

THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES IN ROME IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

After 1492, groups of Jewish refugees from the Crown of Aragon steadily arrived in Rome in search of a new settlement. In the first decades of the 1500s, the Sephardic (consisting of Catalan, Aragonese and Castilian Jews) immigrants to Rome was not only the most numerous, but also the most solid both economically and culturally, endowed with an organisational enterprise and a strong sense of identity, although there were tensions and rivalries within the community itself. In spite of clashes with Roman Jews over the governance of the community, the paper shows exactly how the Iberian refugees brought an element of revitalisation to the Roman-Jewish microcosm.

KEY WORDS

Jews. Crown of Aragon. Immigration. Rome. Renaissance

CAPITALIA VERBA

Hebraei. Corona Aragoniae. Immigrationes. Roma. Artes et Humanitatem Restitutae.

Lozana: But tell me, what's in that house that so many people are going into?

Rampin: Let's go there and you'll see. It's the Catalan synagogue; this one further down is for women. The Germans are there, the other one is for the French, this one is for the Romans and the Italians who are the stupidest Jews from all the other nations, because they want to convert and do not know the law. The most educated are ours, the Spanish, because amongst us are wealthy, educated people, very confident in their position. Here they are. What do you think? This synagogue of ours is the crowning glory.

This passage, taken from the *Ritratto de la Lozana andalusa* by Francisco Delicado,¹ effectively serves to introduce a brief sketch of the Sephardic presence in Rome during the first decades of the 16th century, by which time groups of Jews were settling in the city, mostly coming from regions subject to the Spanish Crown (a result of the expulsion decrees from 1492 onwards), but also Jewish refugees from Navarre, from Portugal, and from Provence.

However, before diving straight in, it is worth briefly digressing into the Jewish presence in Rome during the mid centuries of the Middle Ages so as to be better able to evaluate the "change" caused by the arrival en masse of the Iberian immigrants, in the social context of the Jews in the town. You have to go back to the second half of the 12th century to get a really faithful picture of the conditions of the largest Jewish community in Italy. It is provided by the Spanish traveller Benjamin of Tudela in his "Itinerary", which contains a lot of interesting socio-demographic information:² at that time, around two hundred families (therefore just under a thousand individuals) would have lived in Rome, all of good social standing, well integrated into the life of the town; some Jews were actually servants of the pontiff. The image of economic and cultural prosperity is also confirmed throughout the thirteenth century, in the last few decades of which the migration of a notable number of Jewish merchant bankers began, some of whom were awarded the title of *mercatores Romanam Curiam sequentes*. They, in close relationship with the Papal curia—which tended to insert itself into the picture of its financial policy and of economic expansion towards the municipalities of the countryside and the provinces subjected to the Church—settled in many towns in central Italy, where their capital was particularly required for the different needs of the expanding municipal states.³ This migration certainly increased after 1309, with the transfer of the papal seat to Avignon and the consequent decline in the economic life of Rome and the stagnation of the financial and business activities: therefore the Roman Jewish community lost a large number of families—estimated at around a hundred—from amongst

1. Delicado, Francisco. *Ritratto della Lozana andalusa*, ed. Teresa Cirillo Sirri. Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 1988.

2. Tudela, Benyamin da. *Itinerario*, Italian version by Giulio Busi. Rimini, Luisè Editore, 1988: 18. Jewish presence in Rome, its economic and social connotations, and relationship with Christian society analysed by me making particular recourse to the notarial source. See Esposito, Anna. *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Rome: Il calamo, 1995.

3. Toaff, Ariel. "Gli ebrei a Roma", *Storia d'Italia XI. Gli ebrei in Italia*, Corrado Vivanti, ed. Turin: Einaudi, 1996: 129-137.



the most prominent in terms of prestige and financial funds available and, with them, considerable capital. During the 14th century, also because of the plague of 1348-50, which hit the city hard, the crisis of the Roman Jewish group worsened further: thus a decline in the demographic situation must be added to the economic trend. The difficult conditions in which Rome found itself after the return of the popes and the prohibition of the practice of usury for the Jews —confirmed in the city statutes— were amongst the determining factors of the second great exodus of the wealthiest Roman Jews to the cities of central northern Italy “relating to bankers and brokers in the money commerce sector”, with procedures very similar to those of a century earlier.⁴ The exodus of men of prestige and financial resources contributed to a further decline in the community’s economic conditions, which would never manage to regain the levels of welfare and importance it had known in the 12th and 13th centuries.

