

Sephardic Origins and Transformations in the Spanish Extremadura: A Historical and Socio-Demographic Investigation

An article for publication with the
International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center

Authors:

Roger L. Martinez-Davila, Ph.D., M.P.P.

Assistant Professor of History, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
CONEX Fellow, Universidad de Carlos III de Madrid

Kimberley Sweetwood, M.A.

Research Assistant, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Introduction

Tracing the origins and movement of the Sephardim is one of the greatest challenges that historians and genealogists encounter. Not only are we frustrated by the effective lineage masking efforts of Jews and conversos intent on concealing their identities, but also the difficulties of locating the fragmentary primary sources that reveal their transformation. A solution to the problem of tracking the transition of Jewish lineages and identities during the era of anti-Jewish pogroms, “cleanliness of blood” statutes (limpieza de sangre), and the Spanish Inquisition, lies concealed in an unusual location – the manuscripts held in Spanish cathedral and municipal archives. Within these Catholic and royally-created institutions, both of which were intent on eradicating Judaism from Spain, are the foundational documents that detail the origins of the Sephardic community that filtered into Portugal and the Atlantic World.

The Extremadura, a Spanish border region adjacent to Portugal, is exceptionally interesting because large Sephardic communities resided in this area and it was one of the prominent

sources of migrants to the Americas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The central objective of our research was to synthesize unpublished, archival evidence, as well as published data, on late twelfth through early eighteenth century Jewish and converso (Jewish converts to Catholicism) families in the region of the Extremadura and to compile it into a new database known as the Sephardic Extremaduran Genealogical Database.¹ Our fundamental research effort sought to answer what were the socio-demographic characteristics of Sephardic Jewish communities in the Extremadura (and interrelated regions) and to present case studies pertaining to Jewish and converso life in the community of Plasencia, Spain.

In this article, we first discuss our research methods, as well as the available archival and secondary sources that pertain to the Sephardic Extremaduran community of the Middle Ages and early modern period. Subsequently, we present a brief overview of the communal history of the Sepharad from its foundation during the Roman Era until its expulsion from Catholic Spain in 1492, and discuss the history of a number of the cities where Extremaduran Jews and conversos resided. Our findings, developed from the database, are twofold. The first are broad socio-demographic aspects of Jewish life; they include geographic, familial and genealogical, social and religious, political and economic details. In addition, we present two case studies relating to the most prominent community in our database, the city of Plasencia. Collectively, the broad socio-demographic and case studies indicate that the Sephardic Jewish and converso community was especially vibrant, even if it was under significant cultural and religious distress at the close of the Spanish Middle Ages.

Research Methods

We conducted original research in Spain for this project, as well as collaborated with two undergraduate students in the preparation of this article.² The three primary methods of conducting research for this project included: (1) Onsite review of manuscripts and documents in local municipal, ecclesiastical, and national archives in Spain; (2) electronic review of the *Spanish Ministry of Educacion, Culture, and Sports* online search tool for national and state archives (known as the *Portal de Archivos Españoles*, or *PARES*, <http://pares.mcu.es/>); and (3) textual review of printed primary and secondary sources. Due to reduced funding for the project, as well as Dr. Martínez being denied access to cathedral archives in Plasencia (Spain) and Coria (Spain) because of church staffing limitations, our project research and findings were scaled back.

The local Spanish institutions consulted onsite by Dr. Martinez included the Archivo Historico Municipal de Bejar, Museo Judío David Melul (Bejar, Spain), Archivo Historico Municipal de Coria, Archivo Historico Municipal de Ciudad Real, Archivo de la Catedral de Ciudad Real, Archivo Historico Municipal de Plasencia, Biblioteca del Seminario Mayor Diocesano de Plasencia, Archivo Historico Nacional (Madrid), and Archivo del Duque de Alba.

Via the the Portal de Archivos Españoles, the following archives were consulted: Archivo General Simancas (AGS) – Valladolid, Archivo del Duque de Alba, Archivo de la Real Chancilleria de Valladolid, Archivo Historico Nacional (Madrid), and Archivo Historico Nacional-Sección Nobleza (Toledo). We, as a team of collaborators, consulted multiple printed primary and secondary sources as well.

To conduct our research, we employed a three-pronged methodology of (1) geographic targeting, (2) family and genealogical research, and (3) social network mapping guides our exploration of Jewish and converso families. Geographic targeting involved triangulating the key Jewish and converso population centers in the Extremadura, which include the Spanish cities of Badajoz, Caceres, Trujillo, Coria, Plasencia, Bejar, Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca, Zamora, and Benavente. Family historians and genealogists provided a second methodological focus for this research, which documented family relations (parents, siblings), births and deaths, dowries, marriages, and intermarriages. Critical to our genealogical research was our effort to document and expand our existing Extremaduran-centered genealogical database of 200+ unique Spanish, Portuguese, and New World surnames. A final methodological component employed was social network mapping, or investigating interconnections between related and unrelated individuals and families. While genealogical analysis provides aspects of this data, social network mapping focused on macro-level associations of individuals that describe the frequency and intensity other types familial, kin, vocational relationships. Employing each of these tools allowed us to document Sephardic Jews and conversos in the Extremadura.

Available Sources and Resources

With experience in almost 40 ecclesiastical, municipal, provincial, national, and private archives in Spain, Latin America, and the United States, we can authoritatively state the best sources available for this project reside in the municipal, cathedral and church, and district/provincial-level archives. The primary sources that were most suited to this research study are four distinct classifications of documentation. These include the following:

1. Official ecclesiastical documentation prepared by local cathedral and church governing bodies, such as books of cathedral and church acts and local community activities, property censuses, religious endowments and donations, contracts for services, property sales and leases, and investigations;
2. Official municipal records generated by local governing nobles, such as books of municipal acts, census and property documents, council meeting notes, and contracts;
3. Royal administrative and policy edicts dispatched to local communities; such as royal decrees, laws, investigations, prohibitions, and agreements between the king and individual Jewish communities; and
4. Personal and family legal instruments, such as testaments, codicils, dowry letters, real property sales and leases, property inventories, and religious endowments.

Based on our archival experience, we found each of these classes of documentation to be superb sources for details pertaining to Jewish and converso family relations. For example, official ecclesiastical documents typically identified those individuals who leased church-owned homes and cathedral contracts for tax-collection services named parties to the agreement. Official municipal records similarly reported key Catholic and Jewish community representatives at meetings, municipal contracts detail the parties to agreements, and censuses detail the location of the Jewish quarter and its prominent residents. Royal administrative documents revealed a similar pattern of reporting crucial community leaders of all faith groups. Lastly, it should be noted that both Catholic and Jewish clans often stored copies of their personal and family legal documents at their local cathedral or church for safe preservation. Although it would seem uncommon to find Jews safeguarding property contracts and other personal documents at

Catholic institutions, this is exactly what the Abenhabibe family and other Jewish clans in Plasencia during the mid-1400s. Thus, these four classes of manuscripts offered new and provocative information about the Sephardim in the Extremadura.

A History of the Sephardic Jewish Community in Spain (Roman Era through the 1500s)

To appreciate the Sephardic Jewish community within a historical context, we must start with a bit of historical context. Spain was the creature of many societies and peoples.³ First populated by Celtic and Iberian peoples before the ninth century b.c.e., the Iberian Peninsula took on a greater Mediterranean character with the arrival of the Phoenicians around 800 b.c.e.⁴ The Carthaginians of North Africa, the inheritors of the Phoenician empire, later conquered and claimed Iberia in 236 b.c.e., which set off a civilizational conflict with the Romans until the end of the third century b.c.e.⁵ The Latinization of the peninsula – including its language, culture, religion, and political system – transpired over six centuries and until the conclusion of the fourth century c.e.⁶ The Jewish population, which had accompanied Phoenician traders prior to the common era, grew substantially in Iberia after 70 c.e., the year the Romans destroyed the second temple in Jerusalem and Jews were forced to resettle across the Mediterranean world.⁷

The early medieval personality of Iberia came into focus from the fifth through eighth centuries, when Rome was overrun by Vandals and later, Visigoths. The Visigoths (415-711 c.e.) established their capital in Toledo, although failed to acculturate fully with the Romanized Iberian-Celtic peoples.⁸

Not until 585, with Visigothic King Roderick's conversion from Christian Arianism to Catholicism, did both the political elite and the native populations share the same faith.⁹ In 711, Islamic Umayyad and North African Berber forces led by Tariq Abu Zara entered the Iberian Peninsula at the Straits of Gibraltar and began their rapid eradication of the Visigothic monarchy that was plagued by internal political discord and dynastic claims.¹⁰ In an invasion that lasted no more than ten years, Iberia became Islamic *al-Andalus* in the central and southern portions of the land mass and independent Christian kingdoms from the northwestern coastal regions and into the Pyrenees Mountains.¹¹

Henceforward, the construction of medieval Spanish history was predicated on the dynamic interaction, both positive and negative elements of co-existence (*convivencia*), of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.¹² And as one of the remaining refuges for the European Jewry (England expelled Jews in 1290 and France in 1306), Spain prior to the late fourteenth century offered one of the few regions where a Jewish community could live and prosper.¹³

Prodigious war captains, knights, kings, caliphs, and religious leaders pepper its history, including Tariq Abu Zara (b. 670 - d. 720), the Umayyad conqueror of Iberia; Pelayo (r. 718-737), the mythical founding champion of the *Reconquista*; French King Charles Martel (r. 718-741) and the *Battle of Portiers* (732); Islamic Caliph Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912-929) and his splendid Caliphate of Cordoba (929-1031); Moses Maimonides (b. 1135 – d. 1204), the Jewish polymath and author of the *Guide for the Perplexed*; Aragonese King Jaume I (r. 1213-1276), who consolidated political and military control over the eastern portions of the peninsula; Castilian King Alfonso X “The Wise” (r. 1252-1284) who promoted himself as the monarch of three religions.

