).⁷⁹ In 1749 Raphael Ergas owed sufficient bonds in the Bank of England to vote for its governor and deputy governor.⁸⁰ In 1790 Jacob Ergas, son of David, bequeathed five thousand pounds in annuities of the Bank of England.⁸¹

In order to protect their investments in London, several Jewish merchants in Livorno registered a copy of their last will or a power of attorney given to a relative in London at the local British consulate, which transmitted the documents to the appropriate record office in London. Table 2.2 presents the deeds of those who followed this procedure. This list does not include all Livorno Jews with capital in London (the Ergases, for example, do not appear in it), but it shows that the practice was rare before the 1760s and that over time non-Sephardic Jews joined these investors in increasing numbers. The Recanati were the only family of Italian origin to appear in this list for the first three-quarters of the century; with five thousand pounds' worth of stock, at the end of the eighteenth century the Recanati owned a larger share in the East India Company than any of their coreligionists from Tuscany.⁸² In the meantime, some Jews based in Livorno who specialized in trade with North Africa also invested in the London money market. One Joseph Nataf of Tunis deposited considerable sums in the Bank of England and bought stock in the East India Company through his Livornese agent, Isaac Saccuto.⁸³ The Alvarengas had relatives in London and Algiers.⁸⁴ The Aghib and Racah families operated their business in Livorno, Venice, Genoa, Alexandria, and Cairo.⁸⁵ After some difficulty, Isaac Racah sealed a partnership with his cousin Solomon Aghib in 1721; Solomon settled in Livorno and prospered as a ship-owner and a merchant.⁸⁶ In 1803, having survived the turmoil of the revolutionary years, Moses Racah died a rich man in the Tuscan port.⁸⁷

LIVORNO AND THE EAST

Chapter 3 discusses the rivalries between the old Sephardic oligarchy and emerging groups of Italian and North African Jews in Livorno. For now it is

Table 2.2. Jews from Livorno and Pisa who registered their last wills in London, 1742–1848

<i>Last name</i>	<i>First name</i>	<i>Residence</i>	<i>Will registration date</i>	<i>Source</i>
Supino	Solomon	Livorno	1738, 3 October	PRO, PROB, 11/692
Recanati	Isaac, son of Salvador	Livorno	1742, 4 February	PRO, PROB, 11/716
Penha	Jacob, son of Abraham	Livorno	1751, 1 March	PRO, PROB, 11/786
Attias	Daniel	Livorno	1753, 6 July	PRO, PROB, 11/803
Recanati	Jacob, son of the late Lazarus	Livorno	1759, 8 January	PRO, PROB, 11/843
Rodrigues Monis	Raphael	Livorno	1761, 28 January	PRO, PROB, 11/862
Baruch Carvaglio	Moses	Pisa	1762, 11 August	PRO, PROB, 11/878
Ergas	Rachel	Livorno	1764, 10 January	PRO, PROB, 11/895
Medina, de	David	Livorno	1764, 5 September	PRO, PROB, 11/901
Aghib	Solomon	Livorno	1760, 5 July	PRO, PROB, 11/857
Castro, de	Isaac	Livorno	1767, 3 June	PRO, PROB, 11/929
Baruch Carvaglio	Abraham, son of Jacob	Livorno	1767, 20 January	PRO, PROB, 11/925
Saccuto	Daniel	Livorno	1769, 15 February	PRO, PROB, 11/946
Recanati	Joshua alias Salvador, son of Isaac	Livorno	1769, 19 December	PRO, PROB, 11/953
Baruch Carvaglio	Saul, son of the late Abraham	Livorno	1769, 9 October	PRO, PROB, 11/951
Recanati	Raphael, son of Lazarus	Livorno	1770, 15 February	PRO, PROB, 11/955
Ergas	Raphael, son of the late Moses	Livorno	1770, 24 December	PRO, PROB, 11/962
Recanati	Isaac, son of Lazarus	Livorno	1770, 3 July	PRO, PROB, 11/959
Sachi	Joseph	Livorno	1776, 8 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1022
Leon	Joseph, son of Moses	Livorno	1780, 27 June	PRO, PROB, 11/1066
Nataf	Isaac	Livorno	1782, 14 May	PRO, PROB, 11/1091
Saccuto Baruch Carvaglio	Esther	Livorno	1782, 28 March	PRO, PROB, 11/1088
Serra	Daniel Solomon	Livorno	1783, 16 January	PRO, PROB, 11/1099
Aghib	Jacob, son of Solomon	Livorno	1783, 30 September	PRO, PROB, 11/1107

