

# *Social Networks in a Castilian Jewish Aljama and the Court Jews in the Fifteenth Century: A Preliminary Survey (Madrid 1440-1475)*

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## 1. Methodological remarks and sources

This article offers a preliminary survey based mainly on archival material: This short survey is part of a project in progress on Castilian Jewish leadership at the middle of the fifteenth century (*circa* 1440-1475), a study that will integrate Castilian archival and narrative sources as well as Hebrew legal and homiletic ones. Here, I try to present some new material and, by the way of example, to articulate the relationship of this Jewish elite with a specific local community. We know that «a work of synthesis does not venture where current scholarship has not gone. <sup>1</sup>» That is the case with this particular period in Jewish history, where almost everything has still to be done, either because we are ignorant of its main sociopolitical and intellectual trends, or because these trends have been totally misunderstood <sup>2</sup>. The generation studied here is complex to analyze, at least from a political point of view, when we take into account the struggles that completely fragmented Castilian political power after 1464 until at least 1480, struggles in which Jews were not absent <sup>3</sup>. The other problems for the period I am studying are either a lack of documentary evidence, or disparate sources, both Castilian and Hebrew.

The usual grim view of the lives of Iberian Jewries during the fifteenth century —as result of the riots of 1391, the implementation of the restrictive

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<sup>1</sup> I. Twersky, *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> A broad survey of the recent published research on late medieval Spanish Jewry, mainly on its sociopolitical aspects and the unearthing of new materials, was prepared by C. Carrete Parrondo, «Les juifs dans l'Espagne médiéval: Etat bibliographique (1965-1991),» *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 63-64 (1992): pp. 63-79.

<sup>3</sup> As evidenced in the active involvement in Castilian politics by rabbi Yosef ben Šem ʿToḇ around 1457 (A. de Palencia, *Crónica de Enrique IV*, ed. A. Paz y Melia (Madrid, 1973), *Década* I, book IV, chapter I, p. 82); or by rabbi Jaco aben Nuñes by 1476 (*Archivo General de Simancas, Registro General del Sello* [=AGS, RGS], January 26, 1476, f. 28).

legislation of 1412 and the impact of the missionary efforts in the period 1391-1414, and the way these events foreshadow the tragic expulsions and conversions of the nineties— has to be challenged. Far from this perception, the fifteenth century is a period of transformation of communal and social structures and of adaptation to new challenges—one interrupted, it is true by a sudden and tragic end. However, it is a period that deserves to be studied by itself, and not as a sad afterward to an idealized and diffuse «golden age».

For the more concrete part of my analysis here, which focuses on the relationship between royal court Jews and a local Jewish community, I make use of the notarial registers<sup>4</sup>. These records, which are partially preserved in Madrid, present certain homogeneity<sup>5</sup>. As far as local social and economic aspects of Castilian Jewry for the decades 1440 to 1470, there seems to be no other Castilian town with similar sources of the same value. In addition, Madrid has during these decades a particular importance in Castilian politics, being one of the favourite seats of the royal court. One caution is needed though making use of this archival material, in order to avoid confusion: Castilian sources usually privilege the portrayal of Jews in their relationship with non-Jews, ignoring in most cases details about the inner political, social, or religious life of the community.

The lack in both Y. Baer's *History* and his documentary collection of any substantial reference to Castilian Jewry between the promulgation of the *taqqanot* of Valladolid (1432) and the beginning of the nominal control on the communities by don Abraham Seneor (1476) is very significant: This is not only because of the limits of historiography at the time Baer composed his works<sup>6</sup>; it was also due to the distortions in his historical reconstruction of the period, which he characterizes in very negative terms, and with a teleological thrust that leads automatically to Inquisition and expulsion<sup>7</sup>.

My initial aim when dealing with the several hundreds of register entries related to Jews I transcribed in Madrid's local archives in 1989 was to find

<sup>4</sup> Notarial registers or *Minutas de Escribanos del Ayuntamiento de Madrid* [= *Minutas*] of the *Archivo General de la Villa de Madrid* [=AGVM]; four volumes between 1442-1493. The first but erroneous mention of these records was by F. Fita, *BRAH* 35 (1899): p. 359, and afterwards repeating the erroneous ascription by F. Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien. Urkunden und Regesten. Erster Teil. 2. Kastilien/Inquisitionsakten* (Berlin 1936) [=F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2]. I hope to publish soon the edition that I have prepared of the register entries related to Jews.

<sup>5</sup> Almost five hundred registers entries between 1442-1475, of a total of more than 5,000, make reference to the social and economic life of the Jews. Several problems of interpretation arise from the documents, for example, the use of the Christian town notary for cases of lawsuits between Jews.

<sup>6</sup> Thus in his *Urkunden* 2, the documents for this period are scant (no. 285-323, pp. 279-336, for the period 1417-1471). Our knowledge of this period of Castilian history has substantially improved in the last thirty years.

<sup>7</sup> See Y. Baer, *A history of the Jews in Christian Spain*. (Philadelphia 1961-66/=5722-26), trans. L. Schoffman. I follow here the Spanish translation, which I consider the most up-to-date and accurate (translated) edition of his work: *Historia de los Judíos en la España Cristiana*, trans. J.L. Lacave (Madrid, 1981). Chapter eleven covers the period 1420-1475. The main issues analyzed there are: «Averroism» among Jews, the communal reforms by don Abraham Bienveniste, a characterization of the *Conversos*, the riots of 1449 against *Conversos*, the efforts by friar Alonso de Espina to arrange an Inquisition, and the revival of messianic expectations among the *Conversos*.

some order in them. I started out wanting to study a medium-sized Iberian Jewish community in the fifteenth century. Only after a while, did I realize the relevance of some individuals living in that community during the middle years of the century for Castilian and Jewish politics in general. What seems important to me is to stress the relevance of local studies to understanding the larger patterns of contemporaneous Jewish Castilian society. On the other hand, some events that would seem to have a broad repercussion for the whole of the Castilian Jewish *aljamas* (municipal corporate bodies) have only local or regional echoes.

