

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

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This volume focuses on the intricate, interwoven sets of ties that connected Jews in the Italian peninsula with other Jewish groups in wider European and Mediterranean circles from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. It originates from an international conference held in New York City in March 2015, and cosponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University, and other institutions,<sup>1</sup> which aimed to examine early modern and modern Italian Jewish history in a transregional and transnational context. The eight American and European scholars featured in this collection move beyond a geographically bound approach to the history of the Jews of Italy to explore a variety of contact situations between Jews living in Italy and other Jewish groups, institutions, and communities. They illustrate, from diverse perspectives, the sophisticated networks of familial, economic, institutional, and cultural ties that connected Italian Judaism to Europe and the Mediterranean.

The chapters present specific case studies that address rabbinic connections and ties of communal solidarity in the early modern period; the circulation of Hebrew books as a vehicle of connectivity, and the complex overlap of national and transnational identities after emancipation; the Italian side of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the impact of foreign, German educated rabbis on the Italian intellectual debate; the role of international Jewish agencies in providing assistance in the years of Fascist racial persecution; the interactions between Italian Jewry,

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Jewish Displaced Persons and Zionist envoys in the aftermath of World War II; and the impact of Zionism in transforming modern Jewish identities.

This selection, which highlights the mobility of ideas and people, the role of the Tuscan hub of Livorno as a crossroads of interactions, and Jewish solidarity networks across the ages, reflects our aim to study the history of Italian Jews not in isolation, but within a broader Mediterranean and European framework, highlighting the circuits of exchange that shaped its experience. By doing so, we situate the Italian Jewish trajectory within a transregional and transnational context that is mindful of the complex, at times conflicting, and certainly evolving set of networks, relations, and loyalties that characterized diasporic Jewish life from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. By tracing developments in translocal relations over a period of four centuries, at the same time the volume seeks to problematize the passage from early modern transregional ties to modern transnational relations, illuminating whether new contact opportunities arose and how existing ties evolved – were they maintained over time or rather eroded as different priorities took center stage? An important question that needs to be addressed is how traditional diasporic connections rooted in early modern practices of commerce, communal solidarity, and the circulation of legal and religious knowledge changed as a result of the end of the Ancien Regime corporate states and the creation of the unified Italian kingdom, with its powerful sense of nationhood. Can we speak of any continuities between the practices and ideals that connected Jewish subjects in the old Italian states with their coreligionists across the Mediterranean and in northern Europe, and those that connected Italian Jewish citizens to other Jews in modern nation states?

**Exceptional and Representative, Local and Global**

By focusing on transregional and transnational diasporic relations it is possible to nuance the dichotomy of “exceptionality” and “representativeness” engrained in dominant historiographic narratives on Italian Jewry, and to offer alternative ways of conceptualizing its experience. While the Italian Jewish settlement has been the object of important research – examining cultural, socio-economic, and institutional aspects – it has at times been considered as a peculiar and often isolated case. Indeed, Italian Jews have always been a very small fraction of the world Jewish population.<sup>2</sup> But despite their small number, the history of this community has long fascinated Jewish historians, with the Renaissance, the process of ghettoization, and the Fascist period receiving the most sustained scholarly attention among Italian and non-Italian specialists.

The notion that the trajectory of Italian Jewish history was somewhat atypical can be most prominently associated with the formulation by Salo Baron in the 1937 edition of his pioneering *Social and Religious History of the Jews*. There he argued that the Jews of Italy had experienced an early “economic emancipation,” together with an “intellectual emancipation” that anticipated the Berlin and Eastern European Haskalah (the same phenomenon was also ascribed to seventeenth-century Sephardic Jews in the Netherlands).<sup>3</sup> Italian Jewry was, in other words, both unique and exemplary *avant la lettre*. A different take on Italian Jewish uniqueness had

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<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the sixteenth century there were approximately 50,000 Jews living in the Italian peninsula, which amounted to approximately 0,5% of the general population. With a sharp decline, their number dropped to about 20,700 by 1600 (0,15% of the population), but grew slightly to 26,800 by 1700 (0.2% of the population). From the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century there were between 30,000 and 40,000 Jews living in Italy. Throughout these centuries Jewish presence was concentrated in the central and northern regions; its distribution started to shift after emancipation with a tendency to move to the largest urban centers. See Sergio della Pergola, “La popolazione ebraica in Italia nel contesto ebraico globale,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali XI: Gli ebrei in Italia*, vol. 2, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 896-936: 905.

<sup>3</sup> Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), vol. 2, 164.

been expressed by Isaiah Sonne in a 1924 essay in which he argued that Italian Judaism, throughout its history, had not developed an independent, indigenous Jewish tradition, but had rather been a vessel for Jewish influences that had first originated in distant communities and later been transported to the Italian peninsula. As a result of this atypical development Italian Jewry lacked, according to Sonne, a clear profile and character. Italian Jews were supremely tolerant of diverse cultural forms, but they had not been able to leave a distinctive mark on world Judaism.<sup>4</sup>

An approach that highlights the peculiarity of the Italian Jewish case is still common when it comes to early modern studies, although Sonne's negative evaluation has been rejected.<sup>5</sup> For instance, elaborating on Baron's claim, David Myers has recently represented the Italian Jewish experience as both an extraordinary case apart from the better known Ashkenazic and Sephardic examples and as a model of general Jewish history on a small scale, because its pre-emancipation social dynamics anticipated questions and problems of acculturation that would become evident later on among other, numerically more influential European communities.<sup>6</sup>

The rhetoric of uniqueness has also been incessant and widespread in the representation of the modern period, with different figures such as Arnaldo Momigliano,<sup>7</sup> Antonio Gramsci,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah Sonne, *Ha-yahadut ha-italkit: demuta u-mekoma be-toledot am yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ben Tzvi, 1961; first ed. 1924).

