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The Jewish Community of Portoferraio

In order to understand how the Jewish community of Portoferraio came into being, it should be remembered that 10 years after beginning the construction of his fortresses, the Medici ruler, Cosimo I, promulgated an edict in which he granted certain privileges to all those who came to live in the town which he had christened, rather pompously, "Cosmopoli".¹

With the publication of this edict he was seeking to attract new settlers to Leghorn and Pisa with the intention of promoting the cities respectively, as a port-of-call and a center for trade with foreign countries.

The edict granted exemption from taxes for the first ten years, protection from The Inquisition and amnesty for anyone who had been sentenced to prison, no matter where he had come from. In 1551 similar concessions had been granted to the Levantine Jews who had settled in Florence.

Cosimo's invitation was accepted by many Jews who had been displaced after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 15th century by the Catholic rulers Ferdinand II and Isabella. The Jewish community also increased considerably after the publication, in 1593, of the "Letters of Privilege", later known as the "Livornina" by which Francesco I de' Medici granted generous franchises to merchants of all nationalities and in particular to those persecuted for their religious beliefs. Jews figured prominently in this group.²

Among the concessions granted was the cancellation of debts of up to 500 ecus, exoneration from taxes, and immunity for all offences, including that of apostasy. This last concession was of particular importance to the "Marranos" : Jews who had converted publicly to Christianity in order to escape persecution, but who continued to adhere in secret, to ancient Jewish beliefs and practices.³ Other privileges which were granted included the freedom to travel throughout Tuscany without the obligation to wear a distinctive badge, the opening of a line of credit of 100,000 ecus, the permission to conserve their own religious rites and to construct buildings necessary for the practice of these rites. The most important concessions granted were "the right of *ballotazione*" by which anyone who chose to live in Leghorn or Pisa was automatically granted Tuscan citizenship and the "jurisdictional independence" which was the right to adjudication in both criminal and civil cases by the governing body of the Jewish community in its own recognized courts.

In the two centuries which followed the publication of the edict, thanks to the franchises granted to the primarily Jewish merchants , Leghorn became a major trading center in the Mediterranean, specializing in trade of articles in transit from Eastern ports. It was natural that some Levantine Jews, informed by their coreligionists of the privileges granted by the Medici, made their way to Leghorn and from there to

the nearby island of Elba⁴. In Elba there was the perspective of trade with the local population but also with the military garrisons of Portoferraio and Portolongone.

The Jewish community in Portoferraio, founded in the 17th century, grew until a century later it was well organized and during periods of prosperity numbered more than 50 members⁵.

The first information we have concerning Portoferraio dates back to 1631. Two brothers, Salomon and Jacob Gaon, addressed a request to the Grand Duke concerning religious rites. In reply, the Grand Duke invited the Governor to make a general announcement that “the Jews residing in this place could consult with the Jewish Massari (*heads of the community*) in Pisa or Livorno, or both, on matters pertaining to Jewish rites and ceremonies in Portoferraio because there was no synagogue in Portoferraio and no Massari to deal with legal matters.”⁶

After the publication of this announcement, Salomon and Jacob Gaon, travelled to Pisa to consult with the Jewish authorities there. By all accounts, from the beginning, there were internal conflicts among the members of the community. Over time, as we shall see, these conflicts grew more numerous, resulting in frequent attacks even against the local authorities.

The Gaon brothers obtained an answer from the Massari of Pisa which ordered that the Jews of Portoferraio “should not get involved in their business, by repeating certain things, by attacking them” and stipulated a fine of “200 écus...and command that these Jews of Portoferraio appear before Us who will hand down justice”.

The hypothesis of an internal conflict is confirmed by the injunction extended by the Massari of Pisa to the “Università degli Ebrei” (*the Jewish community*) of Portoferraio to “give meat to the Gaon according to Jewish habit and custom and also to permit their womenfolk entry to the Baths⁷ according to the rites”. The injunction stipulated a fine of 100 ecus and stated that the fine “will be heavier if the injunction is not obeyed”.