Indeed, the need for greater regionalization in the study of medieval Iberian Jewry has been strongly argued in recent years<sup>8</sup>, and any stress on studies of local and regional socioeconomic history should be obvious —with the added requirement of thorough comparative analysis, in order not to fall into a parochial characterization of the communities studied. At the same time, the need for a chronological insertion of the Jews into the society that surrounds them and an analysis of their relations with this society should not be forgotten, taking into account in particular the social and intellectual environment. I refer here to the changes that Iberian countries experienced in the fifteenth century, and especially the need to understand the new nobility-controlled society that emerges in this period, as well as its socioeconomic, political, and intellectual patterns.

We lack adequate information on the vicissitudes of the centralized structures of Castilian Jewry built by the efforts of —among others— don Abraham Bienveniste the elder, before don Abraham Seneor takes power at the end of the seventies; indeed, all that survives is a slight reference to a committee charged with the distribution of royal taxes among the *aljamas* in 1450<sup>9</sup>.

From 1450 to 1475, at least, a sociopolitical struggle takes place inside the *aljamas* with the emergence of new dominant familial groups centered in Segovia and Avila. A comprehensive analysis of this struggle of these new groups —which revolves around the *rab de la corte* or *juez mayor y repartidor de las aljamas* (chief judge of the court of appeals of the Jewish commu-

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<sup>8</sup> Most recently by M.D. Meyerson, «Religious change, Regionalism and Royal Power in the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabel,» in *Iberia and the Mediterranean world of the Middle Ages I*, ed. L.J. Simon (Leiden, 1995), pp. 96-112. This author is correct in his basic appreciation of the wealthy diversity of Iberian cultures. Among the first pioneers in the regional and local study, stressing the need for unearthing new materials, we cannot forget the extensive research done by Spanish scholars, F. Cantera Burgos being the most outstanding. On the other hand, one has to be cautious, as the cultural and political diversity of the late middle ages differs in many respects from the diversity that we can observe today. Besides, claims for the differentiation of attitudes toward Jews and *Conversos* in Castilian and Aragonese countries are not supported by the evidence presented by J. Riera Sans, «Judíos y conversos en los reinos de la corona de Aragón durante el siglo XV», in *La expulsión de los judíos de España* (Toledo, 1993), pp. 71-90.

<sup>9</sup> Composed by rabbi Yişḥaq Campanton (d. circa 1453), master Timon de León, rabbi Yosef ben Šem Ṭob, the magnate don Fraym aben Xuxen and the son of the former *rab de la corte*, Yuṣaf Bienveniste; AGS, *Escribanía Mayor de Rentas. Contaduría de la razón*, leg. 1, f. 319, cit. F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, p. 320, no. 305.

nities and distributor of royal taxes) appointed by the king— is still a desideratum. Proximity to the king, therefore, is an important element determining the control of power within communal structures by influential groups<sup>10</sup>. But the new leadership associated with the crown also has to deal with internal networks of interests in the local communities, led by procurators (local or territorial, appointed by the *aljamas*), community officials, Torah scholars, and magnates.

The fading away in the 1440s of don Abraham Bienveniste the elder, who was so active in Castilian politics between the 1420s and the 1430s left a vacuum that was felt still two generations after his death<sup>11</sup>; and for reasons still not clear, his successors never apparently achieved the same combination of religious pietism and political skill. After Benveniste's death, the royal court appointed the Christian Pedro de Luxan, a trustworthy courtier, to the office (traditionally filled by Jews) of *juez mayor y repartidor*<sup>12</sup>—an appointment that caused protests and resentment by the *aljamas* that resulted in his removal<sup>13</sup>. Behind this paradoxical appointment lies, in all probability, the crown's desire for stricter fiscal control on the *aljamas*<sup>14</sup>.

The *aljamas* represented by the procurator don Santo Alpullate of Alcalá de Henares<sup>15</sup> succeeded in putting pressure on the king and obtained Luxan's removal from office before 1450. The communities then elected a group of representatives, of which the crown selected half—the same group, in fact, that in 1450 was charged with the distribution of royal taxes among Castilian *aljamas*, made up of rabbi Yosef ben Šem ʿOb, master Timon, rabbi Yišḥaq Campanton, the magnate don Fraym aben Xuxen, and Yuḥaf Bienveniste, son of the former *rab*<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> For a comparative approach see D. Romano, «Cortesianos judíos en la Corona de Aragón,» *Destierros Aragoneses I* (Zaragoza, 1988), pp. 25-37, repr. in his *De Historia Judía Hispánica* (Barcelona, 1991), pp. 401-413, and specifically his observations on p. 405.

<sup>11</sup> As we see for instance in the chronicle by A. Zacut, *Sefer Yuḥasin ha-Šalem*, ed. H. Filipowski (London, 1857; repr. with a new introduction by A.H. Freimann, Frankfurt, 1924), p. 226a. Significant enough is the silence that Zacut accompanies Bienveniste's successors in the office. Of value are the technical and critical observations on this chronicle by J.L. Lacave, «Las fuentes cristianas del Sefer Yuḥasin,» in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies II* (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 92-98. Another desideratum is a systematic approach to the attitudes of the Hebrew authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, both towards the Castilian court Jews and the *jueces mayores de las aljamas*.

<sup>12</sup> On the appointment of the *juez mayor de la corte* by the crown, see the text of the *taqqanot* of 1432, published by Y. Moreno Koch, *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae. V. De iure hispano hebraico. Las taqqanot de Valladolid de 1432: un estatuto comunal renovador* (Salamanca, 1987) [= *Taqqanot de Valladolid*], chap. I p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> J. Castaño González, «Las aljamas judías de Castilla a mediados del siglo XV: la "Carta Real" de 1450,» *En la España Medieval* 18 (1995): pp. 183-205, here 190-92.