<sup>5</sup> See David Ruderman's criticism in his "At the Intersection of Cultures: The Historical Legacy of Italian Jewry," in *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy*, ed. Vivian B. Mann (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1989), 1-24: 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> David N. Myers, "Introduction," in David N. Myers, Massimo Ciavolella, Peter H. Reill, and Geoffrey Symcox, eds. *Acculturation and its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience between Exclusion and Inclusion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press/UCLA, 2008), 3-15: 4-8.

<sup>7</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, "A Review of Cecil Roth's *Gli Ebrei in Venezia*," in Id., *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, ed. Silvia Berti (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 225-27.

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. D. Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 104.

Cecil Roth,<sup>9</sup> and Attilio Milano<sup>10</sup> all placing a particular emphasis on the extraordinary speed and quality of the integration process in unified Italy and on the virtual absence of antisemitic prejudice. The representation of a country in which modern antisemitism did not take root gained traction after WWII, as the “good Italian” became a counter image to that of the “evil German.” The “myth of the good Italian” was coherent with the general anti-Fascist narrative that lay at the foundation of the Italian Republic, centered on the representation of Fascism as a betrayal of the authentic spirit of the nation, and offered reassurance to the former victims of persecution in their search for reintegration in the post-war order.<sup>11</sup> Such a simplistic representation certainly contributed to set the Italian case aside; it had significant echoes also in scholarly circles, finding support in Renzo De Felice’s pioneering attempt to write a history of the Jews in Fascist Italy,<sup>12</sup> and then enjoying a long lasting success in international historiography, only to be challenged by scholars since the late 1980s. A lively season of original research has developed since then, leading to the publication of several original contributions and to an overall reassessment both of the history of the Jews in Italy in the age of emancipation<sup>13</sup> and during the Fascist period.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946). It should be noted that, while he celebrated the extraordinary success of the integration process in Italy, Roth was also the first to notice that the Fascist racial laws were in several ways more severe than contemporary Nazi anti-Jewish laws.

<sup>10</sup> Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> See Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013); Guri Schwarz, “On Myth Making and Nation Building: the Genesis of the “Myth of the Good Italian” 1943-1947,” in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1 (2008): 111-143.

<sup>12</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei nell’Italia fascista* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the new approaches to the history of Italian Jewry in the age of emancipation see Paolo Bernardini, “The Jews in nineteenth-century Italy: Towards a Reappraisal,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2 (1999): 292-310; Guri Schwarz, “A proposito di una vivace stagione storiografica: letture dell’emancipazione ebraica negli ultimi vent’anni,” *Memoria e Ricerca*, 19 (2005): 123-154; Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, “Gli ebrei nell’Italia contemporanea,” *Nuova Informazione Bibliografica*, 4 (2013): 827-840. Among the few attempts to offer an overall picture of that period see: Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy, 1848-1915*.

A focus on local contexts has additionally characterized Italian Jewish studies both in Italy and abroad. In recent years, in particular, much historiography on early modern Italian Jews has concentrated on the topic of acculturation, investigating intellectual and social relations, tensions, and conflicts between Jews and Christians, and their institutions, within their immediate regional context. Within the corporate society typical of early modern Europe, Jews living in the Italian states expressed clear local allegiances – social, political, and intellectual – which historians have investigated with detailed studies.<sup>15</sup> Such a sustained local attention proceeds also from understandable historiographic caution, given the political fragmentation of the pre-unitary Italian peninsula and its uneven Jewish geographical distribution – after the expulsion from the Spanish-dominated southern areas and with the start of ghettoization, Jewish life concentrated in selected areas of central and northern Italy. For the nineteenth and twentieth

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*Between Tradition and Transformation* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010); Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews. Family, Gender, Religion and the Law 1861-1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017 [2011]).

<sup>14</sup> On the evolution of historiography concerning Fascist anti-semitism see Mario Toscano, *Ebraismo e antisemitismo in Italia. Dal 1848 alla guerra dei sei giorni* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003): 208-43; Id., “Il dibattito storiografico sulla politica razziale del fascismo,” in *Leggi razziali. Passato/Presente*, eds. Giorgio Resta and Vincenzo Zeno-Zencovich (Rome: RomaTre-Press, 2015): 9-42. Numerous volumes and articles have been dedicated to analyzing aspects of the Fascist anti-Semitic policies, considering the ideological origins, the implementation of the norms, the social, cultural and economic consequences. The most relevant attempts to draw an overall picture are Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2006 [2000]); Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie Fasciste et la Persécution des Juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007); Michael A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy. Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> The literature on Jewish acculturation in early modern Italy is too vast to give an exhaustive list here. For some representative examples see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Lois Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Marina Caffiero, *Legami pericolosi. Ebrei e cristiani tra eresia, libri proibiti e stregoneria* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012); Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

century, the exploration of Jewish reactions to the processes of nation building and nationalization similarly points to a fundamental emphasis on relational aspects of the Jewish experience on Italian soil. These approaches attest to a generalized tendency to investigate the Italian Jewish reality primarily alongside and within its Italian non-Jewish environment.

Such a focus has greatly expanded our understanding of the early modern regional specificities of Italian Jewish history, such the power dynamics between Jewish communities, state authorities, and the Church, and the intense, uneven, and always complex social and intellectual relations that took place between Jews and their neighbors.<sup>16</sup> For the modern period, careful studies have illuminated the nuances of the process of nationalization of the Jewish minority, reframing the issue of antisemitism in unified Italy and, most of all, emphasizing the originality, autonomy, and the serious implementation of Fascist persecutions. Yet, as a result of the intense scrutiny of the local/national contexts, the parallel and at times competing axis of bonds and exchanges in which Jews living in Italy participated – those that involved other, non-Italian Jewish groups to the south, the east and the north of the peninsula – has been relatively neglected.<sup>17</sup> By so doing, historians may risk losing track of the diasporic entanglements that connected the small Italian Jewish minority to the rest of the Jewish world, as well as ignoring possible parallels between the experiences of this group and those of other Jewish communities.