However, it would seem that the Gaons, themselves, were not very zealous in carrying out their religious duties. The following year Jacutiel Coen, “in his own name and in the name of the Jews of Portoferraio”, reported to the Massari of the Pisa synagogue that “we cannot pray as we should with a quorum of 10 persons”⁸ and this because Salomon Gaon, his brother Jacob and his nephew Abraham no longer want to come to the synagogue.

The report petitioned the Massari of Pisa to intervene. The Massari then ordered the Gaons to attend synagogue “according to our law”. On the back of the petition, Daniel de Leon, a member of the Massari of Pisa, orders “a Salomon Gaon y hermano Jacob y sus subrinos” to attend “prayer, one, two or all four at the usual hours” and threatens to fine them should they refuse to comply.

Coen’s petition is important because from it we learn that the first synagogue in Portoferraio came into being between 1631 and 1632 and that the Jewish community numbered hardly more than 10 families since, in the absence of the heads of the Gaon families, the required quorum for prayer of 10 persons could not be reached. The dispute between the Coens and the Gaons can be explained by a different

interpretation of the rites: the Jews did not all come from the same countries and there were many who had never practiced the traditional rites. This was especially true among the Marranos, many of whom after their conversion to Christianity at the end of the 15th century, had lived isolated in small villages on the Iberian Peninsula. They had not prayed, not even secretly, only keeping alive the memory of their Jewish origins.

Until 1702 we have no other information about the community (one can only suppose that it grew progressively) until the year that the Grand Duke suggested to the Governor of Portoferraio, Baron Alessandro del Negro “that the Jews should all be lodged in the same street in order to allay the anxieties that might arise concerning the cohabitation of Jews alongside Christians”⁹.

The recommendations of the Grand Duke were implemented and the Jewish community was assigned the end section of the street now known as “Elbano Gasperi” and which was called, until the end of the 20th century, the street or quarter of the Jews. Thus it became easier for the authorities to maintain control over the community especially as “no Jew was permitted to leave his street after one o’clock in the morning on pain of being sentenced to prison for an unlimited period of time”.

The proposal to gather the Jewish community into one street was subtly suggested by the Ecclesiastical Authority and especially by the Episcopal Vicar.

The fact that there is no record of any complaint by the population of Portoferraio against the Jewish community is symptomatic: traditionally, Jews enjoyed a good reputation, not only in the Island’s capital but also in the communities where they travelled for their business. The trades they practiced required them to be on good terms with the population which provided them with the revenues and services they relied on. So it was not the “anxious” and fearful who advised the Grand Duke to confine the Jews to the ghetto, but rather the secret intrigues of the Ecclesiastical Authority who feared that the growing number of Jews might form ties of business and friendship with Christians and so contaminate their ideas. In fact, we know that the Jews who came from Spain were considered to be heretics. The constraints imposed by the Governor provoked an immediate outcry. About ten heads of households, merchants and traders addressed a petition¹⁰ to him asking to be exempted from the order requiring them not to leave their own street after one o’clock in the morning, the reason being that this order was “extremely prejudicial to their business since they were required to go out during the night in order to keep watch over or attend to their merchandise”¹¹.

At about the same time, the Governor, in a short letter to the Grand Duke, explained his reasons for ordering the suspension of the work on the new synagogue being built by Abraham, son of Isaac Pardo.

The old synagogue as described in the report had “5 unequal polished windows with rough stonework. Passersby in the street could neither see nor guess the activity inside”. We know that an important element for synagogues was that “not only should there be nothing permitting them to be identified from the outside but also that they should blend in perfectly with the houses around them. This is a very ingenious form of self-protection.”¹²

However, it would seem that Pardo did not take this custom into account because he wanted to build a new synagogue “to give the both the interior and the exterior facade more sheen, *imperciocché questa apparisce di varie simmetrie* and more elegance, decorated with 3 windows with carved stonework “*alla gonfolina*” and being high enough to overlook the marina, the city and most of the main square of the parish church where daily military exercises took place”.