continued . . .

Table 2.2. Jews from Livorno and Pisa who registered their last wills in London, 1742–1848 *continued*

<i>Last name</i>	<i>First name</i>	<i>Residence</i>	<i>Will registration date</i>	<i>Source</i>
Recanati	Elihezer	Livorno	1790, 8 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1194
Recanati	Lazarus, son of Isaac	Livorno	1790, 10 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1194
Ergas	Jacob, son of David	Livorno	1792, 20 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1220
Levi Sonsino	Abraham	Livorno	1793, 2 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1235
Franco	David	Livorno	1796, 14 May	PRO, PROB, 11/1275
Baruch Carvaglio	Aaron	Pisa	1798, 26 October	PRO, PROB, 11/1313
Medina Ergas	Leah	Livorno	1799, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1332
Attias	Abraham Raphael	Livorno	1799, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1332
Nunes de Paz	Solomon	Livorno	1803, 13 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1397
Racah	Moses	Livorno	1803, 20 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1391
Bassano	Israel	Livorno	1809, 19 December	PRO, PROB, 11/1506
Villa Reale Leucci	Allegra	Livorno	1816, 7 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1583
Nataf	Samuel	Livorno	1816, 26 January	PRO, PROB, 11/1576
Baruch Carvaglio	Rachel de Jacob Pardo Roques	Pisa	1817, 16 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1591
Disegni	Jacob David	Livorno	1825, 3 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1705
Franchetti	Isaac	Livorno	1832, 28 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1804
Baruch Carvaglio	Daniel Abraham	Livorno	1833, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1823
Baruch Carvaglio	Abraham, son of Jacob	Livorno	1838, 26 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1893
Leucci	Aaron	Livorno	1848, 15 December	PRO, PROB, 11/2085

sufficient to note that, as the changing composition of those who registered their investments in London shows, the financial networks of these different segments of Jewish society based in Livorno overlapped at least in part by the mid-eighteenth century. In contrast, the Sephardim of Livorno and those in the Ottoman Empire became increasingly distant, culturally, socially, and economically speaking. By 1778 David Attias, who was born an Ottoman subject in Sarajevo but spent most of his life in Livorno, condemned the “fatalism” of his coreligionists in the Levant and urged them to embrace secular and rational European culture.⁸⁸ His views foreshadowed an attitude that became prevalent in the following century, when “the Jews of Western Europe began to envision the Jews of the Middle East, North Africa, and Mediterranean not as partners in commercial or intellectual exchange, but as ‘Orientals’ in need of protection and ‘regeneration.’”⁸⁹

Attias’s sentiments reflect the tenor of the times after two centuries during which the gulf between the Sephardim living in the Christian world and those in the Muslim world widened considerably. After 1492, and especially under the reign of Süleyman I (1520–66), the Ottoman Empire became a haven for many of those forced to convert in Iberia. Many of the wealthiest engaged in diplomatic and commercial exchanges with Venice. The weakening of Ottoman commercial power and ad hoc policies created in Venice led many to leave for the Italian peninsula after the 1530s.⁹⁰ After Spanish and Portuguese Jews were admitted to Venice in 1589, three official nations coexisted in the ghetto: those of Italo-German, Levantine, and Ponentine Jews. The three nations had an umbrella organization that negotiated with the Venetian government, but each maintained its own synagogue and charity organization.⁹¹ The ghetto was small and crowded; Jews of all backgrounds lived together. And yet distinctions within Jewish society initially remained strong. In his autobiography, Rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648), a learned scholar, gives us the impression of having mingled with Christians more than with Levantine Jews, and in one passage he hardly conceals his resentment of a Sephardic merchant in Ferrara, whom he calls “diabolic.”⁹² Over time, the boundaries between the three nations blurred, with Levantine Jews being pulled into the orbit of the increasingly prosperous Ponentines and marriages between Jews of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds becoming more common.