During the fifteenth century, the Jewish community —like the rest of the population of the town— saw a notable demographic increase due in part to immigration (from several Italian cities and regions, but also from countries further away, including the Iberian peninsula),⁵ but inadequate in terms of economic development: most of the Roman Jews worked in small businesses, artisanship, or as second-hand dealers; however, the doctors were outstanding, some of whom were the Pope’s chief physicians,⁶ and constituted the community’s aristocracy. As mentioned previously, the situation changed noticeably from the last decade of the fifteenth century onwards, when due to the expulsion proclamations after that of 1492, Rome became the destination of large groups of Jews from various countries. The *Descriptio Urbis* of 1526, the first census that still exists for Rome, records the presence of 373 Jewish families, a total of 1772 individuals, in a whole population of 53,897 people in 9,324 homes. The provenance of the Jewish heads of families is shown in a very small number of cases, but it is sufficient to indicate that amongst the immigrants from Spain the largest group was the “ultramontane” Jews, that is those who came from countries next to the Alps.⁷

The indications contained in the census match the information obtained from notarial records, examined systematically from 1492 to 1512, then with broad sur-

4. Toaff, Ariel. “Gli ebrei a Roma”...: 140.

5. Esposito, Anna. “La presenza ebraica a Roma dal Duecento al Sacco: aspetti demografici e sociali”, *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Rome: Il calamo, 1995: 128.

6. Esposito, Anna. “La presenza ebraica a Roma”...: 128-129. For the emerging role of doctors see Esposito, Anna. “I rapporti tra ebrei e cristiani nella Roma del Rinascimento. Gli intermediari privilegiati”, *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Rome: Il calamo, 1995: 115-117.

7. Gnoli, Domenico. “‘Descriptio Urbis’ o censimento della popolazione di Roma avanti il sacco borbonico”. *Archivio: Società Romana di storia patria*, 17 (1894): 375-520; republished —with analytical indices— by Lee, Egmont. *Descriptio Urbis. The Roman Census of 1527*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1985; and now in a new edition in *Habitatores in Urbe. The Population of Renaissance Rome*, Egmont Lee ed. Roma: Casa Editrice Università La Sapienza, 2006. The information contained in the document was studied by Livi, Livio. *Un censimento di Roma avanti il sacco borbonico*. Rome, 1914: 63-69 information relating to the Jews.



veys up to 1527. The Sephardic immigrants (constituted of Catalan, Aragonese and Castilian Jews) were not just the most numerous, but also the most solid economically and culturally, gifted with organisational initiative and with a strong sense of their own identity, although not without internal tensions and rivalry, as we will examine later. During the 16th century, the influx of Iberian refugees continued to be considerable enough for the Roman Sephardic community to be considered the largest of the Italian Sephardic communities of the time, with a number estimated at between 500 and 1000 people.⁸ However, a considerable number of names of Sephardic Jews appear, often provided with honorary titles, in the records of the Roman notaries of the first decades of the sixteenth century. An idea of the number of the new immigrants and the numeric ratio between Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazi Jews can be obtained from a document from 1506. On March 1st of that year, 68 Jews *ultramontani nationum et linguarum infrascriptarum* met in a house in the S. Angelo district, in Piazza del Mercatello, of whom 17 were from the German and French university, 22 from the *universitas hebreorum aragonensium*, 13 from that of the Catalan Jews and 16 from the university of the Castilian Jews, who represented *totam universitatem hebreorum forensium et ultramontanorum in Urbe existentium* and constituted the majority of all the ultramontane Jews living in Rome. The reason for this very important meeting was the appointment of 12 procurators, 3 for each group (whose names are not included in the previous lists and who therefore must be added to the aforementioned 68, giving a total of 80 individuals), with the duty of checking whether there were "paupers, the infirm and beggars" to whom help should be given amongst them, and to collect money with this purpose from the members of the *universitas*.⁹ The 80 Jews were without doubt the heads of families with a certain level of economic funds available, enabling them to pay community contributions. Considering the density of Jewish homes, the first contingent of ultramontane immigrants who settled in Rome after the expulsions at the end of the fifteenth century can be estimated at around 400 people (but this data certainly puts the number too low). Furthermore, the great prevalence of Sephardic Jews is apparent, a good 60 heads of family compared with the 20 Ashkenazi Jews. Amongst the Sephardic Jews, the large number of Aragonese Jews stands out, some 25, who just a few years later—in 1511—would already have risen to 31.¹⁰