This is especially true for the study of the modern era, a period when the nation becomes an

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<sup>16</sup> For a recent overview see Francesca Bregoli, “The Jews of Italy (1650-1815),” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 7: The Early Modern World, 1500-1815*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 864-893. Two recent attempts at a long-term synthesis geared towards a lay public are Riccardo Calimani, *Storia degli ebrei italiani. Dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2014), Marina Caffiero, *Storia degli ebrei nell’Italia moderna. Dal Rinascimento alla Restaurazione* (Rome: Carocci, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> An important exception is Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

unavoidable and omnipresent heuristic and interpretive category that can be deconstructed and analyzed but not ignored.

### **Italian Jews and Translocal Ties**

Italian Jewry was embedded in webs of supra-regional and transnational relations articulated at the individual, familial, and communal level, which resulted in overlapping identities, tested internal and external bonds of social and political allegiance, and provided outlets for border-crossing opportunities, whether cultural, thanks to the spread of ideas, rituals, and practices from Jewish center to Jewish center, or physical, through the actual movement of people from region to region. While it is certainly true that the complex upheaval determined by the first (1790s) and second emancipation, along with the nationalization of the Jewish minority, transformed some of these bonds, it is also true that – as some of the essays in this volume illustrate – new types of connections were created.

In the early modern period, because of Italy's geographical location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, its Jewish communities or, in some cases, certain prominent Jewish individuals served as nodes in vast networks connecting disparate poles of the Jewish world. Merchants, rabbinic scholars, medical students, and refugees arrived to the Italian peninsula from North Africa, the Ottoman Levant, and German and Polish areas, passing temporarily through Italian centers or settling down permanently. In the sixteenth century, some Iberian conversos joined established communities attracted by economic prospects and the freedom to practice Judaism, while others transited through the peninsula on their journey to their final destination,



the Ottoman Empire.<sup>18</sup> Scholars eager to bring manuscripts to the press traveled from Poland and the Levant to Venice, the prime center of Hebrew publishing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> Sabbatean believers gravitated to Livorno around the figure of Moses Pinheiro, and from there they spread their doctrines to other Italian and Mediterranean centers.<sup>20</sup> In the seventeenth century, Venice served as a crucial node for transregional networks of Jewish charity, such as rescuing captives and organizing support for settlements in Palestine. Livorno took over this role in the eighteenth century, and fundraising emissaries began making the long trek from the Holy Land to the Tyrrhenian coast to collect monies for their communities.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the early modern period, long-distance traders based in Italian ports such as Ancona, Venice, and Livorno wove connections with Jewish business associates across the Adriatic or Tyrrhenian seas, whether by means of correspondence, dispatching their sons abroad to apprentice with trusted Jewish business partners, or marrying off their daughters to cement

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 45-47, 72-73; Renata Segre, "Sephardic settlements in sixteenth-century Italy: a historical and geographical survey," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991), 112-137. There are numerous individual studies on the formation of Sephardic settlements in Italy. See for example Benjamin Ravid, "A tale of three cities and their Raison d'état: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the competition for Jewish merchants in the sixteenth century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1992), 138-162; Aron Di Leone Leoni, *La nazione ebraica spagnola e portoghese negli stati estensi, per servire a una storia dell'ebraismo sefardita* (Rimini: Luisè editore, 1992); Federica Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese. Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia* (Torino: Silvio Zamorani editore, 2006); Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki editore, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear, "Introduction," in *Iid.*, eds., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1-16: 8-9 and references therein.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Goldish, "Sabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatean Movement," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 7: The Early Modern World, 1500-1815*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 491-521: 511.

<sup>21</sup> Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 19-20, 37-38.

business alliances.<sup>22</sup> All of these movements created new avenues of cultural and material exchange, but gave also rise, in some cases, to social and political conflicts, and tensions among Jews of different social and ethnic background.<sup>23</sup> The contributions of Goldish and Lehmann in this collection demonstrate well the individual and institutional nature of ties (and possible sources of friction) that linked different parts of the Jewish world to Italy, while highlighting two of the most significant avenues of contact between early modern Italian Jews and “Jewish others”: the circulation of rabbinic personnel and scholarly knowledge, and networks of solidarity.<sup>24</sup>

In turn, alongside ties to their local environment, many Jews who lived on Italian soil simultaneously maintained active bonds with other Jewish worlds through individual and communal links. Jews from Italian mercantile centers such as Livorno, Ancona, or Venice moved in search of business opportunities to North African and Ottoman ports such as Tunis, Salonika and Smyrna, a process that continued into the nineteenth century, or to northern

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<sup>22</sup> Jean-Pierre Filippini, Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, 3 vols. (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1988), esp. vol. 1: 115-169, vol. 3: 1-357; Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Viviana Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale: una dinastia mercantile ebraica del secondo '600: i Costantini* (Trieste: LINT, 1998); Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Luca Andreoni, “Doti e imprese ebraiche mercantili nel Medio Adriatico. Famiglie, capitali, litigi (XVII-XVIII secolo),” in *I paradigmi della mobilità e delle relazioni: gli ebrei in Italia. In ricordo di Michele Luzzati*, ed. Bice Migliau (Florence: Giuntina, 2017); Bregoli, “Your Father’s Interests.”

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Stow, “Prossimità o distanza: etnicità, sefarditi e assenza di conflitti etnici nella Roma del sedicesimo secolo,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 58 (1992), 61-74; Bernard D. Cooperman, “Ethnicity and Institution Building among Jews in Early Modern Rome,” *AJS Review* 30 (2006), 119-145.

