

# HUMANISM, TRANSCULTURALISM AND SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN JEWS

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## *Abstract*

This article explores the evidence for Transculturalism and Humanism, in the early modern sense of the concepts, amongst Jews of the Ottoman Empire. In the first part of the article, attention is paid to the growing numbers of humanist European travelers to the Ottoman Empire and their relations with Istanbul Jews. The second section of the article is concerned with Ragusa, part of the Ottoman orbit since the fifteenth century. Here, attention is paid to Didacus Pyrrhus, member of an Ottoman Jewish family and the only great Jewish Neo-Latin poet of his age. The third section focuses on Ottoman Cairo and the discoveries and identifications of fragments of works for the theatre in Spanish in Hebrew characters. They attest to an interest in humanist texts. Finally, by way of conclusion, the article examines a specific case of cultural transfer and common ground between Christian humanists and Jewish traders.

## *Key Words*

Cairo Genizah; Didacus Pyrrhus/Isaiah Cohen;  
Dernschwam, Humanism and Jews; Sixteenth-century Ottoman Jews



Few, if any, historians of today would endorse the formulations of the polymath Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo – once seen as a leading intellectual figure – who, writing about early modern Spanish Jewish exiles in the Ottoman Empire averred that:

These new exiles [in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Holland], amongst whom there were those who cultivated artistic poetry could also renew the basis of traditional poetry, importing new ballads or composing them themselves. This [Spanish] influence reached only minimally *the synagogues of Turkey, very remote and isolated, lost amongst the barbarians and consisting at the time of people who were poor,*

*uncultured and in decline* who were completely different from the opulent and refined Hebrew merchants of Venice and Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup>

It would be facile to dismiss his perceptions by reducing them to their date, 1900. And yet, Cecil Roth, half a century later, focusing on Ottoman Jews and judeoconversos returning to their roots in the mid sixteenth century, followed this gesture of comparisons and emphasized differences between Europeans and 'Orientals' in Constantinople where, according to him, there was an almost impenetrable *veil* between the Moslem and the Christian worlds.<sup>2</sup> Despite the differences in presuppositions, today's studies of early modern Western Sephardim routinely follow this or similar conventional comparisons.<sup>3</sup>

In the first section of the following lines, an attempt is made to show Ottoman Jewry, not as isolated and distant but, rather on the contrary, as cosmopolitan and transcultural in the sense in which it is understood by scholarship on the (non-Jewish) early modern Ottoman orbit, as e.g., in the works of Rhoads Murphy or Gülru Necipoğlu.<sup>4</sup> The references to Istanbul Jews – whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi – in the *Diary* of Hans Dernschwam, an agent of the great sixteenth-century commercial enterprise of the Fuggers, exhibit numerous examples of contacts and transmissions rather than remoteness, isolation or distance. A reading of the *Diary* also shows how a sixteenth-century European humanist approached this area in which he acted as a humanist and, in addition, paves the

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<sup>1</sup> MARCELINO MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO, *Antología de poetas líricos castellanos desde la formación del idioma hasta nuestros días*, Librería de Perlado, Madrid 1900, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> CECIL ROTH, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 1948, p. 11; EAD., *Doña Gracia*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Linguistic, musical and literary scholars frequently compared Western and Eastern [i.e., Mediterranean] Sephardi traditions. It is presumably against the vestiges of Roth's vision that Hassan introduced the category of 'castizo'. IACOB M. HASSÁN, « Un género castizo sefardí: Las coplas », in PALOMA DÍAZ-MAS (ed.), *Los sefardíes: Cultura y literatura*, Servicio Editorial, Universidad del País Vasco, Bilbao 1987, p. 103–123. See also MIRIAM BODIAN, « Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: The Ambiguous Boundaries of Self-Definition », *Jewish Social Studies*, 15 (2008), p. 66–80.

<sup>4</sup> See the references *infra*. I try to avoid anachronistic discussions of later, twentieth-century notions of cosmopolitanism which are irrelevant in a study focused on the sixteenth century. But see ULRIKE FREITAG, « 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Conviviality'? Some Conceptual Considerations Concerning the Late Ottoman Empire », *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17/4 (2014), p. 375–391 who affirms [but does not accept] – in relation to late Ottoman history, rather than our sixteenth century focus – that « The latter term [i.e., cosmopolitanism], both in its wider usage and in the historiography linked to the Ottoman Empire, has become heavily laden with moral prescripts [...] ». See also MARGARET C. JACOB, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2006. For comparative purposes, it may be helpful to read the investigation of the cosmopolitan community formed by local groups and foreign nations, in Mamluk Alexandria. See GEORG CHRIST, « The Venetian Consul and the Cosmopolitan Mercantile Community of Alexandria at the Beginning of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century », *Al-Masāq*, 26/1 (2014), p. 62–77.

way for thinking about how his views – or those of many others like him – may have left a mark on those he contacted. A second section continues the focus on history of ideas, perceptions and culture and concentrates on Ragusa, a major hub for Ottoman commerce (in which local Jews played an intensive role) given its location in the transport system. It is also defined as a ‘window’ to European culture, arts and literature for the Ottomans. In our reading, we try to show the possibility of the presence of traditional (Hispano-)Jewish motifs in the literary work of a renowned Ragusan neo-Latin, humanist poet who returns openly to his Jewish roots in that republic. The third case, that of Ottoman Cairo, continues in this history of reading and attitudes by treating the original discoveries in the Geniza of printed *aljamiado* transcriptions of Spanish literary works in a humanist mode. The last section, still centered on Ottoman Cairo, refers to a phenomenon which stands at the intersection of the Renaissance interest in the material vestiges of ancient civilizations but also of trade, medicine and law/halakha.

### I. Conviviality, Humanism and Istanbul Jewry

The Jews roast the large liver of the fattened goose as follows: They place it on a double sheet of paper, add a little goose fat from the parson’s nose, put it on a grate over a small flame and warm ash, and turn it there once or twice until it is firm. But you couldn’t salt them. Then they put goose fat in a pan as needed, put the liver in it and fried them on both sides so that they didn’t dry. They also added cinnamon bark and cloves to it. When the liver was juicy and it didn’t get too dry it was a good meal.<sup>5</sup>

Hans Dernschwam’s instructions for preparing grilled and fried goose liver are not out of character. The traveler in the Ottoman Empire (ca. 1553–5) conforms in this passage to a number of tendencies in his travel diary, in his culture and, more generally, in that of his age. This is not the only gastronomic item in the *Tagebuch*. His travel diary provides various recipes for ‘czorba’ (soup/stew).<sup>6</sup> He is

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<sup>5</sup> HANS DERNSCHWAM, *Ein Fugger-Kaufmann im Osmanischen Reich: Bericht von einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien 1553–1555 von Hans Dernschwam; mit einem Epigraphischen Anhang von Patrick Breternitz und Werner Eck*, eds. HANS HATTENHAUER und UWE BAKE, Peter Lang, Bern 2012 [Henceforward: *Tagebuch*], p 157. See also *Hans Dernschwam’s orientalische Reise, 1553–1555 aus Handschriften im Auszuge mitgeteilt* von HEINRICH KIEPERT, Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, Braunschweig 1887. RALF C. MÜLLER, *Prosopographie der Reisenden und Migranten ins Osmanische Reich (1396–1611): Berichterstatter aus dem Heiligen Römischen Reich, ausser burgundische Gebiete und Reichsromania*, 10 vols., Eudora-Verlag, Leipzig 2006, vol. II, p. 199–220. Still useful is NATHAN PORGES, « Notizen aus Dernschwams Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel (1553/55) », *Monatsschrift Für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 68/7–9 (1924), p. 241–248.

<sup>6</sup> On food in the writings of sixteenth century travelers see for example CLAUDIA RÖMER, « Zu Hans Dernschwams Betrachtungen über Gartenbau und Landwirtschaft bei den Osmanen (1553 und

particularly interested in the chicken stalls in the Istanbul market and describes the Jewish chicken section in detail.<sup>7</sup> He goes as far as to inform the readers about the payment to the slaughterers per individual chicken (3 Mangurn, where 24 equal one asper). He is interested in Jewish *schmalz*.