<sup>14</sup> I intend to develop this argument in another place.

<sup>15</sup> Active in communal politics as procurator, at least between 1445-1455; see E. Gutwirth, «Trends toward Centralization among the Jewish communities in Castile during the 15th century» (in Hebrew), *Te'udah* 4 (1986): pp. 240-46. A comprehensive study of the relationships between the *jueces mayores* and the chief procurators could help to clarify many communal issues.

<sup>16</sup> I do not know of new general assemblies of the Castilian *aljamas*, after that of 1432 in Valladolid, until the 1470s; but this does not mean that none took place in the meantime.

At this point I can shed some new light on several individuals, and their respective local social networks, both at the royal court and at the local *aljama*. Two of them, master Samaya Alubel and rabbi Jaco aben Nuñes<sup>17</sup>, hold the office of *juez mayor de las aljamas* after 1450; both are physicians appointed by the new king Enrique IV as a result of their close relationship with him. I propose to study their local social networks<sup>18</sup> along with that of the «financier» don Fraym aben Xuxen, the study of which has to include several prominent «new men» of *Converso* origin, the magnates Alfonso Alvarez de Toledo and Diego Arias Davila, both of whom held the office of *Contador Mayor de Rentas* (charged with the responsibility of the royal exchequer). Under their protection, in fact, some of the most representative members of the new dominant Jewish groups started their career in the royal court.

It is precisely individuals within the communities that remain directly dependent on the king who are best capable of controlling the communal structures. This is what happens in the middle of the fifteenth century in Madrid, a Jewish *aljama* under direct royal jurisdiction at a time when the monarchy is strengthening its power under Juan II and Enrique IV. Madrid, in fact (together with Segovia and Valladolid), was one of the favorite residences of Castilian monarchs of the Trastámara dynasty.

## **2. Materials for the characterization of the office of Juez Mayor de las Aljamas (Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of the aljamas). The role of the royal physicians and the configuration of a Jewish local social network**

Holdings of real-estate in various locations by wealthy court Jews in different locations can be interpreted simply as a wise investment of their capital. But it also seems to reflect the courtiers' need to find reliable lodgings while following the path of the itinerant Castilian royal court. There is some evidence for previous generations of courtiers holding houses in Madrid, such as for example, Mose Romano, a courtier of Enrique II in the last third

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<sup>17</sup> According to the reading in *Minutas* IV, 85r (March 6, 1475), this name should be read Nuñes. Although this spelling cannot be disregarded, I continue here with the traditional spelling Nuñes in order to avoid confusion; but see F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, p. 59, no. 76 (Yahya aben Yunez, in Jerez, 1266) and p. 235, no. 249 (Çag aben Yunes, Sevilla, 1381); also J.L. Lacave Riaño, «Pleito judío por una herencia en aragonés y caracteres hebreos,» *Sefarad* 31 (1971): pp. 49-101, here 71 (don Yunes Aziz, Zaragoza, ca. 1450). Besides, the reading of his own Hebrew signature makes this spelling more likely; see F. Cantera Burgos (con la colaboración de C. Carrete Parrondo), «Los repartimientos de rabí Jacó abén Nuñes,» *Sefarad* 31 (1971): pp. 212-62, here 214.

<sup>18</sup> See the definition by J.A. Barnes quoted by E. Gutwirth in his «Elementos étnicos e históricos en las relaciones judeoconversas en Segovia», in *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition* (Jerusalem, 1985) ed. Y. Kaplan, p. 91: «Each person is, as it were, in touch with each other and some of ... [them] are not ... I find it convenient to speak of a social field of this kind as a network. The image I have is of a net of points, some of which are joined by lines. The points of the image are people ... and the lines indicate which people interact with each other.»

of the fourteenth century<sup>19</sup>; or don Me'ir Alguadez, *rab de la corte* under Enrique III at the beginning of the fifteenth century<sup>20</sup>.

In contrast with other communal magistracies, the *juez mayor de las aljamas* was directly appointed by the king. The *taqqanot* of Valladolid of 1432 make only slight mention of the office. More significant is the policy of the crown at the end of the 1440s of appointing a Christian to this office.

A survey of the *jueces mayores* and Jewish courtiers of the reign of Enrique IV (1454-1474) cannot be undertaken without reference to several courtiers of *Converso* origin, under whose sponsorship, the «new men» of the *aljamas* arose to power. Around two of these courtiers, Alfonso Alvarez de Toledo and Diego Arias Davila, men like Yosef ben Šem ʿTob and Abraham Senear started their political activity near Enrique IV.

Alfonso Alvarez de Toledo, a *vecino* (legal resident) of Madrid, is already recorded in 1434 as royal exchequer of the king and the prince<sup>21</sup>. A supporter of the constable Alvaro de Luna, he was a relative of Fernan Diaz de Toledo, the *Relator*<sup>22</sup>. He was the most powerful protagonist in local politics in Madrid during the central years of the century and, together with his second wife<sup>23</sup>, appears frequently associated in business with don Fraym aben Xuxen. Several Jews rented houses that were his property and he himself is recorded as lending credit to Jews. One of his sons, Pedro Nuñez de Toledo, was a *regidor* in the town council after 1475.

Most interesting and revealing, but not the least difficult to explain and to rationalize, is the network that was established around Diego Arias Davila—another *contador* of Enrique IV—which included Jews both from Segovia and Madrid<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Evidenced by local documents in 1380 and 1399.