Generated from this environment of constant political and cultural tension, was a European world unlike any other on the continent. Spain and the identities of its community of Jews, Christians, and Muslims would draw upon a broader range of European and Mediterranean norms that emphasized clear delineations of peoples along faith, social, and familial lines.

Spain was exceptional in Western Europe. By the end of the fourteenth century most countries had already expelled the Jewish populations. England did so in 1296, northern France in the early fourteenth century, and southern France in the late fourteenth century. Spain had continuous and substantial populations of Muslims and Jews into the early modern period.¹⁴ Spain's Christian population, in the majority since the early fourteenth century, controlled the Jewish and Muslim minorities through the implementation of restrictive laws and violence, which in turn caused violent turmoil from the oppressed, marking a fundamental evolutionary change in Spain at least one hundred and fifty years before the Jewish expulsions and/or forced conversions in 1492 and the later Muslim forced conversions at the dawning of the sixteenth century.¹⁵

It is problematic to estimate how many Jews actually left Spain. This is just as or more problematic today as it was for those individuals attempting to make the same estimations shortly following the expulsion in 1492. Based on records available, the preponderance of the Jewish population of Spain was located in Castile, with an estimated population between 120,000 and 150,000 individuals. With only 50,000 Jews living in the Aragon area of Spain, the total population was around 200,000. This information is supported by tallying the number of Jews who paid annual taxes to support the war in Granada and how much they paid over the span of a

decade.¹⁶ Data also shows that expelled Jews moved into Portugal, travelling through border cities such as Badajoz, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Zamora, and settled not far from the Portuguese-Spanish border.¹⁷ With this broad historical and geographic context in place, let us consider a number of local city histories for the Extremadura.

A History of Extremaduran Jewish Communities

Bejar

In 400 b.c.e., the Vetones, who were mostly occupied with agricultural pursuits, settled Bejar. In 218 b.c.e., the Romans made their first appearance in Bejar and early in the first century b.c.e. the community was under Roman control. By 713, Bejar was under Muslim administration and remained that way for nearly five hundred years. By the mid-twelfth century Christians had regained control of Bejar and for several centuries Muslims, Jews, and Christians made their homes in Bejar.¹⁸ In the thirteenth century, Bejar was known for textile manufacturing and throughout the fourteenth century control of Bejar changed many hands until King Juan II named Diego Lopez de Zuniga its seigniorial lord. He and his heirs ruled Bejar for over five hundred years.¹⁹

Badajoz

The physical area known as Badajoz shows archaeological evidence of occupation dating back to Bronze Age with Megalithic tombs dating back as far as 4000 b.c.e. and steles dating back to the late Bronze Age. The Romans began their invasion and conquest of Badajoz in 218 b.c.e. and

eventually became part of the Roman administrative district call Hispania Ulterior (Father Spain). The archeological remains of both Roman and Visigoth structures have been discovered in the area.²⁰

Badajoz was officially founded by the Muslims in the ninth century and was later captured by the Christians in the thirteenth century.²¹ The first record available of Jews in Badajoz comes from the eleventh century when Jewish merchants and artists are mentioned conducting international trade. After Christians re-conquered Badajoz, Jews in the area were subjected to new poll taxes.²²

Laws ordering Jews to be segregated from Christians were enacted during the 1480s and after the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, many Jews traveled through Badajoz and into nearby Portugal between the years 1493 and 1499.²⁵ Badajoz continued to be a hub of *converso* activity.²³

Benavente

Research into the city of Benavente uncovers documents that predate the re-population this town by King Ferdinand II of Leon; before the Christian reconquest, it was known as Malgrad.²⁴ This evidence leads to the assumption that Benavente is the successor to Malgrad.²⁵ It appears that Malgrad was a frontier village between Castile and Portugal was of enough value that King Ferdinand II personally oversaw the repopulation of the town around September 1164, particularly after the realization of independence from Portugal in 1140.²⁹

Ciudad Rodrigo

Ciudad Rodrigo is located in central, western Spain near Portugal. Regarding its Jewish community, we understand that it experienced Christian mistreatment during the Middle Ages. Its Jews were attacked and the juderia sacked in 1230.²⁶ Jews did enjoy limited rights in the thirteenth century when its municipal charter, called the *Fuero*, sought to regulate protection from assault, exaction of debts, legal testimony, etc. By the end of the fourteenth century, there was a gradual deterioration of affairs for the Jewish community and there are few records to document Jewish life during this tumultuous time.

The Jewish quarter of Ciudad Rodrigo consisted of a section of town that included the streets Velayos, Colegios, Campode, Carniceros, and Zurradores, all of which were located southwest of the present day city center and just north of the Rio Agueda. The Jewish community of Ciudad Rodrigo rebounded during the fifteenth century. Records show that in 1439 the community paid annual taxes of 1,000 silver maravedis. In 1481, R. Judah of Ciudad Rodrigo is documented as one of the appointed tax collectors for the Kingdom of Castile and Leon.

Plasencia

Geographically, the city of Plasencia was a focus of social and commercial life in the northern portion of Extremadura. To the north was the university city of Salamanca, to the east was Toledo on the Tajo River, to the south was the ancient Roman city of Mérida, and to west, lay Portugal. (See Figure 1 for a map of late medieval Iberia and its principal cities.)

Figure 1: Late Medieval Iberia (1212-1492)



Source: Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin, public domain.

Placentinos imagined themselves as inheritors of this Roman-Visigothic tradition, although the Muslims dominated the area from 713 to 1189.²⁷ Muslim supremacy over the region began in 713 when the Visigothic region of the Extremadura, and its commercial capital of Mérida, capitulated to Muslim Governor Musa ibn Nusayr in a pitched battle.²⁸ At this time, Plasencia was not a major settlement, and as the Islamic rulers learned, most of the Extremadura was sparsely populated and peppered with only minor fortifications and castles.²⁹ The province remained relatively unimportant and uncontested up until the end of the twelfth century, when Castilian King Alfonso VIII aggressively challenged Almohad Caliph Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub al-

Mansjur (1184-1199) for frontier territories separating the Kingdom of Castile and Leon from al-Andalus.³⁰

From 1189 to 1196, the historical record of the city of Plasencia assumed distinct shape. Castilians remember this era as one marked by the triumphant capture and renaming of the city. However, upon further examination it appears that King Alfonso VIII was not simply transforming the thriving Islamic city of Ambroz into Plasencia, but establishing a strategic Christian hamlet as a bulwark against the Islamic south.

With the re-foundation of the Christian city in the twelfth century, a castle was erected, as well as multiple city gates and walls, with as many as 68 towers (referred to as “cubos”).³¹ The partially-walled community, which appears to have been smaller than its late fourteenth century footprint, could accommodate up to 1,000 persons “at times of war”.³²

Unfortunately, no contemporary source from the period, nor do the earliest Christian chroniclers of Plasencia, indicate the religious make-up or population size of the city. The remarkably silent record recounts nothing about the Jewish population and the only reference to Muslims is one that victoriously recalls “the expulsion of the Moors.”³³ However, other sources disclose that as late as 1400, Plasencia remained primarily as Jewish and Muslim-populated city with a minority Christian population. According to archival tax records from the Diocese of Plasencia, in the year 1400 there were only 119 adult men and their families—40 Christians (34%), 50 Jews (42%), and 29 Muslims (24%)— that resided in the city.³⁴ Historians speculate the total population of the city was roughly 800 to 1,000 souls by 1400, although Luis de Toro reports

that the city's population did not reach "almost 1,000 persons" until the 1570s.³⁵ Thus, Jews and Muslims were a key component of the population base throughout the local economy.

On November 10, 1221, a new Castilian king, Fernán do III, "conceded and confirmed" the royal privilege that King Alfonso VIII had previously granted to the city of Plasencia in the form of a royal city charter, or *fuero*.³⁶ The comprehensive legal document governed all aspects of life, including local public offices, clerical roles, criminal acts, civil disputes, trade, festivals, and public spaces, to name a few.

Although the *Fuero de Plasencia* was very important to the community because it established the rights and privileges of the king, city, and its inhabitants, it also was enlightening in terms of the distinctions it enforced between Christian, Muslims, and Jews. Over thirty of its individual laws and decrees pertained to the distinctive Jewish and Muslims communities, thus reinforcing the well-established norm of separate religious identities in medieval Iberia.³⁷ Among the more prominent religious issues dealt with in the *Fuero* was the issue of religious conversion. The *Fuero* welcomed and encouraged Muslim families to convert to Christianity and enjoy the privileges of a Christianity identity. Specifically, the king instructed, "I mandate that all of those men that are Muslims and become Christians...that as their lord, I will receive and think well of them."³⁸ Within the *Placentino* context, this was the first indication that religious identity could change and it served as an origin point for future creation of the fifteenth century's demarcations of "Old" versus "New" Christians.