As a merchant, he is interested in various aspects of food: prices, transport, religion. As this does not seem to be one of the conventional themes of sixteenth-century Ottoman Jewish history studies, it may need some elaboration. That means attending to sixteenth-century perceptions. In broad terms, the interest in food and the decorum or legitimacy of writing about food is part of the period following Bartolomeo Platina, whose *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* [On honest indulgence and good health], was the first cookbook to be printed. *De honesta voluptate* presented itself not only as a work about health but more as a cookbook with – humanist driven – roots in ancient Roman texts (Apicius, Varro, Columela,

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1555) », *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 100 (2010), p. 159–176; VIRGÍNIA SOARES PEREIRA, « Plantas de uso terapêutico e alimentar em Amato Lusitano e Diogo Pires », in *Humanismo, diáspora e ciência, séculos XVI e XVII*, Universidade de Aveiro-Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, Porto 2013, p. 313–326. Heyd has clearly shown how a Portuguese Jew – Don Manuel Brudo, often called Brudus Lusitanus –, in mid-sixteenth-century Istanbul, writes a work of gerontology with numerous references to food. It is a practical manual for the guidance of aged men, apparently the Sultan himself. Following the advice of Pliny, « the Roman scholar and Greek philosopher », the author gifts his treatise to the Ottoman ruler, but does not mention him by name. He also refers frequently to Galen. Other ancient Greek authorities cited are Plato, Aristotle, Diocles (of Carystos), Dioscorides. In addition, the author also refers to several other writers of antiquity, such as Juvenal and Homer. The latter's book on 'the Trojan war' is quoted to show that, in physical strength, present-day men are much inferior to the ancients. See the illuminating work of URIEL HEYD, « An Unknown Turkish Treatise by a Jewish Physician Under Süleymān The Magnificent », *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies*, 7 (1964), p. 48–53. Brudo was also the author of a work on food. Conrad Gessner, the Swiss humanist (1516–1565) admired him and tried to edit the work on dietetics of this Istanbul Jew. Johannes Crato von Krafftheim (1519–85), the German humanist and court physician to three Roman Emperors was the recipient of a letter on medicine in the Ottoman Empire in which Brudus Lusitanus of Istanbul is praised. Brudus was still alive in the 1580s. He is said to have been a physician of the Sultan Murad III's mother, and also a merchant and a Rabbi. See, apart from the works of C. Roth and Friedenwald cited by Heyd, ANTÓNIO MANUEL LOPES ANDRADE, « Conrad Gessner Edits Brudus Lusitanus. The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing a Sixteenth Century Treatise on Dietetics », *Portuguese Jews, New Christians, and 'New Jews': A Tribute to Roberto Bachmann*, Brill, Leiden 2018, p. 189–205. Recently, attention has been drawn to food items in a pharmacological work also composed in Constantinople. The author was Jacob Catalano, who belonged to the circles of Moses Almosnino and Šelomó Alhanat. He finished it « in the house of the Prince, the Duke, don Joseph Nassi ». It is entitled *Séfer ha-refuot w-segulot*. It has been shown that this Ottoman work is indebted to the physician of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, the humanist Andres de Laguna. See ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Acercamiento al círculo de Belvedere: temas para el estudio del Ben Porat Yosef (Constantinopla 1577) », in *Actas del XVIII Congreso de Estudios Sefardíes*, CSIC, Madrid 2017, p. 107–134.

<sup>7</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 130.

Pliny).<sup>8</sup> Such ancient Roman texts would not have been foreign to Dernschwam (who had spent time in Rome) or to other sixteenth-century humanist readers.

No less clear in Hans Dernschwam's age is the expression of attitudes to food in the visual arts. From at least the fifteenth century, European painters turned to fruits, desserts, or wine containers in both religious and secular images. These subjects testify to the artists' and contemporaries' keen observation of color, shape, and texture. They also often carried a symbolic meaning. By the sixteenth century, food paintings come into their own. Their message, like Hans Dernschwam's, is not purely dietary or gastronomic.<sup>9</sup>

Late fourteenth- to sixteenth-century texts were concerned with the connections between cultural/regional identities and food. Similarly, *etopeia*, the construction of characters in literary works, is also related to food.<sup>10</sup> The literary use of food as marker of religion and ethnicity – particularly Jewish religion and ethnicity – has been studied elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Hans Dernschwam's attention to precise Turkish or Jewish alimentation and recipes of ca. 1554 has closer analogues in the writings of those decades. Their links to the humanist concern with the classics, i.e., the Greco-Roman attitudes, has been thoroughly proven and studied.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ANNALISA CERON, « A Humanist in the kitchen. Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* », *Doctor Virtualis*, 13 (2016), p. 39–61.

<sup>9</sup> The realism of Jacopo de' Barbari's, (1504) *Still-Life with Partridge and Gauntlets* evinces a focus on – and acute observation of – food. The religious message is evident in Joachim Beuckelaer's (1533–1575), *Kitchen Scene, with Jesus in the House of Martha and Mary in the Background* (1566) or Pieter Aertsen's *A Meat Stall with the Holy Family Giving Alms* (1551). The modest *Peasants Eating a Dish of Beans* (1583–1584) by Annibale Carracci differs from the lavish banquet of the *Wedding at Cana* (1562–1563) by Paolo Veronese; they all attest to the early modern link between food and character, religion or social standing. For other aspects see, for example, JOHN L. VARRIANO, *Tastes and Temptations: Food and Art in Renaissance Italy*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The impression is that Golden Age Spanish literature stands out in this respect. Lope, Cervantes, Góngora, Tirso, Calderón, Quevedo and others are a small cross-section of examples, by influential literary masters, of the early modern European concern with food as sign of character. MARIO GARCÍA-PAGE SÁNCHEZ & CARMEN ÍMAZ AZCONA, « Contigo, pan y cebolla. Pautas para el estudio del léxico y la fraseología de la comida y la bebida en España », in ANĐELKA PEJOVIĆ, MIRJANA SEKULIĆ, VLADIMIR KARANOVIĆ (eds.), *Comida y bebida en la lengua española, cultura y literaturas hispánicas*, Facultad de Filología y Artes-Universidad de Kragujevac, Kragujevac 2012, p. 133–156.

<sup>11</sup> It is particularly clear in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century literary texts referring to Jewish food customs such as the *Epitalamio* by Cota (1470s) and Delicado's *Lozana* (1520s). See ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Inquisition, Theology and the Realism of *La Lozana Andaluza* », in STEPHAN WENDEHORST (ed.), *The Roman Inquisition, the Index and the Jews: Contexts, Sources and Perspectives*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2004, p. 71–106; ID., « On the Background to Cota's 'Epitalamio Burlesco' », *Romanische Forschungen*, 97/1 (1985), p. 1–14.

<sup>12</sup> Dernschwam's positive evaluation of « Jewish food » contrasts with the roughly contemporary, rather negative, evaluation of Turkish food by the traveler Nicolas de Nicolay, Sieur d'Arfeville & de Belair, (1517–1583). It may be said to have a precedent in the medieval positive evaluation by an anonymous Christian author (or translator) of a recipe for *haroset*. On Nicholay's attack and

Antonio de Guevara, bishop of Mondoñedo, writes in one of his letters (number ten) about a religious polemic he claims to have held with Jews in Naples.<sup>13</sup> The fantasist believes Jews would drink the bishop's Mallorcan wine as he believes the public would accept his 'renderings' of Hebrew and Aramaic in another epistle. The 'anecdote' about the role of food in the religious disputation is incongruous in that specific text, unless Guevara is claiming (by implication) that Jewish arguments are as light as Jewish *pâte feuilletée*, while his own are as strong and noble as Mallorcan wine. Food, then, becomes one more component of the Judeo-Christian polemic. Amatus Lusitanus produces a more sustained reference to Jewish food habits in his cure of Azaria de' Rossi. Here he ascribes Jewish melancholy to gastronomic peculiarities.<sup>14</sup>

Hans Dernschwam's humanism expressed itself directly in his antiquarianism, i.e., in numismatic and epigraphic research emulating that of contemporary Italian antiquarians. But his collection of recipes is also recognizably a part of post-Platina culture. His discussion of wines, written in Istanbul – arguably echoing Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, Book 14 – reveals an interest which borders on passion. We read not only about the taste, bouquet, texture, color, containers and additives but also about nostalgia for another age and other wines, those of the time of Ladislaus (Ladislaus the Posthumous, King of Hungary) and Ludwig (Ludwig II King of Hungary and Croatia).<sup>15</sup> Dernschwam compares Greek wine merchants in Constantinople who dilute their wine with water to Jewish wine merchants who do not. Religion is not absent from his musings on Turkish customs concerning wine. It could be argued that the relatively lengthy space devoted to a description of the Jews of Constantinople is a concomitant of his writing on wine. The diary's style is associative, almost to the point of reminding the modern reader of the 'stream of consciousness' mode and reveals to the reader his train of thought.<sup>16</sup> It is while discussing wine and wine merchants that he writes about

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denigration of Turkish food see ERIC R. DURSTELER, « Bad Bread and the 'Outrageous Drunkenness of the Turks': Food and Identity in the Accounts of Early Modern European Travelers to the Ottoman Empire », *Journal of World History*, 25/2–3 (2014), p. 203–228, who sees a direct link between Nicholay's humanism and his views on food and identity which he traces to ancient Greco-Roman attitudes. For the anonymous medieval text on Jewish food (haroset) see ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « The Judeo-Christian Polemic and the Intelligence of Emotions », *Medieval Encounters*, 22/1–3 (2016), p. 266–286.