<sup>20</sup> See the document of *AHN Clero, pergs.*, carp. 1363, n. 20, although in this document Alguadez is recorded as a resident of Segovia. On this *rab*, dead by 1432 (*Taqganot de Valladolid*, pp. 75-77), see the references in A. Zacut, *Sefer Yuhasin*, *op.cit.* p. 225b; Yosef ha-Kohen, *Sefer Emeq ha-Bakhah* (*The Valley of Tears*), with the *Chronicle of the Anonymous Corrector*, ed. K. Alimbladh (Uppsala, 1981) p. 57 of the Hebrew text; S. Bernstein, «Šir tehilah šel Šelomoh de Piera li-kebod rabah šel Qastjiliah R. Me'ir Alguades.» in *Sefer Yovel Sinai* (Jerusalem, 5718/=1958), pp. 205-19; and M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1893) pp. 209-12.

<sup>21</sup> See *Crónica del halconero de Juan II, Pedro Carrillo de Huete*, ed. J. de M. Carriazo (Madrid, 1946), for the years 1434, 1440 and 1446. The *Refundición de la crónica del Halconero por el obispo don Lope Barrientos*, ed. J. de M. Carriazo (Madrid, 1946), p. 186, mentions his ascendancy with the king in 1435. See also L. Suárez Fernández, «Un libro de asientos de Juan II,» *Hispania* 17 (1957): pp. 350-51, *contador mayor* of the king in 1447.

<sup>22</sup> The *relator* mentions Alvarez de Toledo as an example of a ennobled *Converso*; see his *Instrucción del Relator al obispo Lope Barrientos*, ed. M. Alonso, *Alonso de Cartagena, Defensorium Unitatis Christianae* (Madrid, 1943). On the figure of this influential politician, see N. Rounds, *The Greatest Man Uncrowned. A Study of the Fall of don Alvaro de Luna* (London, 1986), pp. 179-82.

<sup>23</sup> Catalina Nuñez; on both of them and their patronage of several religious foundations, see P.M. Catedra, «Fundación y dote del convento de la Visitación de Madrid de monjas clarisas,» *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 47 (1987): pp. 307-29.

<sup>24</sup> While not the object of this paper, such an explanation would be worth having. Thus, according to the testimony of a Toledan Jew, Diego Arias' daughter-in-law was one of the benefactors of the local synagogue in Madrid by 1468; see C. Carrete Parrondo, *Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Caste-*

The first *juez mayor* appointed by Enrique IV seems to have been his own physician, master Semaya Alubel, a former *vecino* of Avila, who already by 1451 (and at the instance of the still prince Enrique) had been exempted by the king from any fiscal charges<sup>25</sup>. For the year 1456, the sources record him as a resident of Segovia, with the same privileges confirmed by the king. From this time he began his ascent on the political scene, an ascent that seems to coincide—at least chronologically—with the political fall of rabbi Yosef ben Šem ʿTob. Between 1456 and 1469, Samaya was both royal physician and *juez mayor de las aljamas*. He is recorded as doing business both with Menahen Çidre<sup>26</sup> and the previously mentioned procurator of the *aljamas*, don Santo Alpullate of Alcalá<sup>27</sup>.

Samaya's son, rabbi Abraham Alubel, is recorded as resident of Segovia in 1465; he also received a tax exemption from the king<sup>28</sup>, as did one of Semaya's servants, Abraham aben Çayd, who was living in Toledo in the same year<sup>29</sup>. Although we don't know what happened to Semaya after 1469<sup>30</sup>, we know that his son, rabbi Abraham, was living in Madrid in 1472, after his appointment as royal physician<sup>31</sup>.

Another royal physician, rabbi Jaco aben Nuñes, was a *juez mayor* at least from 1471 until the king died in 1474<sup>32</sup>. Before that date though we find him acting as a municipal physician of Madrid<sup>33</sup>. As with master Semaya Alubel, he was also granted a fiscal exemption<sup>34</sup>. He was very active in 1472 and 1474, preparing the distribution of the tax for the *servicio y medio servicio*<sup>35</sup>. As result of the civil war, he is severely punished by the new kings in 1476 with the confiscation of all his property—he simply chose the side of the losers—<sup>36</sup>. Surprisingly, however, soon after that date, in 1477, the town council of Madrid decides not only to readmit him to the town, but also to appoint him once more as a municipal physician<sup>37</sup>. His medical services see-

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*llae. III. Proceso inquisitorial contra los Arias Dávila. Un enfrentamiento social entre judíos y judeoconversos* (Salamanca, 1985) [= *FIRC III*], p. 61, no. 100.

<sup>25</sup> AGS *Mercedes y privilegios*, leg. 9 no. 30; cit. F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, no. 307, p. 321.

<sup>26</sup> April 22, 1462 (*Minutas II*, 500r); in fact this is the first mention of his presence in Madrid.

<sup>27</sup> April 20, 1464 (*Minutas III*, 96v).

<sup>28</sup> AGS *Mercedes y privilegios*, leg. 103, n. 104 (November 12, 1465); cit. F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, no. 307, p. 321.

<sup>29</sup> «*Morador en Toledo*», *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; that year, the king commanded the *aljama* of Segovia to pay him and his son a grant of money.

<sup>31</sup> October 9, 1472 (*Minutas III*, 521v). He is also recorded in the same year as receiving a grant from the king. In addition, there is a mention (October 29) of a particular deal he signed with a Christian in Madrid, when he was hired to heal the client's son (*Minutas III*, 538v).

<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to know whether an early reference in the Madrid notarial records to a rabbi Jaco, dated April 27, 1444 refers to him (*Minutas I*, 175v).

<sup>33</sup> August 23, 1466 (*Minutas III*, 217r).

<sup>34</sup> AGS, *Mercedes y privilegios*, leg. 34, no. 20 (1471); cit. F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, no. 323, p. 336.

<sup>35</sup> See F. Cantera Burgos, «Los repartimientos de rabí Jacó...» cited above n. 17.

<sup>36</sup> AGS *RGS* (January 26, 1476), f. 28; see F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, no. 328, pp. 337-38.