Yet, conversion to Christianity was not necessary to participate in civic life, as the king dictated that Christians, as well as Jews and Muslims, could serve as royally appointed city councilmen (*corredores*) and retained the privilege of bearing weapons and arms in the city.³⁹ Therefore, Plasencia's *Fuero* created a representative role for religious minorities in Castilian affairs. Lastly, the king required disputes, if they involved persons of different faiths, to be settled in a very specific manner at a church located in Jewish quarter of the city. He ordered:

Law VII. In all disputes involving Jews and Christians, they will be heard at the Church of St. Nicholas and no other place. The cases will be heard at the hour of the regular mass of the church. And when these cases are considered closed, then their settlement cannot be vacated.⁴⁰

This aspect of the *Fuero*, as well as others, showed that Christian society viewed each religious community and its individual members as part of a larger inseparable body. Religious identity was a pervasive element of Castilian life.

Salamanca

Salamanca was one of the oldest Jewish settlements in the Kingdom of Castile and Leon and the city's Jewish quarter was located near the citadel according to documents recounting Jewish activities back to the twelfth century.⁴¹ During the twelfth century, King Fernando II granted a *Fuero* to the city allowing Jews judicial equality with Christians. After the death of King Alfonso IX (r. 1171-1230), the Jewish population was attacked. They recovered quickly and became one of the most prosperous populations in the area. There are documents that make mention of a "barrio de judios" in the middle of the thirteenth century, later to be referred to as the juderia.⁴²

The Jewish community did suffer considerable mistreatment during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. In 1335, the town council forbade any Christians to seek and obtain medical attention from Jews. Jews were also restricted from renting accommodations near Christian churches and cemeteries. Vincente Ferrer was an instigator of violence against many Jews in Salamanca during the anti-Jewish persecutions and violence in 1391. He also forcefully proselytized many Jews to convert to Christianity when he preached in the synagogues in 1411-1412.

Zamora

A city in northwestern part of the Kingdom of Castile and Leon, Zamora was founded around the same time as Salamanca during the twelfth century.⁴³ There is no definitive date for the settlement of the Jewish quarter, but it was located outside the city walls and known as “Vega” with separate housing, cemeteries, and a synagogue. In 1313, the cathedral decided to exclude Jews from state functions, to require them to wear a distinctive badge in public as examples of the restrictions enacted. In 1490, Zamora along with Seville and many other communities contributed funds to the return (ransom) of Jewish captives taken from Malaga. In 1492, as in other communities, Jewish property and wealth were turned over to Christians upon their expulsion. Many Jews relocated to Portugal, then toward the end of 1492 many began to return and convert to Christianity and Zamora became a transit hub for returning *conversos*.

With this general city background on some of the Extremaduran Jewish communities, let us consider some of the socio-demographic findings from the Sephardic Extremaduran Genealogical Database.

A Socio-Demographic Portrait of Sephardic Extremadurans

Through our research, we were able to identify over 900 Jews and conversos who resided in the Extremadura between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, which are recorded in the Sephardic Extremaduran Genealogical Database. The database specifically includes:

- 924 individuals,
- 123 families/surnames,
- The earliest date for an individual is 1153 C.E. (common era) and the latest is 1706 C.E.,
- 3,503 recorded life “events” - for example “living” in a particular village,
- 50 place locations,
- 28 primary and secondary sources, and
- 1,202 individual citations recorded.

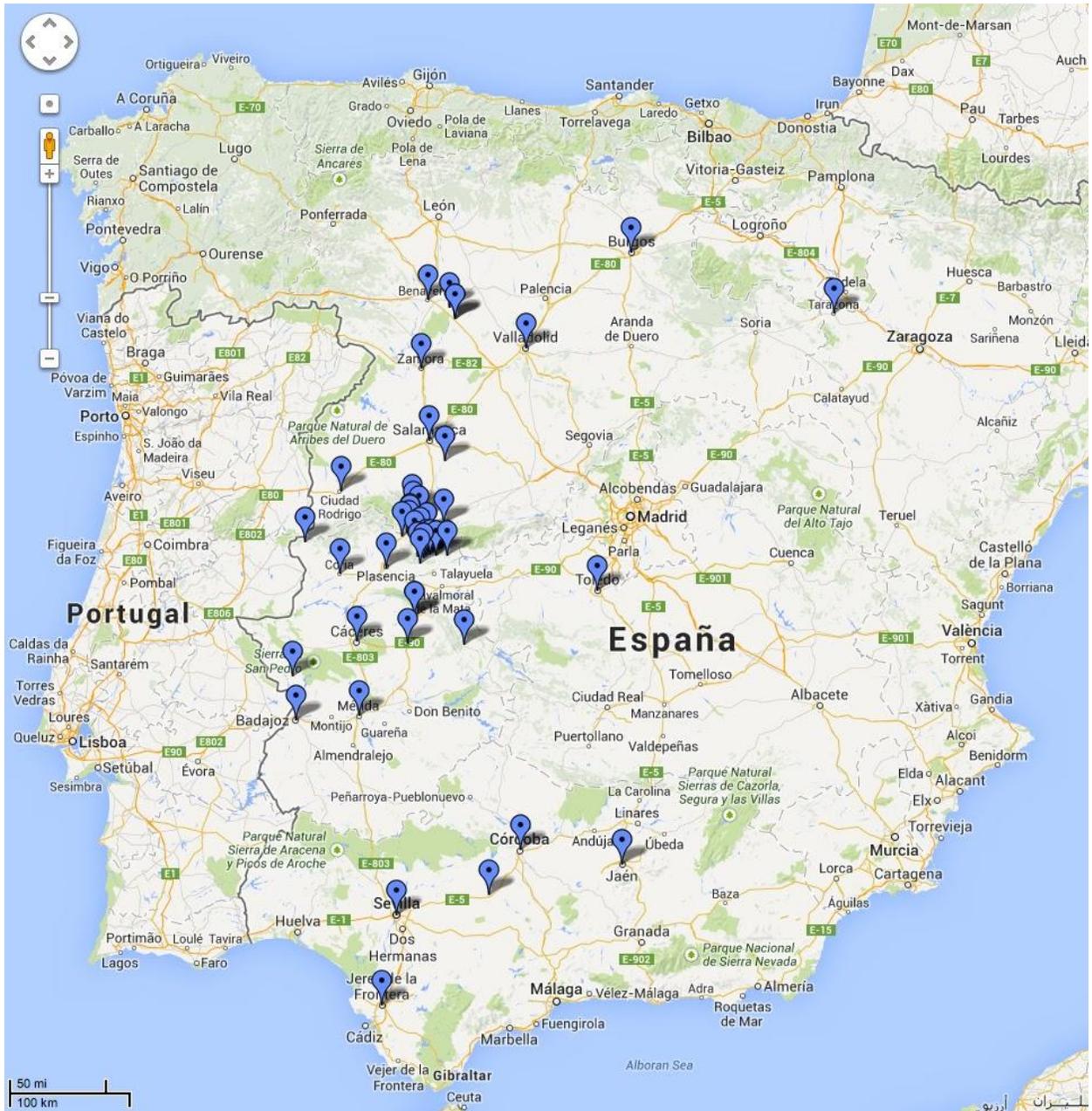
Family historians and researchers can consult the database on the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi’s Center’s organization website, <http://iijg.org/research/spanish-extremadura/>. Below we present the broad socio-demographic characteristics of the Sephardic Extremaduran community.

Geographic Findings

Extremaduran Jews and conversos were not exclusively an urban population, rather they were distinctly represented in city (for example, Badajoz, Ciudad Rodrigo, Plasencia, Trujillo) as well as rural and pastoral (such as Cabezuela de la Vera and Hervas) communities.⁴⁴ Reflectively of

the primary and secondary sources utilized in this study, the vast majority of the population represented in this database is a northern Extremaduran and Castilian community. It is bounded to the north by Ciudad Rodrigo and Bejar, to the south by Caceres and Trujillo, to the west by Coria, and to the east by Guadalupe and El Barco de Avila. Extremaduran Jews and conversos were not an isolated, frontier community — their familial and social relationships connected them to a much broader Sephardic community, including those in Toledo, Sevilla, Cordoba, and Burgos. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Population Concentration Map



Familial and Genealogical Findings

Jewish surnames in the Extremadura reflect the enduring impact of Semitic languages and Islamic civilization on western Spain. That is, a significant portion of Jews' surnames were derived for Semitic origins, as evidenced by last names such as Albuer, Amiz, Aranón, Azari, Hamid, and Hamiz.⁴⁵ These surnames survived after the Christian Reconquest of the Extremadura (during the thirteenth century) and remained in use well into the fifteenth century.