<sup>13</sup> *Epístolas familiares* (Valladolid, 1539) number ten. Its rubric is « Letra para un Judío de Nápoles, sobre una disputa que hubo con el autor ». He asserts that « [...] apostamos entre tí y mi una hojaldre judáica y una pinta de vino de Soma ».

<sup>14</sup> ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Jewish Bodies and Renaissance Melancholy: Culture and the City in Italy and the Ottoman Empire », in GIUSEPPE VELTRI, MARIA DIEMLING (eds.), *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period*, Brill, Leiden 2009, p. 57–92.

<sup>15</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, immediately following the instructions for goose liver, which include a reference to goose fat, he embarks on a description of a fire in Istanbul caused by animal fat.

Jewish wines and commerce and from there he proceeds to write more generally about the Jews of Constantinople, leading to the passages which have become so well known thanks to Marcus' very select sample of translations.<sup>17</sup> His musings on place and wine have a counterpart in his writing on place and Jews.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear to his readers, from his style, that as a Christian European in Istanbul, Hans Dernschwam will have perceived the liver recipe as doubly exotic: it was found in Istanbul and it was Jewish. Thanks to recent historical research we are aware now that the search for exotic food in this period was related to the pursuit and assertion of superior social status. It has been concretely evidenced and discussed in the case of noble courts in Renaissance Italy which showed their standing, in part, through exotic foods. The Este rulers of Ferrara were known for banquets in which luxury spices were added to the food and confirmed the family's high status among Italian nobility. As Ghirardo notes: « Water buffaloes and rice both arrived at court via Mediterranean waters in the late fifteenth century, the former as a producer of cheese for the two most famous duchesses, Eleonora d'Aragona and Lucrezia Borgia, while the latter soon lost its status as a rarity unless garnished with rare and expensive spices brought through the port of Venice ».<sup>19</sup>

As is obvious to his readers and has been occasionally noted, Hans Dernschwam expresses stereotype and prejudice. Many of his remarks on the Ottoman Jews reveal misunderstandings about Judaism and Islam. My example would be that he writes about the 'Green Hats' of Istanbul and thinks them analogous to Inquisitors and to Cohanim.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes his stories are only too recognizable as antagonistic religious polemics or grisly tall tales. Nevertheless, alongside these, there are descriptions and data which are frequently used by modern authors as a matter of course, whatever their accuracy.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the question of travelers' sources of information is legitimately raised and dealt with by historians analyzing travel accounts of this period, particularly Europeans who travel to the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>17</sup> JACOB RADER MARCUS, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book 315-1791*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Cincinnati 1938.

<sup>18</sup> On the Salonikan Moses Almosnino's sustained writing in Judeo-Spanish on wines in 1567, see ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « *Acutissima patria*: Locating Texts before and after the Expulsions », *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, 8 (2011), p. 19-38, p. 36, note 54.

<sup>19</sup> DIANE GHIRARDO, « Mediterranean Pathways: Exotic Flora, Fauna and Food in Renaissance Ferrara », *California Italian Studies*, 1/1 (2010), p. 1-11.

<sup>20</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 104-105.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Roth's *Dona Gracia and Duke of Naxos*. Dernschwam is a frequently used source in these classics. YARON BEN-NAEH, GIACOMO SABAN, « Three German Travelers on Istanbul Jews », *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 12/1 (2013), p. 35-51.

or the Mediterranean.<sup>22</sup> One of the problems is the travelers' lack of linguistic skills, particularly knowledge of Turkish. While describing a formal visit to the court, Dernschwam mentions that they were accompanied by two dragomans, one of whom was a Pole.<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere he mentions that the Pole converted to Islam and is now called Ibrahim.<sup>24</sup> Occasionally the travelers are vindicated:

A content analysis of the Leiden Sketchbook (1577–85) addresses [...] how a stereotype of an Ottoman town was created by sixteenth-century travelers [...]. The comparison of visual sources with travelogues and historiography confirms the historicity and trustworthiness of the drawings. The drawings are revealing when interpreted in the context of the approach of historical anthropology: they illustrate the travelogues and testify to the sensual experience of their author.<sup>25</sup>

At other times their writings emphasize – for the modern analysts – their limitations. A specific case in point is that of the study of transport. The dearth of references to it in the travel accounts is:

[...] surprising, considering that caravans were a phenomenon easily observable also by European travelers. But most of the latter seem to have taken the existence of caravans for granted and record few details about their functioning. *Moreover, since travelers who did not speak Turkish had to rely upon middlemen to hire their camels for them, it is perhaps understandable that so few travel accounts contain any information about the costs involved in camel transportation. Concerning the use of wagons, even fewer European travelers have anything to report, with the exception of Hans Dernschwam, the ethnocentric but technically observant former employee of the Fuggers [...]*<sup>26</sup>

The question of sources touches also on his humanist antiquarianism. He sometimes implies that the local population is completely ignorant of these

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<sup>22</sup> For discussions à la Braudel on Mediterranean unity and difference according to sources of the type discussed here and evidence which is relevant to the subject of Ottoman Jews, see for example ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Tres calas en la literatura de viajes (ss xv–xvi) », in TANIA M. GARCÍA ARÉVALO (ed.), *Viajes a tierra Santa: Navegación y puertos en los relatos de viajes judíos, cristianos y musulmanes (siglos XII–XVII)*, Universidad, Granada 2015, p. 67–90; ID., « Sephardi Culture of the 'Cairo Genizah People': (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries) », *Michael*, 14 (1997), p. 9–34. NATALIE ROTHMAN, « Dragomans and 'Turkish Literature': The Making of a Field of Inquiry », *Oriente Moderno*, 93/2 (2013), p. 390–421.

<sup>23</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 40–41.

<sup>24</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> LUDÁ KLUSÁKOVÁ, « Between Reality and Stereotype: Town Views of the Balkans », *Urban History*, 28/3, (2001), p. 358–377.

<sup>26</sup> SURAIYA FAROQHI, « Camels, Wagons, and the Ottoman State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries », *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14/4 (1982), p. 523–539.



concerns.<sup>27</sup> Fouquet believes that a source of his remarks on, for example, the sources of water in Constantinople was oral information received during the travels. According to Fouquet, the local population served as an important source of information *for everything relating to antiquity*, i.e., for everything relating to humanist antiquarian topics.<sup>28</sup> Although Dernschwam's curiosity and focus are his own, following his humanist education and cultural environment, it is clear that he depended on the locals for knowledge of particular humanist concerns such as e.g., the topography of ancient monuments, inscriptions and coins. That is to say that before Hans Dernschwam there were locals who knew about and remembered relevant themes of Renaissance humanism such as the existence of antiquities, inscriptions, coins, monuments and other objects of interest to humanist antiquarians and their location in the places he visited. It has been pointed out that early modern Ottoman Turks were no strangers to such concerns of the humanists as Troy, Homer and Homeric epic.<sup>29</sup> This in no way represents an undervaluing of the humanist scholarship needed to identify antiquities, whether erroneously or otherwise, which was Hans Dernschwam's own contribution. When discussing the Jewish beliefs about the river Sambation, he mentions Pliny and Josephus in passing, as if a matter of course.<sup>30</sup>

At times, Dernschwam insinuates or refers obliquely to his sources. This would be the case with his 'demographic' data:

Countless number of Jews live in Turkey, who differ in nationality and language, but irrespective of their mother tongues, they stick together. And regardless of which country they have been expelled from, they all gather in Turkey, [...]. They almost fill Constantinople; they swarm like ants. *The Jews themselves talk about how many they are [...].* The Jews tease us, because the Turks cannot arrest them or carry them off as slaves and sell them. But they consider it a miracle that after the fall of Buda, the local Jews were moved there by the Turks, and instead of being sold as slaves, they were let go free; all they had to do was to pay taxes. Had they sold the Jews of Buda,

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<sup>27</sup> JOHANNES FOUQUET, « Der Humanist und Fuggerfaktor Hans Dernschwam auf einer Reise ins innere Kleinasien », in JOHANNES FOUQUET ET AL. (eds.), *Argonautica. Festschrift für Reinhard Stupperich zum 65. Geburtstag*, Scriptorium, Münster 2019, p. 325–336.

<sup>28</sup> FOUQUET, « Der Humanist und Fuggerfaktor Hans Dernschwam auf einer Reise ins innere Kleinasien », p. 329.

<sup>29</sup> NECİPOĞLU, GÜLRU, « Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople », *Muqarnas*, 29 (2012), p. 1–81; GÜNAY USLU, « Homer and Troy in Ottoman Literature: An Overview », in *Homer, Troy and the Turks*, University Press, Amsterdam 2017, p. 137–166.