To justify the suspension of building work, the Governor pretexted that the new synagogue would be too close to the square “where several events were held especially during Holy Week and Easter and where the City Brotherhoods came in procession, singing, to the church *preci all’Altissimo* and that there would be trouble if they saw the Jews gathered under the windows, especially on Saturday, and if their singing of the sacred songs were disturbed by the noises and the droning coming from the synagogue...during these events *per ischerno* they could, through the windows of the synagogue show discourtesy and contempt, and in the process, shock the faithful”. We learn from the Governor’s letter that all the Jewish rites, even the most solemn, were celebrated in the Synagogue of Portoferraio, just as they were in Florence or in Pisa. The synagogue was used by Jews from Piombino *e ne castelli* bordering Maremma as well as the Jews of Elba.

This is why, the Governor explained, that because the voices and racket of these people might disturb the ecclesiastical choir, the synagogue should be situated *dalla Pieve Braccia 90 incirca*.

The Governor concluded by suggesting that the new synagogue should be built in a garden behind Pardo’s house, under Fort Stella, “a place not frequented by the general public, full of light, contiguous to the same house, and very practical for the Jewish community.”

All the Governor’s reasons, motivated by concern for Christian sensibilities, would seem to indicate that the suggestion to move the synagogue came from the Episcopal Vicar in whose interest it was to discredit the growing Jewish community.

The Governor found a way of singling out Pardo yet again in his correspondence with Florence. In another report he said that it was easy to keep the peace in the Christian community but “the case is very different with these four beggarly Jews, as we can see by Abraham Pardo’s agitation and obstinacy. His boldness resembles that of a new Samson and stirs up his compatriots”. This is why “his restless and irascible mind” was often the source of disputes within the community “ill-using his compatriots in words and in deeds”. In the same report we learn that Pardo “caused difficulties every day, sometimes coming to blows, and using as a pretext, money matters or the school or the *precedenza dei luoghi*” with the result that the Governor was forced to intervene several times “to put him in his place”.

Pardo even accused another Jew by the name of Cardoso and who had converted to Christianity, of theft. The authorities, when notified of the situation, wrote to the Governor that Pardo “had to prove the loss of the merchandise which he claimed that Cardoso had stolen” because there was good reason to suppose that the accusation was motivated by vengeance “as Pardo in all likelihood hates the accused for having embraced our faith”.

These disputes within the community continued until, twenty years later, in 1746, the Regency Council ordered the Governor that Pardo “remain locked in his home for one month” and that the Auditor administer “a severe and thorough correction” for having presented “such a infamous document, so unworthy of consideration”. We have no more precise information about this document.

Another note concerns the use of seats in the synagogue: “in order to avoid disputes concerning the allocation of seats” the governor ordered that seats on the benches should be allotted according to seniority and punished offenders with a fine, half to be paid to the treasury and half to the synagogue.

As we have already seen, it was primarily the Ecclesiastical authorities who made cohabitation difficult by isolating the Jewish community and preventing Christians from having contact with them. There were particular restrictions concerning household help and wet nurses. A wet nurse needed to obtain permission from Vicar Foraneo before she could be allowed to feed a Jewish baby. Before granting permission, the Vicar would first verify that the nurse was not exposed to a “threat to her chastity”. If the Vicar continued to refuse his agreement, the Governor was authorized to make “a prudent decision which would order all the members of the family not to mistreat the nurse and as long as there was no trouble and that these women do not spend the night in a Jewish home”.

With respect to Christian workers, this same letter ordained “that the Jews may employ them in the same way as doctors and surgeons do; also Jews could not be forbidden to employ Christians as long as these Christians were not treated as members of the family and as long as the work was not continuous”.

In spite of these precise stipulations, Jews continued to have trouble employing Christians. We learn this from a petition addressed to the Grand Duke ten years later by two Levantine Jews.