Medieval Extremadura Jews demonstrated a cultural preference for biblically inspired given names, which likely communicated their Jewish identity. In this manner, Jewish community members were readily identifiable from Christians and Muslims in the Extremadura, and thus, a distinct and recognizable community in Spain. The most commonly used given names of men included Abraham/Abrahan (43 persons), David (16 persons), Isaqué (26 persons), Jacob (37 persons), Mosé (62 persons), Samuel/Simuel (27 persons), Salomón/Solomón (56 persons), and Yuçe/Yuçef (91 persons).⁴⁶

Jewish converts to Christianity (conversos) typically abandoned Semitic surnames and adopted Castilian surnames. As noted by prior scholars, conversos publicly distanced themselves from their Jewish pasts by using new surnames. In this database, conversos can be found using surnames such as Blasco, Hernández, López, Muñoz, and Santa María.⁴⁷ Their efforts to conceal their Jewish identities serve a significant impediment to genealogists' efforts to rebuild Jewish-converso genealogies. Additionally, it should be noted that it is not a reasonable conclusion to

assume that specific Castilian surnames, such as Hernández, were ones adopted by and exclusively used by conversos.

Cultural and Religious Findings

The Extremaduran rabbinic class was very diverse and represented by large collection of families. These include: Abentaf, Abençur, Abendi, Aben Yuxen, Aloya (Loya), Anejo, Çaces, Çarfati, Carrion, Cased, Castro, Chico, Hagay, Hain de Linda, Juanali, Levi, Melamed, Sobrado, Subel, Truchas, Useda, Valenza, Zarco, Zarfán, and Zarfati families.⁴⁸ Rabbis, as prominent local leaders, often occupied dual roles as religious and economic leaders. For example, Rabbis Abrahan Abendi and Sento Melamed were both guardians of Judaism and head tax collectors.

Political and Economic Findings

Jewish community members were a key component the Castilian nobility. Time and time again, Christian notaries were careful to note the higher social station of some individuals, such as Don (“Lord”) Mosé Çarfati and Doña (“Lady”) Sol Cerfaty, when they appeared in the written record.⁴⁹ Castilian record keepers would, on occasion, note the professions of Jewish members of society. Those professions included: trapero (cloth-shearer), blacksmith, tundidor/tunidor (cloth-shearer), rabbi, mercador (merchant), zapatero (shoemaker), tejedor (weaver), fisico (physician), tax collector, and platero (silversmith).⁵⁰

Jewish property and trade wealth is not only well represented in the database, but it also demonstrates the Extremaduran population was a wealthy one. Property sales and lawsuits

indicate that several transactions were in the 10,000 to 20,000 maravedis (silver pieces) range. This is impressive given a typical, multi-room house in a city such as Plasencia might rent for 100 to 200 maravedis a year during the fifteenth century.

A Focus on Plasencia: Unique Case Studies Pertaining to Sephardic Jewish and Converso Life

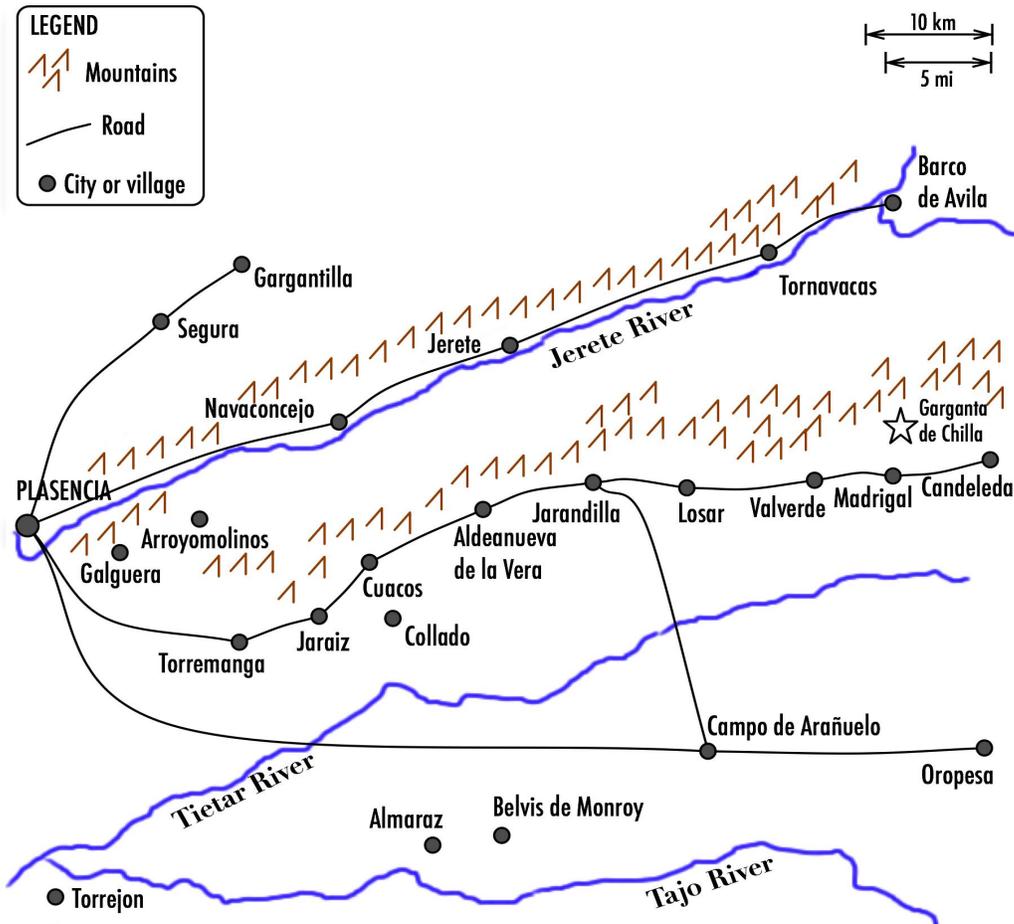
Among the most intriguing elements of our research was the opportunity to review and evaluate two case studies from the region surrounding Plasencia. Specifically, we considered how broader political conflicts between Christian elites, some of whom were conversos, had dire and complicated consequences for Jewish communities. The first case study, from 1431, pertained to a regional war that broke out between the residents of Plasencia and neighboring seigniorial lords. In this event, Old Christians and conversos battled each other for political and economic survival and Jewish individuals were harassed and murdered. The second case, from 1477, highlights how Jewish community members were simultaneously mistreated by one group of elite conversos and sheltered by another. In this case, the Estuniga family, the Counts of Plasencia and Bejar, evicted Jews from their Plasencia synagogue and homes in the neighborhood of La Mota. However, another group of conversos, the Carvajal-Santa Maria family confederation, raced to relocate Jewish community members into their own neighborhood and even sold property to them so that they would own their own homes and synagogue.

Case Study 1: The Limitations Of Authority: Jews And Christian Commoners Caught Within A Broader Regional Conflict

By the 1430s, a converso confederation of families, made up of the Carvajal and Santa María clans, exercise significant control over the Cathedral of Plasencia and the city council. In the previous decade the authority of the two families' was severely limited in the broader region. During the late 1420s, just as the Santa María and Carvajal families were gathering their collective power, the *Señor de Oropesa* (the Álvarez de Toledo family) and the *Señor de Valverde* (the Niño family) coordinated an attack on the traditionally recognized jurisdiction of the city council over its neighboring villages. What ensued was a fierce regional conflict over natural resources (grazing, fishing, and agricultural rights) and secular leadership in the region.

During this era, it appears that the City Council and the Cathedral of Plasencia served as the *de facto* local authorities for resolving secular conflicts in the northeastern section of the Diocese of Plasencia. However, during the 1420s these instruments of power were insufficient to compel local lords like the *Señor de Oropesa* and *Señor de Valverde* to comply with the will of either governing institution. As evidence for this argument, in 1431 King Juan II dispatched Judge Miguel Sánchez de Sepúlveda to the city to investigate disputes over jurisdiction and property, as well as review multiple claims of improper imprisonments and the deaths of two Placentino Jews.⁵¹ Tragically, Christian commoners and Placentino Jews became unwilling pawns in this regional quarrel over communal access and rights to lands near the village of Jarandilla de la Vera (referred to as Jarandilla), which is located east of Plasencia. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3:
Geographical Focus of the 1431 Royal Investigation



In December of 1431, Judge Miguel Sánchez assembled the city council of Plasencia, along with representatives from neighboring villages, to oversee a judicial investigation into a conflict between the city of Plasencia and several local lords over property rights near and around Jarandilla. Among those participating from the city council were Diego González de Carvajal (the family confederation’s leading knight), Alfonso Fernández de Cabreros (a Santa María clansman) and his son by the same name, and their familial ally, Alfonso Fernández de Logroño.⁵² The four men shared bloodlines and enjoyed a collaborative relationship, which they employed previously to direct many of the council’s actions. For instance, just three years

earlier, the four councilmen and their relatives inside the Cathedral of Plasencia had overseen the city council and cathedral's initiative to share royal transit tax collections (the *portazgo*).⁵³

Also gathered for the hearings, which were held in the Church of St. Vincent, were residents from the neighboring communities of Losar, Arroyo Molinos, Jarahiz, Cuacos, Aldeanueva de la Vera, Jerete, Navaconcejo, Ojalvo, Esperilla, Gargantilla, Segura, and Tornavacas.⁵⁴ Notably absent from the meeting were García Álvarez de Toledo (the *Señor de Oropesa*) and Pedro Niño (the *Señor de Valverde*) whose own interests ran counter to those from Plasencia and most other local communities. At the heart of the conflict, according to Judge Miguel Sánchez, was whether or not García Álvarez de Toledo had ordered the residents of Jarandilla to take someone prisoner if they fished, tended cattle, or farmed in the disputed lands.⁵⁵ Although King Enrique II had donated the villages of Jarandilla and Tornavacas to García Álvarez's father, Fernán Álvarez de Toledo, the territory surrounding these villages was not within the jurisdiction of the *Senores de Oropesa*.⁵⁶ To a lesser extent, the judge was also interested in Pedro Niño's efforts to appropriate lands near the village of Valverde. Embedded in Miguel Sánchez's royal charge was only a hint of the deterioration of societal affairs in the region surrounding Plasencia, which the local lords and Plasencia's leaders could not resolve. It also revealed the fractures and fissures that ran through the *converso* elite and that they were not a collective entity with a shared identity – rather they were all pursuing their own individual familial aims.