<sup>24</sup> On the exchanges between European Jews and their Jewish (and non-Jewish) others see now Francesca Bregoli and David B. Ruderman, eds., *Connecting Histories: Jews and their Others in the Early Modern Period* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

European hubs such as London, where they maintained active and idealized cultural and linguistic bonds with their regions of origin, even after many generations.<sup>25</sup>

In the modern period, such pre-existing links started to waver. While emancipation changed the legal status of the Jews, the process of nationalization that started long before 1861 altered the modes of self-representation of the Jewish minority. The nation was not an abstract concept, but a true passion that stirred the hearts of many, and Jews - especially the young - were no exception. New opportunities and a new mindset meant, for many, a shift in occupational strategies, with a tendency to move from commerce to employment at various levels as officials of the newly formed state, be it in the military, the university, or local and national bureaucracy. Furthermore the newfound freedom of movement and the will to start afresh led to significant internal migrations, with a gradual movement of population to the largest cities. In this sense it is significant to note how coastal cities like Livorno gradually lost attractiveness in the post-emancipation era.

The case of the Franchetti family is in many ways exemplary. They had been long-distance merchants for generations, conducting a profitable trade business built on family connections in Livorno, Tunis, and Smyrna. In the late eighteenth century the entire family relocated to Livorno, but following emancipation they left the port-city, moved inland, and

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<sup>25</sup> On the Italian *grana* in Tunisia see Yitzhak Avrahami, *Pinkas ha-kehilah ha-yehudit ha-Portugezit be-Tunis, 1710–1944* (Lod: Orot ha-Yahadut ha-Maghreb, 1997); Jacques Taïeb, “Les juifs Livournais de 1600 à 1881,” in *Histoire communautaire, histoire plurielle: La communauté juive de Tunisie. Actes du colloque de Tunis organise le 25-26-27 Février 1998 a la Faculté de la Manouba* (Tunis: Centre de publication universitaire, 1999), 153–64; Elia Boccara, “La comunità ebraica portoghese di Tunisi (1710–1944),” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 66 (2000): 25–98; on the Italian *francos* in the Ottoman Empire see Anthony Molho, “Ebrei e marrani fra Italia e Levante ottomano,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali XI: Gli Ebrei in Italia*, ed. C. Vivanti (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 2:1009–43; Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000): 34, 46, 74–79.

invested in a large estate. They would eventually acquire a noble title, and the heir to the dynasty – Leopoldo (1847-1917) – would make a brilliant career as a politician and public official. In this process the ancient family links to the other banks of the Mediterranean were, at least apparently, severed; Jewishness acquired a secondary and possibly minor role while Italian identity gained center stage.<sup>26</sup> But just as we stress the relevance of this process we must at the same time be extremely careful in evaluating its rapidity and the extent to which it developed: pre-Unification trans-regional ties, as the contributions by Boulouque and Reiman illustrate, did not vanish abruptly after emancipation and the creation of the Italian kingdom.

Moreover, other forces coming from Europe led to the development of new or renovated intra-Jewish and supra-national connections. International institutions such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle organized Italian branches in the 1860s and towards the end of the nineteenth century Zionist ideals started to emerge, while translations of texts coming mainly from the French and German speaking worlds circulated through the Italian Jewish press.<sup>27</sup> As Facchini illustrates, foreign rabbis, typically educated in Germany, arrived to hold chairs in several important cities, bringing with them fresh ideas and, in some instances, helping stimulate

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e l’attività economica nell’area nord-africana,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 131-149; Mirella Scardozzi, “Una storia di famiglia: i Franchetti dalle coste del Mediterraneo all’Italia liberale,” *Quaderni storici* 38 (2003): 697–740; Amedeo Spagnoletto, “Nuove fonti sulla famiglia Franchetti a Tunisi, Smirne e Livorno fra XVIII e XIX S.,” *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 76 (2010): 95–113; Francesca Bregoli, ““Your Father’s Interests”: The Business of Kinship in a Trans-Mediterranean Jewish Merchant Family, 1776–1790,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108.2 (2018), forthcoming.

<sup>27</sup> There is no detailed study on this point. For some notes on the literary texts published by Italian Jewish periodicals see Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, “Sperimentazione e normatività. Periodici ebraici italiani e letteratura fra Otto e Novecento” in “The New Italy and the Jews: From Massimo d’Azeglio to Primo Levi,” eds. Scott Lerner and Jonathan Druker, special issue of *Annali d’Italianistica* 36 (2018), forthcoming.

a reaction to what was perceived as the threat of assimilation and to sow the seeds of a religious-Zionist awakening.<sup>28</sup>

The scenario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was marked by a structural tension between the anxiety to constantly reassert an unquestioned allegiance to the nation-state, and the need to reinterpret and find room for Jewish particularism. Two competing and partially contradictory preoccupations dominate the internal debates of the small Italian Jewish world: the fear that assimilation would lead to the disappearance of the community and the terror that efforts to resist that process – via education or the institution of Jewish social and philanthropic networks (both national and transnational) – would stimulate adverse reactions from the majority society and jeopardize the positions conquered in the post-emancipation scenario. The intense conflicts that, since the 1890s and through the Fascist period, opposed a tiny but very active and determined Zionist minority – inspired more by Ahad Ha'am than Herzl – to other segments of the Italian Jewish communal world, reflect those tensions.<sup>29</sup>

As this brief survey illustrates, both in the early modern and modern periods, the small but lively Italian communities constituted a hub for Jewish networks across the Mediterranean and between the Mediterranean and northern Europe. By deliberately reinserting the Italian Jewish experience within this broader diasporic matrix, yet without ignoring the fundamental role of local contexts, it is possible to bypass the paradigms of “exceptionality” and “representativeness” and instead examine supra-local commonalities with other Jewish groups while being mindful of Italian specificities.

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<sup>28</sup> The case of Samuel Hirsch Margulies in Florence is particularly striking. See Elizabeth Schächter, *The Jews of Italy*, 173-76.

<sup>29</sup> For the Liberal age, see Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*, 182ff.; for the Fascist period, see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, *passim*. See also Simon Levis Sullam, *Una comunità immaginata. Gli ebrei a Venezia 1900-1938* (Milan: Unicopli 2001).