<sup>37</sup> September 6, 1477 (*Minutas IV*, 233v).

med to be worthy enough, in the eyes of the members of the town council, for him to be granted—at a time when the other Jews in Madrid were starting to be subjected to restrictions—significant privileges<sup>38</sup>. After he died in 1488, his son rabbi Yuda inherited the same post of municipal physician, which held until 1492. Then, as result of the decree of that year (forcing Jews to choose between conversion or expulsion), he chose exile, only to return to the town soon after to continue the same job, but now as a Christian.

### 3. Madrid's Jewish *aljama* in its geographical and historical setting

The northern part of the kingdom of Toledo lacked a strong political-administrative center before the fifteenth century. At that time, Madrid began to assert its centrality—in connection with its association with the Crown—with respect to three important cities: Toledo, Segovia, and Guadalajara<sup>39</sup>.

The first documented evidence of Jews living in Madrid, preserved in Genizah material, goes back to 1053, in the Islamic period prior to the Christian conquest (*circa* 1085)<sup>40</sup>. It seems plausible that, during the twelfth century, the local *aljama* increased with the affluence of Andalusian refugees, consolidating its structures until the arrival of the Trastámara dynasty (in the 1360s). Since the second half of the fourteenth century followed several outbreaks of destructive violence, outbreaks that manifested in riots against the minorities, mainly Jews, and that accompanied Castilian sociopolitical strife or economic crisis<sup>41</sup>. Such riots took place in Madrid in 1366<sup>42</sup> and again in 1391<sup>43</sup>; in the latter case, they led to the conversion of a significant portion of the community and the eventual disappearance of the *aljama*, which was restored only at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In this restoration a

<sup>38</sup> On March 7, 1481, the local council exempted him from wearing the Jewish badge; see *Libro de Acuerdos del Concejo Madrileño*, ed. A. Millares Carlot, J. Artiles Rodríguez (Madrid, 1932) [= *LAAM* I], p. 79; on September 26, the town council granted him the «corral de los toros» near the synagogue (*ibid.*, p. 131); and on November 9, the council allowed him to stay inside the town and outside the already segregated Jewish quarter at night, in order to make it possible for him to treat his Christian patients (*ibid.*, p. 138); these privileges were ratified on January 31, 1483 (*ibid.*, p. 222).

<sup>39</sup> M. Terrasse, «La région de Madrid d'après les "relaciones topográficas"», *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 4 (1968): pp. 140-73.

<sup>40</sup> E. Ashtor «Documentos españoles de la Genizah.» *Sefarad* 24 (1964): here pp. 47-59.

<sup>41</sup> For a general perspective of the issues involved see P. Wolf, «The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or not?», *Past and Present* 50 (1971): pp. 4-18, and A. Mackay, «Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile.» *Past and Present* 55 (1972): pp. 33-67.

<sup>42</sup> See the reference by the fourteenth century exegete Šemuel Sarsa ibn Sinah, *Meqor Hayyim*, quoted by F. Baer, *Urkunden* 2, no. 209, p. 200; also Yequṭi'el Lazi Aškenazi, ed. *Sefer Margalioṭ Ṭobah* (Amsterdam, 5482/1722).

<sup>43</sup> The fatal consequences for the Jewish community of Madrid of the attacks in this year were extensively documented; among the Hebrew sources, see the references in liturgical poetry in D. Pagis, «Dirges on the persecutions of 1391 in Spain» (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 37 (1968): here pp. 372-73; and the references by rabbi Šem Ṭob ibn Šem Ṭob collected in Šelomoh ibn Verga, *Šebet Yehudah*, ed. A. Shohat and Y. Baer, (Jerusalem 5707/1947), p. 119.



flow of Jewish families from the Toledan region played an important role. Moreover, there was a strengthening of the power of the new nobility, which reasserts its intervention and control of local politics, as in the case of the Mendoza family, the most prominent of the territory <sup>44</sup>.

Several features characterize Castilian Jewry during the fifteenth century. Among these are a deep social transformation of the *aljamas* (after familial groups or individuals converted to Christianity, and with the formation of new groups monopolizing the central communal structures): a shift in the geography of the communities (avoiding big cities and concentrating in the small capital towns of seigneurial estates); and educational transformations (the flowering of rabbinical academies).

Madrid was characterized from the twelfth century by a predominantly agrarian economy; the development of the local textile industry took place only after the fifteenth century. The city's Jewish quarter was originally located inside the walls in the Sagra compound <sup>45</sup>, near the Valnadú gate in the northeast part of the town, although this location was abandoned after the riots of 1391. After the restoration of Madrid's Jewish population in the beginning of the fifteenth century, a new synagogue was built in the Almudena compound <sup>46</sup>. In the 1450s and 1460s Jewish families scatter in the commercial heart of the town along Calle de los Estelos <sup>47</sup>, as well as in the area surrounding the castle, known as «*castillo de los judíos*» <sup>48</sup>. This scattering, in fact, parallels the expansive trend of Castilian economy—from the 1430s on, a trend that was due to several factors and is exemplified by the suburban development around Madrid in the 1450s and increased construction in the surrounding region <sup>49</sup>, as well as an increase in the commercial activity in the market <sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> During the second half of the fifteenth century, the main Jewish communities of the region—except for Madrid—were either under the seigneurial jurisdiction of the Mendoza (like San Martín de Valdeiglesias, Buitrago, Manzanares) or that of the Toledan archbishop (like Talamanca, Alcalá de Henares, and Torrelaguna). For these Jewish communities, the most important studies are those by F. Cantera Burgos, «La judería de San Martín de Valdeiglesias», *Sefarad* 29 (1969): pp. 217-312; F. Cantera Burgos and C. Carrete Parrondo, «La judería de Buitrago», *Sefarad* 32 (1972): pp. 3-87; E. Cantera Montenegro, «Judíos de Torrelaguna (Madrid) a fines del siglo xv», *Anuario del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños* 19 (1982): pp. 427-44 and «Judíos de Torrelaguna: retorno de algunos expulsados entre 1493 y 1495», *Sefarad* 39 (1979): pp. 336-46. I am preparing a monograph on the social and intellectual life of the *aljamas* of Alcalá de Henares and Talamanca in the fifteenth century, with the assistance of a grant from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

On the late medieval seigneurial expansion in the territory, see M.A. Ladero Quesada, «Los castillos de la Comunidad de Madrid. Orígenes históricos», in *Castillos, fortificaciones y recintos amurallados de la Comunidad de Madrid* (Madrid 1993), pp. 21-34.