The two Jews, Bongiorno and Scappa, had been advised by friends to travel to Portoferraio where “they would find land, water and nearby, coal and wood and all other things necessary” to the business they exercised in Persia, “where they worked different materials such as cast iron (*fuzzia*), spirit of sulphur, alum from Cyprus, green copper and saltpeter”. On Portoferraio they had rented the lands belonging to an elderly man, Franceschi, and had set up their business, building “ovens and other things” and had hired men, women and children from 30 Christian families. But, as they had been inspected twice for drugs which they were suspected of having brought from the Orient and also because of the nature of their work, the two petitioners requested that the Grand Duke grant them the same privileges granted to “the Jewish Nation of Livorno and Pisa and particularly to the Levantine Jews” as Vicar Foraneo refused to grant “*la permissione*” to the Christians “*a chio venghino detto travaglio* and that he has also just forbidden Christian sharecropper from helping with the planting and the vines on the rented land”. They begged “to be allowed to continue to employ Christians and to be able to keep them on their lands in the country”; saying that they “wish to offend no one and that on the contrary, their employment has a positive effect both on poverty and on Your Royal Highness’ treasury”.

These same Jews complained that the clothing “which is customary in their country”¹³ made them “targets for harassment by Christians so that they could bear it no longer” and so they decided to turn to the Grand Duke to ask him to order “the Christians to stop”.

They then particularly requested permission to manufacture saltpeter in Portoferraio which they proposed to sell to the Governor at a discount of one percent compared to what was paid elsewhere. The Grand Duke “in his benevolent letter” granted the Jews all their requests. It was also agreed that saltpeter could be manufactured in Portoferraio on the condition that the Superintendent General of the Fortresses “took the share that he deemed necessary for the Real Servizio” with the proposed discount.

In another report dated 1746, one letter remains in which an allusion is made to “violations relating to the benevolent privileges from which they are not always able to benefit” and from which it can be inferred that the Jews complained that they could not take complete advantage of the privileges granted by the injunctions handed down by the Grand Duke.

The question of Jewish burial deserves some explanation. The documents in the archives relate that in 1765 agreement was reached to build a wall around the field which had been set aside for their tombs, with a clause allowing the wall to be taken down “each time access was necessary”¹⁴.

Another document relates to the transport of corpses and the intervention of soldiers. It is obvious that there were abuses in this matter as the Grand Duke notifies the Governor “that neither the soldiers nor their assistants are permitted to ask to be paid according to the size (large or small) of the corpses except when the family of the deceased requests the soldiers to accompany them”.

Other archival documents referring to the Jewish community concern a proposal for a regulation that the Governor of Portoferraio, at the request of ten Jewish families, submitted to the President of the “Buon Governo” in January 1826.

Attached to the proposal is a list of heads of families with a brief note on each one attesting to his moral character. The Governor had then to choose two Massari from the list. At the head of the list were Consolo Levi, aged 50 and Abraham Bocarra, aged 35 both of whom “enjoyed above all others, the good reputation and esteem of the community and the people”.

Consolo Levi was, in fact, chosen to be one of the Massari. The list continued with David, son of Isaac Pardo, aged 63, Salomon Pardo, aged 60, Aron Pardo, aged 32, Aaron Calfon, aged 28, Aaron, son of Isaac Pardo, aged 62, Ruben Levi, aged 30, Abraham Lopez Pererra, aged 60; all these persons “enjoying a good reputation in the community and being respectful of the religious precepts”.

At the bottom of the page, we find Abraham Pardo “a schemer and hated by almost everyone in the community, and who has, along with his sons, been the cause of many disputes during his tenure”. One can see that he was a worthy descendant of the same Abraham Pardo who almost a century before had given the Governor so much trouble.

The list ends with Angelo, son of Moisè Pardo “recently returned and little respected for his liberal ideas”¹⁵; implying that he had been punished for his political ideas and had been under special surveillance because of his liberal views.