Before proceeding to an examination of recent trends in approaches to Jewish transregional and transnational links, a few words are in order about two additional topics: the impact of distinct national academic traditions and that of disciplinary boundaries on the study of translocal Jewish relations. Approaches to supralocal relations and exchanges, both in the early modern and in the modern age, have been profoundly informed by the distinctive trends and modes of analysis characteristic of Italian and non-Italian research. A survey of historiography shows that there tends to be a difference in the way in which Italian and non-Italian scholars approach these topics, even in recent times. While the former focus mostly on analyzing Italian Jewish history as part of *Italian* history and culture, examining the relationship with non-Jewish society and with political authorities, the latter often see it as a piece of a broader *Jewish* history where the specificities of the local context can become blurred, which makes it possible to identify larger patterns and models and to draw comparisons between different times and geographical areas. These approaches have been too often deemed incompatible and the discrepancies have generated misunderstandings and, sometimes, even academic feuds. Instead, they should be seen as complementary. Both bring important insights and raise crucial methodological and interpretive questions, and should be combined as often as possible.

Finally, it is relevant to consider that, in recent decades, coherently with a growing specialization, scholarship on the early modern and the modern periods has developed in different and autonomous directions. This is in part a logical and unavoidable reflection of the different issues raised by the sources. Indeed with emancipation and nationalization, two processes that in the Italian case were intertwined, the scenario changed, and so have the scholarly questions and the methods used to answer such queries. In recent years, with few exceptions geared towards the lay public, Italian Jewish historians have shied away from

sweeping diachronical accounts providing an overarching narrative of the entire Jewish experience on Italian soil. We do not propose to return to such all-encompassing modes of historical writing, yet we believe that framing the Italian Jewish experience in a way that allows to better appreciate continuities and discontinuities between the early modern and the modern period would be beneficial.

### **Historiographic Turns**

This collection's focus on connections and webs of intersecting allegiances resonates with current historiographic concerns about early modern transregional circuits of exchange and the transformations of Jewish identity that developed after emancipation. Scholars of early modern Jewry increasingly emphasize the connectedness of Jewish groups, a turn that has recently given rise to a number important studies which, while paying attention to local contexts, underscore diasporic connections and parallels. Jewish economic historians have been especially influential in illuminating questions of mobility and connectivity. Pioneering research on the commercial and familial networks that undergirded the vast Sephardic diaspora has highlighted its networked experience,<sup>30</sup> as has recent work on long-distance Ashkenazic trade.<sup>31</sup> (As already anticipated, in the Italian case the important role of trading enclaves, such as Venice, Livorno,

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<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires, (1540-1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Ray, *After Exile*. On the networked nature of the Sephardic diaspora see the important remarks in Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," *Jewish Culture and Society* 7 (2004), 61-76.

<sup>31</sup> Cornelia Aust, *The Jewish Economic Elite: Making Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

Ancona, and from the second half of the eighteenth century Trieste, has received sustained attention).<sup>32</sup>

But circulation was not exclusive to early modern Jewish merchants, although the historiography has tended to focus on this group as naturally mobile and connected. Significant attention has been devoted to the role of print in the faster diffusion of legal, philosophical, and kabbalistic knowledge among the rabbinic elites and the so-called secondary intelligentsia, enabling the transfer of knowledge from Sephardic to Ashkenazic milieus, and vice versa.<sup>33</sup> The mobility of Palestinian emissaries and rabbinic personnel facilitated new encounters between segments of the Jewish world that were previously not in touch, creating bonds of solidarity, but also misunderstandings and tensions, as Matthias Lehmann further elaborates in this collection.<sup>34</sup> The heightened circulation of unorthodox religious ideas and their opponents in the long post-Sabbatean period generated heated transregional religious controversies, which can be interpreted as a sign of a besieged rabbinate that attempted to organize across regional borders to protect its eroding authority against perceived heresy and secularizing processes.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, scholars who have explored circulation caused by persecution, such as the expulsion from Spain

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<sup>32</sup> Arbel, *Trading Nations*; Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana*; Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*; Bonazzoli, *Adriatico e Mediterraneo orientale*.

<sup>33</sup> David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 99-132, and references therein.

<sup>34</sup> Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*; Matt Goldish, "Hakham Sasportas and the Former Conversos," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 44 (2012), 149-172.

<sup>35</sup> Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, tr. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).



or the 1648 Chmielnicki massacres, have emphasized the paradoxical creation of new communities and ties, straining existing relations but also generating new ones.<sup>36</sup>

David Ruderman's recent reinterpretation of early modern Jewish culture, informed by the notions of cultural exchange and connected histories advocated by Jerry Bentley and Sanjay Subrahmanyam,<sup>37</sup> has provided a groundbreaking synthesis of these historiographic trends. Emphasizing increased exchanges between different parts of the Jewish world (as well as between Jewish and non-Jewish societies) as a unifying trait of the early modern Jewish experience,<sup>38</sup> Ruderman points in particular to accelerated mobility, a knowledge explosion thanks to the printing press, and a blurring of religious identities as overarching factors common to disparate Jewries, facilitating unprecedented connections while simultaneously introducing new challenges generated by the increased circulation of people and ideas.<sup>39</sup>

Historiography on the Jewish experience in the age of modern nation-states has, on the other hand, been unavoidably centered on the interconnected issues of emancipation and integration, and on the resistance – be it from Jewish or non-Jewish circles – to such processes. A generalized trend in historiography has led scholars to reconsider the categories of assimilation and integration, which had been portrayed in a negative light after the Holocaust.<sup>40</sup> Influenced by

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<sup>36</sup> Ray, *After Expulsion*. Adam Teller has been working on a forthcoming study on refugees from the Chmielnicki massacres.

<sup>37</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," in *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997), 735-762: 745; Jerry H. Bentley, "AHR Forum: Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 749-770.

<sup>38</sup> Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, esp. 1-21 and 220-226.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-56, 99-132, 159-190.