<sup>30</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 143.

it would have caused the total financial collapse of the Turkish Jews, because they – according to tradition – would have had to ransom their coreligionists.<sup>31</sup>

Here Dernschwam himself tells us about the source of his data on the Jewish population of Constantinople. It was not the product of his own ‘field work’ or ‘keen observation’: « [...] *The Jews themselves talk* about how many they are [...]. *The Jews tease us*, because the Turks cannot arrest them [...]. But *they consider* it a miracle [...] ». That is to say, the traveler’s knowledge comes probably from conversations (in German or Hungarian?) with Jews in Istanbul. Elsewhere he mentions that he was often visited in Istanbul by a Jew named Samuel from Cracow.<sup>32</sup> He talked to physicians and says – without specifying whether they were Ashkenazi or Sephardi or Romaniote – that they only knew Hebrew or Arabic.<sup>33</sup> He implies that he bought wine daily from Jews during the more than a year and a half of his residence in Istanbul. He speaks of a Jew named Joseph who was « *sunst ein gutter frolicher zechbruder* » [a good joyful drinking companion] and who frequently visited him in Constantinople. He knows how the Jews of Constantinople name Doña Gracia ‘Señora’ in Spanish. He writes that he knows about (the Spanish and Portuguese speaker) don Joseph Nassi because he is informed by Jews who are in daily contact with don Joseph.<sup>34</sup> Evidently, he had encounters with the Jews of Istanbul. That is to say that local Jews and others communicated with the humanist travelers whose numbers were increasing notably in the sixteenth century. Like the liver recipe, or the passages about Jews and wine or chickens, what we read as authored by Dernschwam is sometimes, in practice, his rendering of sixteenth-century Ottoman Jewish views and voices. We know what Dernschwam asked the Jews, but little attention has been paid to what they may have asked him. That is to say that, as in any encounter or conversation, information or values are transmitted both ways. The evidence found shows the Christian European humanist engaged in encounters, visits, conversations, transactions, conviviality and communications with Constantinople Jews in the mid sixteenth century. Such evidence paves the way for the question whether the numerous humanist travelers had an impact on Ottoman Jewish culture.

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<sup>31</sup> Hungarian Jews settled also in Sofia, Kavala, Vidin, and Thessaloniki. See also MARIANNA D. BIRNBAUM, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes*, Central European University Press, Budapest – New York 2003, p. 38 for the translation of this passage.

<sup>32</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 149.

<sup>33</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 152.

<sup>34</sup> *Tagebuch*, p. 155.

II. *Didacus Pyrrhus:*

*Jewish textual traditions, Neo-Latin Culture and Images in Ragusa and Beyond*

The centrality of Constantinople in Hans Dernschwam's account does not at all imply that his travel was limited to that city.<sup>35</sup> Nor (despite appearances) was the history of the Ottoman Empire and its Jews limited to Istanbul. Two additional cases may be examined here: Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik), an Ottoman tributary since 1458, and Cairo, Ottoman since 1517. While no one would argue that Cairo and the Ragusan Republic (or city-state) are identical, both places are in the Ottoman orbit.<sup>36</sup> In both we find traces of a cosmopolitan,<sup>37</sup> humanist culture. According to Gülru Necipoğlu, who studies the cosmopolitanism of the Ottomans, « the city-state of Ragusa », which began to pay the Ottoman court an annual tribute after 1458, functioned as an « open window to the West », supplying books and objects, including « images », that were ordered on occasion for the sultan and his « intimates ». It is clear to her that Ragusa is relevant to Ottoman history and culture.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the Jews, the recent discovery of Rivka Havassi reinforces our perspective and gives us a clearer idea of early modern Ragusan Sephardi culture. This may be inferred from the Ragusa manuscript studied by her. It contains Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish poems but also elements of a Jewish Ottoman character such as a bilingual Hebrew-Turkish piyyut/liturgical poem or the addition of the relevant makam in the rubric to some of the poems.<sup>39</sup>

The case of Ragusa in the sixteenth century takes us to the personality and ideas of Isaiah Cohen/Diogo Pires/Didacus Pyrrhus. Locale and culture are closely

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<sup>35</sup> For his extensive travels see e.g., STÉPHANE YERASIMOS, *Les voyageurs dans l'Empire Ottoman, XIVe-XVIIe siècles: Bibliographie, itinéraires et inventaire des lieux habités*, Société turque d'histoire, Ankara 1991, p. 230–233.

<sup>36</sup> See RIVKA HAVASSY, « MS JTS from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), 1752: An Unknown Source of Judeo-Spanish Traditional Poetry », in ELENA ROMERO (ed.), *Actas del XVIII Congreso de Estudios Sefardies*, CSIC, Madrid 2017, p. 135–157, at 139–140. BARIŠA KREKIĆ, « Gli ebrei a Ragusa nel Cinquecento », in GAETANO COZZI (ed.), *Gli Ebrei e Venezia: secoli XIV–XVIII*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milan 1987, p. 835–844.

<sup>37</sup> For cosmopolitanism in this period see RHOADS MURPHEY, « Bigots or Informed Observers? A Periodization of Pre-Colonial English and European Writing on the Middle East », *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110/2 (1990), p. 291–303. ID., « Ottoman Medicine and Transculturalism from the Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Century », *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 66/3 (1992), p. 376–403; GÜLRU NECİPOĞLU, « Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople », *Muqarnas*, 29 (2012), p. 1–81.

<sup>38</sup> See also BENEDETTO LIGORIO, « Primi studi sull'apporto degli ebrei all'economia della Repubblica di Ragusa », *Atti e Memorie della Società dalmata di Storia patria*, 5 (2016), p. 31–50.

<sup>39</sup> See the reference to Havassi above.

associated in his Neo-Latin work.<sup>40</sup> Tucker has referred to the « espaces de l'identité religieuse juive-chrétienne ».<sup>41</sup> In his anthology, Andre<sup>42</sup> chooses poems which fully confirm this: he gives « um maior relevo aos poemas que tratam aspectos relacionados com Ragusa » [A greater attention to aspects related to Ragusa]. Description of the port city, praise of illustrious Ragusan families, praise of its peace and laws, felicitations for the publication of a history of the Slavs, compliments to a female poet, Cvjeta Zuzorié (Floria, 'Gallica Sappho'), all subjects of his poetry, fully confirm this link between poetry and location.

Isaiah/Diogo's inspiration in Tibullus when writing about the death of his mother or composing an epitaph for his (by then Ottoman) compatriot, Amatus Lusitanus, is only one of the ways in which his humanism is made visible, as is his composition of an epitaph for his own tomb – compared by Tucker with that of Erasmus. His Jewish identity as Isaiah Cohen during the long and final stay in Ragusa (1558–1599) was expressed in a number of ways: his name, the way he signed his letters, his testament, his burial.

Recent work has discovered a manuscript codex at the Folger Library containing his poems.<sup>43</sup> A noteworthy and relevant poem in it is dedicated *Ad Micas fratres*. It is undated, although it is surmised that it belongs to Cohen/Didaco's Italian phase. That is to say, a brief period before the *Micas fratres* became an Ottoman/Istanbul fixture. At the same time, renewed attention to an Ottoman/Istanbul work (*Ben Porat Yosef*) ascribed to one of his nephews, the *Micas fratres*, the Ottoman resident Joao Micas/Joseph Nassi (of Constantinople) brought into relief various aspects of the latter's image.<sup>44</sup> The genre of the panegyric, to which Isaiah Cohen's newly discovered poem to the Micas brothers belongs, was crucial in the enterprise of understanding the *Ben Porat Yosef* ascribed to Micas of Constantinople. Isaiah Cohen's poem to his nephews, *Ad Micas fratres*, with its assertion of friendship and admiration is also an expression of identity, given the parallel circumstances of both – uncle and nephews – biographies. They were

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<sup>40</sup> DRAŽEN BUDIŠA, « Humanism in Croatia », in ALBERT RABIL (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. II, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1988, p. 265–292. ANTONIO MANUEL LOPES ANDRADE, *O 'Cato minor' de Diogo Pires e a poesia didáctica do século XVI*, Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro 2005.

<sup>41</sup> GEORGE HUGO TUCKER, « De Ferrare à Raguse: chemins et espaces de l'exil, chemins et espaces de l'identité religieuse (juive et chrétienne) », in JEAN BALSAMO, CHIARA LASTRAIOLI (eds.), *Chemins de l'exil, havres de paix. Migrations d'hommes et d'idées au XVIIe siècle*, Publications du Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Paris 2010, p. 305–330.

<sup>42</sup> CARLOS ASCENSO ANDRÉ, *Um judeu no desterro: Diogo Pires e a memória de Portugal*, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, Coimbra 1992.

<sup>43</sup> TOBIAS LEUKER, « Poemas de Diogo Pires en un códice de Washington (con una edición comentada de los versos 'Ad Micas fratres') », *Humanística lovaniensia: Journal of Neo-Latin Studies*, 64 (2015), p. 97–111.

<sup>44</sup> ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Acercamiento al círculo de Belvedere: Para el estudio del Ben Porat Yosef (Constantinopla 1577) », in ELENA ROMERO (ed.), *Actas del XVIII Congreso de Estudios Sefardíes*, CSIC, Madrid 2017, p. 107–134.

