



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY
AND PAUL JACOBI CENTER**

AT THE JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, JERUSALEM

Title of the Project:

***THE COUNTY ARCHIVE OF CERVERA
A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF JEWISH GENEALOGY,
MIGRATIONS AND LIFE IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN***

Researcher:

Maria Jose SURRIBAS CAMPS

Mid-term Report - May 2009

I. RESEARCH IN THE *ARXIU COMARCAL DE LA SEGARRA*

The main archive for this research project is the County Archive of La Segarra (*Arxiu Comarcal de la Segarra*) located in the town of Cervera, Catalonia, Spain. To date, about 1,900 documents concerning Jews have been identified in this archive.

The document research in this archive is at present approximately 60% complete. It is likely that the search in the remaining records may reveal an additional number of documents in the same rough proportion as in the 60% already done.

By way of illustration, among the unpublished documents are:

1. From the Notarial Books, some 1,700 documents have been accumulated to date.

These are mainly business documents (contracts, debts, payments, bills of sale) and also wills, dowries, etc., that provide us with names, localities, family relations and dates. Sample extracts include:

- a. "*Quod ego magister Abraam Astruch Zatorra judeus nunc Cervarie, tutor et curator Moise Abraam Zatorra, filii meum ... Testes ... Vital Gracia*" – from which we learn that, on October 8, 1362 (document date), the aforesaid Jews were in Cervera, that Abraam Astruch Zatorra, Jew, did not originate from Cervera, and that he was the tutor and guardian of his son Moise (uses the same hereditary surname). The brief quote provides useful information on how middle and surnames were used during that period. It is also helpful to come across the same names more than once to avoid erroneous conclusions.
- b. In another Notary book, dated June 30, 1365, we read "*... ad hoc ego Abram Astruh Zatorre, fisticus, locumtenenti Vital Fferrari, judeus*

secretarii aliame iudeorum Cervarie ...” from which we learn that Abram was a medical doctor.

- c. Or, “*Jaffuda Leo judeus oriundus Cesarauguste, nunc habitator Cervarie... quod est actum Cervarie xiii die novembris anno a nativitate domini M^oCCC^oLX^oV*” : indicating that Jaffuda Leo originated from Saragossa, but on this date, November 13, 1365, he was a resident of Cervera.
- d. “*Ego Juceff Taboch judeus ville Montissoni, Regni Aragonis, gratis ... confiteor vobis Salamoni Lobell, alias Faiardo, judeo comoranti Cervarie ...*”. Jucef Taboch, a Jew of Monzon, was in Cervera on December 27, 1466, declaring he was Salamon Lobell’s debtor. Salamon was also called Faiardo and lived in Cervera.

As the Notarial Books are not indexed, it is necessary to examine each one individually to locate useful content about Jews. Unfortunately only a few of the books have helpful titles like “*Jews’ book*” or “*Jews and Christians’ book*”.¹

2. The “*Dalmases Collection*”² and a “*Jews’ notarial file*” provide about 140 documents of varied content, (wills, inventories, letters, tax lists, synagogue seats ...), all concerning the Cervera Jews

3. About 20 documents in the archive, specifically filed as “*Jewish manuscripts*”.

4. From municipal tax books and settlement books, about 15 documents have been abstracted thus far. The settlement books provide us with information about the localities of origin of the “*settlers*”, their families, and date of settlement.

The following is an example abstract of one of these records:

DAVI SAMUELL and YSSACH BARUC, February 27, 1416

Davi Samarell de Piera, Issach Baruc, an inhabitant of Agramunt, and Astruch Galipapa, an inhabitant of the Seo de Urgel, appeared before the Cervera authorities, requesting residence permits.

There is a post-dated note in the document, mentioning Manuel de Ripoll, who was called Içac Samuell, and who was a Jew (November 8, 1421).

Piera, Agramunt, Seo de Urgel (in Catalan, Seu d’Urgell) and Ripoll are localities of Catalonia.

In addition to these documents, there are certain key items needed for the analytical part of the project that have previously been translated and published, such as a handful of important *Ketubot* (marriage certificates) in Hebrew.

Beyond all these, many notarial receipts, loans, acknowledgements of debts, payments and sales, still remain to be scrutinised and abstracted for names, localities, dates and further details.

Other records being examined are the tax collection books, manifests of properties, and settlement books because they too can contain useful genealogical data.

This mass of documentation provides us with important information about Jews from other Jewish communities that had business or family relations with the Cervera Jews. They are identified in the documents as having originated from such varied localities as

Saragossa, Barcelona, Lleida, Castellfollit de Riubregos, Santa Coloma de Queralt, Falset, Girona, Piera, Agramunt, Monzon, Tarrega and others.

In reading the notarial records, we notice that certain names were used by both Jews and Christians at one and the same time. Examples are Vidal, Salamo, Malet, and Rossell. The first (given) name preceding the surname and specially the lack of the word “Jew” at the end of the name, identifies them as carried by either Jews or Christians. It is possible that new documents will be found to help clarify the origin of these persons and names.

When the name of a Christian appears in a document with the addition of “*neophyte*” (the term used in those times for the newly-converted), the opportunity presents itself of re-examining the documents and searching for a missed Jewish name that may have been the former name of the neophyte.

Thus the search for these family names in the Cervera archive documents permits us to go further back in the individual’s genealogies and produce a more complete history of the families beyond the records in Cervera.

II. RESEARCH IN THE *ARXIU DE LA CORONA D’ARAGO*

In the Crown of Aragon Archive (*Arxiu de la Corona d’Arago*), located in Barcelona, are documents of considerable interest that contribute to our primary genealogical research of the Jews of Cervera. To date, some 50 documents of relevance to our project have been identified – with more to be expected.

The earliest references found concern the Jews of Cervera in this archive are in documents of the 13th century, and are letters from the King that confirm rights regarding credits and sales to various Jewish communities. Some mention the Jews of Cervera but, unfortunately, without specific names.

However, insights are gained from various documents. For instance, in a 1281 document, a Jewess, *Regino*, lodged a complaint against her husband, *Samuel des Forn*, a Jew of Cervera, who had repudiated her.

Other Jews of Cervera mentioned in this archive in 3th century documents are *Samuel Enoch*, *Vidal de Cervera*, *Abram Astruch*, *Abraam Portella*, *Mosse* and *Abraham Çaporta*, *Juceff Bonafeu* and his wife *Goyo*, etc.

In sum, the documents in both these archives, when taken together, can be utilized in different ways for varying genealogical purposes to discover the main Jewish families and lineages of Cervera, as well as positioning them in their social and economic environments. One can analyze internal and external migrations and learn about the Jews’ exact locations, as there are references to their residences and land boundaries. Through the inventories of household goods, clothes, furniture, and detailed descriptions of houses, one can study the way they lived. Finally, where the notary wrote down the exact words the people used, one has rare access to how they actually spoke.

¹ See illustrations attached below.

² The "Dalmases" Collection is a series of about five thousand documents concerning different items: Cervera castle, agriculture, water, wars, fairs, markets, Jews, ... In the late 19th century, Faust de Dalmases i de Massot, an attorney and historian originating from Cervera, preserved these documents from destruction or loss and kept these collections in his house to which he gave the name of "*Archivo Historico de Cervera*"

Attached (below) are the cover page and the first page of one of these books identified as “Jews’ Books” (Cervera, Anonymous, 1362-1363). On the left is the word *Christianorum* and on the right, partially obscured by a stain, *Judeorum*. Note the caricature of a Jew, labeled on its left *Lo Emperador Moise* (Emperor Moses), with Hebrew script over his head (as yet, undeciphered).





1
2