<sup>40</sup> David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation. Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History," in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 35 (1990), 17-33; Jonathan Frankel, "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?," in Jonathan Frankel e Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community. The Jews in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-37.

international debates, a new generation of Italian scholars has proposed new readings of modern Italian Jewish history, with a focus on social, cultural, and also religious dynamics.<sup>41</sup>

More limited has been the echo of the studies dedicated to the development of wide ranging transnational philanthropic networks. The efforts made in the nineteenth century by British and French Jews who aimed not only at offering support to persecuted Jews abroad but also at exporting the Western model of civilization did not and could not find a replica in the Italian setting.<sup>42</sup> Italian Jews were not insensitive to the plight of other less fortunate communities, but the Italian Jewish world was probably too small and culturally fragmented – not to mention the fact that it lacked a central coordinating body<sup>43</sup> – to be able to effectively project its energies abroad.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For social history see Barbara Armani and Guri Schwarz, eds. *Ebrei Borghesi: identità familiare, solidarietà e affari nell'età dell'emancipazione*, special issue of *Quaderni Storici*, 3 (2003); Barbara Armani, *Il confine invisibile. L'élite ebraica di Firenze 1840-1914* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2006); for cultural history see Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews*; for intellectual and religious history see Cristiana Facchini, *David Castelli: ebraismo e scienze delle religioni tra Otto e Novecento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Lisa M. Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity. The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> On the organization of Jewish institutions in Liberal Italy and the difficulty in reaching some form of national coordination among the different, often rival, communities see Tullia Catalan, “L’organizzazione delle comunità ebraiche italiane dall’Unità alla prima guerra mondiale,” in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Vivanti, 1265ff; Stefania Dazzetti, *L’autonomia delle comunità ebraiche italiane nel Novecento. Leggi, intese, statuti, regolamenti* (Torino: Giappichelli, 2008). A central unifying body was created only in 1930.

<sup>44</sup> There is still limited research on this topic. See Cristiana Facchini, “Luigi Luzzatti and the Oriental Front: Jewish Agency and the Politics of Religious Toleration,” in *The Jews and the Nation-States of Southeastern Europe from the 19th Century to the Great Depression: Combining Viewpoints on a Controversial Story*, eds. Tullia Catalan and Marco Dogo, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 227-245; Tullia Catalan, “Le reazioni dell’ebraismo italiano all’antisemitismo europeo (1880-1914),” in *Le racine chrétiennes de l’antisémitisme politique (fin XIXe-XXe siècle)*, eds. Giovanni Miccoli and Catherine Brice, (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2003), 137-162.

Italy was not hit by the major migrations from the Russian Empire that shook and transformed other Western European Jewish contexts in the early twentieth century, which also contributed to keep it at the margins of the major transnational upheavals of the time. Only in a later period would significant numbers of foreign Jews migrate to Italy, in three different phases. First, about 20,000 German Jews found temporary refuge from Nazism in the peninsula.<sup>45</sup> Then, in the immediate post-war period (1945-48), between 30,000 to 50,000 Jewish Displaced Persons, fleeing Eastern Europe and without a home to return to, resided temporarily in various camps before most of them finally migrated to Eretz Israel or the Americas.<sup>46</sup> Finally, after the establishment of the State of Israel, thousands of Jews expelled from Arab and Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa would reach Italy, settling mainly in Rome and Milan.<sup>47</sup>

These migrations did not only contribute to alter the internal makeup of Italian Jewish communities, but also – as Catalan and Marzano suggest in this volume – to strengthen the interest and involvement in Italian affairs by foreign and international Jewish bodies. Various institutions – in the first phase the AIU, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint), then mostly the WJC and the Joint – would start exerting a relevant influence on Italian communities that were more and more dependent on foreign aid, be it to help refugees coming from abroad or, in the

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<sup>45</sup> Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933-1945* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Mario Toscano, *La Porta di Sion: l'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina, 1945-1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

<sup>47</sup> The major communities came from Libya, Iran, Egypt, and Lebanon. There is limited scholarship on this issue. On the fate of Libyan Jews, connected to Italy since Libya had been an Italian colony from 1911 to 1947, see Barbara Spadaro, “Across Europe and the Mediterranean Sea. Exploring Jewish Memories from Libya,” in *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, 50 (2014): 37-52; Renzo De Felice, *Jews in an Arab Land. Libya 1835-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

post-war period, to rebuild communal institutions.<sup>48</sup> Renovated and more intense transnational connections at an institutional level, together with a new enthusiasm for the Zionist cause following the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel, on which Simoni sheds light with her essay, contributed to transform Jewish life in post-war Italy.<sup>49</sup>

To properly frame the Italian Jewish experience in the modern and late modern period such processes need to be studied in greater depth. It will be crucial to not simply analyze each phase or migration pattern, but to look more generally at the shifting equilibria that they generated, both in terms of everyday Jewish life, identity and culture, as well as in terms of growing connections with other Jewish worlds. Moreover, following Sarah Stein's critical insight, the meaning and articulation of citizenship for modern Italian Jews – in terms of legal possibilities as well as self-awareness – should be explored and reassessed taking into account also those who did not live on Italian soil.<sup>50</sup>

### **New Perspectives on Italian Jewish Connections**

The essays gathered in this volume intervene at various levels in the broader historiographic discourse about translocal networks and the place of Italian Jews in them. As seen above, the increased rate of Jewish mobility has been interpreted as one of the distinctive traits of early modern Jewish communities.<sup>51</sup> Mobility was not only a result of the waves of forced migrations and dislocations that affected Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in the early

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<sup>48</sup> See for the Fascist period Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 281-85; for the post-war see Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (London-Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013 [2004]), 35-39.

<sup>49</sup> As elsewhere in the West, after the war Jewish communal institutions – generally quite tepid if not hostile to Zionism – became fervently pro-Zionist: Schwarz, *After Mussolini*, 47-68.