Iberians, born in Portugal, exiles who escaped the Portuguese Inquisition, Louvain students, spent time in Western Europe and Italy and later found themselves in the Ottoman Empire, where Didacus/Isaiah Cohen's Micas nephews returned to Judaism. The *Ben Porat Yosef* (Constantinople 1577) – ascribed to Joao Micas/Yosef Nassi/Duke of Naxos – is presented as the result of his contacts with Italians in Istanbul. It has been recently seen as a work which evinces elements of humanism such as (to adduce only one) the contemporary Christian Hebraists' focus on theurgy – Divine and angelic 'names'. The comparison of the two Micas brothers, Cohen's nephews, to the Dioscurides in the Folger manuscript poem has attracted the attention of Neo-Latin scholarship. It has been announced as « un hapax en la producción de Didacus y en la poesía humanística ». <sup>45</sup> The hapax is even more remarkable once we realize that most of the sixteenth-century mentions of Joao Micas do not refer to his brother. There are some exceptions. Two are from near the mid-century: 1549 and 1552. A document listed under *Secreta* found by Rose (in the Archivio di Stato, Venezia, Consiglio dei Dieci, Criminali) reveals the intentions of the Council to prosecute Joao and his brother in 1549. Ortensio Lando's *Due Panegirici* published by Gabriel Giolito in Venice bears the date 1552. <sup>46</sup> Lando, Dernschwam, Isaiah, Yocef and Shmuel exhibit a common sensibility or esthetic rooted in the culture of the return to the ancient Roman sources.

The Folger poem mentions the dangers of the sea: they are termed, by the poet, the threat, the iron, the fire, and the constraints of the Spanish tyrant. In the body of the poem, as explained by Tobias Leuker, Didacus refers to the Jews persecuted by Spain, lamenting the fate of the Sephardim and invoking God and the Micas brothers. The verses are also interesting because of their relative transparency about the crypto-Jewish group's Jewish identities. Pires formulates in poetic (Greco-Roman) classical terms a non-poetic situation. He gives the group a way of thinking about themselves. The concept is both Jewish and humanist. The main image cluster is that of an anthropomorphic ship in a storm searching for a port. Leaving aside the (later?) *fortuna in porto* emblems, we might wish to place this cluster at the intersection of trends and traditions which are humanist, Iberian and Jewish.

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<sup>45</sup> GUTWIRTH, « Acercamiento al círculo de Belvedere: Para el estudio del Ben Porat Yosef (Constantinople 1577) ».

<sup>46</sup> CONSTANCE HUBBARD ROSE, *Alonso Núñez de Reinoso: The Lament of a Sixteenth-Century Exile*, Dickinson University Press, Fairleigh, NJ 1971. Another reference occurs in Almosnino's *Treatise on Dreams*: « veía a vuessa merced assentado en una silla muy rica. Y de la otra parte estaba el señor don Xemuél su ermano en otra (silla también muy rica) ». By the 1560s they were no longer 'Micas'. See PILAR ROMEU FERRÉ, « El sueño premonitorio de Moisés Almosnino sobre Yosef Nasí en el Tratado de los sueños (Salónica 1564) », *Sefarad*, 64 (2004), p. 159–193.

To be sure, the formula is not unique to conversos. Canfora<sup>47</sup> studies the topics of Poggio's *De infelicitate principum* and the humanist's use of sources including the topic of the port. He gives various examples of the image in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanist texts and sees Cicero's *De Senectute* – with its notion of human life as a ship reaching port with death – as a prime antecedent.

*Molesta el ponto Bóreas con tumultos cerúleos y espumosos [...]* is the incipit of a sonnet by Quevedo. Smith's analysis shows in detail the Greco-Roman classical, and also the contemporary, early modern, resonances. The ship in the storm is one of the most frequent of lyric topoi employed by Quevedo and his chronologically closer antecedents.<sup>48</sup> Smith also points to precedents such as Horace's *Odes*, a political interpretation by Quintilian, and, most remarkably, Lucan. Once the implications of such studies are understood, we can reinterpret and appreciate the full significance of Rose's remarks about the frequency of these images in Alonso Núñez de Reinoso's *Isea* (Venice 1552), believed to be an allegory about Doña Gracia and her entourage. She compares it to their recurrent appearance in Usque's *Consolation to the tribulations of the people of Israel* (Ferrara: Usque, 1553).<sup>49</sup>

While the images appear in a Byzantine novel in Castilian, a pastoral chronicle in Portuguese, and in Neo Latin poetry, i.e., in literary creations by Reinoso, Usque, and Pyrrhus/Isaiah, the full expression of the conceit is visual. It appears in the frontispiece of the Jewish Ferrara Bible – with Haphtarot in some copies – of 1553. It might be pointed out, incidentally, that recent research amongst the Genizah fragments at the John Rylands suggests that the Ferrara Bible was being read by Hispanophone Jews in Ottoman Cairo. The Bible was dedicated to Doña Gracia, by then a resident of Ottoman Constantinople.

The picture in the frontispiece of the Ferrara Bible still needs to be fully described: it consists of a scroll within which there is the shape of a heraldic shield flanked by cornucopias. At the top of the scroll there is a Neptune-like figure. On the sides, two visible asymmetric faces in profile seem to stand for the winds. It may be recalled that the more salient Latinate *cultismos* in the Castilian Spanish of the *Biblia de Ferrara* are the names of the winds. Inside the shield there is a deserted galleon with one broken mast tossed in a stormy sea.<sup>50</sup> The broken mast evokes the broken staff in representations of *Synagoga* in medieval sculptures, ivories or oil

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<sup>47</sup> DAVIDE CANFORA, « La topica del 'Principe' e l'uso umanistico delle fonti in Poggio Bracciolini », *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 45 (1996) p. 1–92, especially p. 72 and note 229 on 'portus tranquillus'.

<sup>48</sup> PAUL JULIAN SMITH, *Quevedo on Parnassus*, MHRA, London 1987, p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> CONSTANCE HUBBARD ROSE, *Alonso Núñez de Reinoso: The Lament of a Sixteenth-Century Exile*, Dickinson University Press, Fairleigh, NJ 1971.

<sup>50</sup> See *Pharsalia*: « Just as, when the stormy south wind has repulsed from the Libyan Syrtes the boundless ocean, and the broken mass of the sail-bearing mast has sent forth its crash, and the pilot, the ship deserted, leaps into the waves, the seaman, too, and thus, the structure of the vessel not yet torn asunder, each one makes a shipwreck for himself ». *The Pharsalia of Lucan*, ed. by HENRY T. RILEY, George Bell, London 1903, p. 32.

paintings. Two sea creatures are engrossed in observing the scene.<sup>51</sup> Another mast is unbroken and holds, at the top, a sphere which is neither an astrolabe nor a terrestrial globe – as is sometimes imagined – but an armillary sphere. This is the one element which the printer and editor, Abraham Usque, would single out of the whole representation as his own chosen printer's mark in other books printed by him, such as the recently discovered edition of the *Spanish Psalter* by Abraham Usque (Ferrara 1554)<sup>52</sup> amongst many other Hebrew and Spanish works. It is therefore worth noting as an icon of an early modern Jewish publisher's identity. The anchor constitutes its base (in Abraham Usque's printer's device). The armillary sphere is associated with the royal heraldry of late medieval Portugal, the geographic origin of many or all of the members (such as Didacus/Isaiah) of the converso network surrounding Usque and the House of Nasi on their way to the Ottoman Empire. But as an exclusive explanation according to which Usque, lacking in any ideas of his own, simply imitated the emblem restricted to the royal house of Portugal, it is not fully satisfactory. Roth<sup>53</sup> could not have been aware of Roy Strong's and Jean Wilson's work<sup>54</sup> on the armillary sphere as an attribute of Queen Elizabeth I in her persona of Astrea or Urania. And yet the evidence assembled by art historians on the sixteenth-century ubiquity of the armillary sphere is overwhelming but absent from treatments of the mark/icon of the Usque Press. It is not inconceivable that this icon's text (« I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word *do I hope* » [Ps. 130:5]) is at the root of the centrality of *Esperanza* in the next century's book titles and in the thought of Menasse ben Israel. The hope for a safe port reappears elsewhere. In their dedication (1553) to the Duke of Ferrara, Hércules de Este, the printers of the *Biblia de Ferrara*, Vargas and Pinel, express their confidence that with his support they will be able to *navigate the tempestuous seas* stirred up by their detractors.

While the affinities with humanism have been studied and are perfectly evidenced standing out as they do in Didacus' output in Ragusa and Ferrara, there may be other – perhaps less visible – additional possibilities in the approach to his work. Isaiah Cohen's Jewish identity during his lifetime in Ragusa, as has been seen, is accepted by consensus. His lengthy presence in the Jewish community of Ragusa may lead us to search not only in his itinerary, his 'life' but also in texts.