8. Toaff, Ariel. "Ebrei, spagnoli e marrani nell'Italia ebraica del Cinquecento. Una presenza contestata". *La Rassegna mensile d'Israel*, 58 (1992): 47-59, in particular: 50. On the presence of Sephardic Jews in Italy see, amongst the most recent contributions, Segre, Renata. "Sephardic Settlements in Sixteenth-Century Italy: a Historical and Geographical Survey". *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 6/2 (1991): 112-137; Toaff, Ariel. "Los Sefardies en Ferrara y en Italia en el siglo XVI", *Introducción a la Biblia de Ferrara. Actas del Simposio Internacional sobre la Biblia de Ferrara, (Sevilla 25-28 de noviembre de 1991)*. Sevilla: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1994: 185-203; Luzzati, Michele. "La marcha hacia la Italia de las ciudades y de los principes". *Los caminos del exilio. Segundos Encuentros Judaicos de Tudela (Tudela, 7-9 de noviembre de 1995)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996: 159-180.

9. Archivio di Stato di Roma (=ASR), *Collegio dei Notai Capitolini (=CNC)* 929, f. 443r-v, 451r.

10. ASR, CNC 852, f. 140r-141r. For the Aragonese Jewish communities and their expulsion see Motis Dolader, Miquel Àngel. "Caminos y destierros de los Judios de Aragón tras el edicto de expulsión", *Los caminos del exilio. Segundos Encuentros Judaicos de Tudela (Tudela, 7-9 de noviembre de 1995)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996: 197-252.



There is also a constant growth curve for the other Sephardic groups. For the Castilian Jews we are not in a position to provide numerical information, but the presence, from December 1511, of a *universitas castiglianorum novorum*, facing, at least until 1521, the *universitas hebreorum castiglianorum antiquorum*¹¹ is probably connected to a further migratory wave. Also, for the Catalan university other lists of members after the sixteen recorded in 1506 are missing, but the importance of this group can be obtained from other data, such as the purchase of a new synagogue (1517), its readaptation, with the furnishing of a heater and of a bath in the annexes (1518), and the construction of a new *aron* (1523).¹²

The Lanzichenecchi's sacking of 1527 was the cause of a considerable reduction in the demographic size of the Roman Jewish minority, due to death and departures, a reduction which is, however, difficult to quantify due to the lack of specific sources. However, due to the strong decline in members, it is proved with certainty by the merging of some synagogues (also called *scole*) in the period immediately afterwards: the Catalan *scola* was combined with the Aragonese one and, a few decades later, the Castilian with the French,¹³ still maintaining its headquarters in the traditional residential quarter.

The *contrada iudeorum* was included in the S. Angelo district, bordering the Arenula and Ripa districts, where the Jews of Rome, originally from Trastevere, had already been settling since the thirteenth century.¹⁴ The majority of the Jewish community facilities were concentrated here, such as the main synagogue, called the Scola Tempio, located in Piazza del Mercatello; the *hospitales iudeorum* which operated both as a refuge for travellers and as a hospital; the slaughterhouses for the ritual slaughtering of the animals selected in accordance with precise criteria;¹⁵

11. See Esposito, Anna. "Le 'comunità' ebraiche prima del Sacco: problemi di identificazione", *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Roma: Il calamo, 1995: 272-273. For the Jews of Castile see Valdeón Baruque, Julio. "Las juderías castellanas en el siglo XV entre el 'pogrom' y la expulsión", *Segundos Encuentros Judaicos de Tudela (Tudela 7-9 de noviembre de 1995)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996: 181-195.

12. Valdeón Baruque, Julio. "Las juderías castellanas" ...: 274-276. For the indication of the presence of a heater (that is a heated room for steam baths) and a bath, perhaps a *miquè*, see ASR, CNC 1141, f. 241v-242v. For the new *aron* see Migliau, Bice. *Nuove prospettive di studio per le Cinque Scole del ghetto di Roma: l'identificazione e il recupero dell'aron di Scola Catalana*. "Henoch", 12/2 (1990): 191-206. On the Catalan Jewish presence in the Mediterranean basin after 1492 see Tov Assis, Yom. "Los expulsados judíos de Cataluña", *Los caminos del exilio. Segundos Encuentros Judaicos de Tudela (Tudela 7-9 de noviembre de 1995)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996: 61-70.