This brief allusion merits further discussion but it is sufficient to point out here, that even in Portoferraio, as was the case in other parts of Tuscany and especially in Leghorn, there were among the Jews fervent patriots who contributed to the cause of independence and unification.¹⁶

To return to the proposed regulations referred to above, the President of the Buon Governo informed the Governor that he had been required to submit the regulations to the Grand Duke for approval. "This question, writes the President, should not prevent You in your great wisdom from settling affairs in such a manner as to ensure that the practice of religious rites can take place calmly and with regularity this falling in the domain of government seeing that Your Honor is invested with the right to inspect activities of the synagogue."¹⁷

The rule drawn up with the Grand Duke's approval stated: "are appointed, the representatives of the Jewish families, residing on this island and belonging to the Jewish school or the synagogue of this town, David Pardo and Consolo Levi". In the report, The Grand Duke allows the Governor "the power to approve the deputies or Massari who are nominated every year by the resident heads of families" with the permission to add to this rule "any further measures necessary to ensure that there be no disturbance". The final rule was drawn up by the Governor Giuseppe Falchi in the name of His Imperial and Royal Highness, Leopoldo II; In this document it was agreed that two Massari would represent the Jews of Elba: The Governor would choose the Massari the first year and in the following years they would be drawn by lot from a list of heads of families approved by the Governor.

The regulations go on to list the duties of the Massari, in particular their responsibility concerning the sacred objects in the synagogue: Article 4 stipulates that "everything shall be placed under lock and key. There shall be two locks, in order that it shall be possible to access all that is necessary for the school without having to ask for the consent of the Massari". These precautions were taken because in the past disputes had arisen concerning the custody of the sacred objects. The regulations also stipulated the protocol which should be followed when reading the Pentateuch and the celebration of the religious rites, thus putting an end to the disputes which had occurred during the lifetime of Abraham d'Isaac Pardo.

The Article refers to the Jewish community of Leghorn whose regulations should be respected both in the reading of the Pentateuch "as well as in every other thing concerning the celebration of religious rites". It is evident that if at first the Jews of Portoferraio referred to the synagogue of Pisa, they then conformed to the customs of the Jewish community of Leghorn which became more and more important while the influence of Pisa progressively declined.

Evidence of this can be found in a letter dated January 1827 in which the Governor of Pisa requested information from the Governor of Portoferraio concerning a measure emanating from the Grand Duke "with respect to the composition of the governing body of the Jewish community of this island"; which has "resulted in a number of members which is insufficient. I would be extremely grateful if you could tell me the exact date and terms of the Edict in order to judge if the same measures could be applied to this city (*Pisa*) where the same difficulties can be found".

In fact, in the second half of the 18th century, the Jewish community of Elba had progressively declined until only ten families remained, the same families who had presented their petition concerning the proposed regulations to the Governor.

In order to understand the reasons for this gradual decline, one must keep in mind the economic and political climate of the second half of the 18th century. Economic conditions on Elba had deteriorated considerably. After peace was made with the Ottoman Emperor, the danger of Saracen invasion had ended, the garrisons of Portoferraio and Longone were considerably reduced and the ships which generally anchored in the harbor now sailed to Leghorn. Lastly, with the suppression of the “*compagnia urbana*” made up of 180 men, all of whom were villagers, “who, with the money they earned from their services and activities, maintained their families and tilled a small parcel of communal land”, revenues began to decline.¹⁸

The situation became even more precarious in the 19th century, particularly after unification when the garrisons were all abolished and Elba lost the numerous privileges which it had enjoyed under the reign of the Grand Dukes. So it was natural the Jewish community, which had come to the island in order to trade, would begin to look elsewhere to improve its fortunes when the economic situation of the country suffered collapse after the progressive demobilization and closing of the garrisons.¹⁹

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, the construction of a steel mill attracted a large number of laborers from the continent to Portoferraio. This industrial activity gave rise to the hope that there would be an economic recovery on Elba and so other Jewish families were again drawn to the island: among them were the Coen, Orvieto, Passigli, Cremisi and Rabà²⁰ families, almost all of whom were cloth traders (*pannine*) and who were well regarded in Portoferraio and other coastal towns where they could be found in small markets and on feast days.

During World War II, these people disappeared completely from the island as a result of racial persecution.²¹

In conclusion, we can see that, even if the oldest documents show that there were some disputes with the Christian population, especially concerning the clothing of the Levantine Jews, and even if there were disagreements with the ecclesiastical authorities for religious reasons, in general, Jews found the island of Elba and Leghorn where they were protected by privileges granted by the Medici and the Lorraine, an oasis of peace. They were able to prosper there and to develop a lively trade with Eastern ports.