Indeed, in the years prior to the inquest, there was a significant increase in violence against persons and property in the kingdom as a result of convoluted property and jurisdictional conflicts involving the monarch, noble families, and churches.⁵⁷ In a 1431 letter that accompanied Judge Miguel Sánchez on his journey to Plasencia, King Juan II endowed the judge

with broad and comprehensive authority to review the discord in the Diocese of Plasencia. The king stated:

I have placed my trust in Miguel Sánchez de Sepúlveda, Bachiller of Law...to conduct an investigation regarding any items—all of them—including...pleas, ...allegations ...and thefts. And for half a year Miguel Sánchez can suspend the offices and powers of my local mayors and judges [to pursue this investigation].⁵⁸

Thus, the king's decision to grant the judge this breadth of power reveals that the confederated families lacked sufficient political sway to resolve these regional conflicts and enforce peace in the greater diocese. It further suggests that King Juan II believed he needed to subjugate all local secular powers in the region to his supreme authority. Only in this manner could the judge resolve the conflicts. This circumstance was almost certainly due to the nature of Castile's overlapping secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Because the *Señor de Oropesa* and *Señor de Valverde* were the king's vassals, only the monarch could hold them to account in secular affairs. These *señores* had explicitly demonstrated through their actions that they believed the City Council of Plasencia lacked any authority to impose its decisions and mandates on territories considered outside its periphery. In particular, the *Señor de Oropesa* appeared willing to test the limits of his jurisdictional authority outside of the villages of Jarandilla and Tornavacas. A critical focus of the judge's investigation and findings would center on the extent of Plasencia's periphery, particularly the area to the east of the city.

As all of the claimants framed the conflict as a secular matter, and not as a church issue, the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation was unable to harness the authority of the Cathedral

of Plasencia to resolve the matter in their favor. If the issue were ecclesiastical in nature, then Bishop Santa María and the cathedral's church chapter could claim jurisdiction over all lands west of the Cathedral of Ávila and the Monastery of Guadalupe. However, the jurisdictional conflict did not pertain to church properties or the payment of church taxes and therefore the family confederation could not exercise the church's power in the matter. Thus, to ensure that Judge Miguel Sánchez had sufficient authority to enforce an agreement among the parties, the king empowered him with absolute secular authority over all parties.

The line of questioning pursued by the judge focused on five issues pertaining to actions of several of the residents of Jarandilla:

1. Did they occupy and take possession of the disputed lands belonging to the city council of Plasencia?
2. Did they pay the city council for these lands?
3. Had they taken anyone prisoner?
4. Had they erected a hangman's gallows in the disputed lands?
5. Did they do any of these things with the help of García Álvarez de Toledo?⁵⁹

Judge Miguel Sánchez's questions quickly revealed critical and troubling facts about Jarandillans' activities as well as the obstinacy of García Álvarez de Toledo and Jarandilla's village council. Not only did García Álvarez, the *Señor de Oropesa*, fail to present himself at the hearing, but the only men from Jarandilla compelled to attend the inquiry were Juan Sánchez de Castillo, Pedro Fernández, and Diego Gómez, none of whom held any official position on their local council. With each response that these men provided to the judge's questions, the inquiry

verified that the *Señor* had claimed the disputed properties as his own seigniorial lands. Further, he had ordered the residents of Jarandilla, who were his living under his seigniorial authority, to enforce a fishing and herding ban in nearby areas, thereby disturbing the traditional “peace and coexistence” of the local communities.⁶⁰ Thus, if García Álvarez and the residents of Jarandilla could effectively expand the generally accepted boundaries of the village of Jarandilla, then both parties could claim new income-producing resources as their own. In effect, the *Señor de Oropesa* and Jarandillans were attempting to redraw the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the city of Plasencia.

The men from Jarandilla explained to Judge Sánchez that events took a turn for the worse when their local village council, “claimed all of the surrounding land around Jarandilla as a part of their jurisdiction and erected a hanging gallows.”⁶¹ As the line of questioning proceeded, these men also noted that some of their unnamed neighbors had taken three local pastoralists from the village of Losar, as well as Rabbi Abraham de Loya of Plasencia, hostage and had transported all of them to García Álvarez’s village of Oropesa and perhaps held them in his formidable castle (See Figure 4.) The *Señor de Oropesa*, a *New Noble*, demonstrated that elite *conversos* could not only balance a warrior’s stance with that of bureaucratic prowess, but also could aggressively pursue his claims to these lands at the expense of other *conversos* like the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation. Through his proxies in Jarandilla, who willingly used physical force, intimidation, detentions and fines, as well as the threat of hanging against anyone that trespassed into these disputed areas, García Álvarez was building his own collection of united families.

Figure 4: García Álvarez de Toledo’s Castle at Oropesa



Source: Photography by author.

The testimony from the men of Jarandilla also exposed the limits of what Judge Miguel Sánchez could accomplish in the case. He was ultimately unable to force the men to name any member of the group that had taken hostages. Moreover, the absence of García Álvarez, or any his personal representatives, from the proceedings highlights how little power the king had to compel the *Señor de Oropesa* to appear and address the parties’ claims in this specific investigation. Royal power was weak in this region.

Although García Álvarez did not attend the hearing, Judge Miguel Sánchez’s questions revealed that he believed the City Council of Plasencia was the proper local authority and owner of the disputed lands. (See Figure 5.) By framing the question, “did the residents occupy and take possession of the disputed lands belonging to the City Council of Plasencia,” he explicitly

accepted the Placentino's claims.⁶² The judge was on solid legal ground because the *Fuero de Plasencia*, the royal document establishing the rights and privileges of the city of Plasencia, granted the lands in question to the city.⁶³

Judge Miguel Sánchez's direct questioning of the residents of the village of Losar established the customarily acknowledged eastern periphery of the city. These lines were explicitly marked with boundary stones (*mojones*). The eastern reaches of the periphery abutted *New Noble* Pedro de Estúñiga's secular lordship of Barco de Ávila and Pedro Niño's ownership of the villages of Valverde and Madrigal. However, according to the residents of Losar, the land situated in between these two seigniorial lands, which was close to Garganta de Chilla.

something of value, perhaps control or use of his lands in Tornavacas, in return for his assistance with contesting Plasencia's jurisdiction.

Additional testimony highlighted the accepted southeastern boundaries of the jurisdiction of Plasencia. Specifically, witnesses indicated that an unknown party had tampered with and removed boundary stones demarking the city council of Plasencia's southeastern periphery near Campo de Arañuelo—a village that was under the lordship of García Álvarez (*Señor de Oropesa*).⁶⁵ These witnesses definitively noted that although the *Señor de Oropesa* rightfully claimed the village of Jarandilla as his own secular jurisdiction, all of the territories surrounding this village fell within the City of Plasencia's authority. Thus, with the exception of Jarandilla, all of the *Señor de Oropesa*'s seigniorial lands fell south of the Tietar River. The judicial process also exposed the unwarranted seizure of cattle and prisoners in and around Jarandilla, as well as in around other villages immediately adjacent to Plasencia, such as the village of Galguera. In sum, Judge Miguel Sánchez utilized this judicial method to map the physical topography, including referencing mountains, pastures, and valleys, in order to clarify and validate the jurisdictional claims of the City of Plasencia.

In addition to reinforcing the physical boundaries of the City of Plasencia, the inquiry also revealed the city's relationship with other local communities. The judge's inquest confirmed that the villages and inhabitants of Arroyo Molinos, Torremanga, Jaraiz, Collado, Cuacos, Aldeanueva de la Vera, Losar, Jerte, and Navaconcejo perceived themselves to be within the secular jurisdiction of the City Council of Plasencia. As such, these residents likely expected Plasencia to protect them from malfeasance and the predatory behavior of the *Señor de Oropesa* and *Señor de Valverde*. Interestingly, although the residents of the village of Tornavacas were a

part of the *Señor de Oropesa's* seigniorial jurisdiction, they too claimed to be outside the authority of García Álvarez.

The judicial process exposed the willingness of local communities to use the royal legal process to pursue the redress of a whole range of wrongs against them. For example, several men from Aldeanueva de la Vera, Cuacos, and Tornavacas readily confirmed that, “García Álvarez ordered that no one was to fish from the Jerete River in that area,” and that the *Señor* had taken many local residents prisoner.⁶⁶ Others, like the Sánchez family of shepherders, added that the *Señor de Oropesa* incarcerated these residents, as well as other “poor men”, until their families paid “great quantities of maravedis”.⁶⁷ The conflict extended to lower nobles, like Martín Fernández de Toledo, when men took his herdsmen with their “hands bound” to Jarandilla and confiscated his cattle.⁶⁸ By presenting their claims to Judge Miguel Sánchez, it appears that these and other parties hoped to recoup lost assets and the unfair imposition of ransoms for hostages.