Across the eastern Mediterranean, in contrast, Ottoman and Iberian Jews grew further and further apart. Differences in language, religious rites, social customs, and economic activities between the Sephardim living in the Balkans, Anatolia, the Levant, and North Africa and those who settled in Italy and in western Europe became more acute in the seventeenth century. To begin with, East-

ern Sephardim quickly abandoned their crypto-Judaism. The first generations of exiles to reach the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, moreover, spoke Castilian and Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish vernacular language. Instead, in Livorno, as in most of the Western Sephardic world, Portuguese was employed in commercial, legal, and communitarian records, and Castilian was reserved for literary, philosophical, and religious texts. In 1743 Isaac Silvera told a correspondent in Genoa that he considered Portuguese his “paternal and maternal language,” although he was born in Italy.⁹³ Four years later, Moses Ergas—who was born and raised in Livorno, as was his father—jotted down his testament in an Italian that was inflected with traces of Portuguese.⁹⁴ Only in the southwest of France was Spanish the preferred language among New Christians, although others used it often across the diaspora.⁹⁵ Everywhere, linguistic acculturation was rapid. In the late 1750s, having settled in London, Solomon de Silva, son of a prominent banker in Bordeaux, learned English and retained his proficiency in French but wrote only a rudimentary Spanish.⁹⁶ Knowledge of Hebrew was considerably more widespread among Eastern than Western Sephardim. Portuguese (mixed with Spanish), not Hebrew, was the common language of the Sephardic trading diaspora.

Community organization set Eastern and Western Sephardim apart, as well. A vast array of Jewish communities lived in the Ottoman Empire, including Ladino-, Arabic-, and Greek-speaking Jews and surviving communities of Karaites. Soon after their arrival in the Ottoman Empire, Spanish émigrés imposed their leadership and rites on others. The Spanish congregations of Salonica and Constantinople emerged as the two major centers of Ottoman Jewry (and were sometimes rivals). In the Ottoman Empire as in Europe, each Sephardic community (*kahal*) elected its leaders from among the male heads of household, who formed the governing board (*mahamad*) that administered the community's affairs, appointed rabbis, supervised religious and moral order, assessed internal tax levies, and negotiated with local and state authorities. These similarities notwithstanding, rabbis ruled among Eastern Sephardim to an extent not matched in Europe and the New World, where affluent laymen headed the Portuguese and Spanish Jewish communities. In the Ottoman Sephardic world, every congregation named a rabbi to adjudicate religious, civil, and criminal disputes with the assistance of two sages (*dayyanim*).⁹⁷ In the West, in contrast, the degree of juridical and jurisdictional autonomy granted to each Sephardic community varied from place to place but was firmly in the hands of the lay leadership. After the rabbis examined Spinoza's works, it fell upon the parnassim to approve his expulsion from the Amsterdam congregation in the summer of 1656. Several years after a Jewish community was formally recognized in Bor-

deaux in 1723, a rabbinic court (*bet din*) was created in the 1740s, but it only ruled on matters of religious and moral conduct; wealthy laymen overshadowed the rabbinate.⁹⁸