<sup>45</sup> In the fifteenth century the town was divided into thirteen compounds or *colaciones*, and the subjected territory surrounding it into four districts or *sexmos*.

<sup>46</sup> Evidenced by a document dated September 17, 1402 (*AHN, Clero, perg. carp.* 1363, no.18).

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Jewish families rent houses in the Calle de los Estelos in the 1450s and the 1460s, being the houses property of don Fraym aben Xuxen and Alfonso Alvarez de Toledo. The rent of houses possibly illustrates a recent settlement of Jewish families in this compound.

<sup>48</sup> After 1481, almost all the Jewish population was segregated and concentrated in this last spot.

<sup>49</sup> See J. Urgorri Casado, «El ensanche de Madrid en tiempos de Juan II y Enrique IV: La urbanización de las cavas», *RBAM* 23 (1954): pp. 3-63

<sup>50</sup> This is also evidenced in the *Minutas*. For the growth of the Castilian economy, see M.A.

#### 4. The Jewish Aljama: Its economic and social structure

The lack of statistical demographic sources for this period as well as the necessary methodological tools prevents us from obtaining a satisfactory answer on this important topic<sup>51</sup>. Until now, demographical realities have been incorrectly determined on the basis of fiscal data, although as far as regular fiscal distributions among the Jewish communities are concerned (the distributions for the period 1439-1474 are known) it is impossible to have any certainty. Madrid can be defined as a community with a medium to low degree of wealth. Besides, it must be remembered that the Jewish courtiers and magnates living in Madrid were either exempted, or —as will be detailed further on— in the case of Menahen Çidre and don Fraym aben Xuxen, were taxed together with the *aljama* of Toledo.

The same uncertainty holds with respect to the description of the *aljama*'s socio-professional structure. From a detailed reading of the notarial registers, the need to differentiate two periods —1440-1462 and 1462-1475— seems evident. Each one is characterized by a perfect generational synchronization of the families and activities involved; moreover, the evolution of the main patterns of commerce and trade can be defined by the same periodization<sup>52</sup>. Indeed, the importance of certain sectors increases during the second period, mainly textiles and herding. This coincides with the increase by the same date of both sectors in the Iberian regional economies. Some Jews keep and significantly increase their herds, as a way of investing their liquid capital<sup>53</sup>. As for the textile sector —in whose trade Jews are involved— the towns of the *meseta* not only increase their textile production, but there is also an improvement in the quality of the cloths<sup>54</sup>. Another way to invest liquid capital was the acquisition of rural real estate, and the Jews in Madrid indeed increase their purchases of this between the 1440s and the 1460s<sup>55</sup>.

Three family groups are frequently cited in the documents of the first

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Ladero Quesada, «Economía mercantil y espacio urbano: Ciudades de la Corona de Castilla en los siglos XII-XV», *BRAH* 191 (1994): pp. 235-93.

<sup>51</sup> For a general Castilian overview however, see M.A. Ladero Quesada, «Le nombre des juifs dans la Castille du XVe. siècle», *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 45-52.

<sup>52</sup> As far as Castilian economic policies are concerned, 1462 is a key year because of the effects of the rate decreed by Enrique IV; see M.A. Ladero Quesada, «Moneda y tasa de precios en 1462. Un episodio ignorado en la política económica de Enrique IV de Castilla», *Moneda y Crédito* 129 (1974), repr. in his *El siglo XV en Castilla. Fuentes de renta y política fiscal* (Barcelona, 1982) pp. 114-42.

<sup>53</sup> I have many examples of this trend. Here, I will give only one which seems illustrative enough: after he won an open contest in 1463, the town council decided to award to Simon, a Jew, the contract to supply 500 goats for the local butcheries of Christians and Mudejars, his proposal having been cheaper than that of his Christian opponents (April 30, 1463; *Minutas* III, 13v).

<sup>54</sup> See P. Iradiel Murugarren, *Evolución de la industria textil castellana en los siglos XIII-XVI* (Salamanca, 1974), pp. 15-50.

<sup>55</sup> Mainly vineyards, but also arable lands and orchards.

period mentioned (*circa* 1440-1462), those of Menahen Çidre, don Fraym aben Xuxen, and don Salamon de Monsoria.

The Aben Xuxen or Ibn Šošan family is documented as one of the families of dominant *nesi'im* in Toledo from the twelfth century; many of its members appear in records as residing or doing business in the city. Three generations and a total of eight family members are mentioned as being connected with the magnate, don Fraym aben Xuxen, who is active in business and communal politics between 1437 and 1464<sup>56</sup>, and a man who could well be described as a «financier»<sup>57</sup>.

Don Fraym's father died before 1453, leaving his inheritance to his sons don Fraym, Yuçaf de Toledo, don Mose, and don Ysaque. Besides them, we know of two of Fraym's sons, Yuçe el moço —a resident of Toledo and representative of its *aljama* in 1482<sup>58</sup>—, and don Jaco<sup>59</sup>. Don Fraym himself was one of the five members of the committee charged in 1450 with the distribution in the *aljamas* of the royal tax of the *servicio y medio servicio*. He is active in the local market of Madrid renting cattle (oxes) for work to peasants of the surrounding hamlets<sup>60</sup>; we also see him farming royal, local, and seignorial taxes, and both selling his patrimonial real estate<sup>61</sup>, and increasing it by purchasing properties both outside<sup>62</sup> and inside Madrid<sup>63</sup>. His recurrent granting of credit —either in money or in consumption credits— both to peasants and other residents of Madrid, Christians, Jews and Mudejars alike, make him the center of an extensive network of relationships, as well as the image of skillful and fair dealer<sup>64</sup>. He also trades in various goods<sup>65</sup>, either his own, or as broker for someone else (usually the powerful *contador* Alfonso Alvarez de Toledo).