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<sup>51</sup> One wonders whether they are dolphins, well known as rescuers of the shipwrecked as in stories about Arion, Taras or Telemachus or in Alciato's *Emblems*. BRUNILDE SISMONDO RIDGWAY, « Dolphins and Dolphin-Riders », *Archaeology*, 23/2 (1970), p. 86–95.

<sup>52</sup> ARON DI LEONE LEONI, « A Hitherto Unknown Edition of the Spanish Psalter by Abraham Usque (Ferrara 1554) », *Sefarad*, 61/1 (2001), p. 127–136.

<sup>53</sup> CECIL ROTH, « The Marrano Press at Ferrara, 1552–1555 », *The Modern Language Review*, 38/4 (1943), p. 307–317 discusses the frontispiece at p. 312 and, unlike some later references, correctly identifies the sphere.

<sup>54</sup> JEAN WILSON, « Queen Elizabeth I as Urania », *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 69 (2006), p. 151–173 and the bibliography in the notes.

That is to say, the texts which were part of the Jewish tradition, learning and culture at that time.

One example of such texts is the work of the exegete and philosopher Joseph ben David Ibn Yahya, (1494–1534), who was born in Florence. His Hebrew *Commentary* on Daniel was written in the territories of the D'Estes and published in Bologna in 1538. But his context is not purely Italian. His parents had fled to Italy from Portugal and, in his Prologues, he constructs a genealogical tree of Ibn Yahyas going back for about eleven generations, all of them in the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Portugal. It has been observed that in his *Commentary* on Daniel, Ibn Yahya develops the theme now known as the 'anxieties of the courtier', an ancient topos which could be traced back to the Talmud and medieval bible exegesis. It was still current in Moses Arragel's additions to his translation of the Bible (1422–33). But Ibn Yahya adds « that the life of the courtier is as dangerous as the ship in a stormy sea ». <sup>55</sup> Didacus/Isaiah Cohen employs the same motif in his Folger poem to the Micas brothers of Constantinople. It is also taken up by Reinoso, Samuel Usque and the text of the 'Dedication' of the Ferrara Bible and later, arguably, in the Salonikan Almosnino's *Extremos y grandezas*.

If we take the related motif of exile, we note that scholarship on Diogo <sup>56</sup> has seen it as a dominant theme in his output. The comparison to the classics (e.g., the *Odyssey*) and to the humanists (e.g., Erasmus) is solidly based on his Neo-Latin poetic formulations and the echoes of classical texts. But, behind or before these, there may have been a *decorum* manifested in his notions of poetic significance, or in his personal selections of poetic themes, genres, motifs. It might be helpful, therefore, to recall that there is a large corpus of writings on travel and exile in the Jewish tradition in general and the Hispano-Jewish one in particular. Discussions on the positive and negative aspects of exile and travel are present in both, Hebrew prose and poetry. Relevant Hispano-Jewish texts have been studied

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<sup>55</sup> ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Daniel 1/4 y las ansiedades del cortesano », in *III Simposio Bíblico Español y Luso-Espanhol*, Fundación Bíblica Española, Valencia – Lisbon 1991, p. 639–648.

<sup>56</sup> GEORGE HUGO TUCKER, « Joachim Du Bellay's Precursors and Contemporaries in Italy: Pietro Alcionio, Ortensio Landi, and Diogo Pires », in MARIE-FRANCE GINESTE, WOLFGANG KOFLER, ANNA NOVOKHATKO, GILLES POLIZZI (eds.), *Die neulateinische Dichtung in Frankreich zur Zeit der Pléiade*, Narr Verlag, Tübingen 2015, p. 293–317. GEORGE HUGO TUCKER, *Homo Viator: Itineraries of Exile, Displacement and Writing in Renaissance Europe*, Droz, Geneva 2003; CARLOS ASCENSO ANDRÉ, *Um judeu no desterro: Diogo Pires e a memória de Portugal*, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica-Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra 1992. GEORGE HUGO TUCKER, « Voix d'exil, voies divergentes chez deux Marranes portugais, Diogo Pires (1517–99) et João Rodrigues de Castelo Branco (1511–68) », *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 245 (1997), p. 33–49; ID., « To Louvain and Antwerp, and Beyond: The Contrasting Itineraries of Diogo Pires (Didacus Pyrrhus Lusitanus, 1517–99) and João Rodrigues de Castelo Branco (Amatus Lusitanus, 1511–68) », *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Studia*, 19 (1998), p. 83–113.



and show the currency of such meditations in the late Middle Ages.<sup>57</sup> In Pires' own century we have the case of the *Scepter of Judah-Shevet Yehuda*, printed in Ottoman Adrianopolis/Edirne in the mid-sixteenth century. Various attempts have been made at characterizing it, including its description as the first modern Jewish history book or as a compendium of folklore. More recently, however, another possibility has been raised. Indeed, there is a discrete type of writing which attracts intense attention and is known as 'exile literature'. The centrality of the question of exile in the *Shevet* would support a classification of this Hebrew prose chronicle, a major influence on early modern Jewish culture, in such terms.

The praise/dispraise of cities that we find in Didacus' work is also not absent in late medieval Hispano-Jewish texts. Bonafed's fifteenth-century invective against the community of Saragossa would be one example. The Iberian don Ishaq Abravanel's praise of Venice, Florence, Genoa, Lucca, Siena and Bologna<sup>58</sup> would be another. On another plane, we find it in the *Lozana Andaluza*. Recently, attention has been drawn to the category of exile in the works of Amatus Lusitanus. The invective against Queen Isabella in Didacus may also have antecedents in Abravanel and others.<sup>59</sup>

### III. Iberian Humanism in Ottoman Cairo

Elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, three discoveries of Spanish dramatic literature in Cairo may lead to a reassessment of Jewish culture there. A Hispano-Jewish presence and community/ies have been studied and found there even before the influx of exiles following the Iberian expulsions of the 1490s.<sup>60</sup> The three discoveries of fragments are, firstly, a manuscript page in Latin characters with the conventional 'with the help of God' (*be-'ezrat ha-shem*) in the upper right corner in Hebrew characters followed by the title of Torres Naharro's *Comedia Aquilana* (1524) in Latin characters. This seems to be the first page or frontispiece of a Latin character manuscript copy of the work made by a Jew. Secondly, a printed fragment in Hebrew characters identified as part of an aljamiado version/transcription of the *Comedia Aquilana*. And thirdly, printed fragments in Hebrew characters identified as parts of an aljamiado version/transcription of the *Tragedia Josefina* (1535) by Micael de Carvajal. The provenance of the first fragment

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<sup>57</sup> ELEAZAR GUTWIRTH, « Viajes y viajeros hispanojudíos en la Baja Edad Media », in JOSÉ LUIS HERNANDO, PEDRO LUIS HUERTA HUERTA, MIGUEL ÁNGEL GARCÍA GUINEA (eds.), *Viajes y viajeros en la España medieval*, Fundación Santa María la Real – Centro de Estudios del Románico, Aguilar de Campoo 1989, p. 293–308.

<sup>58</sup> In his *Commentary* on I Sam. 8 (written in the Iberian Peninsula, ca. 1483–1484)

<sup>59</sup> YOLANDA MORENO KOCH, « Figuras antisemitas según las crónicas hebraico-españolas », *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. IV: *History of the Jews in Europe*, World Union of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 1977, p. 93–100.

<sup>60</sup> See, amongst others, GUTWIRTH « Sephardi Culture of the 'Cairo Genizah People' ».

is the padding of the binding of a halakhic compendium in manuscript including texts by R. David ibn Zimra, Rabbi of Cairo in the sixteenth century. The provenance of the last two is the repository of the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Cairo known as the Cairo Genizah. Their Jewish provenance is thus impeccable, in addition to the use of Hebrew characters in all three types of fragments.<sup>61</sup> A difference between these last two and the first is that they are printed. This means, of course, that the fragments attest to an original printed book in numerous copies which contained other – i.e., all – parts of the work. This leads us to the further question of the public for such texts.

That Jews in medieval Iberia before 1492 were aware of their neighbors' literature and read their books, is amply evinced by scholarship on history of ideas, on their thought, their literature and their books. That is to say that there is an element of continuity in the – albeit unsuspected – presence of such sixteenth-century works in the midst of the 'post-exilic', Jewish community of Ottoman Cairo. It follows that any realistic analysis of Jewish culture at that time and place must attend to these works. The questions to be asked would be: what did the readers seek or find in these works? what did the publishers assume when investing in the labors and costs of Hebrew character transcriptions and prints of these texts? how were they read in the early modern Jewish community? As in the cases of Dernschwam and Didacus, so here – in the synagogal items – too, we find elements of the Renaissance humanist predilection for Greco-Roman culture.

In the *Comedia Aquilana*,<sup>62</sup> by Torres Naharro, the hero, Aquilano, is a foreign prince who disguises himself as a gardener for the love of Princess Felicina. This love having been discovered, the king, furious, wants to have the young man executed, and Felicina, desperate for the life of her beloved, retires to a garden where she wants to end her life. Meanwhile, the king, having learned that Aquilano is the son of the king of Hungary, is no longer opposed to the union of the two lovers. Dileta comes to bring the news to her mistress Felicina.