<sup>50</sup> Sarah A. Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams. European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 23-56.

modern period, but also an organic part of the rabbinic experience. Rabbis, teachers, and preachers crossed borders on a regular basis to pursue advanced study and professional opportunities. The heightened circulation of rabbinic personnel resulted in exposure to new ideas and mores, with several rabbinic figures located in Italy acting as intellectual magnets and generous patrons for their visitors.

Matt Goldish offers a re-examination of the list of visitors of one such figure, rabbi and secret Sabbatean Abraham Rovigo (ca. 1650-1714), in his northern Italian hometown of Modena. The list helps recreate a spiritual map of late seventeenth-century rabbinic and Sabbatean relations and reflects the shift of the Sabbatean center from the Ottoman Empire to Europe. In light of contemporary network studies, Goldish shows how Rovigo's home played the role of a hub in a complex web that connected not only some of the main geographic poles of the early modern Jewish world (Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Salonika, Poland-Lithuania), but also Jews of different social classes (such as itinerant Palestinian emissaries and learned physicians) and of diverse religious leanings ("orthodox" rabbinic Jews versus Sabbatean loyalists). By linking Jews of disparate origins, classes, and beliefs, and by enabling the exchange of information, Rovigo's home is representative of the kind of network node whose impact on Jewish life greatly expanded in the early modern period. The city of Modena itself emerges as a crossroads of widely diverse parts of the Jewish world.

Matthias Lehmann's essay brings us from northern Italy to the Tuscan port-city of Livorno, widely recognized as an influential early modern Sephardic hub. The city's Jewish community was a central node in the larger circuit of communication connecting Sephardic centers in northern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and North Africa, as well as Jewish

communities in Italy. Livorno's role as a leading connector of Jewish centers features in three essays in this collection, starting with Lehmann's study of fundraising networks.

The mobility of fundraising emissaries (*shadarim*) created a web of connections across geographical borders, testing local loyalties and identities while shaping supra-regional ideals of Judaism.<sup>52</sup> Livorno, because of its strategic location, was central in facilitating fundraising efforts organized by Ottoman Jewish officers. Lehmann's examination of Livornese fundraising on behalf of both Palestinian settlements and needy diasporic communities underscores the importance of studying local contexts within a web of trans-regional relations to fully understand the multiple forms of allegiance held by early modern Jewries. In the case of Livorno, shared Sephardic ethnicity, shared languages (Spanish and Judeo-Spanish), and the reliable circulation of information characterized the interrelated networks in which it was embedded. Fundraising, Lehmann shows, was conducted through avenues relying not only on ideal values of "pan-Jewish solidarity," but, more pragmatically, on face-to-face encounters and reciprocal communication, which reinforced the networks' trustworthiness. Operating outside such established webs of trust – as in the case of Ashkenazic emissaries visiting Livorno – might instead raise suspicions and entail the failure of the fundraising mission.

Hebrew printing and Jewish publishing in the vernacular also contributed to shape networks of communication and exchange, creating new ties and simultaneously taking advantage of existing ones. Another of the complex circuits of exchange in which early modern and modern Livorno was embedded, alongside (and at times overlapping with) relations of solidarity, was indeed the Hebrew printing business. As Clémence Boulouque shows, this

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<sup>52</sup> Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*.

endeavor served as a conduit for Sephardic transnational relations even after the establishment of the unified Italian state in 1861.

Boulouque turns to the publishing activities of Elia Benamozegh, a rabbinic scholar best known for his interventions in the realm of Jewish-Christian dialogue and his detachment from the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Benamozegh's printing endeavors took place at a time of inexorable decline for the commercial reach of the Livornese hub, a decline that affected also Western Sephardic networks as a whole. Based on his imprints, heavy on liturgical and legal texts catering to Jews in North Africa and the Middle East, the Benamozegh press and thus Livorno itself appear at the periphery of Italian Jewish modernity. At the same time, the resilience of traditional Jewish Mediterranean connections comes to the fore.

Alyssa Reiman's essay on the Moreno family provides an apt segue to Boulouque's, depicting another facet of the resilience of Mediterranean networks, this time not solely Jewish, and raising questions about the place of citizenship for diasporic Italian Jews after Unification. One of the most influential vectors of Jewish exchanges in the western Mediterranean was the connection between Livorno and Tunis, articulated along commercial, familial, and communal lines. In Tunis, a flourishing Italian community known as *grana*, distinct from the indigenous, Arabic-speaking *twansa* Jewry, developed from the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> In the late nineteenth century, the new status and ideals of Italian citizenship created intersecting transnational and national demands that *grana* had to navigate, as Reiman demonstrates. Even as Livorno's commercial power was on the wane, Livornese Jews living in imperial Tunis as Italian citizens, like the Morenos, maintained multiple identities, as well as complex ties of affection and patriotic loyalty to their fatherland across the Mediterranean Sea. As bourgeois entrepreneurs

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<sup>53</sup> See above, note 25.

committed to shaping a diasporic Italian nation, they expressed a cultural and linguistic affinity with Italy, supporting Italian charitable, educational, and cultural efforts in Tunis.

Simultaneously, the Morenos took advantage of their Tunisian local context, one that offered them exceptional commercial opportunities thanks to its heterogeneous state power.

Looking away from the Mediterranean and towards northern Europe, Cristiana Facchini presents the circulation of rabbis and ideas linked to the Italian reception of and contribution to the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the decades 1890s-1930s. In these years marked by the crisis of Positivism and by the faith in progress that culminated with the rise of Fascist dictatorship, a group of Galician rabbis – notably Samuel Hirsch Margulies, Hirsch Perez Chajes, Israel Zoller, and Isaiah Sonne – moved to Italy where they operated in two, only partially connected, dimensions: the life of the local Italian Jewish community where they resided, and the transnational network of scholars. In the same years Italian Jewish scholars such as Giorgio Levi della Vita, Umberto Cassuto, and Arnaldo Momigliano contributed to the Italian version of contemporary European debates on the origins of Christianity and the historical Jesus. The transnational nature of this conversation was partly responsible for its survival during the Fascist period: “When it came to the study of religions [Fascism] was unable to control the output of different scholarly traditions.”<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the impact of the persecution on the lives of these scholars was deep and transforming.