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<sup>56</sup> Significantly enough, there is no information on the family's activity in Madrid during the second period.

<sup>57</sup> According to A. Mackay's characterization. He adds: «pero a mi juicio, las palabras francesas "traitants" y "partisans" son más precisas»; see his «Documentos para la historia de los financieros castellanos de la baja Edad Media. I: Una "información" del 23 de septiembre de 1466», *HID* 5 (1978): p. 321.

<sup>58</sup> *Archivo Catedral de Toledo* [= ACT], *Capilla reyes nuevos, perg.* (May 28, 1482); cit. P. León Tello, *Judíos de Toledo II* (Madrid, 1979) [= P. León Tello, *JToledo*], no. 1322.

<sup>59</sup> 1464, June 21 (*Minutas III*, 123v).

<sup>60</sup> To peasants of Alcorcón (district of Aravaca), 1 ox, February 25, 1444 (*Minutas I*, 127v-128r) and July 8 (*Minutas I*, 210r); of Getafe (district of Villaverde), 1 ox, July 2, 1444 (*Minutas I*, 207v); and Uxena (hamlet of Illescas, on the way from Madrid to Toledo) 1 ox, June 29, 1444 (*Minutas I*, 203r-204v).

<sup>61</sup> Real estate in El Verçial, February 24, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 30r); or houses in Fuencarral (district of Vallecas), January 24, 1453 (*Minutas II*, 314r-v); arable land in Valdemorenda, Overa, March 7, 1458 (*Minutas II*, 401r-v).

<sup>62</sup> He acquires real estate in Carabanchel de Arriba (a district of Aravaca), August 18, 1444 (*Minutas I*, 233v-234r); Butaraque February 4, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 17r); Amaniel, September 4, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 123r-123v). He holds several houses in Alcorcón (district of Aravaca), March 17, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 42v).

<sup>63</sup> He acquires houses in the compound of San Salvador, October 9, 1449, (*Minutas II*, 154v).

<sup>64</sup> I will discuss Jewish credit in Madrid in a forthcoming article. Consumption credits are used for the acquisition of cereal (wheat, bread, barley, rye) and building materials (slates, bricks).

<sup>65</sup> Wine, leather (*corabras*), unspecified pieces of merchandise (*merceradería*), as well as low-quality fabric (*sayal, chillas*).

By 1464 don Fraym and Menahen Çidre pay their royal taxes along with the *aljama* of Toledo, a fact that illustrates their autonomous status inside the local community of Madrid and the real location of their economic interests<sup>66</sup>. Another of don Fraym's relatives, don Mayr aben Xuxen, a physician (of his precise kinship with don Fraym I have no information) is recorded as a resident in Toledo, but a procurator of the *aljama* of Madrid in 1446<sup>67</sup>.

Based in the town of Illescas, but expanding their business in Madrid, the Çidre family group, of which we know eight members, revolves around the active figure of Menahen Çidre and his wife Jamila. Menahen business dealings are recorded between 1439 and 1466, the date of his death. He conducts business either with his father-in-law<sup>68</sup>, his brothers don Salamon and don Davi<sup>69</sup>, as well as by himself. His recorded activities include the following: farming local, ecclesiastical, and royal (*alcabala*) taxes; acting as a broker or being an intermediary in lawsuits; purchasing real estate in Madrid<sup>70</sup> or its surroundings; renting houses and arable lands<sup>71</sup>; and owning herds (sheeps, goats, and cattle), for whose care he hires Christian shepherds<sup>72</sup>.

Sometimes Menahen makes sizable purchases<sup>73</sup>, but he is frequently recorded being involved in lawsuits on fiscal taxes. He is recorded as making numerous loans of goods and consumables to Christians and Mudejars<sup>74</sup>, as well as selling calves, grease (*sebo*), or fish. Sometimes, he emphasizes his high economic and social status by the use of external tokens, such wearing expensive clothes<sup>75</sup>.

His sons Abrayn<sup>76</sup> and Ysaque, together with don Yuçaf<sup>77</sup>, the son of Menahen's brother don Salamon, continue doing business in Madrid during the second period. Not surprisingly after the difficulties created by the segregation of Jews and Mudejars in a separate quarter after 1480, the two brothers choose to return to Illescas<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> See C. Carrete Parrondo, «Tributación económica de las comunidades judías toledanas», in *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional «Encuentro de las Tres Culturas»* (Toledo, 1988), pp. 19-34.

<sup>67</sup> March 10, 1446 (*Minutas I*, 300r-v).

<sup>68</sup> March 4, 1446 (*Minutas I*, 296v).

<sup>69</sup> A resident in Ocaña on March 12, 1444 (*Minutas I*, 142r) and October 22, 1445 (*Minutas I*, 289r), but in Madrid on September 25, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 132r-v); he was also very active in business.

<sup>70</sup> A *corral* with two houses in the outskirts of the town in July 3, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 90r-v).

<sup>71</sup> Arable lands in Palazón (district of Vallecás), September 25, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 138r-v); houses and arable lands in Talamanca, July 31, 1464 (*Minutas III*, 137v).

<sup>72</sup> He hires a shepherd and a *zagal* for his cattle herd on July 17, 1447 (*Minutas I*, 343r-v); the shepherd, Juan Perez of Vicálvaro, is hired to take care of his herd for six months; another shepherd, Marcos Gonzalez of Villacastín, a resident of Canillas (district of Vallecás), is hired to care for his goats and sheep for five months on February 9, 1453 (*Minutas II*, 328v).