A strong spiritual bond linked the Sephardim of Europe to Palestine (then under Ottoman rule), but in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this bond manifested itself first and foremost in the form of monetary remittances. A few men (mostly students and scholars) and women (usually elderly widows) animated by religious fervor left Europe for the biblical land of Israel. Others came for short visits to holy sites. Groups of indigents were occasionally dispatched to Palestine. But philanthropy was the strongest connection between the Holy Land and the Western Sephardic diaspora. Rabbis regularly traveled from Palestine to solicit financial help from wealthier European congregations; Sephardic men and women of means frequently made bequests to subsidize scholarship and aid to the poor in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed.⁹⁹

The cultural distance between Eastern and Western Sephardim was wide when Elijah Silvera joined a small but thriving group of Sephardic merchant firms in Aleppo that included Jacob and Joseph Belilios, Lopes, Pinheiro, and Coen, Medina and Chaves, and the Medina family.¹⁰⁰ French consular papers referred to them as “juifs livournais,” “juifs italiens ou espagnols,” “juifs européens,” “juifs protégés de France,” less frequently as “juifs portugais,” and sometimes as “juifs chrétiens.” In the language of the time they were simply “Franks,” the generic term for Europeans in the Muslim world. They all lived in physical proximity to European merchants and were not obliged to wear distinctive signs.¹⁰¹ They spoke Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian rather than Ladino, and their Arabic was very basic at best.¹⁰² They wore European attire and wigs. In 1690 the French consul in Aleppo decried their habit of wearing hats and wigs.¹⁰³ And the chief rabbi of Aleppo apparently wished to oblige “the Frank Jews” to comply with the requirement of wearing a beard.¹⁰⁴ In 1731 only twenty-three Sephardim of Livorno officially resided in various Egyptian port cities under French diplomatic protection.¹⁰⁵ But their privileges generated antipathy among coreligionists and French merchants alike. A French Capuchin friar ridiculed Western Sephardim for their unrefined hats; he stressed that they had a separate burial ground from Ottoman Jews and even claimed that they “did not share some articles of faith” with them.¹⁰⁶

The depth of the fracture between Western and Eastern Sephardim should warn us against assuming that a common religious identity might be taken to fuel solidarity in commercial matters. In fact, matrimonial and economic alliances followed closely the internal ramifications of the broader Sephardic dias-

pora. In addition, precisely in the decades when Ergas and Silvera operated, new operative and symbolic boundaries emerged among the Sephardim of Livorno.

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, a group of families based in Tunis, Cairo, and Algiers referred to as North African Jews in Livorno and as Livornese Jews in North Africa became active in the region between the northern and southern coasts of the western Mediterranean. In 1685 there were forty-nine of these families in Tunis (they were referred to as *Grana*, from the Arabic term for Livorno). By 1710 they established their own synagogue.¹⁰⁷ In Tunis the Lombrosos controlled three or four factories manufacturing popular woolen hats (*chéchias*) made with Spanish wool imported via Livorno, where they established a business outpost. Others, such as the Aghibs, the Boccaras, the Camposes, the Farros, the Gutierrez Pegnas, the Leons, the Racahs, the Sorias, the Vaíses, and the Valensins, followed suit and progressively dominated the exchanges between Marseilles, Livorno, and North Africa.¹⁰⁸

Families such as the Ergases, the Baruch Carvaglios, and the Francos resisted intermarrying with these emerging North African Jews. They also kept separate spheres of commercial influence, dividing their efforts among the Levant (most notably Aleppo), northern Europe (and increasingly London), and the diamond trade with India. In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, these established Sephardic families lost ground to the rising commercial power of France in the Mediterranean and especially to Britain in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In Livorno, too, their supremacy within the Jewish community began to be contested by Italian Jews such as the Recanati and by a cluster of Jewish families that specialized in the triangular trade between Livorno, Tunis, and Marseilles. What concerns us is that by virtue of their geographical and business specializations, the old Sephardic elite of Livorno frequently entered into prolonged business deals with non-Jews. In contrast, the Jewish merchants who trafficked primarily with North Africa relied primarily on relatives and coreligionists and only occasionally pooled resources with Muslim traders.¹⁰⁹