The population of Elba, over time, was not only used to the presence of Jews, but also was sympathetic to their presence. This is evidenced by marriage between Jews and young girls from Elba for whom they were willing to make the greatest sacrifice that one can ask of a Jew: that of renouncing his religion through baptism into another faith.

So it was with Moïse Pardo who married a young girl from Rio and who took the name Baccetti. It was also the case for Elia Coen, son of Salomon Rubino Coen and Sarah Benatar, who fell in love with a girl

from Rio. His future father in law demanded that he be baptized before he would allow him to marry his daughter.²²

Translation Notes:

Alla gonfolina: A reference to a particular sandstone quarried near Florence in Settignano and Gonfolina

Ballotazione: Admission to the Jewish nation by secret ballot bringing with it the right to residence

Levantine Jews: Marranos originating from the Ottoman Empire

Marranos: Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who converted to Catholicism to escape persecution during the Inquisition

Massari: Heads and judges of the Jewish Nation

Pentateuch: First five books of the bible

Portoferraio: Main town on the Island of Elba

Rio: A town on the Island of Elba

School: Jewish school dispensing religious education and attached to the Synagogue

¹ GIUSEPPE NINCI, *Storia dell'isola dell'Elba*, Portolongone, 1930, p. 130

² The history of the Leghorn community begins with the granting of this remarkable charter of privileges which is affectionately called "The Livornina", published in 1593 by Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany. This charter was addressed to foreign merchants, particularly Jews, in order to incite them to settle in the new free ports of Elba and Leghorn (CECIL ROTH, *Notes sur les marranes de Livourne*, Publications de la Société des Etudes Juives, Paris 1931)

³ Article 3 of the "Livornina", which directly concerned the Marranos, states "We also wish that during the period referred to, there be neither fear nor persecution, neither denunciations nor accusations against you and your families even if, in the past outside our domain, you have lived as Christians or have called yourselves Christians." This article was, in fact, an open invitation to the Marranos who had been persecuted in Spain and Portugal, to settle in the free ports. After 1649 when they were officially permitted to leave Spain and Portugal, Tuscan ports saw a considerable influx of Marranos attracted by the many opportunities for trade. (ATTILIO MILANO, *Storia degli Ebrei in Italia*, Torino, Einaudi 1963, p. 214)

⁴ Although Leghorn had become the largest center for Marrano settlement in Tuscany and indeed in all of Italy, it was not the only center. A small branch of the community had established itself on the island of Elba where the old Jewish cemetery can still be found. This small community had settled in the capital, Portoferraio. Its most important members were Abraham d'Isac Pardo and Benatar Melo (CECIL ROTH, *op. cit.*, p. 21).

⁵ In the CORESI DEL BRUNO's Zibaldone, written in 1729 and found in the Marucelliana Library in Florence, we can read that there were 41 Jews in Portoferraio in 1730, 40 in 1731, 54 in 1732, 43 in 1733, 50 in 1734, 44 in 1735, 40 in 1736, 44 in 1737, 43 in 1738.

⁶ Portoferraio City Archives, Jewish Community, 1631.

⁷ This is a ritual bath reserved for women. They were required to purify themselves after each holiday, on the eve of their wedding day or after childbirth. The distribution of meat was also an obligatory ritual.

⁸ In general when Jews settled in a new town, there was a conscious effort to maintain a minimum population of 10 adult males in order to be able to celebrate the required services.

⁹ Portoferraio City Archives, Jewish Community, 1702.

¹⁰ The complaint is signed by Volonio Salo, Moise Salerno, Salomon Finzi, Salomon Carpi, Moise Salerno for his brother Salomon, Jacob Melli, David Baruch and Samuel Fernandez, also known as "Boca de Gloria" (Glorious Mouth). Samuel Fernandez was a member of Isaac Fernandez' family and was a pastry cook in Leghorn. GUIDO BEDARIDA tells a curious story about him in "The Jews of Leghorn", Florence, Le Monnier 1956, p. 161.