<sup>73</sup> 200 *arrobas* of merino wool on August 19, 1449 (*Minutas II*, 111r-v); 28 *arrobas* of fish, January 4, 1453 (*Minutas II*, 297v); [one *arroba*= 11.5 kgs.]

<sup>74</sup> Pine boards, cereal (bread, wheat, barley), wool, unspecified merchandise, and leather.

<sup>75</sup> Thus, he acquires from a Christian an expensive coat for his wife Jamila. Nevertheless, contemporary Jewish legislation seems clear in these matters; see the fifth chapter of the *Taqqanot de Valladolid*, pp. 93-97 on the interdiction on the wearing of expensive clothes, especially by women.

<sup>76</sup> October 30, 1466 (*Minutas III*, 239r).

<sup>77</sup> July 9, 1471 (*Minutas III*, 332r); January 8, 1472; September 9, 1473 (*Minutas IV*, 25r-v).

<sup>78</sup> *Archivo Santo Domingo el Real, Toledo* (November 6, 1484); cit. P. León Tello, *IToledo II*,

Don Salamon de Monsoria seems to be one of the most prominent members of the local *aljama*, and his activities are frequently recorded between 1442 and 1464: He serves as a judge (*dayyan*) in the financial quarrel between two Jews in 1442<sup>79</sup>, also acting as one of the representatives (maybe an *adelantado*) of the *aljama* in 1446<sup>80</sup> and again in 1460<sup>81</sup>. His role at the same time as a guarantor of business attest to his high social standing, as well as healthy economic situation. He also farms taxes and purchases real estate<sup>82</sup>. He owns a herd of cattle and regularly appears buying and selling in the market<sup>83</sup>. Probably the most important information recorded about him, concerns his privileged relationship with master Samaya Alubel, for whom he collects debts<sup>84</sup>, during the period that Alubel holds the office of *juez mayor de las aljamas*<sup>85</sup>.

During the second period (1462-1475), we find Abrahen Çidre as head of the family business, which concentrates now (at least so the sources record) in the trading of cattle<sup>86</sup> and fiscal farmings. Other new families now appear in the records, such as the Curiel. Don Yanto de Curiel, *trapero* (clothes trader), his wife Dona and their two sons, Ysaque and Lezar, all devoted themselves to an increasingly important textile trade<sup>87</sup>. Other traders who occupied themselves with the same business in Madrid are Abrahen and Vellida Alcuzneni<sup>88</sup>; Mose, Yuçaf and Benjamin Muçafir<sup>89</sup>; and don Huda and Hayn Lerma<sup>90</sup>.

After 1481, the forced segregation of the Jewish population in a separate quarter is also implemented in Madrid<sup>91</sup>; as result of this measure, the parti-

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no. 1378. I don't know the familial kinship between Menahen and don Mose Çidre, recorded in March 5, 1446 (*Minutas I*, 297v); or between don Mose and Ysaque, February 17, 1472 (*Minutas III*, 416r-417r). On Mose Çidre of Illescas in 1487-91, see *ACT, Obra y fábrica*, cit. P. León Tello, *JToledo II*, no. 1459.

<sup>79</sup> February 13, 1442 (*Minutas I*, 63v).

<sup>80</sup> March 10, 1446 (*Minutas I*, 300r-v).

<sup>81</sup> January 31, 1460 (*Minutas II*, 415r).

<sup>82</sup> December 11, 1452 (*Minutas II*, 282v).

<sup>83</sup> He buys a pack-mule (*macho de albarda*) April 26, 1463 (*Minutas III*, 8v); sells linen, March 3, 1462 (*Minutas II*, 469r). One of the local judges commands him to pay a fine imposed for not having paid the *alcabala* (trade tax).

<sup>84</sup> May 2, 1464 (*Minutas III*, 105r).

<sup>85</sup> He may be the link between the court Jew and the local *aljama*. We have evidence for a nearby date of the tensions between Alubel and a local *aljama*, that of Segovia; see *FIRC III*, no. 231. One is tempted to recall in this connection the records of the alleged murder in Madrid in 1465 of the friar Alonso de Espina and —according to the inquisitorial evidence preserved— the direct involvement of Diego Arias Davila and Samaya Alubel in this political slaying.

<sup>86</sup> He buys and sells livestock (sheep, rams and goats) and by-products (grease, meat).

<sup>87</sup> On April 21, 1477 he joined with other Jewish local traders in order to sell Ysaque aben Yacar of Murcia 1,000 *varas* of low-quality fabric (*jerga*); *Minutas IV*, 144v. [one *vara*= 0.835 meters].

<sup>88</sup> Buying low-quality fabric (*saya*) and selling *abortones*; January 10, 1477 (*Minutas IV*, 106r).

<sup>89</sup> August 18, 1477 (*Minutas IV*, 221v).

<sup>90</sup> Purchase of *lienzos* and *sayales*.

<sup>91</sup> Decreed at the *Cortes* of Toledo of 1480 for the entire Jewish and Moslem population of the kingdom; for Madrid, see *AGVM, Libro Horadado*, 48r-49v.

icipation of Jews in the local market is drastically restricted, and trade for most of them became difficult. Those who could, choose to migrate to other towns, where the measure was not so strictly enforced. There were also those who were able to obtain some limited «privileges», as in the case previously mentioned of rabbi Jaco, the physician.

### **Final remarks**

My chief intention in this paper has been to present critically new materials for the study of the history of the Jews in Castile in the middle decades of the fifteenth century. Two main issues have been considered here: firstly, the important role of the Jewish royal physicians holding communal offices, and secondly their connection with a local network of interests, as demonstrated concretely in the notarial registers of Madrid. It is still too early to offer a deeper interpretation of these materials, however. At the same time, there is an urgent need to explore both old and new materials with the help of the new methodological tools <sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>92</sup> A shorter version of this paper was read at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Studies (Boston, December 1996).