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<sup>61</sup> For the discoveries in the Genizah see GUTWIRTH, «Sephardi Culture of the 'Cairo Genizah People'»; ID., «The Hispanicity of Sephardi Jewry: A Genizah Study», *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 145/3-4 (1986), p. 347-357.

<sup>62</sup> JOSEPH E. GILLET, OTIS H. GREEN, *Propalladia and Other Works of Bartolomé de Torres Naharro*, vol. IV: *Torres Naharro and the Drama of the Renaissance*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1961; JOAN OLEZA, «En los orígenes de la práctica escénica cortesana: La Comedia Aquilana de Torres Naharro», in *Théâtre, musique et arts dans les cours européennes de la Renaissance et du Baroque*, Université de Varsovie, Warsaw 1997, p. 153-177; JULIO VÉLEZ-SAINZ, «De la noche al lenocinio: Usos amorosos y prostibularios de la noche en la 'Comedia Serafina' y la 'Comedia Aquilana' de Bartolomé de Torres Naharro», *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies*, 22 (2012), p. 375-390; JULIO VÉLEZ-SAINZ, «Hacia una nueva edición crítica de la Comedia Aquilana de Bartolomé de Torres Naharro», *Incipit*, 32 (2019), p. 135-156. JÉSSICA CASTRO RIVAS, «De la comedia a fantasía a la comedia palatina: Aquilana de Bartolomé de Torres Naharro como modelo dramático», *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 94/4 (2017), p. 595-613.

What the Jews were reading in Hebrew characters was the work of an author, Torres Naharro, who admired Virgil and Lucan, quoted Ovid and Persius, imitated Plautus and Terence. The indebtedness of Bartolome de Torres Naharro to classical Roman Comedy is not in doubt.<sup>63</sup> He himself asserts in writing that he is familiar with the works of Plautus. Features such as the division into five acts, the use of the *introito* and the *argumento*, as well as the function of the servants, allow us to link Torres Naharro with classical comedy. The preface to his *Propalladia* (1517) asserts that Torres was such an excellent humanist that he could have written the whole work in Latin. Lenz<sup>64</sup> had pointed out that the scene between the *infanta* Felicina and her *criada* Dileta in the last act of Torres Naharro's *Comedia Aquilana*, is indebted to Plautus' *Asinaria*. Leon Hebreo's notion that the lover turns into the beloved is expressed in the line: « bien sabes que el amante se conuierte [...] en la persona amada ».

Zimic insists on the certainty that Torres Naharro was an Erasmist.<sup>65</sup> Surtz adds that « many, if not most, of the Spanish erasmistas were also *cristianos nuevos*. The ideas of Erasmus were all the more attractive to that social group that was able to perceive most clearly the gulf between the Christian beliefs and the un-Christian practices of its Old Christian neighbors ». <sup>66</sup> Neither has the question of performance been resolved. The Jews of Cairo would hardly have occasion to perform university plays. A chamber play is a possibility and the contemporary references to 'recite' dramatic works would point in this direction. The play ends in a wedding and the whole work is considered to be a wedding play.

Amongst the early theatrical works in Castilian, the *Tragedia Josefina*<sup>67</sup> inspired by the story of Joseph and Potifar's wife, with some Celestinesque tendencies, was a work which was published more than once between 1535 and 1546. It was prohibited by the Inquisition in 1559 and remembered still forty years after that, when, in 1599, permission was sought for it to be performed. In the *Tragedia Josefina*, the herald defends the author's work and his many efforts to amuse the public. The summary by Florence Whyte is still worth citing:

Carvajal tells the story of Joseph, the beautiful youth sold into captivity in Egypt, where he was tempted by Potiphar's wife and cast into prison; of his clairvoyance, his wisdom, and his magnanimity toward his brethren. The most appealing lines of

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<sup>63</sup> RAYMOND L. GRISMER, « Another Reminiscence of Plautus in the Comedias of Torres Naharro », *Hispanic Review*, 8/1 (1940), p. 57-58.

<sup>64</sup> ANITA LENZ, « Torres Naharro et Plaute », *Revue Hispanique*, 57 (1923), p. 99-107.

<sup>65</sup> STANISLAV ZIMIC, *El pensamiento humanístico y satírico de Torres Naharro*, 2 vol., Sociedad Menéndez Pelayo, Santander 1979.

<sup>66</sup> RONALD E. SURTZ, « Review of: 'El pensamiento humanístico y satírico de Torres Naharro' », *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 32/2 (1980), p. 143-146.

<sup>67</sup> JOSEPH E. GILLET, *Estudio, edición y notas de Tragedia Josefina de Micael de Carvajal*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1932.

the tragedy are found in Joseph's lamentations at the tomb of Rachel. It would be interesting to know the relation of these verses to Old Spanish *endechas*. Our emotions are stirred by Joseph's misfortunes and by the grief of Jacob, although, as Professor Gillet points out, the transcendent value of the play is due to the creation of Zenobia,<sup>68</sup> in whom passion speaks with a fullness of power not attained elsewhere.<sup>69</sup>

Carvajal introduces, at the end of every act, choruses of classical inspiration. His understanding of the category 'Tragedia' is not that of the Middle Ages but that of the Renaissance humanists. His division of the work into five acts is that current in the Renaissance. He may have taken it from Torres Naharro, with whom his work is linked in other ways, as pointed out by Juan Carlos Garrot Zambrana.<sup>70</sup> Its connection to humanist comedy (e.g., *Celestina*) has been shown on the basis of its extension, the personage of Zenobia, wife of Potifar, or the lament of Jacob. The character of Jacob reminds critics of the Senecist theatre. All of this becomes a new, fresh and unexpected phenomenon when read in Ottoman Cairo in a printed text in Hebrew characters.

Given the ample array of different opinions, one may offer an additional perspective on the two plays and their link. They would both appeal to a taste for one of the staples of medieval and Renaissance storytelling: tales of concealed/mistaken identities.<sup>71</sup> The *Aquilana*, as has been seen, depends on this. Aquilano conceals his identity; he wishes to be loved for himself and pretends to be a gardener. The denouement revolves around the revelation of – and return to – his previous identity. He might be called a crypto-prince. In the *Josefina's* source, the brothers do not recognize Joseph. He conceals his identity: « and Joseph saw his brethren but *made himself strange unto them and spake roughly unto them* » (Gen. 42:6–7). The story is resolved by recognition or revelation: « Then Joseph could not refrain himself [...] Joseph *made himself known* unto his brethren.

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<sup>68</sup> In the late Judeo-Spanish 'Joseph literature', Potiphar's wife is called Segoviana, a fact which puzzled twentieth-century scholars who could find no Jewish antecedents for this. See e.g., ELENA ROMERO, *El teatro de los Sefardies orientales*, CSIC, Madrid 1979, vol. I, p. 558. MOSHE LAZAR, *Joseph and His Brethren: Three Ladino Versions*, Labyrinthos, Culver City, CA 1990, p. 210. If, however, we observe the Geniza fragment, we can realize that the typographical rendering of the *nun* could easily lead to a *gimmel*, thus explaining the conundrum.

<sup>69</sup> FLORENCE WHYTE, « Review of: 'Joseph E. Gillet, *Estudio, edición y notas de Tragedia Josefina de Micael de Carvajal*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1932' », *Hispania*, 16/1 (1933), p. 114.

<sup>70</sup> JUAN CARLOS GARROT ZAMBRANA, « A vueltas con la 'Tragedia Josefina' de Micael de Carvajal », in FELIPE B. PEDRAZA JIMÉNEZ, RAFAEL GONZÁLEZ CAÑAL, ELENA E. MARCELLO (eds.), *Drama y teatro en tiempos de Carlos I (1517-1556)*, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca 2018, p. 171–188.

<sup>71</sup> See, for an example among many, CHRISTINA WALD, *The Reformation of Romance: The Eucharist, Disguise, and Foreign Fashion in Early Modern Prose Fiction*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2014. It is present in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* and may be traced back to Plautus or Menander.

And he wept aloud [...] And Joseph said unto his brethren: I am Joseph, doth my father yet live? » (Gen 45:1 ff).

For Hispanophone Jews in the post-expulsion period both stories could well be understood as stories of exile and concealed identities. Numerous sixteenth-century texts attest to an image of the Ottoman Empire as a haven from persecution, as a space where crypto-Jewish converts could return to Judaism<sup>72</sup> and where Jews could practice their religion in relative freedom.

#### IV. (By Way of) Conclusion: Renaissance Mummies

Ottoman-Cairene Jewish culture was not limited to that of merchants, lawyers and mystics. These were by no means exclusive parameters. To conclude, therefore, one might point to a case of cultural exchange or transfer which shows, yet again, the cosmopolitan ties between Christian Europeans and Ottoman Cairene Jews in the age of humanism. There was a commonality of interests and assumptions between Cairene Jews – including Rabbis and merchants – on the one hand and the humanist Christian travelers to the Ottoman Empire on the other.

