



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY AND PAUL JACOBI CENTER

AT THE JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, JERUSALEM

Research Proposal
(originally elaborated by the Prof. Yomtov Assis)

Genealogical Research into Jewish Communities in Medieval Spain and Portugal

Background

Municipal, notarial, ecclesiastical and other archives throughout the Iberian Peninsula (present-day Spain and Portugal) have proven fertile ground for the study of Jews living there from the 13th to the 15th centuries (that is, before their Expulsion in 1492). Much work has been done and published on Jews in major centres, such as Toledo, Seville, Saragossa and Barcelona. On the other hand, many provincial towns and villages, where significant numbers of Jews resided, remain largely unresearched. Moreover, analysis of the records from a genealogical perspective has been almost entirely neglected.

Certain scholarly publications illustrate the range of documentation currently available on Jews in large urban environments and a few provincial towns. A prime example of such works is the six volume series published jointly by the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem and *Hispania Judaica* at the Hebrew University, entitled "*Sources for the History of the Jews in Spain.*" Similar studies and collections can readily be located in the catalogues of the Library of Congress on principal places in regions such as the Crowns of Aragon and Castille as well as the Kingdoms of Portugal and Navarre.

On the other hand, *The Jews of Santa Coloma de Queralt* by Yom Tov Assis is a remarkable examination of what can be revealed about the demography and economic history of a Jewish community in a small town. The huge potential of provincial archives was further demonstrated recently by Maria Jose Surribas Camps, who uncovered over 3,000 documents relating to Jews, mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries, in the notarial archive of the town of Cervera, in the course of research sponsored by the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem. Cervera was notable for various reasons: it stood on a thoroughfare linking Spain with France; it has been barely investigated from a Jewish point of view – and, it emerges, several well-known Jewish families passed through the town or were resident there for generations, including members of the Adret family, related to the great rabbinical scholar, Solomon ben Abraham ben Adret (the "*Rashba*"). Although still incomplete, this lengthy work, with summaries of the relevant documents, has been posted at < <http://www.iiig.org/Research/CerveraNotarialArchives.aspx> >.

Proposal

It is now proposed to extend and deepen the genealogical and demographic research into Jews living in provincial towns in medieval Spain. At the outset, case studies will be concentrated on the region of Catalonia, where well-organised archives were established by law and maintained from the mid-13th century onwards.

The towns to be investigated will be selected on the basis of a number of criteria, including the quality and quantity of their records, the degree to which they are representative of other provincial and rural centres and, of course, the presence of a Jewish community of some import. Towns such as Lerida, Besalu, Valls and Manresa would come into consideration for initial probes. The researchers would require archival, palaeographical and linguistic skills, including competency in Latin and Medieval Catalan.

It is proposed that the retrieval and collation of the documents would be carried out by qualified researchers in Spain, while their academic treatment would be done primarily by doctoral and post-doctoral students at *Hispania Judaica*, the Center for the History of the Jews in Spain and Portugal at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Institute would offer its genealogical expertise to the project, whereas the Center would locate the researchers and have academic responsibility for the editing and analysis of the documents and their preparation for publication.

Additional Dimensions

A further dimension could be added to the project's scope, if it were expanded in a complementary direction – namely, the conduct of a systematic examination of printed sources and documents on medieval Spanish Jewry, with a view to generating significant results from the genealogical perspective.

Moreover, if the published records from larger centres in the vicinity of the provincial towns being researched in the framework of the present proposal were examined, kinships links could be sought between the urban and rural Jews in the region, throwing a fascinating light on the mobility the Jews, their extended family ties and the interface, even interdependence, of large and small towns from the Jewish point of view

Goal

The eventual aim of this enterprise would be to produce, over time, a series of volumes that would be of significant utility to historians and social scientists generally, as well as of direct assistance to genealogists and family historians having a special interest in Sephardi Jews, many of whom can still today trace their origins to pre-Expulsion Spain and Portugal.

That said, the initial effort should probably be directed at a pilot study, perhaps in the form of completing the Surribas study, mentioned above, for speed and feasibility.

Budget and Time Frame

I. Case Studies: **£15,000** per individual town:

1 st Year	Data Collection (Catalonia, Spain)	£7500
2 nd Year	Data analysis (Jerusalem)	£7500

II. Pilot Study: **\$10,500** for the completion of the Cervera study

1 st Year	Additional Data Collection Cervera)	£3,000
2 nd Year	Data analysis (Jerusalem)	£7500