Those most unable to protect and defend themselves during this regional conflict were the Jewish residents of Plasencia. During the investigation, several imprisoned residents of Jaraiz confirmed that men from Jarandilla had not only taken Rabbi Abraham de Loya captive, but that he was singled out for harsher treatment when his hands were not bound, but instead “shackled in chains”.⁶⁹ The group of prisoners noted that their captors later transported the rabbi to their village of Jarandilla and held him captive for an extended period of time in an isolated house in the mountains. Although the rabbi appeared to survive the disturbing and demeaning ordeal, two of his coreligionists were not as fortunate. The shepherders Juan and Pascual Sánchez of Tornavacas reported they had seen men transporting the “bodies of Fartalo and his wife”, both

Jews from Plasencia, to the village of Oropesa.⁷⁰ Although no one could elaborate on the circumstances of their deaths, it is possible that they were victims of Jarandilla's gallows.

Even though local Christians suffered the temporary loss of liberty, monies, and assets during this conflict, the judge's inquiry revealed that no Christian lost his or her life during these events. The death of the two Jewish residents of Plasencia, and the lack of additional questioning on the matter by Judge Miguel Sánchez, revealed that Plasencia's Jews lived a precarious existence in a society that targeted them for harsh punishment and sometimes murder. Although the archival record does not preserve the final ruling of Judge Miguel Sánchez de Sepúlveda, the thrust of his investigation demonstrated his willingness to support the claims of the municipal council of Plasencia over the assertions of regional lords. It was a position that was more favorable to the king because he ultimately controlled city councils, which served as valuable royal counterbalances to independent-minded seigniorial lords, many of whom were among the most powerful *New Noble* families created by the monarchy in the late 1300s.⁷¹ Fortunately for the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation, whose members served as the monarch's counselors and on his City Council in Plasencia, this arrangement also benefited their families' efforts to fortify their own political and economic positions in Plasencia.

Cumulatively, the royal inquest of 1431 demonstrated that liberty and livelihood in Plasencia was dependent on a complex interaction of political, economic, and religious factors. The nature of the investigation revealed that the Kingdom of Castile and Leon existed as a patchwork of royal, municipal, religious, and seigniorial jurisdictions. When local city councils and local lords could not agree on how to balance the needs of these jurisdictions, the king's supreme authority was required to settle disputes. In particular, Christian commoners and religious minorities such as Jews often found themselves trapped in the mechanics of these conflicts.

Case Study 2: The Era Takes its Toll on Plasencia's Jewish Community, 1477-1492

Within the highly charged religious and cultural environment created as early as anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1390s and the subsequent blood purity laws of the 1450s, Plasencia's Jewish community was in full retreat by the 1470s. Of the course of fifteen years, the juderia would find itself increasingly on the defensive as the Estúñiga asserted their authority and control over Jewish properties (even the synagogue) and King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel prepared to expel them in 1492. Faithful to the end to a more pluralistic community, the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation attempted to mitigate this slow moving religious and cultural disaster by lending aid to Placentino Jews. Once again, no single *converso* identity bound the Castilian clans together – rather – the Estúñiga exerted the maximum pressure on Jews by casting them from their synagogue and homes while promoting an overt but farcical *Old Christian* pedigree with erection of the *Convento de San Vicente Ferrer*. On the other hand, the family confederation made room for the Jewish community near their homes and incorporated a synagogue within the tight cluster of Carvajal and Santa María homes that centered around the Plazuela de Don Marcos. Unfortunately, the path to move forward was both narrow and a dead-end.

In a donation recorded in the *Registro del Sello de Corte* of the Kingdom of Castile and Leon, on July 22, 1477, Alvaro de Estúñiga, the Count of Plasencia and Béjar, gave the Jewish neighborhood of La Mota and the synagogue to the Dominicans to construct a convent in the name of the most voracious of Christian proselytizers, Vicente Ferrer.⁷² By virtue of his “seigniorial privilege and ownership and possession of the Jews and the Jewish community”, Alvaro gave the synagogue, “those houses that belonged to Rabbi Abraham”, and others

structures, to the religious order charged with protecting the faith from heretics. Intriguingly, the count did not perform this donation in Plasencia, but rather from his stronghold just to the north, in the smaller city of Béjar, and in the presence its mayor and local nobility. There was little the Placentino Carvajal-Santa María family confederation in the cathedral or on the city council, or their Jewish allies, could do to counter this action – it was a fait accompli. (See yellow-shaded outline of the Estúñiga Zone of Control on Figure 6: Displacement and Relocation of Synagogue and Jewish Community, 1477-1492. See Figures 7 and 8, the Palace de los Mirabeles and the former Convent of San Vicente Ferrer.)

Figure 7: Palace de los Mirabeles (Count of Plasencia and Béjar)



Source: Photography by author.

**Figure 8: Palace de los Mirabeles (right)
and the Former Convent of San Vicente Ferrer (left)**



Source: Photography by author.

With the creation of the convent and the eviction of Jewish residents from the neighborhood of La Mota, the Count of Plasencia and Béjar effectively created an massive zone of control in the southwestern portion of the *juderia* that radiated out from their Palacio de los Mirabeles. From this locus of power, the Estúñiga directly owned and controlled over 19,200 square meters of city, or roughly 4.75 acres within the city walls, and their properties represented the largest contiguous family zone in all of Plasencia.⁷⁴ This was the most brazen of all of the actions of the count and his supporters, which turned out to be short-lived, as will be discussed in the following sub-section.

The response of the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation was remarkable as it demonstrated that not all *conversos* were committed to the elimination of the Jewish community, rather these clans stood steadfast and ready to integrate the displaced Jews and synagogue in their immediate neighborhood in Plasencia. (See Carvajal-Santa María Zone of Control on Figure 6.) Within eight days of the count's actions, on July 30, 1477, Rodrigo de Carvajal sold "forever after" – rather than just leasing – a large complex of his homes on Calle de Zapateria to Saul Daça and Yuda Fidaque for 25,000 maravedis.⁷⁵ (See dark blue-shaded section with letters "D & F" on Calle de Zapateria on Figure 6.) Rodrigo, himself, lived in a large housing complex within the immediate vicinity and on the connecting Plazuela de Don Marcos. This son of the knight Diego González de Carvajal, who had lived his entire life adjacent to Jews and Muslims on the Plaza Mayor, had elected to welcome Saul and Yuda to be his permanent neighbors.

Just as had been done in the La Mota over sixty years earlier but in a reversal of roles, this time Jews took possession of Christian homes. Saul and Yuda did so by "entering into them and walking through them, and to signal their possession of them, in the presence of everyone that was there, they closed the houses' doors while they remained inside of them."⁷⁶ Witnessing the transaction were several members of the family confederation who ensured the enduring relationship of intertwined clans, albeit with the Santa María surname having been genealogically laundered into other surnames. Among them were Gonzalo de Carvajal, who was the son of Alfonso Fernández (one of original clan lines of the Santa María), Luis de Carvajal, and Alfonso Gutiérrez.⁷⁷

Thus, the majority of this *converso* family was in agreement that Plasencia's Jews needed to be shepherded into a protective and defensive confederation cocoon of housing complexes.

However, there may have been some discomfort with this cozying up to Jewish neighbors because one family member present at the transaction was already marching toward a more religiously pure and Christian identity. It is very likely that Luis de Carvajal, a witness to these events and who held a deep knowledge the family's ancestral Jewish bloodlines, was the same official who later investigated his uncle's heretical religious practices using the full force of the Holy Office of the Inquisition (founded in 1478 and implemented in 1480).

The periphery of the family confederation's 15,200 square meter (3.75 acres) zone of control was created with housing anchor points resided in by Rodrigo de Carvajal, Diego Jiménez de Burgos (noted as "DJB" on Figure 6), Bernardino López de Carvajal ("BLC"), Diego de Carvajal and Elvira de Toledo ("DC/ET"), the family of Lorenzo Galíndez de Carvajal ("LGC"), Pedro Gutiérrez, the Camargo clan, Ruy Garcia de Salamanca ("RGS"), and the Almaraz family. From the zone of control's central point, located in the Plazuela de Don Marcos and precisely where the new synagogue was founded (noted as "Syn" on Figure 6), all relocated Jews resided within 90 meters (100 yards). See Figure 9: Plazuela de Don Marcos and Palacio Carvajal-Giron (home of Rodrigo de Carvajal.)

Proving the strength of their conviction that Plasencia's Jewish community should have a proper synagogue, as well as an attached women's section, the Carvajal-side of the family confederation sold multiple properties so that they could be constructed on the Plaza de Don Marcos.⁷⁸ In sum, family confederation's approach to this neighborhood implied an intense interest in protecting their Jewish neighbors and themselves should events proceed on a more destructive path with the Estúñiga.

**Figure 9: Plazuela de Don Marcos and Palacio Carvajal-Giron
(home of Rodrigo de Carvajal)**



Source: Photography by author.