¹¹ A trade register recording the day's sales and kept in the City Archives shows us that the Jewish Community in Portoferraio, as was a general rule elsewhere, was primarily involved in the commerce of fabrics.

¹² A. MILANO, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

¹³ Even in Leghorn, Levantine Jews were recognizable by their rich turbans and eccentric clothing. (A. MILANO, *op. cit.*, p. 563)

¹⁴ The Jewish cemetery in Portoferraio was situated on the other side of the Ponticello River, in the Ghiaie area. The wall which surrounded it is still visible today "di braccia tre d'altezza e di mezzo braccio di grossezza nella

distanza di tese 22 dalla contoscarpa del fosso”, built shortly after the middle of the 18th century. In April 1964, near the cemetery, a headstone was found bearing the inscription “here lies Ester Modigliani, aged 84 who spent her life...”. Other headstones inscribed in Hebrew and dating from 1646 to the end of the 19th century were transferred to the Jewish cemetery of Leghorn. The inscriptions, according to Bedarida, were in Castilian, “Castilian being the language of choice for literature, prayers and inscriptions, and for typical artistic Sephardic tombs found in Italy only in the old cemeteries of Leghorn, Pisa, Portoferraio and Venice”. (G. BEDARIDA, op.cit., p.xiii).

¹⁵ It should be remembered that at the end of the 18th century, two other Jews in the family, Abram and Salomon, were sentenced to nine months in prison for their pro-French ideas. (CARLO FRANKOVITCH, *Elenco dei Giacobini di Portoferraio condannati dal Governo Granducale* (List of Jacobins in Portoferraio convicted by the government of the Grand Duke), appendix to “Massoni e Giacobini all’isola d’Elba durante l’occupazione francese” Rivista di Livorno n°4, 1956) and also in “*Les débuts du socialisme dans le Risorgimento* (The Beginnings of Socialism in the Risorgimento), Florence, Le Monnier 1962 p. 99-119).

¹⁶ A. MILANO, op. cit., p.358. Concerning the patriotism of the Jews of Leghorn, in G. BEDARIDA, op. cit., we read that “in the 19th century the Leghorn Jews took part in patriotic movements and also movements for liberation, immediately within the sects and later on the battle fields”.

¹⁷ Portoferraio Communal Archives, 1826.

¹⁸ See the petitions of the Elders of the Portoferraio district to Pierre Leopod in “Relazione manoscritta fatta a S.A.R. dal conte Vincenzo degli Alberti suo consigliere di Stato, 1766”, Portoferraio Communal Library. The report states that the garrison has been reduced to 600 men “whereas in the times of the now defunct house of Medici, it numbered 1000 men, most of who were settled and lived in Portoferraio”.

¹⁹ Around the middle of the 19th century, there were still 28 fabric and *sottigliami* resellers, 28 tailors’ workshops and 59 haberdashers. The Jewish community probably had the monopoly on these activities, most of which would be gone in the space of a few decades (see the unpublished manuscript by EUGENIO BRANCHI *Corografia storica e statistica dell’isola d’Elba*, 1839, Portoferraio Communal Library)

²⁰ Witness a news item reported in the press of the time “Samuel Rabà is a typical example of his nomadic race. He has always been like a spinning wheel, spinning but never finding a fixed place. But he preferred to stop in Portoferraio and today he is still with us and is opening a new dry goods shop which will cheaply clothe the residents of the area, the city and many of those whose work brings them to Elba” (*Corriere dell’Elba*, 16 June 1901).

²¹ The Jews of Elba did not endure repression or persecution by the Fascist authorities. However, at the sign of the first anti-Semitic demonstrations they preferred to move to the coastal cities of France such as Marseille. At that time these cities offered more guarantees of safety and they could expect to be welcomed by a large colony of coreligionists.

²² The baptism took place in Longone and the young Jew, as was the custom, had to adopt the name of his godfather, the Spaniard Don Simone d’Especo. The name was progressively modified to De Specos and then to Specos (see ERCOLE SPECOS, *Ritorni all’Elba*, in *Pagine elbane* edited by S. Foresi, Portoferraio, Tip. Pop. 1932, p.32).