As a rich literature has insisted in recent decades, distinctive social, economic, and cultural traits kept the Sephardim united across the diaspora and apart from the rest of Jewish society. Affluent merchants cultivated their sense of superiority over other Jewish groups in order to reaffirm their standing in the community. Jewish scholars of Iberian origin were more thoroughly imbued with Christian culture than were most Ashkenazic rabbis. A web of personal and institutional ties bound Sephardim together over vast distances. As Evelyn Oriel-Grausz has documented, persecution and commerce were not the sole

reasons people maintained connections throughout the diaspora. The need to preserve order and integrity in local communities, to acquire religious texts and objects, to relocate rabbis, and to comply with Jewish legal prescriptions multiplied and intensified lines of communication among the Portuguese and Spanish Jewish congregations across Europe and the Atlantic.¹¹⁰ These contacts and migrations reinforced a distinctive translocal, collective identity among Western Sephardim.

At the same time, distinctive but complementary networks crisscrossed this polycentric diaspora. Dutch Sephardim and Ottoman Jewry tend to eclipse Livorno in the scholarly literature, but this chapter has mapped the principal axes of Sephardic migration and commerce that radiated from the Tuscan port. In tracing the affirmation of Livorno as the most important Sephardic hub in southern Europe, I have sought to convey a sense of the vigor with which the most proactive Sephardic merchants created and adapted to new patterns of trade as well as describe the internal variations that came to distinguish different segments of the Sephardic world in the Mediterranean. In so doing, I have sought to set the stage for a reexamination of the notion that a shared confessional and ethnic identity was entirely self-evident or, indeed, alone sufficient to the construction of business relations. As Ergas and Silvera's commercial strategies will demonstrate, a shared identity was often longed for in the choice of commission agents, but more was needed. Even within the same diaspora, only intertwined kinship and credit networks sustained fiduciary relations.

For merchants whose minority status placed *de facto* if not legal limits on the range of opportunities for business organization (no state would have chartered an exclusively Sephardic commercial company, nor could Sephardic merchants raise considerable capital among non-Jews to set up large-scale operations), solid intra-Sephardic networks were also prerequisites for engaging in cross-cultural trade. Cooperation in business did not require the dissolution of religious and social boundaries.

The creation of a Jewish nation in Livorno in the 1590s was part of the effort by several European rulers to capture the perceived entrepreneurial talent of Iberian refugees. In the Continent more than in England, and in Venice and Livorno more than in Amsterdam or Hamburg, these efforts were accompanied by a stabilization of the porous religious boundaries between New Christians and New Jews. By the time Ergas and Silvera began to operate in Livorno in 1704, they had long ceased to waver between their forbears' allegiance to the Catholic Church (whether sincere or not) and Judaism. Alone among his relatives, Moses Ergas, a paternal uncle of Ergas and Silvera's founder, was baptized together with his three-year-old daughter in 1691 and took the name of Francesco Xa-

verio Carlo Fortunati. His wife Sarah did not follow him in this choice and, as required by canon law, obtained a divorce. Although Ergas-Fortunati probably continued to serve as a liaison for his relatives from Florence, his conversion, like that of many others, left no room for compromise.¹¹¹

In northern Europe a few individual Sephardim, and wealthy men in particular, continued to assume alternative religious identities. The lines of demarcation between Jews and Christians were greater wherever the Inquisition remained vigilant, but the pressure to conform grew stronger in Amsterdam, too. There, as Yosef Kaplan has shown, those who traveled to Iberia were relegated to a marginal position in the community. As community leaders and merchants, Sephardic men of the upper and middle ranks were interested parties in the consolidation of the community's boundaries. Rather than leading to economic isolationism, communitarian control rendered Jewish-Christian relations more stable and peaceful. This stability likely enhanced the collective credibility of Sephardic merchants in the eyes of outsiders, including the many Christians with whom they exchanged favors and negotiated deals. In Chapter 3 I turn to Jewish-Christian relations in Livorno, as well as to the evolution and internal conflicts of the local Jewish community.