In particular, Diego and Rodrigo’s homes offered substantial, fortified castle-like structures that would be used to shelter the family confederation and Jewish community when a bloody-hand-to-hand war broke out between the Estúñiga and the confederation in 1488. As previously discussed, in 1469, the *converso* New Noble Álvarez de Toledo (*Señores de Oropesa*) and the Placentino Carvajal had reconciled since the 1440s and secured a family alliance through the marriage of Diego de Carvajal, by then a Regidor in Talavera de la Reina, and Elvira de Toledo.⁷⁹ Not only did Elvira bring an enormous dowry to the partnership, but ownership of family castle in the village of Oropesa as well as Plasencia’s Casa de Dos Torres (“The House of Two Towers”) situated at the corner Calle Blanca and Calle Don Marcos. (See Figure 10: Casa de Dos Torres) Therefore, both the Casa de Dos Torres and Rodrigo’s large housing complex

allowed for improved family protection and revealed an overt *converso* fraternity with the surviving members of the Jewish community.

Figure 10: Casa de Dos Torres



Source: Photography by author.

Between 1477 and 1485, the family confederation acted decisively alongside collaborating Jews as they integrated as many as a dozen Jewish families within their immediate neighborhood. First, Saul Daça sold several houses to his co-religionist, Yuce Caçes.⁸⁰ These houses were next to those of Simuel Harañon, the Jewish chainmail maker who rented a residence from the church, and the wife of Salamon Abenhibibe, who owned a home in the immediate vicinity (See light blue-shaded section with letters “YC”, SH”, “SA” on Calle de Zapateria on Figure 6.)

Subsequently, Rodrigo de Carvajal and his sister, Estefania González de Carvajal, executed an expansive array of property agreements (perpetual leases, short term leases, and sales contracts) that settled Jewish families along Calle de Trujillo (from Calle Blanca up to the alleyway behind Rodrigo's housing complex). These property arrangements allowed Rabbi Mose Caçes, Yuda Alegre, Simuel Alegre, Jacob Lozano, Abrahan Lozano, Levi Alegre, Pedro Alegre, Isay de Oropesa, Ysay Pachén, Yuda Caces, Yuce Haruso, Yuce Molho, Habine Molho, Albrana Cohen, and Yuce de Medillín to re-locate, and in some cases, build new homes to their liking.⁸¹ At the same time, the Carvajal also leased a massive house on Calle Blanca to their extended family member, Pedro Gutiérrez, thus further consolidating the presence of the family confederation in the immediate area.⁸²

It should be noted that the details of Estúñiga's seizure of the synagogue and the relocation of the Jewish community are expertly researched and discussed in the exhaustive and mammoth undertaking, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, authored by Marciano de Hervas.⁸³ While Hervas precisely plots the locations of each individual Jewish family member, in this work I have indicated the approximate location (usually a set of houses as opposed to a precise home) of these Jewish families. Moreover, while the movement of these Jewish clans is in itself a tragically important finding, from this author's perspective what is equally valuable to appreciate is the role and approach of the Estúñigas versus the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation to Placentino Jews.

Just a few short years after the formation of this new Jewish neighborhood, Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand issued the Alhambra Decree on March 31, 1492, which required the remaining 250,000 - 300,000 Jews in Spain to convert to Christianity or to leave Spain by July 31, 1492 –

or within four months.⁸⁴ This Edict of Expulsion served as the terminal point for Plasencia's Jews. Likewise, since 1480, the Holy Office of the Inquisition had been busy investigating *conversos* suspected of falsely converting to Christianity. For all intents and purposes, the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation of Plasencia was largely left untouched by the Inquisition; after all, it claimed great churchmen as its stewards. Other *conversos* were less fortunate, as in the 1487 case of Cristobal Manrique who was sentenced to death and burned alive in Plasencia after visiting inquisitors found him guilty of heresy.⁸⁵

Also in 1492, the new Synagogue of Plasencia was shuttered and became royal property and on the May 21st the Jewish community sold the Jewish cemetery, and in particular its headstones, to Diego de Jerez, who was then the Dean of Cathedral of Plasencia, for 400 reales.⁸⁶ The transaction conducted on behalf of the Jewish community by Yuce Castano and witnessed by Yuce Caces, Isay Pachen, Abrahan Haruzo, Mayr Cohen, Yuce Abenhabibe, Rabbi Abrahan, and others. Diego de Jerez's relations were tense with the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation because he was in the service of and loyal to Alvaro de Estúñiga and Leonor de Pimentel.⁸⁷ While in the past the Cathedral of Plasencia had been the exclusive domain of the Carvajal-Santa María family confederation, it only retained some seats on the governing chapter of the cathedral by the 1490s. More importantly, since 1470, Bishop Rodrigo de Avila had complicated their local familial power in the cathedral as Avila was allied with the Estúñiga as well as the Carvajal via intermarriage.⁸⁸ It seems likely that given all that they had done on behalf of the Jewish community, the *converso* Carvajal and Santa María must have regarded Diego de Jerez with contempt because of his loyalty to the Estúñigas and his purchase of Jewish graves.

Conclusions

What might be best appreciated from the case study of the regional war in Plasencia in 1431, the late fifteenth century displacement of Jewish families from Plasencia's La Mota neighborhood, and the socio-demographic characteristics of Extremaduran Jewry (and conversos), is its vitality in spite of repeated political, religious, and violent challenges. Consistently, the Sephardic found a way to survive—and in some cases thrive—across the great Extremadura. Throughout the Spanish Middle Ages and into the early modern period, they hailed from all walks of life and professions. A large collection of Jewish families, and not just a select few, were also deeply involved as spiritual leaders (rabbis). And, perhaps most importantly, they were an important component of the regional population. Hopefully, the Sephardic Extremaduran Genealogical Database will encourage family historians, genealogists, and scholars to more deeply evaluate the prominence of this Jewish community.

¹ On 16 October 2011, the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center (IIJG-PJC) funded the Sephardic Origins and Transformations in the Spanish Extremadura project that was conducted by Dr. Roger L. Martínez-Dávila. Over the course of three years, the researcher performed onsite archival, electronic, and text-based research on the late medieval Sephardic Jewish communities of the Spanish Extremadura. From this investigation, the researcher and a collaborate team of research assistants developed a genealogical database (a GEDCOM file) that was delivered to the IIJG-PJC on 17 June 2014.

²We wish to acknowledge the important efforts of the following University of Colorado-Colorado Springs students: Mr. Andrew Roome and Ms. Kelcey Vogel.

³ In terms of historical periodization, late medieval Spain might be best captured as the time period between the seminal Spanish Christian military victory over the Islamic Almohads at *Las Navas de Tolosa* (1212 c.e.) and the Catholic Monarchs' (Isabel and Ferdinand) political consolidation of Spain after the capture of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews, and the encounter with the Americas (1492 c.e.).

⁴ William D. Phillips, Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷ Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: Free Press-Reprints, 1994), 2.

⁸ Phillips and Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, 34, 74.

-
- ⁹ Ibid., 37.
- ¹⁰ Roger Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710-797* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 17-18, 28.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 45.
- ¹² J. N. Hillgarth, "Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality," *History and Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (February 1985), 33.
- ¹³ Phillips and Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, 97.
- ¹⁴ Teofilo F. Ruiz, *A History of Spain: Spain's Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 2011), 139.
- ¹⁵ Ruiz, *A History of Spain: Spain's Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474*, 139.
- ¹⁶ Benjamin R. Gampel, ed., *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391-1648* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 93.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 93.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 93.
- ¹⁹ "History of Bejar," *I-Bejar*, accessed 6-10-15, www.i-bejar.com.
- ²⁰ "Badajoz, Spain." *The Jewish Virtual Library*, Accessed June 11, 2015.
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_01846.html
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Severiano Hernandez Vicente, *El Concejo de Benavente en el Siglo XV* (Zamora: Bazar Jota: 1986), 55-56.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 55-56.
- ²⁵ Ibid, 55-56.
- ²⁶ "Ciudad Rodrigo, Spain," *The Jewish Virtual Library*, Accessed June 11, 2015.
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0004_0_04329.html
- ²⁷ ACP Legajo 129, Documento 11, Folio 3-3v.
- ²⁸ Janina M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate, the Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in Al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 158.
- ²⁹ Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* (Harow: Pearson Education Limited, 1996), 56.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 115, 237, 246; Note: Historians of Christian Spain and Islamic Spain often utilize different naming conventions for Almohad Caliph Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansjur (1184-1199). From a Christian historical perspective, this caliph's name is commonly shortened to "Ya'qub I", whereas scholars of Islamic Spain typically refer to this Almohad ruler as "Ya'qub al-Mansur." For the purposes of clarity, this author utilizes the caliph's full name in all references pertaining to him. Further, this author would like to thank Professor L. J. Andrew Villalon for pointing out that the name "al-Mansur," which is a title that is often translated as, "the victorious," is commonly associated with the Spanish Umayyad ruler, Muhammad b. Abi 'Amir (981-1002), who took the title, "al-Mansur."
- ³¹ Alonso Fernandez, *Historia y Annales de la Ciudad y Obispado de Plasencia*. Edicion Facsimilar (Madrid: Cicon Ediciones, 1627), 2.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Vicente Paredes y Guillén, *Los Zúñigas, Señores de Plasencia* (Cáceres: Tipografía, Encadernacion y Libreria de Jiménez, 1903), 66-67; Elisa Carolina de Santos Canalejo, *El siglo XV en Plasencia y su tierra. Proyección de un pasado y reflejo de una epoca* (Cáceres: Instituto Cultural "El Brocense", 1981), 105-107.
- ³⁵ Biblioteca de la Universidad de Salamanca (Spain) (BUS) Mss. 2.650. Descripción de la Ciudad y Obispado de Plasencia por Luis de Toro, Folio 14v.
- ³⁶ ACP Legajo 129, 11, Folio 2-3; Jose Benavides Checa, *Prelados Placentinos*. (Plasencia: Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Plasencia, 1999), 287-289.