13. Milano, Attilio. *Il ghetto di Roma*. Rome: Staderini editore, 1964: 214-218.

14. On the Jewish quarter in Rome before the ghetto, see Esposito, Anna. "Gli ebrei romani alla fine del Medioevo", *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Roma: Il calamo, 1995: 144-150; Racheli, Alberto Maria. "Gli insediamenti ebraici a Roma prima del Ghetto", *Gli ebrei nello Stato Pontificio*. Rome: Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1998: 42-53; Esposito, Anna. "Gli ebrei e l'Isola Tiberina", *Roma e il Tevere, l'Isola Tiberina, e il suo ambiente. Atti del Convegno, Roma 5 novembre 1998*. Rome: Associazione Idrotecnica Italiana, 1999 (*L'Acqua*, 3 [1999]): 51-53.

15. For the ritual slaughter, see Toaff, Ariel. *Il vino e la carne. Una comunità ebraica nel Medioevo*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989: 87-92.



the Jews here were exempted from the use of the distinguishing mark.¹⁶ The voluntary concentration of the Jews in the same area was common to almost all the centres of Jewish settlement, but particularly in a large town like Rome, subject to a continuous migratory flow, the need to be together and recognise everyone must have been felt more strongly. It was therefore natural for the immigrants to settle in the “Jewish quarter”¹⁷ and in its immediate vicinity, founding their own community facilities, in close contact with those of the Roman Jews, with whom the Iberians did not completely share rituals and ceremonies, also in the name of a strong sense of identity —and of superiority— acute, rather than humiliated, from exile.¹⁸

The synagogues indicated in the passage of the *Lozana* quoted above, or the Catalans’ synagogue with its women’s gallery, that of the Germans and that of the French, the Scola Tempio of the Roman Jews, the Scola Nova of the Italian Jews, almost all located “*in loco qui dicitur Mercatello*” in the heart of the S. Angelo district, were just some of the eleven synagogues that existed in Rome during that period. There were others not far from those recorded, with obvious partisanship, by the Andalusian author: that of the Castilians, which a notarial document from 1526 attests to bordering one side of the Scola Tempio,¹⁹ that of the Aragonese, also in *platea Mercatelli*,²⁰ as well as that of the Porta, near Piazza Giudea, at the Scola Quattro Capi near the bridge of the same name, and the one in Trastevere.²¹

The presence of a conspicuous number of *forenses* Jews couldn’t fail to have repercussions on the settled communities. It is not surprising that it should have been the Sephardic Jews themselves who formed, in 1496, an organisation that was clearly antagonistic to that which traditionally governed the Roman Jewish community: in a resolution of that year, three of its representatives (Mayr don Solema, Aven Lope, None Almercharen) were in fact nominated “with the agreement of the whole community of Spanish Jews living in Rome” to create two officials, who were Moyses ben Venisti and Moyses de Banes, who in turn had to choose six advisers “and were given full authority and absolute power over the dictates of ordinary power and tax and reason and in fact all that which would seem necessary and desirable for the needs and use of the said community...”.²² It is obvious that the

16. The exemption —limited to the residential area described in detail— is expressed in the Papal Bulls of 1402 issued by the Papal authorities on the day after the restoration of papal power over the city. Simonsohn, Shlomo. *The Apostolic See and the Jews. Documents: 492-1404*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988: 541 (n° 499).

17. For this quarter see Esposito, Anna. “Un’immagine della ‘contrada degli ebrei’ nei primi decenni del Cinquecento”, *Un’altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Roma: Il calamo, 1995: 293-316.

18. On the sense of superiority of the Spanish Jews see Toaff, Ariel. “Ebrei spagnoli e marrani nell’Italia del Cinquecento. Caratteristiche di una mentalità”, *Xudeus e Conversos na Historia I. Mentalidades e cultura*, Carlos Barros ed. Santiago de Compostela: Deputación Ourense, 1994.

19. ASR, CNC 853, f. 466v.

20. Esposito, Anna. “Un’immagine della ‘contrada degli ebrei’ nei primi decenni del Cinquecento”, *Un’altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Roma: Il calamo, 1995: 295.