When Fascist racism and antisemitism developed during the 1930s to produce the racist laws of 1938, foreign national and international Jewish associations analyzed the evolution of the regime’s ideology and tried to find ways to help Italian Jews and especially the thousands of foreign Jews living in the peninsula and in the colony of Rhodes, as shown by Tullia Catalan

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<sup>54</sup> 000.



who focuses on the Joint Foreign Committee (UK) and the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Two different sets of existing networks were exploited: the links – both institutional and personal – between the associations and Italian Jews, and the established communications between the JFC and the AIU at European and transatlantic level. Among the key protagonists of these networks on the British side we find, unsurprisingly, Cecil Roth. To the overall widespread incredulity with which French and British Jews met the onset of the antisemitic persecutions, Italian Jews often reacted by trying to halt international mobilization for fear of reprisals.

After the end of the war, Italy temporarily hosted thousands of Jewish Displaced Persons directed towards British Palestine or the United States. Arturo Marzano analyzes the “multilateral encounter” that was shaped by the interactions between the survivors, UNRRA, the Joint, a plethora of voluntary associations, representatives of the Yishuv, Italian Jews, and the Italian institutions. In this maze of communication and sometimes miscommunication and misunderstandings, Italian Jews often acted as mediators with Italian authorities, while the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities’ focus was mainly on internal, national dynamics.

Finally, Marcella Simoni’s contribution zooms in on a group of Italian Jews she calls “generation 1948”: born around 1930, these young men and women committed to Zionism and *aliyah*, driven by the desire to overcome their parents’ alleged passivity vis-à-vis the Fascist persecution. They found the movement *Hechalutz* in 1946 and established their own *hakhsharah* in 1947, to train for life in a *kibbutz*. Influenced by the activity of the Jewish Brigade, the Joint and some Italian emissaries coming directly from Palestine/Israel, they became a small junction of an international and transnational network, using correspondence between the members and the movement’s journal as the two main means of communication. Analyzing their enthusiasm and political training, which in some cases developed into a disappointment so bitter that it

generated the desire to return to Italy, this chapter reconstructs a piece of Italian, Zionist, and Israeli history and sheds new light on the multifaceted aspects of the reconstruction of an Italian Jewish identity in the immediate postwar period.

### **Conclusion**

The essays gathered in this volume offer a bird's-eye view of the evolution over the course of four centuries of the supra-local systems in which Italian Jews operated – commercial and family networks, intellectual and rabbinical exchanges and the circulation of texts, philanthropic and solidarity networks – with an important coda on political networks, examining the role played by Zionism and the birth of the State of Israel in the transformation of Italian Jewish identity and Italian Jews' relationships with other Jewish groups. This evolution underscores the complex transformations that took place in the transition from the Ancien Regime to the “age of emancipation,” the season of racial persecution, and into the postwar period. The movement of people and the circulation of ideas between different and distant Jewish groups and communities underwent significant changes in the transition from the early modern to the modern era, yet they still played a relevant role in shaping the Italian Jewish experience. In different ways, Italian Jews were embedded – both before and after emancipation – into their immediate local surroundings but also into a broader web that crossed state boundaries and cultural divides.

An important development that we can detect through a *longue durée* approach is an apparent geographic shift from “south” to “north” when it comes to the zones of interaction and the diasporic nodes (both ideal and actual) that connected Jews living in Italy with their coreligionists abroad. While in the early modern period networks crisscrossing the

Mediterranean Sea appear especially prominent, as the nineteenth century progressed new centers of gravity emerged, which reflect broader developments in the Jewish world: the Italian Jewish intellectual horizon expanded northward as a result of the long *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and of emancipation, and new institutional contacts developed, for example through the Alliance Israélite Universelle.

However, the legacies of early modern Mediterranean trading and family networks did not simply vanish with modernity; in fact they were still relevant in the 1930s, being considered by the Italian authorities of the time as a valuable asset to exert influence in the region.<sup>55</sup> And we can't forget that Italian colonial expeditions in Libya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia opened new doors for economic and cultural exchanges with North Africa and created new avenues for Jewish public engagement in support of the nation's imperialistic aspirations but also of coreligionists living in the newly acquired colonies. The "discovery" of the Falashas generated massive interest among Italian Jews as the amount of ethnographic articles that filled the pages of the main periodicals shows: an interest not immune from a deep sense of Western and white superiority.<sup>56</sup> The ideal and ideological centrality of the Mediterranean region for many Italian Jews, finally, came back to the fore forcefully with Zionism, especially after the Second World War and the establishment of the State of Israel.

The dynamics and implications of these shifts are thus more complex and nuanced than what we are used to believe and deserve further attention from scholars. A perspective that

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<sup>55</sup> Simonetta Della Seta, "Gli ebrei nel Mediterraneo nella strategia politica fascista sino al 1938: il caso di Rodi," *Storia Contemporanea* 6 (1986): 997-1032. In August 1940, some senior member of Italian Diplomacy were still musing on how to restore the damages done in the relationship between Fascist Italy and Mediterranean Jewish communities with the introduction of the anti-Semitic legislation; on this see Vincenzo Pinto, "L'Italia fascista e la "questione palestinese"," *Contemporanea* 1 (2003): 102-125.

<sup>56</sup> Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Allo specchio dei Falascià. Ebrei ed etnologi durante il colonialismo fascista* (Florence: Giuntina, 1987).

privileges a long term investigation, assessing changes and continuities from the early modern to the modern period, and that takes advantage of the complementary strengths of Italian and non-Italian historiographies is a first step towards a reassessment.