³⁷ Jose Benavides Checa, Jose, *El Fuero de Plasencia* (Rome: Tipografia de M. Lobesi, 1896), 42, 45, 46, 54, 69, 76, 77, 105, 106, 107, 108, 133, 155.

³⁸ Ibid., 42.

³⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁴¹ “Salamanca, Spain,” *The Jewish Virtual Library*, Accessed June 11, 2015.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0017_0_17317.html

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ “Zamora, Spain,” *The Jewish Virtual Library*, Accessed June 11, 2015.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0021_0_21389.html

⁴⁴ Sephardic Extremaduran Genealogical Database (SEGD), “Index of All Place Names, Badajoz, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7007.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Ciudad Rodrigo, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7019.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Plasencia, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7041.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Trujillo, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7056.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Cabezuela de la Vera, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7014.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Hervás, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7028.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Toledo, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7053.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Sevilla, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7048.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Córdoba, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7020.html>; Ibid., “Index of All Place Names, Burgos, Spain.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/7013.html>.

⁴⁵ Ibid., “Isaque Albuer.” <http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/149.html>; Ibid., “Mosé Amiz.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/173.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Aranon.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/185.html>; Ibid., “Isaque Azari.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/219.html>; Ibid., “Baruj Hamid.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/572.html>; Ibid., “Jacob Hamiz.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/573.html>.

⁴⁶ Ibid., “Abrahán Haruso.” <http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/591.html>; Ibid., “Don David Follequinos.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/532.html>; Ibid., “Isaque Mocado.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/662.html>; Ibid., “Jacob Cohen.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/367.html>; Ibid., “Mose Salvadiel.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/779.html>; Ibid., “Simuel Cordero.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/394.html>; Ibid., “Saloman Truchas.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/814.html>; Ibid., “Yuce Escapa.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/507.html>

⁴⁷ Ibid., “Juan Blasco.” <http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/248.html>; Ibid., “Juan Hernandez de la Matas.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/600.html>; Ibid., “Ana Lopez.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/631.html>; Ibid., “Francisca Lopez.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/703.html>; Ibid., “Alfonso Garcia de Santa Maria.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/453.html>.

⁴⁸ Ibid., “Yuda Abentaf.” <http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6523.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Abencur.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2773.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Abendi.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5871.html>; Ibid., “Yuce Aben Yuxen.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/11.html>; Ibid., “Abraham de Aloya.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5915.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Anejo.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/4627.html>; Ibid., “Mose Caces.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2252.html>; Ibid., “Mose Cerfati.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/3486.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Cerrion.”

<http://iijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5347.html>; Ibid., “Salamon Cased.”

-
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6915.html>; Ibid., “Yuda Castro.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/4571.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Chico.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6103.html>; Ibid., “Yuce Hagay.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6103.html>; Ibid., “Unknown Hain de Linda.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5451.html>; Ibid., “Mose Juanali.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6815.html>; Ibid., “Unknown Levi.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5415.html>; Ibid., “Sento Melamed.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/4531.html>; Ibid., “Salomon Sabrado.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6175.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Subel.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6287.html>; Ibid., “Yuce Truchase.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6051.html>; Ibid., “Yuce Useda.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6283.html>; Ibid., “Simuel Valenza.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6639.html>; Ibid., “Samuel Zarco.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2958.html>; Ibid., “Za Zarfán.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/1942.html>; Ibid., “Mose Zarfati.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5375.html>.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., “Sol Cerfaty.” <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/3329.html>; Ibid., “Mose Cerfaty.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/3340.html>.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., “Yuda Cazes.” <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2223.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Abencur.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6519.html>; Ibid., “Isaque Aben Anco.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5075.html>; Ibid., “Abraham Zaboca.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5167.html>; Ibid., “Alonso Munoz de Aguilar.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2415.html>; Ibid., “Samuel Zarco.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/2958.html>; Ibid., “Jacob Abenmanco.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/5371.html>; Ibid., “Samuel Levi.”
- <http://ijg.org/Extremaduran/html/6667.html>.
- ⁵¹ AMP Sin Legajo. “Pesquisa hecha por Miguel de Sepúlveda corregidor de la ciudad de Plasencia, en razon de las terminus y otras cosa. Fecha en 3 de septiembre de 1431, ante Martín Fernández de Logroño, escribano de esta ciudad.”
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ ACP Legajo 282, Documento “El Portazgo de Plasencia pertencia al Cabildo Catedral...”; ACP Legajo 270, Documento 15.
- ⁵⁴ AMP Sin Legajo. “Pesquisa hecha por Miguel de Sepúlveda corregidor de la ciudad de Plasencia, en razon de las terminus y otras cosa. Fecha en 3 de septiembre de 1431, ante Martín Fernández de Logroño, escribano de esta ciudad.”
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Jose Manuel Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Oropesa y Los Álvarez de Toledo* (Toledo: Diputación Provincial, 1985), 17.
- ⁵⁷ Paredes y Guillén, *Los Zúñigas, Señores de Plasencia*, 69, note I.
- ⁵⁸ AMP Sin Legajo. “Pesquisa hecha por Miguel de Sepúlveda corregidor de la ciudad de Plasencia, en razon de las terminus y otras cosa. Fecha en 3 de septiembre de 1431, ante Martín Fernández de Logroño, escribano de esta ciudad.”
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ ACP Legajo 282, Documento 7.
- ⁶⁴ Alfonso Franco Silva, “Oropesa, El Nacimiento de un Señorío Toledano a Fines del Siglo XIV.” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* No. 15 (1985), 299-314.
- 309.

-
- ⁶⁵ AMP Sin Legajo. “Pesquisa hecha por Miguel de Sepúlveda corregidor de la ciudad de Plasencia, en razon de las terminus y otras cosa. Fecha en 3 de septiembre de 1431, ante Martín Fernández de Logroño, escribano de esta ciudad.”; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Oropesa y Los Álvarez de Toledo*, 17.
- ⁶⁶ AMP Sin Legajo. “Pesquisa hecha por Miguel de Sepúlveda corregidor de la ciudad de Plasencia, en razon de las terminus y otras cosa. Fecha en 3 de septiembre de 1431, ante Martín Fernández de Logroño, escribano de esta ciudad.”
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ The king controlled the city council because he appointed its members, the *corregidores*.
- ⁷² AGS *Registro del Sello de Corte*, Junio 1511, no folio; Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 2, 377-395; Benavides Checa, *Prelados Placentinos*, 159-161. It should be noted that the history of the Jewish community of Plasencia is expertly researched and discussed in the exhaustive and mammoth undertaking, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, by Marciano de Hervas.
- ⁷³ AGS *Registro del Sello de Corte*, Junio 1511, no folio.
- ⁷⁴ The area and distances calculated in the chapter using the ArcGIS georeferenced map created by Roger L. Martinez-Davila and Paddington Hodza of the Revealing Cooperation and Conflict Project. See: <http://revealingcooperationandconflict.com>.
- ⁷⁵ ACP Legajo 2, Documento 55, Folio 1.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., Folio 2.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., Folio 3.
- ⁷⁸ Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 1, 129.
- ⁷⁹ AHNSN Frias, Caja 1764, Doc. 32.
- ⁸⁰ ACP Legajo, 1, Documento 51, Folios 1-1v.
- ⁸¹ ACP Legajo 1, Documento 42; ACP Legajo 3, Documento 11; ACP Legajo 14, Documento 42; ACP Legajo 3, Documento 21; ACP Legajo 5, Documento 42; ACP Legajo 2, Documento 56; Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 1, 116-121; *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 2, 452-459, 472-481, 488-494, 497-501.
- ⁸² AMP “Pertenenizas de 1.000 mrs. de renta y censo perpetuo en cada ano...Francisco de Paula Vargas y Carvajal”; Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 2, 481-488.
- ⁸³ Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 1, 116-133.
- ⁸⁴ Lea, *A History of the Inquisition*, Vol. 1, 135-136; Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, 115; Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, ix-x.
- ⁸⁵ Beinart, *Trujillo*, 287-353; Hervas, *Historia de los Judios de los Judios Plasencia*, Vol. 2, 506; AHN Inquisicion, Legajo 175; Expediente 1, Folios 17-24.
- ⁸⁶ ACP Legajo 6, Documento 30; Fernández, *Historia y Annales de la Ciudad y Obispado de Plasencia*, 154.
- ⁸⁷ Domingo Sanchez Loro, *El Parecer de un Dean* (Caceres: Publicaciones del Movimiento, 1959), 513-542.
- ⁸⁸ ACP Legajo 129, Documento 11, Folio 16v; Francisco. González Cuesta, *Los Obispos de Plasencia* (Plasencia: Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Plasencia, 2002), 119, 125-126.