21. Esposito, Anna, “Le ‘comunità’ ebraiche”...: 265-267.

22. ASR, CNC 128, f. 19r-v.

Spanish Jews sought to escape from the administrative management of the Italian and Roman group which, until then, had held the most prestigious positions, and who tried to control the administration and in particular the distribution of the taxes, reasons for the discord that during the sixteenth century would periodically trouble the Jewish centre of Rome.²³ But even within the Iberian group, living together was not easy because of the regional and worship peculiarities, which were, moreover, similar to those that divided the Christian Iberians. It is, therefore, not surprising that already in the early years of the sixteenth century there should be three different community organisations documented: for the Aragonese Jews, the Castilian Jews and the Catalan Jews,²⁴ jointly and with the other "ultramontane" groups (French and German) when compared with the *communitas hebreorum romanorum et talianorum*, which did not want to cede, even slightly, the control of public affairs to the new arrivals. The split between the *forenses* Jews and Roman and Italian Jews would be straightened out, even if not in the long-term, in 1524 by Daniel of Pisa with the issue of the Capitoli in which the equal distribution of duties between the two groups should have guaranteed peace in the community.²⁵

The change represented by the settlement of the Spanish Jews also affected many aspects of the *consuetudo hebreorum*, where it was impossible not to see the peculiarity of the traditions that the refugees brought with them. A first distinction can already be seen in the names. It was above all the Sephardic Jews who enriched male Roman names, generally of biblical origin and expressed in the Italian form—only rarely in the Hebrew form—with names like Astruch, Efraym, Iento, Mayo, Salema and with patronymics/surnames like Abenayn, Abennamita, Asscharell, Boccher, Gattegna, Iett, Occagna, Rimoch etc.²⁶

The use of the Hebrew language is proved not only by reference to documents written in Hebrew by Jewish "notaries", in Rome or in the original places of residence, but also by the existence of written or printed books, in Hebrew particularly those found in the collected libraries of Spanish Jews "demonstrating a familiarity with the holy language which [...] is not found in all the communities coming from the Iberian peninsula".²⁷ For example *Setti uxor quondam Ioseph Sivilli, hebreia yspana* owned seven volumes *in litteris hebraicis* of which the title has not survived, while

23. Schwarzfuchs, Shimon. "Controversie nella comunità di Roma agli inizi del secolo XVI", *Studi in memoria di Enzo Sereni*. Jerusalem: Fondazione Sally Mayer, 1970: 95-100 (Italian part); Toaff, Ariel. "Lotte e fazioni tra gli ebrei di Roma nel Cinquecento". *Studi Romani*, 27 (1979): 25-32.

24. Esposito, Anna. "Le 'comunità' ebraiche"...: 269-276; Toaff, Ariel. "The Jewish Communities of Catalonia, Aragon and Castile in 16th-Century Rome", *The Mediterranean and the Jews. Banking, Finance and International Trade. (XVI-XVIII Centuries)*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1988: 249-259.

25. Milano, Attilio. "I capitoli di Daniel da Pisa e la Comunità di Roma". *La Rassegna mensile d'Israël*, 9-10 (1935-1936): 324-338, 409-426.

26. In fact, there are no substantial differences between the names of the Roman and Ashkenazi Jews. On Jewish names see Colorni, Vittore. "La corrispondenza tra nomi ebraici e nomi locali nella prassi dell'ebraismo italiano", *Judaica minora. Saggi sulla storia dell'ebraismo italiano dell'antichità all'età moderna*. Milan: Giuffrè, 1983: 661-825.

27. Minervini, Laura. "'Llevaron de ac nuestra lengua'. Gli usi linguistici degli ebrei spagnoli in Italia". *Medioevo romanzo*, 19 (1994): 133-192.



the inventory of the ten books by *Moyses Rozilli* is more detailed, taken over by the creators of the *congregationis et scole castiglianorum veterorum*; there is also evidence of books and manuscripts in the Latin language, like those owned by Mosecchio di Alcazar or those owned by the convert Aloysio da Tolosa, son of Leone di Juda Alfraciel in 1510.²⁸

A great deal of information about the practices and customs of the Jews who lived in Rome can be obtained from wills. In particular the wills of the Spanish Jews reveal great attention to burial practices, the decoration of the synagogues, charity work, far more noticeable in comparison with the Roman Jews: thus, for example, the already mentioned Setti insisted in her will that her heirs "*debeant fieri omnia cerimonia tam in sepultura quam etiam in scholis et omnia alia officia debita pro anima ipsius testatricis*"; the "*discretus vir Moyses Abenaym yspanus*" leaves four ducats "*scole delli spagnoli apud dictam scholam delli aragonesi*", specifying that this money should be spent for "*rebus argenteis pro ornamentis et honore dictarum scholarum*"; the *nobilis vir magister Salamon Yspanus artium et medicine doctor* settles *tribus scole hispanorum quinque petittis olei pro quolibet scola ponendos in lampadibus* and *unum rubrum cum dimidio grani de quo fierent azime dispensande pauperibus hebreis*; finally in her very detailed will *Stella uxor Samuelis alias Montalbani, hebraea hispana*, amongst the many bequests to the different synagogues in Rome, both Roman and Sephardic, also settles eight ducats for "*David sacerdoti, cui mandat dici orationes per unum annum modo quo utitur inter hebreos pro eius anima*".²⁹