The above-mentioned David ben Solomon ibn (Abu) Zimra (1479–1573) born in Spain, author of more than 3.000 responsa, was in Cairo as early as 1517.<sup>73</sup> Rabbi David ibn Zimra was the recipient of a question about trading in mummy parts and using them for medicinal purposes. (*Responsa*, vol. III, no. 548 or 979)

You asked me to tell you my opinion on what does *everyone rely when using the flesh of the dead that is called 'mummy' as a remedy*, even in a case where there is no danger and it is not ingested. Not only that, they also trade and do business in this, and this is a prohibited profit, as we hold that it is prohibited to benefit from the flesh of the dead, as it is written 'And Miriam died there'.<sup>74</sup>

R. David replies:

You need not have asked about the prohibition on eating, for it is certainly permissible to eat. Its form has been altered and it has returned to mere dust,

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<sup>72</sup> Dernschwam explicitly describes Istanbul as a place where conversos return to Judaism.

<sup>73</sup> HIRSCH JAKOB ZIMMELS, *Rabbi David ibn abi Simra*, Druck Th. Schatzki, Breslau 1932; ISRAEL M. GOLDMAN, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David Ibn Abi Zimra: A Social, Economic and Cultural Study of Jewish Life in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th Centuries as Reflected in the Responsa of the RDBZ*, JTS, New York 1970), p. 140–147, 229. ELIYAHU STRAUSS-ASHTOR, *History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under the Rule of the Mamluks*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1951, p. 458ff.; SAMUEL MORELL, *Studies in the Judicial Methodology of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra*, University Press of America, Dallas 2004; DORA ZSOM, « Converts in the responsa of R. David ibn Avi Zimra. An Analysis of the Texts », *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, 6 (2008), p. 267–292; ZALMAN MENAHEM QOREN, « Qdushat ha-Kotel ha-Ma`aravi be-mishnat ha-RDBZ », *Ma`alin be-Qodesh*, 38 (2009), p. 3–9 [Hebrew].

<sup>74</sup> Numbers 20:1. He seems to be referring tacitly to BAZ 29b where this is a proof-text for the prohibition to derive benefit from a corpse.

certainly by means of fragrant drugs, for the mummy is the embalmed flesh, which is treated with several types of fragrant drugs so that the form and body are preserved, that has become tarlike. It is not forbidden to eat it, as I have written with regard to musk and theriac. However, with regard to the prohibition on deriving benefit, this rationale is clearly insufficient grounds to permit.

R. David ibn Zimra argued that it is permitted to eat parts of a mummy since the flesh has been treated and has changed so much that it is no longer really 'flesh'. He believed that these were the mummies of the dead of ancient, pagan Egypt.

The epistolary exchange involves two sixteenth-century (Egyptian?) individuals. The anonymous questioner is learned, a correspondent of ibn Zimra, and someone who knows his prooftexts. He does not support the use of mummies. Ibn Zimra informed himself and learnt the subject so that somehow, he was perfectly well aware of the composition of the mummy and its ingredients as remedy. He is also aware of its uses and trade in the Jewish community. Who the clients interested in such a commodity were is not the focus of his discussion. Although ibn Zimra's discussion centers on Talmud, Maimonides and Rabbi Nissim, it may be argued that it reflects its own age, that of Renaissance humanism. As Karl H. Dannenfeldt points out in a different context:

The first signs of interest in the ancient land of the Pharaohs and its fabulous monuments were evident in the time of the Renaissance, for the humanistic regard for the material vestiges of the classical civilizations and the literature of Greece and Rome quite naturally led to an interest in the preclassical civilizations of the Near East.<sup>75</sup>

Mummies are mentioned in Pliny. Embalming materials are referred to in Herodotus and Diodorus. By the sixteenth century, Egyptian mummies, usually in broken pieces or powder, could be found in the pharmacies of Europe.<sup>76</sup> The embalmed bodies of ancient Egyptians, and even the 'mummified' bodies of those more recently dead, became a valued prescription drug. It was also in the sixteenth century that physicians and scholars began to question the value of mummy as a drug and to discuss and criticize its use in medicine.<sup>77</sup> Before ibn Zimra we do not hear much about mummies in responsa. The exchange of letters in the responsa

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<sup>75</sup> KARL H. DANNENFELDT, « Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance », *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6 (1959), p. 7–27. KARL GIEHLOW, *The Humanist Interpretation of Hieroglyphs in the Allegorical Studies of the Renaissance: With a Focus on the Triumphal Arch of Maximilian*, trans. by ROBIN RAYBOULD, Brill, Leiden 2015.

<sup>76</sup> KARL H. DANNENFELDT, « Egyptian Mumia: The Sixteenth Century Experience and Debate », *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16/2 (1985), p. 163–180.

<sup>77</sup> DANNENFELDT, « Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance », p. 17. WARREN R. DAWSON, « Mummy as a Drug », *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 21 (1927), p. 34–39.

of ibn Zimra, thus, mirrors the Renaissance humanist interest in Egypt in general and the gathering of information about mummies in particular, the disagreements or controversies on the use of mummies, the observation of and focus on the preservation and its methods.

In the sixteenth century, Europeans in increasing numbers began to visit Egypt, the home of *mumia*. Pierre Belon (1517–1564), one of these humanist travelers, was interested in mummies. He thought that the Arab sources, from whom the Western writers derived their knowledge of *mumia*, referred to the pissasphalt of Dioscorides, which had been mistranslated. He said that Europeans were importing both, the ‘falsely called’ *mumia* obtained from the scraping the bodies of cadavers, and ‘artificial *mumia*’ made by exposing buried dead bodies to the heat of the sun before grinding them up. While he considered the available *mumia* lacking in value, he noted that King François I always carried with him a mixture of *mumia* and rhubarb to use as an immediate remedy for any injury. Belon is only one amongst many possible examples of European travelers to Egypt interested in mummies.

In the studies of coeval but different early modern cultures we find that there is a realization that the subject cannot be reduced to the margins of commerce or medicine but that it has an impact on culture at large. Philip Schwyzer<sup>78</sup> found that in the literature of Renaissance England, mummies were linked with double dealing and dishonesty and associated with Scots, blacks, women. In *Othello*, Desdemona’s handkerchief is said to have elements of mummy. The sisters in *Macbeth* mention mummy. If we look at the French travelers’ stories, we find Jews mentioned in connection with the mummies trade in similar terms. Historians in other fields recognize the importance and ramifications of this subject. Louise Noble argues that

As is the case in today’s medical economy, the fragmented human body was a crucial commodity in the business of health in early modern England. In many ways, the culture is defined by its preoccupation with the ingestible corpse drug mummy, or *mumia*.<sup>79</sup>

An additional example would be the French Franciscan friar, Andre Thevet (d. 1590), who traveled widely in Egypt. Writing about the pyramids and mummies,

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<sup>78</sup> PHILIP SCHWYZER, « Mummy is Become Merchandise: Literature and the Anglo-Egyptian Mummy Trade in the Seventeenth Century », in GERALD MACLEAN (ed.), *Reorienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005, p. 66–87: « intimations of crime and deception seem to creep in, almost unbidden, whenever mummy is mentioned » (p. 78). CHRIS ELLIOTT, « Bandages, Bitumen, Bodies and Business – Egyptian mummies as raw materials », *Aegyptiaca. Journal of the History of Reception of Ancient Egypt*, 1 (2017), p. 26–46.

<sup>79</sup> LOUISE NOBLE, *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, Palgrave, New York 2011, p. 1–16.

he mentioned the well-preserved bodies, some of which were 2.000 years old. Genuine mumia was taken from the tombs and brought to Venice for distribution throughout Europe. The bodies of the wealthy ancient Egyptians had been embalmed with myrrh, aloes, saffron, and other spices. Thevet writes that on the advice of a Jewish physician, with whom he was in contact, he took some mumia as medicine, but he experienced pain in the stomach and fetid breath. Louis Giuyon (1625) told of an incident involving Jews and the mummy trade in Alexandria, Rosetta, and other places in Egypt, and Aleppo in Syria.<sup>80</sup> Despite the dragoman stories and tall tales and the traits of *reisefabulistik*, we observe the underlying undeniable fact of Jewish involvement in the trade of spices and other pharmacological items and their importance as a factor in that particular trade.

The phenomenon of the mummy or mumia thus stands at the intersection of the renewed interest in the material vestiges of ancient civilizations, but also of trade, medicine and halakha. It is an intersection we have seen here in my four examples of the cosmopolitan contacts with humanism and humanists of sixteenth century Ottoman Jews.

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<sup>80</sup> DANNENFELDT, « Egyptian Mumia: The Sixteenth Century Experience and Debate », p. 168 (on Thevet), and p. 171 (on Giuyon).



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