In the economic field, the settlement of the Iberian refugees does not seem to have caused significant changes in the sectors in which the Roman Jews traditionally worked, that is those linked to food, working with animal fat and leather, manufacturing and sale of fabric and clothing, sectors in which the new arrivals also involved themselves. However businesses not previously practiced by the Roman Jews appear, carried out by Spanish Jews, like those of selling spices and goldsmiths, or that of making objects from bone, the prerogative of the Sicilian Jews.³⁰

It is nevertheless in the credit sector that the most significant change was felt. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, the Jews of Rome were not exclusively debtors of the Christians, as during the previous century, but we often find them, particularly Sephardic Jews, in the guise of creditors.³¹ In addition, as already mentioned previously, amongst the 20 Jewish loan security banks authorised by Leo X and then by Clement VII, the majority were owned by Jews from Spain, a sign that the rise in this sector, in the period prior to the ghetto, must in part be attributed to

28. For the examples quoted see Esposito, Anna. "Tra Quattro e Cinquecento", *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e comunità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Roma: Il calamo, 1995: 241.

29. Esposito, Anna. "Tra Quattro"....: 241.

30. Esposito, Anna. "Tra Quattro"....: 242. On the artisan activity of the Sephardic Jews see Esposito, Anna. "Mercanti e artigiani ebrei forestieri a Roma tra '400 e '500: prime indagini". *Archivi e cultura*, 37 (2004 sed 2005): 57-74.

31. Esposito, Anna. "Tra Quattro"....: 243.



the contribution of Iberian capital brought into Italy by the refugees, both Jewish and converts.³²

To conclude, just a brief mention of the *conversos*, many of whom moved to Italy in the early sixteenth century. For Rome, there is very little information about them, partly because of the difficulty of recognising them from the notarial citations, which lack elements that show their Jewish origin. We rarely find personages of notable social and economic prestige, like Diego Pedro *de Beana*, an Andalusian entrepreneur, already in Rome in 1508, with a bank in Campo dei Fiori, in which he carried out credit operations and the sale and purchase of wool—one of the sectors where the Spanish presence was prevalent—enjoying a reputation amongst his clients as a “*homo dabbene et profidato, gentil iovane et legale*” because of the honesty of the exchanges and the prices given.³³

In my opinion, the picture that we have tried to sketch out, although it still needs further analysis and investigation, manages to show sufficiently clearly how the contribution of the Iberian refugees, from the demographic and economic points of view (not speaking of the cultural point of view, not taken into consideration on this occasion), was essential to the revitalisation of the Jewish microcosm of Rome, within which, despite disagreements and rivalry, a slow process of integration between the different groups of immigrants and between them and the old Roman centre was gradually achieved, a process which was certainly favoured both by the sharing of the same residential quarter and by the assumption of the Roman vernacular as the general language of communication amongst the different ethnic elements of the community, and between these and the host society.³⁴

32. See Esposito, Anna. “Credito, ebrei, monte di pietà a Roma tra Quattro e Cinquecento”. *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, X/3 (September - December 2002): 559-582.

33. On this personage and the Spanish economic environment in Rome see Vaquero Piñeiro, Manuel. “Artigiani e botteghe spagnole a Roma nel primo ‘500’”. *Rivista storica del Lazio*, 3 (1994): 99-115. On the activity of the manufacture and sale of clothing, old and new, by Spanish Jews and converts see Toniolo, Alberta. “Els mercats de les sedes: paper i herència dels sefardites a Bolonya en l’Edad Moderna”. *Revista d’Història Medieval*, 4 (1993): 34-36.

34. Proof of the assumption of the vernacular as the “common language” is given by the writing in vernacular of documents relating to matters within the different Sephardic communities, such as for example the chapters for the *universitas hebreorum aragonensium*, see Esposito, Anna. “Le ‘comunità’ ebraiche”...: 269-271.

